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SPECIAL REVIEW

WhatsApp: +263 77 4854 551 Email: madzimbahwe-explorer@gmail.com



Mutare's hybrid food, business venue

by BERNARD CHIKETO

IN THE tidy, laid back city of Mutare, the commercial capital of Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands, a certain pragmatism prevails.

It is a quality embodied by *The Platinum Leisure & Conference Centre*, a multifaceted establishment on the city's central business streets.

More than just a restaurant or conference hall, the Isau Mupfumi-owned facility represents a model of necessity and ambition, catering to a wide spectrum of social and economic functions under a single roof.

Its calculated versatility is a logical strategy.

The premise is straightforward: within one central location, the facility must be all things to a variety of guests.

One day, its main hall hosts a corporate conference. The next, it is reconfigured for a wedding reception. And on another, a vibrant musical performance.



Violet-backed Starling: Mutare is a biodiversity hotspot with a high concentration of birds making it a prime avi-tourism destination.

This chameleon-like ability to accommodate church services, birthday parties, and formal meetings speaks to a deep understanding of local demand.

In a provincial hub like Mutare, where large, well-appointed accessible and affordable venues are scarce, such adaptability is not merely a convenience but a sound business imperative.

Culinary offerings follow a similarly hybrid and pragmatic formula.

The restaurant avoids narrow niche appeal, instead presenting a menu that walks a careful line between delectable Zimbabwean cuisine and popular Western dishes.



An à la carte selection provides flexibility, while a dedicated braai area caters to a foundational local custom.

The adjoining bar, stocking both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, completes a service ecosystem designed for extended gatherings, from casual lunches to lengthy celebrations.

Notable too is the architectural foresight catering to different tiers of clientele.

Alongside the main public spaces, a private lounge offers seclusion for executives requiring discreet discussions or for families desiring respite from a larger event.

And, by being explicitly children friendly, the venue removes a common barrier to attendance for family events, broadening its market reach.

Geographically, the centre's position in Mutare's central business district is its foundational advantage.

It leverages existing urban infrastructure and footfall, avoiding the isolation of a purpose-built resort.

This urban integration reduces overheads and increases accessibility for local patrons, who form the bedrock of its business, while remaining convenient for visiting business travellers and tourists exploring the highlands.

The Platinum Leisure & Conference Centre does not purport to be an elite boutique conference centre or a singular culinary destination.

Its strength, and its commentary on the local market, lies in its consolidation of services.

It functions as a commercial and social utility for Mutare— a one-stop venue for a society in which the lines between business, pleasure, and community are often seamlessly blended.

In successfully executing this model, Mupfumi underscores a broader truth—in emerging markets, the most resilient hospitality businesses are often those that master the art of street-smart adaptability.