



Survival of Small and Medium Enterprises in Bulawayo Metropolitan Post Covid-19

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v7i5.2032>

Abstract

Small businesses are always confronted by a plethora of challenges even when the operating 'landscape' is normal. The advent of Covid-19 posed an additional and unconventional difficulty to the already constrained SMEs. The governments used various method to assist SMEs to pull through the pandemic. Post Covid-19 the SMEs are still struggling to generate revenue and reduce operating costs. The paper sought to establish challenges and measures put in place to address the challenges either by SMEs or the government. A qualitative research approach aligned with interpretivism research philosophy was adopted in this paper. The research subjects were selected using a convenient sampling technique. A total of 12 interviews were conducted with the managers and business owners of SMEs. The pertinent challenges faced by SMEs in the Bulawayo metropolitan are high cost of doing business, uncertainty, failure to settle international debits, and anti-business government policies. The SMEs reduce cost through operating from home, virtual meetings, renegotiating contracts with suppliers, staff retrenchment, processes automation, streamlining operation as well as inventory management. The findings also revealed that SMEs increased their revenue through sales promotions and bulky purchases discount, increasing the range of products or services as well as increasing brand awareness. This paper recommends that SMEs' business should be engineered such that they are highly flexible to adapt and change both the nature of operations and the methods of operating. Business continuity through both succession planning and operational continuity should be at the apex of the priority list of business leaders.

Keywords: *Small and Medium Enterprises; Bulawayo; Cost Reduction Measures; Revenue Generation*

1.0 Introduction and Problem

The purpose of this paper is to examine survival measures by the Zimbabwean small and medium enterprises in Bulawayo metropolitan post Covid-19. This paper is motivated by the fact that SMEs in Zimbabwe play a pivotal socio-economic role which addresses not only poverty but also other ills that come with poverty. Regardless of the fact that SMEs are indispensable from an economic perspective, they still receive far less than the deserved support from policy makers in most developing countries (Chipangura, 2012). SMEs are faced with collateral demands that banks and other financiers require against loans. Ideally, the government is expected to guarantee such loans however, in Zimbabwe and other developing countries there exist a problem of moral hazard by SMEs themselves. Most of the SMEs abuse loans advanced to them at concessionary rates by the government. This calls for an aggressive campaign to educate SME leaders on basic managerial skills and other soft skills. Prior studies indicate that the government is undoubtedly a key player in the SMEs ecosystem, and this role by the government is expected to be more pronounced post COVID-19 to ensure quick recovery.

The devastating effects of Covid-19 on businesses have been felt across the globe, with both developing and developed countries recording uncountable losses (Tembo, 2020). This implies that, the pandemic had adverse impact to the businesses on a larger scale across the world. Similarly, Kalidas, Magwentshu and Rajagopaul (2022) in their study established that, the businesses were negatively impacted by Covid-19, notably SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) were the hardest hit and had to advance measures to survive. Furthermore, Kalidas et al., (2022) established that, the SMEs has limited resources, and have struggled to weather the storm. Consequently, various governments across the world used the safety nets to protect businesses from the total collapse. Firstly, aiming at an impossible target of eliminating the effects but later settling at minimising the effects on the cost of transacting.

The SMEs are the drivers of most economies in various countries (Guliwe & Venter, 2018). The sentiments by Guliwe and Venter, (2018) implies that SMEs are a key factor in the economy as evidenced by the ranking of some local SMEs in the global charts as depicted by the statistics on SMEs provided by the Zimbabwe Research Council, (2018). According to the Zimbabwe Research Council (2018), 60% of Zimbabwe's productive workforce is employed in the SME sector who account for more than 50% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). By the end of year 2022, SME sector accounted for 70% of business transactions in Zimbabwe (CZI report, 2022). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2023) reports that more than 70% of employment in Zimbabwe rests in the SME sector. This intuitively suggests that the SMEs sector has significantly alleviated poverty hence curing a lot of other socio-economic 'ills' that are associated with poverty. The Zimbabwe national economic growth trajectory engraved in Vision 2030 is dependent on the performance of the economic transformation which is grounded on empowering SMEs and creation of more indigenously owned and run businesses (Zimbabwe Research Council, 2018). According to the targets set out in the National Development Plan, Zimbabwe should be an upper-middle income country by 2030. It can be deduced from the prior studies mentioned above that if Zimbabwe is to achieve its 2030 vision there is need for a collective effort from all stakeholder groups, with a special focus to the SMEs which are tipped to have an immense contribution towards attainment of an upper-middle income country by 2030.

Samudzimu and Munkumba, (2022) assert that, the governments in various countries had to go out of the norm to ensure that businesses do not collapse during the Covid-19. The challenges brought by Covid-19 have however spilled into the post Covid-19 period as many businesses are struggling to recover. Samudzimu and Munkumba, (2022) further explains that, one of key challenges faced by SMEs is emergency liquidity support, which remains essential in addressing some of the challenges. The post Covid-19 crisis has caused major disruptions and is likely to have a long-term impact on economies

around the world. Hence, this study sought to explore measures that can be adopted by SMEs to survive post Covid-19.

2.0 Literature review

The global financial crisis of 2006-2009 had devastating effects similar to that of the Covid-19 era (Chiloane-Phetla and Mathipa, 2021). The similarity between the two pertains to both job losses and loss of value in capital investments. Zimbabwe was equally affected by especially the second crisis with more than 45% of SMEs closing shop and thousands of jobs being lost as a result (Rob et al., 2020). The financial impact of Covid-19 is still under compilation, as economic agents believe the losses may be far higher than is anticipated. The downstream economic growth that could have happened in the two years without Covid-19 is beyond the comprehension of the statisticians. The social impact that came with job losses is yet another myriad of losses that remain unquantified. The governments announced lockdown which made labour to move from their areas of work to their hometowns or their families prior to the implementation of lockdowns. Thereafter the lockdowns were announced. All factories, and businesses were closed except for those deemed to be of essential services. The majority of businesses that were closed were SMEs, and the system worked in favour of the corporates. The main challenge remained the distribution of goods and services by SMEs in an environment that was prohibiting movement of both people and goods. While the demand for these increased significantly, it never turned into any revenue streams for SMEs. Most of the perishable goods were lost in the process. The consumers and financial market were face with a state of uncertainty because no one knew when Covid-19 was going to end. What made the situation even more challenging was the fact that big multinational companies adopted the use of technology and internet thereby reducing the number of employees, which further eroded income that can be spent by consumers.

Labour supply also became a challenge even where SMEs were willing and had an opportunity to supply goods and services. Concern for employees' health (Ratnasingham, et al., 2020) was a limiting factor given the rapid rate of infections and death rate. This left owners and, managers of businesses in a quandary as they could not get labour supply as and when it was needed (Dai, *et al.*, 2020; Nurunnabi, *et al.*, 2020). Business managers were also mandated to protect the well-being of employees hence they could only sympathise with the situation. Service providers (Romano, 2021) could only use the work from home strategy, whilst the organisations offering physical goods the strategy did not work for them. This and the already existing financial challenges compounded by acute liquidity shortages could only make the situation worse (Schivardi & Romano, 2020). The cash liquidity problem was compounded by loss of sales and made survival almost impossible for most SMEs. Most SMEs in Zimbabwe rely on cross border trade as they either bring raw materials or finished goods for resale. The pandemic saw all borders being closed implying that their businesses had to shut down. In overall, this saw revenues plummeting to nothing within a short space of time. This left businesses with salary and wages liabilities for labour that was not offered.

Ideally, businesses should enjoy increasing revenues against falling costs, however in the case of SMEs in Zimbabwe, especially post-Covid 19 crisis, a characterisation of rising costs and decreasing revenue have been the order of the day (Nani and Ndlovu, 2022). Not surprisingly, there are business disruptions that contribute on to the decline in revenue and profitability of SMEs such as high cost of labour, water shortages and inconsistent electricity supply. While it is common to have such challenges post a crisis, it is the extent of these challenges that are not ascertained to date in Bulawayo Metropolitan province. Similarly, in press release dated June 2023, the city of Bulawayo bemoaned a plethora of anti-business conditions that exist in the city such as shortage of water and electricity. The city of Bulawayo assert that, water and electricity challenges has led to high cost of doing business which has led to

company closures and relocating to the capital city, Harare and other cities. For example, the latest being Edgars stores Head Office which relocated to Harare.

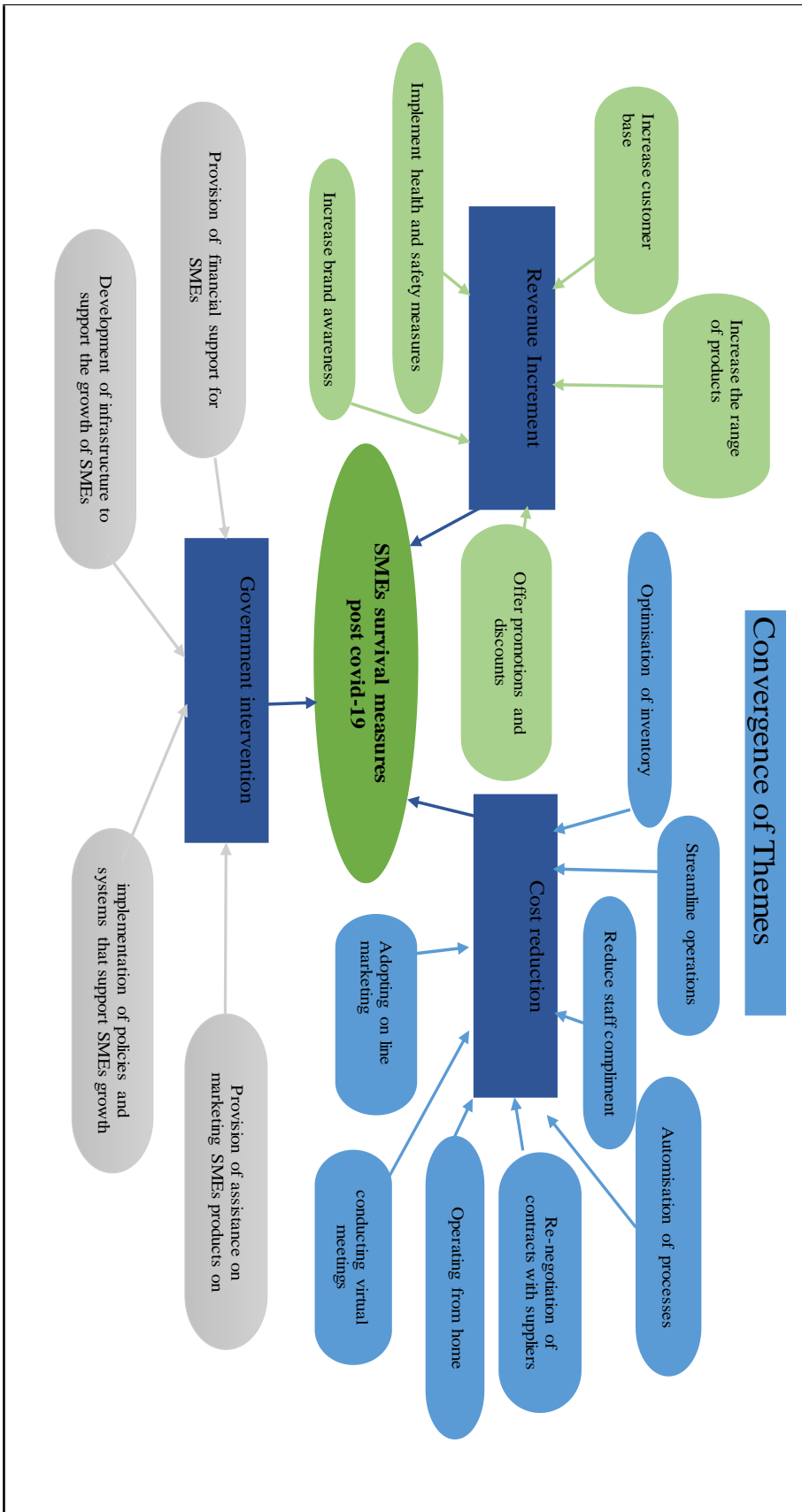
A study by Kalidas, Magwentshu and Rajagopaul (2022) conducted post-Covid 19 indicates that the increase in cost of doing business is driven by a number of factors including the ever-deteriorating exchange rate which has a ripple effect on the price index, hence, increases in the cost of raw materials and other services such as insurance. The majority of SMEs have reacted by increasing prices of products and services or cutting staff as a solution to their challenge. However, Guliwe and Venter (2018) document that, an increase in price of commodities or services has a negative effect in the growth of business. There is a research gap that therefore exists in as far as the challenges faced by SMEs in Bulawayo metropolitan post-Covid-19 is concerned. The rise in cost of doing business and reduction in revenue may decrease the chances of realisation of vision 2030. The paper sought to determine strategies used by SMEs in Bulawayo Metropolitan to reduce costs of doing business and increase revenue post Covid-19. Furthermore, the study pursued to identify measures that the government can use to assist SMEs reach their potential towards attaining vision 2030.

3.0 Methodology

This paper adopted a qualitative research approach which is aligned with the interpretivism philosophy to explore the survival measures of SMEs post Covid-19 in the Bulawayo metropolitan. This approach was described by Saunders et al, (2016) as information gathering technique that generates or uses non-numeric data. A convenience sampling technique was utilised to select the business owners or managers of SMEs in Bulawayo Metropolitan. . A semi-structured interview guide was developed with an aim to collect the qualitative data and the interviews were conducted until the level of saturation was reached.

4.0 Discussion of the Results

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyse, establish themes and interpret the data. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The study targeted the managers and business owners of SMEs in the Bulawayo metropolitan. The institutions involved SMEs in the mining, hospitality industry, agriculture, retail industry, professional services, information communication technology (ICT) and manufacturing. According to International Labour Organisation (2019) the SMEs in Zimbabwe complement the efforts of large corporations in the production of goods and services. This means that they fill the gap that is not covered by large firms. Furthermore, ILO (2019) explains that the SMEs account for more than 90 per cent of the economy in Zimbabwe. This makes SMEs an anchor of economic growth towards vision 2030 of attaining an upper middle-income economy. It is against this background that SMEs are worthy to be target in the study. The obtained results were suitable for the generalisability of SMEs in Bulawayo metropolitan province as the sample was able to cover different sectors of the economy. **Figure 1** below gives a summary of strategies that SMEs adopted in order to manage costs of doing business post the Covid-19.



Discussion of SMEs' Survival Measures Post Covid-19

4.1 Cost Reduction Strategies

4.1.1 Operating from Home

The paper established a number of measures utilised by the SMEs in the Bulawayo metropolitan province to reduce costs post Covid-19. Most participants mentioned that they have adopted a working from home approach. A number of participants showed interest in this cost reduction measurement. The participants mentioned that it assists the business reduce costs related to rentals and transports costs. It can also be deduced from participants' submissions that the working from home system does not only eliminate rental cost but it also eliminates costs associated to electricity and water bills as well as telephone and internet costs.

Participant **P1** had this to say: *"We went back to operate from my apartment to save on rentals"*. In a similar way to **P1**, **P3** said *"We are now mainly working from home to reduce rental expenses"*. While **P7** emphasising the same point as **P1** & **P3** said *"One of the strategies is we had to stop renting a premise and carry out the works from a garage we have at home"*.

P6 further gave a detailed account of the measures utilized by the SME to reduce the costs. **P6** explained that one of the strategies utilised was to work remotely which assisted the SMEA to cut on travel costs, rentals and purchase of office furniture. In her own words **P6** said: *"one of our first strategies in terms of cost containment was to do remote work, so we implement flexible time in terms of our staffing. We also eliminate costs of traveling, as well as save on office expenses, furniture and equipment by allowing our workers to work remotely"*.

4.1.2 Virtual Meetings

The participants also mentioned that they are now conducting business meetings virtual, which has assisted SMEs to reduce travelling and refreshments costs for the meetings and in some instances accommodation costs for those travelling from far. **P3** had this to say *"we now conduct most of our meetings virtually to save on venue and transport costs"*. **P8** said *"by conducting online meetings we have eliminated costs such as accommodation and refreshments for those attending meetings"*

4.1.3 Renegotiating Contracts with Suppliers

The paper established that SMEs are using methods such as renegotiation of contracts with suppliers in a bid to save on costs. Renegotiations covers areas such as the suppliers of goods or service, lease agreements and payment of bills to various service providers like Tel-One, ZESA, Bulawayo city council and financial services institutions. **P4** stated that *"I reduce costs by implementing cost saving measures such as reducing unnecessary expenses, renegotiate contracts with our associates, suppliers and landlords to help reduce expenses, this includes renegotiating rent, ZESA, city council, banks and in a bid to seek better pricing from suppliers"*.

4.1.4 Staff Retrenchment

A number of SMEs indicated that they had to reduce staff post Covid-19 after realising that support staff such as those who were doing manual jobs like cleaning offices or providing security were no longer relevant as the SMEs were now operating remotely. **P4** in her own words said: *"I had to retrench those who provided us with cleaning and security services after Covid-19 because we are no longer using the offices. It was one of measures I used to reduce costs in the company by trying to remove*

all unnecessary costs”. P7 mentioned that “after the pandemic I had to retrench some of my staff and remain with those young ones who are able to navigate technology as we are trying to move with times”

4.1.5 Automation of Processes

The Covid-19 pandemic brought with it some new life in the business world as those who managed to digitalise their operations were in a better position to serve their clients (Venter, 2021). This means that during the Covid-19 if the company was not able to use digital platforms to serve its clients it then had to close business because contact business was not allowed. P4 indicated that during the pandemic they had to automise business processes. The automisation of business processes ensure that customers were served and also on the other hand reduced the requirement of intensive labour. P4 *“Automation helped reduce costs and reducing the need for manual labor for example on inventory there will be no need for much staff members to do manual counting of stock”*. On the same point P8 had this to say, *“what we have done is to invest in machinery to make sure that we cut costs in labor, for instance, where we would employ about 30 people, our machinery is able to do a job done by 30 people, so we have reduced on maternity costs, medical aide costs and overtime costs, all these have come to reduce our costs post Covid-19”*.

4.1.6 Streamlining Operations

The study established that some SMEs in the Bulawayo metropolitan had streamlined operations post Covid-19. P5 mentioned that post Covid-19 the business had to refocus its operations and focus on the niche market. Further mentioned that the business abandoned its multiple facet approach to focus on the niche market. In his own words P5 said: *“I had to streamline my business services to focus on more profitable niche market. My business focus is on providing vegetables in urban areas during Covid-19 we diversified operations by including some dry vegetables, beans and some small grains in an effort to increase revenue streams. However, this did not work as the company keep losing a lot of money with little return on it. It was then when I planned to streamline the services and focus on a niche market that I service with fresh vegetables on”*.

4.1.7 Optimisation of Inventory Management

The majority of SMEs in Bulawayo metropolitan mention that in an effort to reduce cost they had to focus on the optimisation of inventory management. The following are some of the verbatim responses from the participants on how they have adopted the inventory management as a way of reducing costs. P2 *“Optimizing Inventory management reduced costs associated with excess inventory and wastage as well as pilferage. This was achieved through implementing inventory tracking software and adjusting order quantities”*. P3 had this to say *“Initially, we used to use manual system, we would write down and keep books and papers, but now we have a new procurement lady who is trying to consolidate everything in terms of asserts and procurement so that they all speak to each other. So, she’s in the process of implementing new software, a new system”*.

P4 *“Just in Time (JIT) Inventory policy which involves ordering inventory only when it is needed to minimize inventory holding costs and reduce the risk of spoilage. This helps as some alcohol expires quickly thereby reducing cost through loss of expired inventory, as well as also reducing cost through ordering stock that will sell in the immediate future”* P6 *“We adopted just-in-time policy because we find that it helps us in terms of reducing the risks associated with any other inventory management.*

We only then secure inventory as in when we need it and we only keep what we order, so we adopt just-in-time”. Emphasizing on inventory management P8 said: *“Yes, it is, like I said that the costs associated with risks of keeping a lot of stock that we make sure we pass over, we eliminate that risk. And*

also, the cost of keeping hardware for a long time, we try to prevent any costs of repairs or any damages in transit, we also try to avoid keeping a lot of bulk inventory in case it becomes obsolete, technological changes, it's always a dynamic space because technology changes very fast”.

4.1.8 Digital Marketing

Online marketing has been viewed as one of the most effective measure of reducing cost of doing business by the SMEs. The traditional methods of doing marketing has been distributed costly as it involved transport costs, hiring of PA systems, travelling costs for employees, accommodation and logistical costs. **P4** had this to say: *“we are conducting all our marketing through online platforms like Facebook, twitter, Instagram, and our website. This has helped us reduce costs of conducting face to face marketing which are capital intensive”*

P9 mentioned that *“Increased online presence of people shopping online due to the pandemic, the business focused on advertising online, improving the website and social media presence as well as offering online ordering and delivery service”*. This means that the businesses saw it fit to focus its advertising on line where there is present of people shopping on line.

4.2 Measures to Increase Revenue Post Covid-19

4.2.1 Offer Promotions and Discounts

From the findings, there are a number of measures used by the SMEs to increase revenue. Some of these include, promotions, specials and discounts. The participants are of the view that these measures assist increasing revenue in the company. **P4** mentioned that *“we offer promotions and discounts to encourage customers to return to our establishments. We offer promotions such as happy hour specials and discounts on certain menu items which has helped use increase our revenue”* **P6** mentioned that *“we do promotions where one buys two and get one for free in an effort to increase the revenue”*

4.2.2 Increasing Customer Base

The SMEs has measures put in place to increase the customer base in an effort to ensure that there is growth in revenue. **P4** mentioned that *“effective marketing and advertising campaigns help attract new customers and increase brand awareness which can lead to increased revenue”* While **P6** indicated that they conduct partnerships and collaborations with other stakeholders in order to increase the revenue. **P6** said: *“partnerships and collaborations with other organizations and stakeholders helps expand our reach and tap into new customer bases and that increases revenue”*.

P5 said; *“Right, in terms of our revenue generation, what we have done post Covid19 is, we have looked at or existing clients and gone on to engage them in terms of what changes have they implemented and what technological plan do they have. We also assist our clients in coming up with IT strategies so that we can ensure that we are guaranteed of future business because we are part of the planning process, this helps us increase our revenue”*. **P1**: *“We advertise through Facebook and WhatsApp group and using WhatsApp status platform. So many people are now into technology and Facebook has opened a market place for so many businesses to advertise their products, and a lot of people are using WhatsApp and Facebook for communication”*. Additionally, **P4** said: *“Our Company mainly markets and advertises its products through social media, such as Facebook, Instagram etc. This particular method is chosen as it reaches a wide audience. This being the digital age, most people have smart phones and are always on social media so it is easy to market our events and products to almost everyone”*. **P5** *“Yes, we are in a position to sell our products and services online through our own websites. The goods to be sold online are our beverages as well as marketing our shows and events. The market is located within the*

Bulawayo Metropolitan province”. **P6** “We use digital marketing platforms such as social media platform, websites, we also do a lot of conferences and workshops where we partner with other technological companies and we also do trade exhibitions, that’s how we mark and advertise our product”

4.2.3 Range of Products

Some SMEs have identified niche markets while other have developed a range of products in an effort to increase the revenue in the organization. **P9** had this to say “Yes, as a company we have seen that there is a niche market in the side of water treatment chemicals, so we have gotten into water treating chemicals for the municipalities. Not only that, but we have realized that there is a gap in the water treatment aspect, we have realized that many companies in Bulawayo and everywhere in the country internationally are now into borehole sinking and using borehole water, which is also contaminate, so we have diversified and introduced a reverse osmosis technology system to treat that water from non-portable water into portable water. And that has increased our revenue base post Covid-19”.

4.2.4 Health and Safety Measures

The study further established that health and safety measures are also used by some SMEs to ensure that they establish trust and reliability when it comes to providing a clean, secure, and virus free environment to the customers. This is viewed as giving customer confidence and likely to increase the revenue in the business. **P4** “Implement safety measures, customers are more likely to return to businesses that prioritize their safety. We have implemented safety measures such as regular cleaning and sanitization, mask requirements for staff and customers as well, we have remained vigilant post Covid-19 to ensure that we protect of clients”

4.2.5 Brand Awareness

The majority of SMEs had come up with a number of measures in an effort to increase their brand awareness which is also expected to increase the revenue of the company. **P6** said: “Right, measures to increase revenue was to try to be a little more aggressive in terms of marketing. Going out there to the clients, sort of a door-to-door approach to try and solicit more business”. **P9** “It was attained through a robust move, we had sent some teams to go into those areas like in Beitbridge do massive campaigns and a product awareness, like in Zvishavane to make sure that we are visible in all shops during busy periods where we know that there is an influx of people into the CBD, we would do some road shows, making sure that everyone is aware that there is NECHEM”

Moreover, **P9** Also", we supply schools with these chemicals, so where school head masters meet and have a conference, we would go there and do our presentations and allow them to test our products for free, when they are satisfied, they come back to us. And also, another thing that we have done is to make sure that we deliver to those areas free of charge, because you can get all your chemicals under one roof, that’s one and number two, you get them free of charge and also the fact that we stock on time helps so that our customers get whatever they want in real time and planning on their side becomes efficient”.

P2 had his to say “so I’ll speak particularly about this year. One of the things we’re truly to do is to increase the number of hosted events, by hosted events we mean like, since we do big exhibitions, but then we also want to do events whereby you’re hosting an event for SMEs, it’s your own event not ours, so we want to increase the number of people or clients like you who are coming in. That’s what we have been doing this year. And then also private and simple clients who like concerts and arts, we are trying to break into that trying to get as many people coming and use the venue and our facilities more”

4.3 Government Intervention

4.3.1 Financial Support

The SMEs are of the view that if the government can help them access the loans, credits facilities, grants and reduce taxes they can be in a position to drive the economy towards the vision 2030. In their own words they had to say: **P2**: “For us, we were lucky enough to receive a grant just after Covid-19 to be able to continue to function, I think those grants, loans and that kind of assistance is what helped” **P3**: “If we can get credit facilities from government in partnership with banks and other financial institutions to provide credit facilities to SMEs including loans and lines of credit”. **P6** said: “By offering loans to SMEs and reduce taxes on imported products”. **P9**: “the government should provide tax relief, the government has provided tax relief to SMEs, including a deferment of tax payments and a reduction in the corporate tax rate from 25% to 24%”.

4.3.2 Develop Infrastructure

The study established that if the government can build infrastructure this can help boost the SMEs ability to push the economy towards vision 2030.

The SMEs mentioned the need to invest in roads, water, and energy. **P1** said: “the government can invest in the development of infrastructure such as roads, power and water supply to support the growth of SMEs. This can help reduce the cost of doing business and improve the competitiveness of SMEs”.

Further the SMEs mentioned that there is need for the government to reduce or provide subsidized internet services. **P5** said “The government can assist SMEs by subsidizing the costs of the key or primary products in our space which is the internet, this still remains a very expensive product especially looking at regional markets, Zimbabwe internet connection subscription is still remain high, so if the government could intervene and make sure that they subsidize the cost of internet and the cost of hardware and licensing as well, this will enable SMEs to adopt technology faster”.

4.3.3 Market SMEs Products on International Markets

The SMEs means mentioned that there is need for the government to provide SMEs with the marketing support on international markets so that they can increase their customers’ base and generate the much need foreign currency for running the businesses. **P7** had to say: “In terms of external assistance, we definitely need to have a good supplier for the hardware that we are now looking I’m providing, we definitely need reliable suppliers internationally, so we’ll definitely need assistance in getting that for our organization”. While **P9** in support of **P7**’s view said: “ZimTrade does a lot but I think it needs to be capacitated more to be able to incorporate a lot of us, they are very good in marketing the SMEs internationally and regionally but I think if they got more capacitated then more of us will be marketed”.

4.3.4 Develop Laws and Regulations That Support SMEs

The SMEs mentioned that there is need for the government to support the growth of SMEs through laws and regulations that favour growth. Some mentioned that there is need to reduce the licencing fees and permits. They further mentioned that service delivery should be improved. **P4** “The government can simplify regulations and procedures to make it easier for SMEs to start and grow their businesses. This can include reducing licenses and permits as well improving the efficiency of regulatory agencies”.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper found out that Covid-19 had a lasting impact on SMEs which has shifted the landscape as most SMEs now operate remotely and utilising online services either to sale or buy products. A high number of staff was retrenched post Covid-19 either because the company had closed its physical office or their position was phased out as the organization streamlined its operations. If the government is to attain its objective of becoming an upper middle-income country by 2030 there is need for government to provide financial support to SMEs and also focus on developing infrastructure such for energy, water and roads. This will act as a catalyst to facilitate growth in public and private sectors of the economy. There is uncertainty amongst the SMEs in regards to business continuity during pandemic and unforeseen circumstances. The government should provide measures to give business stability such as safety nets. The findings of the research have pinpointed the factors that are driving the impact of pandemic post Covid-19 to SMEs in the Bulawayo metropolitan. There has been a change in the land scape particularly in labor, Information Communication Technology (ICT), utilisation of industry or office space, and demand for physical meetings. In light of this the government and SMEs are encouraged to embrace these variables so as to improve the business performance in Bulawayo and across the country.

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