

Developments and Changes Adversely Affecting Trade Unions in the Hospitality Industry of Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This article investigates the changes happening in the tourism and hospitality industry adversely affecting the trade unions and their ability to effectively organise and represent fully their member interest in Zimbabwe. The authors argue that the tourism and hospitality industry remains one of the fastest growing sectors within the global economy that is undeniably extremely labour intensive. While there are two officially registered unions namely the Zimbabwe Catering and Hotel Workers Union (ZCHWU) and the Hospitality and Allied Workers Union of Zimbabwe (HAWUZ), the focus has been on the ZCHWU which has ultimate control, having enjoyed monopoly from the traditional one union one industry approach. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions findings reveal legislative and demographics changes, adoption of precarious employment, adoption of new technology and the entry of Chinese accused of being anti-unionism and exploitative in nature as some of the major changes. The study exposes poor working conditions ranging from, long working hours, low salaries, poor safety conditions, intimidation, harassment and massive casualisation of labour calling for trade union intervention. Based on the findings the research maintains that trade union remain relevant in the sector, beneficial to both their members, employers and the clients they serve.

Keywords: Developments, changes, trade unions, hospitality and Zimbabwe

Introduction

The Zimbabwe hospitality sector covers primarily well renowned hotels, mushrooming lodges, restaurants and clubs dotted throughout the country. It constitutes the prime component of the tourism industry (Ncube & Jerie, 2014). Tourism as a key economic sector for the country contributes significantly to the generation of the much needed foreign currency, harness economic empowerment, as well as creating employment opportunities (Rusike & Chitambara, 2012; Ncube & Jerie, 2014). The Government of Zimbabwe views tourism as the fourth economic pillar of the economy given the prominence of agriculture, mining and manufacturing (Matanga, 2018). This places tourism at a strategic position tipped to steer economic growth and prosperity with full potential to transform the economy through the vast lucrative and attractive destinations. The sector is thus taken to be the face of the nation contributing significantly to the image and perception building after a decade of isolation. Nyaruwata (2017) pointed out that Zimbabwe owing to the challenges experienced



was ranked 127 out of 136 in terms of the Human Resource and Labour Market indices by the 2017 World Economic Forum Report.

The continued growth of the hospitality industry has created vast opportunities for employment. Naturally, when employment levels are high, the expectation is to also experience high levels of trade union density given the vulnerability of employees (Chitambara, 2018). However, evidence on the ground proves to be otherwise. Chitambara (2018) suggest that at its peak the ZCHWU had an excess of 30 000 members but currently has plus or minus 6000 members yet the industry continue to grow given new players coming in. The authors acknowledge that the changes typifying the hospitality industry have an impact on trade unionism. The main objective of the study was therefore to determine the developments and changes taking place and assess how they impact on trade unionism. The authors argue that trade unions remain relevant despite the changes taking place in the industry. Actually, the authors argue that trade unions are more useful during change and transformation, as every change has a significant bearing on employees in any organisation or Industry. The same argument is advanced by Ncube (2017) who suggest that every change has an effect on employees. The article answers the question: what changes in the hospitality industry has affected the trade union in relation to its ability to effectively organise and represent fully its members? The structure of the paper is as follows: this section outlined the introduction and background. The other sections of the paper will cover the literature review, methods, discussion of findings, conclusion, recommendations, significance and contribution of the study as well as the limitation and avenue for future research.

Literature review

The tourism industry remains one of the main pillars of economic development for both highly developed and developing countries (LaVan & Marsha, 2013). Several scholars point out to the significance of tourism, for instance, Nyaruwata (2017) suggests that in a large number of developing countries, tourism is being used as a major vehicle for the creation of employment and alleviation of poverty for the youth, vulnerable groups, women as well as generation of foreign currency. The tourism industry has played and continues to play a significant role in the economic sphere of the country since the dawn of independence (Mkono, 2010). Nyaruwata (2017) suggests that the tourism industry employed an excess of 181,000 people directly and in downstream activities such as cultural industries, travel and tour companies, fast food and sculptures among many others. The Zimbabwe National Tourism Master Plan (2017-2035) launched in 2017 by the government through the ministry of tourism projected a total receipt of 3.4 million tourists by 2020 (a situation compromised by the outbreak of Covid-19) which would grow to 6 million by 2025 and further increase by 2035.

Despite the beauty in these projections the reality on the ground currently calls for the need to review the figures downwards post Covid-19. The closure of borders and international tourist restrictions further plunge the industries into unprecedented chaos. We point out that while hotels and lodges were affected by the lockdown imposed by the government to date, they are operating in full swing targeting the domestic market. The changes have affected the employment patterns signalling the need for trade unions to defend the interest of their vulnerable members. This stresses the significance of trade unionism in the hospitality industry. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) suggest that Zimbabwe has a number of sites recognised as the Natural World Heritage. The recognised sites are the majestic Victoria Falls shared with Zambia, Matopos National Park in Bulawayo, Mana Pools National Park, Great Zimbabwe and Khami Ruins (Matanga, 2018). Based on these and many other cites dotted around the country the signal for



an upward trend in employment levels to enhance service becomes a reality and not just a possibility.

Employment in the industry

While the Zimbabwe tourism covers hotels and lodges, safari operators, travel and tour operators and conservation and natural resource preservation, the present study centres more on hotels, catering companies and lodges. The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) suggests that there are high employment levels in the industry, targeting both highly skilled and unskilled employees (Matanga, 2018). Of concern from literature is the fact that the industry also has a high percentage of youth employment (Nyaruwata, 2017). Generally, young employees still find it hard to participate fully in trade unionism (Ncube, 2017). This may have a detrimental effect on trade union density, which may affect the union's ability to effectively mobilise within the industry. While this is the trend Nhema and Mutenheri (2016) contents that compared to other industries jobs in the hospitality industry are considered inferior, which calls for trade union representation. The same authors proceed to point out to the existence of very low salaries coupled with pathetic working conditions, as well as long working hours. The same position is advanced by the National Employment Council (NEC) for the Tourism Industry which indicated that from 2013 to date employees in the industry received and continue to receive a low salary. The NEC further pointed out that despite being the highest earner of foreign currency workers in the industry comparatively were only earning better than those in the agricultural sector. This reality obtaining calls for the need by workers to effectively organise themselves and through their unions fight for their rights. The hospitality sector employees are thus covered by the Zimbabwe Catering and Hotel Workers Union (ZCHWU) as well as the newly registered Hotel and Allied Workers Union of Zimbabwe (HAWUZ).

While a lot can be said on the good side of the hospitality industry in terms of conditions of service several studies have pointed generally too poor people practices in the industry globally, solidifying the trade union role in safeguarding member interest. Duncan et al. (2013) point out that, workers in the hospitality industry meet complex and demanding customer expectations and at times emotional labour is exhibited. Trade unions play a key role in ensuring that their members meet these customer expectations. Unions also play an essential role in service quality since their members (employees) are expected to display enthusiasm and friendliness notwithstanding depressing emotions they may experience (Shani, Uriely, Reichel & Ginsburg, 2014). Other scholars have stressed the importance of trade unions impliedly through pointing out people issues are rampant in the industry calling for union action. Long working hours is said to be the order of the day (Wong & Ko, 2009). Poor management, low pay, use of part-time and seasonal employment further complicate employment relations (Karatepe & Uludag, 2007; Ncube, 2017). Worker exploitation mainly in departments like housekeeping is further pointed out by Roberts (2015). The majority of workers are said to be commonly regarded as semi-skilled or inexperienced (Riley, 2011). Such ills identified call for a strong union presence, for the benefit of both workers and management since service provision is the preserve of workers. This justifies the existence of trade unions in the industry, with their primary role being to maintain harmonious industrial relations and guarantee productivity.

Trade unions in the hospitality industry

Wright (2011) defines a trade union as an association whose membership consists of workers and union leaders, integrated to protect and promote their universal interests. The trade union, through its leadership, negotiates through collective bargaining with the employers on behalf



of union members to arrive at a binding Collective Bargaining Agreement (Baral, 2018). The hospitality sector of Zimbabwe remains the most important employer, especially for the communities bordering resort areas providing vast opportunities of employment to skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled people (Ncube, 2017; Nhema & Mutenheri, 2016). The sector generates better employment opportunities as compared to other sectors, with comparatively low skill levels, thereby signalling the need to effectively organise such workers. The tourism industry is known for being labour intensive despite the recent surge in the use of technology to complement human labour (Rusike & Chitambara, 2012). The hospitality sector, however, stands accused of employing a number of unskilled employees in public areas, kitchens, housekeeping, security and maintenance. These represent the most vulnerable group that needs an effective representation of a trade union as they remain vulnerable except frontline people and managers who are skilled (Riley, 1997).

There are two main unions recognised at law and both registered under conditions set by the Labour Act Chapter 28:01. The main trade union to operate in the industry is the Zimbabwe Catering and Hotel Workers Union (ZCHWU) formed and registered in 1988, and another rival union the Hotel and Allied Workers Union of Zimbabwe (HAWUZ) formed and registered in 2017. The Zimbabwe Catering and Hotels Workers Union (ZCHWU), is affiliated to the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) initially formed by the Zimbabwean Government in 1981 soon after gaining independence only to break ties with the government in 1987. ZCHWU has a cordial relationship with the Catering Employers Association of Zimbabwe (CEAZ) which represents all employers in hotels and catering companies. The current National Employment Council (NEC) regulations are a product of negotiations between ZCHWU and CEAZ. The ZCHWU currently control virtually all employees in the Catering Companies and Hotels dotted throughout the whole country. HAWUZ is yet to create an impact with no offices and with its membership unknown. HAWUZ is currently seeking affiliation to the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU) a rival labour centre to ZCTU registered in 2000. The Government of Zimbabwe was instrumental to the formation of ZFTU after September 1999 fall out with ZCTU (Bhebe & Mahapa, 2014; Chidavaenzi, 2013).

Changes happening in the hospitality industry in general

Literature is replete with changes happening in the hospitality industry. Burgess, Connell & Winterton (2013) discuss the changing nature of contracts in the hotel industry probing the function of trade unions in addressing wobbly working conditions and the vulnerability of workers. A similar study on precariousness is also undertaken by Ncube (2017) in Zimbabwe as an emerging reality in the hotel industry. The emergency of a new breed of union leadership self-centred ignoring the plight of workers and focusing on personal gains has been observed as another change being witnessed. This has resulted in some union members not pleased with union activities, believing that the leaders seek personal aggrandisement at the expense of workers and well as singing the blues of their political masters they are affiliated to (Baral, 2018). Other studies in the industry accept that unions at times are either by design or by default join the bigger scheme of politics but of late they go deeper in politics leading union activities subordinate to the prevailing political conditions (Henry, 2015). The significance of unions has been stressed given that the industry is deemed to have low wages, poor working circumstances, and high levels of seasonal and part-time employment (Zampoukos & Ioannides, 2011). This has led to wide research on examining the efforts of trade unions to improve the working conditions and remuneration of employees in the tourism industry (Lloyd, Warhurst & Dutton, 2013)



Globally the hotel sector is experiencing intensification during times of uncertainty and this creates cut-throat pressures triggering streamlining and new labour practices (Bergene, Jordhus-Lier & Undertun, 2014). These carried out a study focusing on three different hotels. Their Toronto study findings point out to the expansion and changes happening in the hotel had an impact on regulatory changes from the 1990s with effects becoming more visible currently. Their findings also depicted that in Oslo, rapid growth in new hotel establishment staff rationalisation as a way of managing costs. In Dublin Bergene et al., (2014) findings unearthed that the hotel has experienced the most fundamental crisis, with a complete restructuring of the industry, the competitive dynamics, and the way labour legislation is being practised. These pressures are a reflection of what is happening in virtually all hotels and other hospitality destinations calling for trade union intervention to safeguard jobs

Evans et al. (2007) pointed out that trade unions in the hospitality industry continue to face massive challenges in terms of union density but their relevance crucial to protect both employers and employees by influencing the improvement of conditions of service. What is striking from this observation is the acknowledgement that trade union numbers are on the high time low. Matanga (2018) suggests that in terms of employment numbers in Zimbabwe there has been a drop in permanent employment and an increase in contract and casual employees due to high rates of staff turnover. Such employees if not fully represented will be at the mercy of the employers. (Rusike & Chitambara, 2012) points out that another change happening in the industry has been the shift toward policies favouring the employment of women citing the African Sun gender policy on the employment of more women. They also cite Rainbow Tourism Group (RTG) which according to their report boost having 69.3% being women. For trade union, this change signifies a massive impact, as women stand accused of being hesitant to join trade unions yet they are said to be part of the vulnerable. The increase in female labour force participation is viewed as another change happening with an effect on trade unions.

Rusike and Chitambara (2012) suggest another development and change in the hospitality industry is the move from permanent employment to the adoption of precariate employment. They explain that before the liberalisation of the economy employment was permanent in nature but of late companies in the industry have opted to shift to other forms of employment. Ncube (2017) observes that the hospitality industry depends on seasonal peaks (mainly those in resort areas) which often lead to the adoption of casualisation of labour through the use of casuals, fixed-term contracts and labour brooking. This calls for the need for members to be fully unionised supporting the trade union efforts to bring sanity in the employment relationship. Female employment is in most cases not stable and their employment is mainly for an attraction basis than skill (Rusike & Chitambara, 2012). Ncube and Jerie (2014) suggest that hotel workers are lowly paid but at times endure the stay due to tips thereafter they are dropped; hence the need for protection from unions becomes eminent.

Methods

The research design follows a qualitative case study of the Zimbabwe Catering and Hotel Workers Union (Baxter & Jack, 2010). Despite the existence of two unions focus was on ZCHWU with membership covering the majority of the employees in the industry given that it has been in existence since 1988 as a monopoly. HAWUZ, while registered, has no offices and a clear membership base. The study utilises a total sample of 18 participants, drawn from the full-time union executives and their shop stewards from the ZCHWU. Purposive sampling technique was applied through targeting 10 fulltime union officials and 8 shop stewards. The adoption of this technique enabled the researchers to identify individuals'



proficient and well informed on the changes happening and their subsequent effect on trade unionism (Etikan et al., 2016). Data were collected from respondents through one on one interview with ten ZCHWU union officials and eight Shop Stewards. Focus group discussions with both union officials and shop stewards were also used as the researchers took advantage of the strategic meeting by the Zimbabwe Catering and Hotel Workers Union (ZCHWU) leadership. The researchers were able to conduct a total of 8 tap recorded focus group discussions. Eighteen (18) respondents were divided into 2 focus group discussions of 9 participants each. The researchers were granted 4 visits recording 2 sessions per visit. Each discussion lasted between 60 minutes and 80 minutes.

The research was conducted between August and November 2019. Each one on one interview lasted between 20 to 30 minutes. The researchers negotiated with union leadership and the President of the union accepted that interviews be undertaken with all his executive members. The interviews were conducted either before or after the executive meeting since permission was granted and members informed by the union leadership. The 8 shop stewards were selected from the main hotel groups and were part of the committee members who attended the executive meetings. These were coming from the 3 main hotel groups, the Cresta Group of Hotels, the Rainbow Towers Group and the African Sun Group. The respondents selected had been in office for more than 8 years each serving on different capacities. The President, Secretary General, Treasurer, Organising Secretary, Vice President and Vice Secretary General were full-time union employees directly on the union payroll. The rest of the respondents were employed by the different hotel groups mainly the identified 3 players. Of the 18 respondents that participated in the study only 5 were women and the rest were male respondents.

An interesting observation during data collection was that key positions (Presidents, Vice president, Secretary General, Vice Secretary General and Treasurer) were occupied by males. Only 2 women were part of the senior executive heading the Public Relations and Informal Sector Desks, the remaining 3 women were part of the shop stewards. The union President was directly involved with the labour centre the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) to which ZCHWU is an affiliate. The respondents also availed secondary data in the process of data collection which assisted the researchers with relevant information while applying thematic analysis method of data analysis. Thematic data analysis assisted researchers in identifying and describing patterns important to understand the changes affecting trade unions in the industry. The primary question the research sought to answer was; what changes in the hotel industry has affected the trade union in relation to its ability to effectively organise and represent fully its members?

Developments and changes happening in the industry

Regulatory changes

The study established regulatory changes as one of the major development that happened in the hospitality industry affected the trade union power to effectively bargain for member bread and butter issues. Trade union officials pointed out that upon the promulgation of the Labour Relations Act (Chap. 28.01), the law was very clear, with the *'One Industry One Union Policy'*. The setup was such that each industry had to establish one trade union which would negotiate with management at the National Employment Council (NEC). The union officials lamented over the government move to legalise the registration of what the respondents termed the *'Yellow Unions'* with little to no numbers at all except creating Zombie structures fuelling rivalry and confusion in the industry through amending the Labour Act Cap 28.01. From the union leadership, such unions affected ZCHWU's ability to participate at the NEC level weakening its bargaining power. Respondents from the union



pointed out that the change in the law was causing the sprouting of other unions, who initially were not members of the NEC. Respondents cited the formation of the Hospitality and Allied Workers Union of Zimbabwe (HAWUZ), through the Registrar of Labour in 2017. One union official pointed out that:

One notable change in the industry is the coming in of new players whose mandate we feel is to jeopardise the traditional norm of having a single union in the industry. We find it odd that such union's lack membership but surprisingly they are well funded and undermine efforts by the main trade union.

Five of the shop stewards reiterated that freedom of association and assembly as a principle was being taken advantage of by the employers in different hotels to undermine ZCHWU efforts, through influencing workers committee operations and selection. The officials pointed out this move jeopardised efforts to improve remuneration, or conditions of service. Union officials pointed out that this development fuelled inter-union rivalry through multiplicity of trade union creation as a divide and rule tactic. Union official pointed out that this new development was affecting their numbers, revenues as well as bargaining power. One union official highlighted that:

There has been an abuse of the freedom of association law by both the government and the employer. Registration of splinter unions like HAWUZ and other associations has resulted in the fragmentation of labour and affected the trade union directly. In my view, there is no need to have more than one union in the industry. I feel the ruling party ZANU-PF through the government simply wants to weaken ZCHWU which is affiliated to the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) which natured the main opposition political party the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), through promoting HAWUZ an affiliate of ZFTU.

Union officials and their shop stewards indicated that employers in the industry had taken advantage of the situation to allow HAWUZ members to participate in the elections of workers committees as well as to give them space during CBA as a way of creating discord within the labour movement yet HAWUZ has never produced a register of its members, a situation they were resisting. They pointed out that this has delayed all employee concerns tabled for NEC deliberations and ratifications, in the process creating a negative effect in the eyes of their members through expectations not met timeously. One of the union officials indicated that:

There is no need to have another union in the industry because as a union we have not failed our mandate. There are no new jobs that have been created we are not taking care of..... this automatically shows that the unions and association that are being registered are a managerial or government project to undermine the gains of the union.

Thus, members pointed out that the Zimbabwe Catering and Hotel Workers Union and the Catering Employer's Association were sole members who participated in the formation of the NEC. Hence, trade union representatives felt that some managers with an inert hatred to unions lobbied for the inclusion of other unions to divide and rule. To the union members, this position weakened the already existing union. Such changes undermined the ability of the union to create uniformity, in terms of conditions of service mainly salaries,



overtime allowance positions, issue of uniforms and protective clothing for effective service delivery. The officials were of the opinion that the creation of chaos for the union affected the normal business operations through having de-motivated employees which in turn affected effective service delivery. One of the participants in a focus group discussion highlighted that:

As a union, we are not just concerned about our members but the business as well. For the continuity of employment, our members should work hard and ensure the business is sustained. That way we are not only there for our members but the employer as well hence the need to co-exist and negotiate in good faith for mutual benefits.

Technological changes

All union officials pointed out that one of the major developments and changes that have occurred in the industry impacting on unions has been the issue of technological changes. They cited that the majority of hotels automated certain services a situation that has eliminated human labour. Shop stewards from the Cresta Group of hotels, for example, cited the introduction of 'Alexa' services or the Artificial Intelligence System (AIS) that one can command for certain services electronically which has reduced the need for human labour. Some hotels now have self-check-in systems, on-line bookings and automated guest feedback which all eliminating services of human labour. Another respondent explained:

There has been a shift in the hotel industry from the traditional labour-intensive to being capital intensive. Imagine at Rainbow Towers we used to have a shift of 16 people at the reception but due to online booking and self check-in, we have been able to eliminate services of people. The traditional numbers have since been reduced which has affected the trade union density.

Some union leaders were of the view that while technology was one of the changes happening, its effects were not too damaging given that the catering industry is a people industry and there is no way people can be eliminated totally. Another official had this to say:

Well, I agree technology has its way but in Zimbabwe, most of our hotels are yet to fully adopt technology except the Meikles Hotel and the renovated Cresta Oasis and Cresta Lodges. As such while it's correct to say technology has affected us its effect is yet to create an impact.

An interesting observation was raised by one shop steward who looked at the effect of technology in a different way. The female shop steward believed that technology in principle in the hotel industry can never eliminate human labour; rather it affects unions in that the use of computer systems and other gadgets make it easy for women, the young and the educated to also participate in service delivery. According to the respondent, this category needs more education on unionism compared to the old guards who have overwhelming knowledge of unions having benefitted before from them.

Demographic changes

Demographic change is one factor that was pointed out by virtually all union officials. Through a focus group discussion, respondents unanimously agreed that there has been a new trend in terms of employment patterns. Of late, the industry that was mainly male-dominated was now characterised by more female employees. Respondents pointed out that naturally,



women are reluctant to join trade unions mainly due to the perception they attach to militancy by unions. The increase in female labour force participation has reduced the union density in all the groups from Cresta, Rainbow and African Sun. One official highlighted that:

The main change that has occurred in the industry is the increase in female labour force participation. Traditionally the majority of workers in departments like housekeeping, kitchen and bars were male employees. Female employees concentrated in the restaurants and front office. Thus by nature women find it extremely hard to joining unions hence this may explain the current challenges being faced by unions in terms of membership density.

Another respondent reiterated that both management and detractors of ZCHWU tried their level best to tarnish the union in the eyes of women and the young through portraying the union as militant citing the famous events of January 14 to 16, 2019 where ZCTU organised mass protests owing to fuel price hike which saw workers and the general public being harassed as the event was high jacked by political parties. The respondent explained that the hotel industry was affected and management blamed the ZCHWU by being an affiliate to ZCTU which is MDC controlled. The respondent explained that in the eyes of women such activities are and remain undesirable. Another official supported this view by also referring to the threats by MDC activists on 1 August 2018 which witnessed security forces descending heavily on protestors who were marching and threatening to burn the Rainbow Towers where the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) was housed doing the vote counting for both Presidential and Parliamentary elections. The incident resulted in the death of 5 people including innocent citizens.

Interviewees still on demographic changes indicated that the employment of the young and educated was crucial. One of the respondents pointed out that the hotel industry was currently staffed by young employees who seem to have a negative attitude towards trade unions. Officials explained that young employees find it difficult to associate with unions let alone participate in trade union business. The respondent had this to say:

My experience is that as a union we need to do better in terms of appealing to the young employees. Some of them have never heard anything to do with the union; some think the union is for the old and the uneducated, yet the future of both the industry and the union lies in this young generation.

One union official went on to suggest that the changes in demographics affect union negotiations at NEC level as some of the individuals don't wait for NEC negotiations but opt for self bargaining. The official cited that the shift from collective bargaining to individual bargaining created a headache for the union, as management negotiates with certain individual employees based on their skill. The official suggested that unions decide on the industry minimum wages and individuals can lobby for more mainly those technical like in IT, and Kitchens, Accounts and Front Office. Such arrangements undermined the bargaining power of the union. The officials also explained that the union was affected now mainly by faith placed in Human Resource Management (HRM) personnel by workers yet HR people know where their bread is buttered. The union official further clarified that HR was replacing some of the union functions creating policies meant to defeat unions and coming up with tactics forcing the young to frown at the union, for instance, dismissing employees who bring union officials during hearings and threatening those who participate in union business among other tactics.



Responding to a focus group, discussions interviewees pointed out that the management tactic to tarnish the union was self-defeating. While the young and women frowned at unions their bread and butter issues remained unsolved leading to low level of motivation, commitment and engagement. The respondents explained that this had an effect on good service delivery as employees engaged in emotional labour. The respondents explained that as a union they were also concerned with good and effective service delivery, which guarantees business continuity and employment security. One of the union officials went on to suggest that:

As a union, we believe in the ability to co-exist and cooperate with management. When we bargain we bargain in good faith. What we always want to ensure companies survives through being able to attract business and more business. That way we guarantee job security, better remuneration and good conditions of service.

Casualisation of labour

Another change observed by respondents in the industry has been the introduction of labour casualisation. To union officials labour casualisation while was an emerging reality in terms of reducing union density, union participation and commitment had serious consequences on unions. It was pointed out that, traditionally, the industry was characterised by people whose employment was permanent enjoying 100% job security. It was submitted that Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) which was a product of negotiation between the Zimbabwe Catering and Hotel Workers Union (ZCHWU) and the Catering Employers Association (CEA) was clear on the need to confirm employee permanent. One of the senior interviewees had this to say:

When we joined the hospitality industry the traditional norm was one work for three months and on good performance management would appoint you permanently. The union on its formation would ensure this is the case through workers committee representatives and shop stewards. Of late out of 20 employees only 5 are permanent and the rest either on a fixed-term contract or casual contract. Naturally, these don't stay long and they see no value in joining trade unions, which affects us as a union really.

From the discussions, the researchers noted that virtually all union official and their shop stewards appreciated fluctuations in terms of business volumes, hence the decision to employ, casual employees, part-timers and short term fixed contracts. One of the respondents emphasised:

You see the nature of our business is such that it is characterised by high levels of fluctuations. Today you may have a full house with 100% occupancy, and tomorrow the hotels may be empty. There are a lot of distortions in the market pushing management to be extra careful. Tomorrow one may be stuck with redundant employees hence the use of short term or fixed-term contracts and of late the use of apprentice and students on attachment.

The respondents were thus aware of the challenges coming in due to the adoption of precarious employment with an effect on the bargaining power of the unions. They pointed out that the adoption of casual employment affected trade union density as all contract and casual employees considered themselves to be in transit seeing no value in unions. The officials



agreed that the employer by having more casual employees was shooting self on the hip as employees on such a contract could not pay attention to detail. To further contextualise this, a respondent said:

As worker leaders, we are concerned with the business. We value quality and effective service delivery. Hotel or canteen business is a people business hence the employer has to guarantee employee security for enhanced service delivery. We are on record pushing for better conditions of service for mutual benefits.

Use of students as a source of cheap labour by hotels

The use of students as a source of cheap labour was pointed out by virtually all the union officials. They explained that the boom in the tourism sector has led to an increase in the number of students channelled through Universities, Poly Techniques, Colleges, Hotel School and Culinary Arts. As a way to cut cost union officials explained the hotels were beefing up virtually all departments with students and maintain one or two permanent employees to guide the students. One union official highlighted that: “we have witnessed on the hotel with a staff complement of 140 “employees” yet out of these contracts and permanent employees are 40 and the 100 are students from different universities and colleges.” The officials were of the view that this was a pure case of exploitation since the students in most hotels bring their uniforms, and are not paid or incentivised but with the hotels making profits. The situation has eroded union power. And unions are yet to come up with a strategy to embrace the students as their members. The union official pointed out with more students in organisation who in most cases are grateful for the peanuts they receive after rendering service union density was under massive threat. However, the union executive through focus group discussion was agreeable to the fact that something should be done to cover student on attachment who work long shifts, who do not have a specific job description, who work under harsh conditions with hotels making money at their expense.

New employers and mushrooming lodges and canteens

Findings from the trade union official pointed out that another challenge presenting a mismatch between figures recorded as in the hospitality industry is the coming in of new players in the industry. The officials cited mushrooming upmarket lodges in Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru and Victoria Falls. These lodges compete with convectional brands like Cresta, Rainbow and African Sun but due to the people, they employ they never join the union. Union officials also cited the coming in of Chinese employers fully protected by the government as a major blow to the union. One of the union officials pointed out that Chinese employees are strongly discouraged from joining unions, hence they endure ill-treatment, and they are overworked and are lowly incentivised. The union official reiterated:

Anjin Investments dismissed about 1500 employees who engaged in industrial action in August 2012 and reportedly replaced them with card-carrying Zanu (PF) youths. As a union, we failed to represent workers at the Golden Peacock Villa Hotel because they were not part of our members and we did not have legitimacy when they were fired.

Secondary data availed to the researchers pointed out to massive abuse of workers at Golden Peacock Villa Hotel in Mutare, where cases of abuse were recorded. Union officials reiterated that they had cases documented of sexual harassment on female workers by management (mainly of Chinese origin). Other cases were sexual favours for employment at



the hotel and other lodgings facilities. The officials explained that it was hard for them to represent such workers as they were not part of union membership at large. The same was picked in a study by Rusike and Chitambara (2012) that exposed some form of sexual harassment of workers by their Chinese managers. The officials pointed out that naturally Chinese frown on trade unions and their workers are either threatened or afraid to join. Another manager indicated that:

Some of the new employers are the powerful elite who cannot be controlled even by government because they are either serving or former senior security Chiefs. These people may have benefited land in resort areas and set up tourism infrastructure. Their workers don't join trade union yet they need unions more.

Discussion

The paper aimed to find out the developments and changes happening in the tourism and hospitality industry with an adverse effect on trade unions. The study found out several changes affecting unions, primarily legislative changes being taken advantage of by the employers to create a rivalry between and among unions, which affected trade union density making the union powerless to effectively defend the rights of workers within the hospitality industry. This view exposes the union since the power of any union lies in its ability to mobilise members. This view is congruent to the argument by Ncube (2016) who pointed out that inter-union rivalry ultimately cuts at the very root of unionism, weakens the power of collective bargaining, and reduces the effectiveness of workers in securing their legitimate rights at the workplace. As explained by Crouch (2017) trade unions thrive on numbers. Where the union fail to get the numbers its bargaining power is weakened. The power of a union lies in its ability to effectively mobilise people such that when the union push for an agenda the employer is left with no choice but to request the union at the bargaining table. Without the numbers, the union movement simply becomes a Zombie structure with no meaningful effect. In extreme cases, the union becomes a passive passenger on collective bargaining. In the end, it is the workers that suffer marginalisation, long working hours, low salaries and poor working conditions in the hospitality industry.

Workers in the hospitality industry in general work long hours (Wong & Ko, 2009). They receive low pay and are exposed to arbitrary management rule (Karatepe & Uludag, 2007). By virtue of being semi-skilled and unskilled, they possess a weak bargaining power (Riley, 2011). Alternately these workers are open for exploitation (Roberts, 2015). These are factors that are handled through collective bargaining. But the current shift towards individual bargaining exposes the majority of the workers that fall under the above category. It is therefore clear that casual and contract workers that lack job security and that are highly mobile in the industry rarely wish to join a union yet they are the ones whose rights are tempered with by the employer. The union therefore instead of lamenting over the changes should find ways to attract such members.

Findings reveal the adoption of precarious and related forms of employment. The employment of the young and educated as well as women perceived to be sceptical to join unions. The changes identified by the union bare serious ramifications to the union business. Kirton (2017) concurs that the women participation in trade unionism is necessary now that they also constitute the majority as was pointed out by union officials. We observe that employers within the industry seem to be enjoying low labour protection by changing the nature of contracts from the traditional permanent employments to the adoption of precarious employment knowing pretty well that employee on short term contracts doesn't have an incentive to join unions. The use of students has hit hard on unions such that in some hotels



and restaurant they have a handful of members a situation that has destroyed their resource base in terms of union subscriptions. We note that it's high time for unions to move out of their comfort zones and embrace women, casual employees and students (Rivers & Truitt, 2014). We argue that the trade union has an opportunity here because the employees in these categories need unions' more than informal hotels. Maybe its high time trade unions think of embracing students and represent their interest; its high time unions consider women in leadership positions, its high casual employee interest is protected by unions in all forms of negotiation.

Trade unions are relevant despite the changes happening in the sector. We maintain that for trade unions to thrive there is need for them to learn to co-evolve with the changes happening around the hospitality industry. Thus the speed of change in the industry should be matched proportionately with the speed of change by unions in terms of strategies to survive (Debono, 2015). Members don't just join unions they join unions due to perceived benefits (Moem, 2017). When a union becomes a zombie structure with no meaningful benefits members find it extremely hard to join and fully participate in union business. Technological changes have affected the face of unions through globalisation and other related software eliminating or reducing human labour participation. We, however, argue that the hospitality industry is a service industry where employees sustain the business through one on one interaction with the customers. Unions thus remain crucial even in the edge of technological changes. A previous study by Gupta (2016) questions whether unions will have the capacity to survive in this era of technology. The argument by Gupta (2016) may fully fit in the manufacturing sector, we, however, maintain that in the hospitality industry is a people industry and it is the workers that create a difference hence unions still maintain a positive role in that regard.

The study also revealed that the benefit of respecting unions and giving space for ensuring quality service delivery. The same is observed by Ncube (2016) who pointed out that trade unions play a dual role, satisfying their member interest and ensuring business continuity. In principle, trade unions exist to safeguard their member but for them to be able to do this they have to be recognised by management. As such there for they maintain harmonious industrial relations to ensure member security and guarantee continuity of employment while maintaining harmonious industrial relations. By encouraging members to work and offer exceptional service delivery, unions create a positive perception and can be able to influence all collective bargain processes.

Conclusion

We conclude by pointing out that while the identified challenges are a serious cause of concern they present an opportunity for trade unions to impactfully on both employment and business. Trade unions remain critical stakeholders who do not only protect their member interest but equally protect the business operations and ensure that workers deliver an exceptional service. The government of, while it is a part of employment within the tripartite arrangement, has a duty to protect the interest workers and business. The future of union lies not only on their own strategies but equally lies in the hands of management who should recognise their significance and support them. We argue that unions still have an opportunity and unions still have a duty to protect their members. The growth of HR is not to undermine unions but to work with unions as long as they value harmony and productivity. Their significance is actually more important now because they have to protect employees in precarious employment; women failing to have a good work-life balance, students marginalised and exploited, and casuals denied uniform and job security. All these people need trade unions. We sum up by challenging unions in the hospitality industry that the



industry is a growing industry with downstream industries the unions can also take advantage of. The developments and changes happening should allow pushing the union leadership to learn to match the speed of change in the industry with their survival strategies and also focus on the changing needs and tastes of their members. While we did probe more on the serious allegations levelled towards the Chinese we challenge both the union and government to keep on knocking so that the Chinese will learn to observe and respect the local laws.

Based on the findings we conclude that the trade unions should ensure that they work well with management through participating in ensuring their members offer exceptional service to clients other than being known for being vindictive and anachronistic. With the trajectory, the industry is taking confrontation shop to be substituted with cooperation. The future of unions lies in the acceptance of the union by management. We also recommend cooperation between ZCHWU and HAWUZ. There should be competition with cooperation after all competition is healthy than a monopoly for the benefit of members. Both unions can co-exist and ensure all members are effectively represented. We also recommend that ZCHWU push for the representation of the vulnerable groups, mainly the students. The union can actually educate students while they are still in a class by creating partnerships with Universities and College. That way membership will be enhanced. While the findings reveal a strong link with political parties and labour centres that should never be a reason to abandon workers but rather both unions can and should never fail to champion employee agenda.

Several studies have been undertaken in the hospitality industry of Zimbabwe in relation to people issues and industry management in general. These include studies by Rusike and Chitambara (2012) that focussed on organising workers in the hospitality industry of Zimbabwe. These authors explained that employees had a right to form or join a trade union of their choice. Nhema and Mutenheri (2016) also looked at turn over intentions due to a number of reasons chief among them being poor conditions of service and lake of proper representation. They maintained that where unions fail to effectively represent their members, the possibility of being frowned at is high which may have an effect of member commitment and loyalty to trade unions. Nyaruwata (2017) focussed on the impact of import substitution on the management of the tourism sector. With this particular study, the researcher pointed out that import substitution had an effect on determining employment levels locally which if unions capitalise on may have a breathing space. Matanga (2018) looked at manpower needs of the industry, pointing out that the industry has capacity to be the major employer. This directly affects the unions who if they properly strategies can manage to increase their union density through adopting a membership drive. Ncube (2017) focused on precarious employment as an immersing reality in the industry and pointed out that the new forms of employment adopted affected the ability of the unions to effectively organise and fully represent their member interest. While these studies are valuable this particular study focuses on the changes happening in the industry with an effect on trade unionism. The study equips workers, management, policymakers and able all the trade union with enough information to shape the tripartite relationship and ensure service delivery is enhanced in companies. This study, therefore, becomes significant and contributes to the new board of knowledge on the pitfalls trade unions in the industry should watch for.

The hospitality industry covers the various sub-sectors such as; hotels and lodges, safari operators, travel and tour operators and conservation and natural resource preservation. Different unions exist in all these but the study focused mainly on the union covering catering companies and hotels. Maybe a future study may also be undertaken to find out if the developments and changes affect them in the same manner. Equally, the study looked mainly on the negative effects of the developments and changes happening in the industry on trade



unions. Maybe another study that focuses on the positive effects on trade unions can be undertaken.

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