

Chapter 11

Domestic Leisure Tourism: Lessons Learnt from Township Business Operators During the COVID-19 Pandemic Era



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Abstract The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected tourism businesses across the globe. The burden on tourism operators to survive was exacerbated by the emergence of new variants, which threatened an already troubled industry. Since its detection in South Africa in early 2020, the pandemic has relentlessly impacted the tourism industry, especially causing a reduction in the number of visitors. Several strategies had to be adopted to rescue the industry from the devastating effects of the pandemic. Amongst these interventions was the focus on domestic leisure travel. This study examines the factors that restrict township residents' participation in domestic leisure tourism to find the best ways to promote domestic leisure tourism post the COVID-19 pandemic era. To achieve this, qualitative research was undertaken through a focus group discussion with eight members of a selected township community tourism forum in Cape Town. Through a thematic analysis, the study revealed a lack of travel interest among locals due to affordability and perception of travel and cost. The study highlights strategies that could be used to encourage greater participation in domestic tourism.

Keywords Domestic tourism · COVID-19 pandemic · Township tourism · Leisure travel · Recovery strategies

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11.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic decimated the tourism industry resulting in extended suffering for several businesses across the globe. Consequently, massive pressure was exerted on tourism operators, who battled to survive, thus necessitating the need to implement strategies that would enable survival and cushion businesses against running into losses (Aburumman, 2020). During the 2020/2021 period, the impact on South Africa was heightened by several factors that the country had to deal with, including the emergence of the new COVID-19 variants, political unrest and violence and service delivery protests (Landa et al., 2021). The impact of the pandemic was felt across industries, and visitor numbers fell drastically for the travel and tourism sector, threatening several jobs (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). Furthermore, it has been estimated that international tourists have decreased by approximately 78%, resulting in a loss of US\$ 1.2 trillion in export revenue and the largest decline in tourism job cuts in history (Jaipuria et al., 2021), which is approximately seven times the impact of the 11 September terrorist attacks (UNWTO, 2020). Moreover, the decline in tourist demand resulted in severe financial difficulties for many businesses (Tsionas, 2021). According to the 2020 Tourism report, the number of international arrivals had plummeted by 71% from just over 15 million in 2019 to fewer than five million in 2020, signifying how severe the pandemic was to the tourism industry (Statistics South Africa, 2021). It is undeniable that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant influence on the tourism sector around the world, including South Africa, mostly because of the lockdown and travel restrictions that were implemented (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020).

In dealing with the impact of COVID-19, several strategies had to be adopted to rescue the industry from the devastating effects of the pandemic. Amongst these interventions was a focus on domestic leisure travel (Bama & Nyikana, 2021). The South African government had embarked on massive campaigns for domestic tourism as it has proved to be a viable interim option for the industry's survival. In these campaigns, the country was showcased as a safe and friendly tourism destination for individuals and families. During 2020/2021, South Africa recorded a decline in international tourism (Statistics South Africa, 2021), thus necessitating the promotion of travel amongst locals (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). However, the main question is whether this approach is feasible and sustainable for the continuous growth of the tourism industry. This is because the domestic market that should be the target includes those who were affected by the pandemic in several ways (e.g. retrenchment, pay cuts, reduced working hours, furlough etc.). The situation is even worse, especially for the previously neglected groups in South Africa who lack the "travel culture" (Ezeuduji & Dlomo, 2020).

The current study investigates the domestic tourism approach as an intervention strategy that could be adopted by tourism businesses, especially during times of crisis. In addition, it examines how tourism businesses can encourage residents within townships to engage in domestic leisure travel. The impediments to participation in domestic leisure tourism by residents of selected townships in Cape Town

were also explored with the aim of devising ways of enhancing and promoting visits to local attractions. The chapter begins with a review of pertinent literature, including a discussion of domestic leisure tourism, township tourism, and the impact of COVID-19. It continues with the research design and methodology that the study adopted. The findings of the study are then discussed and conclusions and implications drawn.

11.2 Literature Review

This research reviews three streams of literature: (1) South African domestic leisure tourism, (2) South African township tourism, and (3) the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry.

11.2.1 *The South African Domestic Leisure Tourism*

Various scholars have proposed several definitions for domestic tourism. Earlier scholars (Becken, 2009; Holdsworth & Quinn, 2010; Kabote et al., 2019) share the view that domestic tourism involves travelling to a unique environment within the borders of one's own country but not seeking employment opportunities at the destination. Hermann and Du Plessis (2016) shared the same sentiments as other researchers (Becken, 2009; Holdsworth & Quinn, 2010) and explained further the concept of travel that should last at least for more than 24 hours but not exceed 12 consecutive months. Hermann and Du Plessis (2016) define a trip whereby people leave their usual place and do not stay overnight at the destination as an excursion. This can also be referred to as a day trip, a crucial component of domestic tourism. Due to several connotations associated with defining domestic tourism, Kabote et al. (2017:2) summed up the concept of domestic tourism by stating that despite the definition one uses, the paramount aspect is that they all share a common element, that is, "travel excluding international travellers."

According to Osiako and Szente (2021), domestic tourism is the most important driver of tourism in major countries worldwide. Rogerson and Baum (2020) state that while domestic and regional tourism in Africa is far more prevalent than international tourism, international tourist spending is far higher in developing nations. Hughes (2010) points out that, in comparison to international tourists, locals in poor nations are not highly active participants in tourism. When looking at it from the perspective of emerging countries like South Africa, with high unemployment, it is, therefore, doubtful to bank on the adage that domestic tourism will boost the tourism industry (Panashe, 2020). Earlier researchers (Rogerson & Lisa, 2005; Scheyvens, 2007; Kabote et al., 2017) expressed concern about the slow development of domestic tourism in less economically developed countries. This is because domestic tourism could be used to cushion the tourism industry in times of crisis

such as COVID-19. The slow development of domestic tourism in many African countries could be attributed to the fact that this market is considered not lucrative due to its low spending in comparison to the international market (Rogerson & Baum, 2020). Surprisingly, besides its low contributions, especially in the less economically developed countries, several governments have resorted to this market to resurrect the tourism industry with the anticipation that it would provide much-needed revenue in the tourism industry during the COVID-19 pandemic period (Garau-Vadell et al., 2018; Kozak & Kim, 2019; Panashe, 2020; Arbulu et al., 2021; Woyo, 2021).

The South African Department of Tourism devised a Domestic Tourism Strategy in 2012 with the goal of increasing tourism expenditure (Department of Tourism, 2019). However, according to the statistical report, this plan may have failed to produce the expected outcomes of increasing domestic travel between 2015 and 2018. (Department of Tourism, 2019). According to the report, 24.3 million domestic overnight journeys were registered in 2016, a 0.4% decline from the previous year's domestic travel (South Africa, Department of Tourism, 2019). In 2017, 17.2 million total overnight domestic journeys were recorded, a decrease of 29.2% from the previous year's figures. The Department of Tourism (2019) reported a small increase (2.8%) in total overnight domestic trips of 17.6 million in 2018, compared to 17.2 million in 2017. In 2019, there was a substantial increase (61.3%) in the overall number of overnight domestic trips, with 116 million trips reported. The most common purpose for travel was visiting to friends and family. Domestic travel was fully shut down when COVID-19 surfaced in early 2020 due to the lockdown limitations that impeded people's movement. On the other hand, international travel has been a major driver of tourism in South Africa. This could be because South Africa has been highlighted as a preferred destination in sub-Saharan Africa, with at least ten million international arrivals registered annually between 2016 and 2019. (Department of Tourism, 2019). Between 2018 and 2019, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany were the top three international source markets (Department of Tourism, 2019). However, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a 71% drop in foreign markets due to the closure of international borders. The worldwide market is starting to pick up again as countries begin to ease regulations, but at a slower rate than before.

According to Stats SA (2021), before the pandemic, South Africa's unemployment rate was at 28.7%. The unemployment rate currently stands at 35.3%, the highest since the quarterly labour force survey began in 2018 (Reuters, 2022). The weakened situation of the domestic economy because of the pandemic, which resulted in numerous job losses, has hampered people's capacity and affordability to travel, according to the Department of Tourism (2021). As a result, the domestic market alone lacks the capability to maintain the sector's stability, necessitating the return of foreign travel in accordance with the "new normal." Furthermore, this shift resulted in significant lay-offs, spiking unemployment and had far-reaching consequences for local communities and businesses. According to Arndt et al. (2020), tourism is made up of a variety of activities, all of which were adversely impacted by the lockdown. Since the lockdown began in March 2020, the Department of

Tourism (2021) has seen a dramatic drop in hotel sales, airline traffic, and the hospitality business. The reliance on inbound tourism to keep the tourism industry afloat gives rise to the idea that domestic tourism is a strong challenger in terms of the measures being taken to protect the tourist industry from serious devastation. Furthermore, Mazimhaka (2007) contends that, even though overseas visitors bring in a significant amount of money, domestic tourism is the foundation of a destination's tourism industry. One could argue that this adage is particularly applicable to countries that are more economically developed, as evidenced by the fact that many individuals in Europe travel domestically and within European countries (Statista Research Department, 2021). However, applying the same concept in less economically developed countries, where there is a large socio-economic imbalance, may be a bit of a stretch. This is because people were unable to travel overseas and therefore had to spend their discretionary income within their own countries. European countries such as Germany, Italy, France, and Spain, to mention a few, experienced a boom in internal tourism after the lockdown limitations were lifted (Statista Research Department, 2021). However, this is not the case in developing countries such as South Africa, where the bulk of the population is struggling to meet their basic needs because of employment losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Panashe, 2020).

11.2.2 The South African Township Tourism

The apartheid policy in South Africa was strengthened through the formulation of several policies that favoured the ruling party of the time. Mbambo and Agbola (2020) contend that when the Urban Areas Act of 1923 was enacted, it recommended the clearance of slums in urban areas where Black people lived. In addition, the Act gave authority to municipalities to establish separate locations for African people, mainly on the outskirts of urban areas. The origins of townships in South Africa date back to the late 1920s. Van Den Berghe (1966) argues that it was when the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948 that they proceeded to make large-scale segregation as impermeable as possible through the policy of the "Group Areas Act." According to Maharaj (1997), under the Group Areas Act (1950), the cities and towns of South Africa were divided into segregated residential and business areas. Thousands of coloureds, blacks, and Indians were removed from areas classified for white occupation. Van Staden (2019) contends with Van Den Berghe (1966) that it was both the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923 that were responsible in very large measure for the dislocation and relocation of millions of blacks, coloureds and Indians away from the cities. Van Den Berghe (1966) further states that tens of thousands of people were expropriated, expelled from their domiciles and relocated according to their skin colour. This was then how townships were established in South Africa. Omonona et al. (2021) contend that the township as a concept is used to describe historically developed places (through central planning) to racially segregate South African cities and generate labour

pools for the colonial and apartheid economies. People of colour had to thrive under hard conditions in the townships. The post-apartheid era in South Africa has seen major townships becoming popular tourist attractions with lots of entrepreneurial opportunities.

Petersen et al. (2020) identified township economies and the informal sector as ones that continue to represent important livelihood options in attempts to reinforce the heavily damaged South African economy after the prolonged impacts of COVID-19. South African townships are places that are highly populated and so provide plenty of business opportunities. Petersen et al. (2020) further state that the structure of the township economy is poorly understood, and most micro-enterprises operate outside of an effective policy environment. “Township economy” is referred to by Retief (2021) as enterprises and markets based in the townships. Township entrepreneurs operate these enterprises. Township enterprises are diverse, with a high rate of informality and provide a range of goods and services to meet the needs of township communities and beyond. Retief (2021) further likens the township economy to a heart that never stops beating, where resiliency and hard work prevail over hardships. Much work still needs to be done to ensure that the needs of township dwellers are taken care of through the provision of basic services and necessary infrastructure. SME South Africa (2021) states that the impact of past neglect, lack of investment, overpopulation and isolation from urban centres is still largely evident today. Most notably with the lack of resources and infrastructure and high unemployment levels, townships have always been disadvantaged.

Mbambo and Agbola (2020) have asserted that the COVID-19 pandemic has created a widespread economic slowdown in townships and rural economies and has also affected different sectors of the economy. Retief (2021) further argues that townships bring hope for the fulfilment of dreams and fortunes. Omonona et al. (2021) state that townships were previously viewed as dormitory settlements plagued by unemployment, poverty and crime, high population density, informality, poverty, general socio-economic backwardness, and apartheid’s footprints still exist. SME South Africa has listed popular township businesses, including Internet cafes, car wash, hair salons, bulk buying/reselling, youth entertainment, coffee shops, food markets, towing services, tourist guiding services and tour operating services, as well as hospitality services. The participants in this study included tour operators, tourist guides and hospitality business owners.

The UNWTO referred to 2021–2022 as a year of “Tourism for Inclusive Growth,” and the theme was further reinforced by the 2020–2021 theme of “Tourism and Rural development.” Mahlalela (2021) found the two themes to be going hand in hand because it is impossible to have inclusive growth without a self-reliant and vibrant township economy. Mahlalela further stated that there could never be a vibrant township economy without tempering the economy’s base and superstructure, unleashing wholesale transformation and bringing in people who are black in the majority into the country’s economic activity. It gives hope to see the Department of Tourism in South Africa paying attention to the value of the township economy.

11.2.3 The Impact of COVID-19 on the Tourism Industry

Many types of disruptive events, including terrorist attacks such as 9/11, natural disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, floods), epidemic outbreaks such as Ebola, SARS-CoV-2, MERS-CoV, swine flu, and others, have had an impact on global tourism in the past (Wen et al., 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating global influence on practically every business, including tourism (Yeh, 2021). The virus spread to all continents through the movement of people (travel) via air transport and internally in communities through contact with the infected persons (Jaipuria et al., 2021). If not controlled, the virus would continue to spread infection at an exponential rate (Nicolaidis et al., 2020). Many nations have closed their borders totally or partially to restrict the spread of the virus and have cancelled all flights and events, including sports, pilgrimages, entertainment, conferences, and other gatherings. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) predicted that international tourists would drop by 1–3% in 2020 compared to 2019, rather than the expected growth of 3–4%. As a result, there has been a considerable slowdown in global tourism. Following the temporary lay-off of more than half of the tourism industry's personnel, Gössling et al. (2020) note a sharp decline in the number of international flights. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the tourism industry suffered a loss of up to US\$ 2.1 trillion and a loss of up to 75 million jobs in 2020 (WTTC, 2020).

A 50% decline in employment and income was evident in the travel industry, which includes airlines, accommodation, and restaurants. Job loss, salary cuts, scrapping off work benefits, and temporarily laying off workers were some of the strategies which tourism businesses adopted to remain afloat and reduce losses (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020; Riadil, 2020; Škare et al., 2021). Some businesses had to decide with clients to postpone their travel until a time when the situation had improved, all in trying to save the industry (Gursoy et al., 2021). In 2020, airline losses were predicted to reach US\$84 billion, more than three times the loss incurred during the Global Financial Crisis (The World Economic Forum, 2020). Because of the devastating effects of the pandemic, most airlines were grounded for some time (Jaipuria et al., 2021). Several accommodation establishments, such as hotels, had to close, while some were converted to quarantine centres (Hoang et al., 2021). Most of the travel and tourism businesses, including restaurateurs, hotels, recreation centres, and attractions, saw an increase in operational costs emanating from the need to comply with COVID-19 preventative measures set up by governments. These additional costs resulted from conforming to healthy practices such as ensuring hygiene, sanitation, and social distancing. As a result, maintaining profitability in the face of this crisis became difficult for tourism businesses.

11.2.4 Theoretical Framework

Stakeholder Theory (ST) is a perspective of capitalism that emphasises the interdependent interactions between a firm and those (individuals and organisations) who have an interest in the affairs of the business (Dmytriiev et al., 2021). The Stakeholder Theory (ST) was adopted in this study as it highlights the significance of understanding the role of different stakeholders in the delivery of tourism products. The ST was developed by Freeman in 1984 and hinged on the principle that all stakeholders are important to the success of a business. Additionally, the ST advocates for every stakeholder to play a role in delivering quality services. This framework was fundamental to this study as it enhances understanding of the various stakeholders who affect or are affected by township tourism. The ST has been widely used in various fields, including social sciences, where different players are seen as critical to the success of developmental projects (Khazaei et al., 2015). Researchers such as Duarte-Alonso and Nyanjom (2017) agree that involving all stakeholder groups in tourism planning promotes sustainability. Community engagement and collaboration among all the stakeholders have long been seen as key planning principles for tourism development (Jamal & Getz, 1995). In times of crisis, such as when pandemics and disasters confront societies, stakeholder engagement and participation are critical to addressing the resulting challenges (Yeh, 2021).

11.3 Research Design and Methodology

11.3.1 The Study Area, Sample and Data Analysis

The research was carried out in Langa, one of the oldest townships in Cape Town, which is home to the predominant African population (Ebrahim & Muresherwa, 2021). Figure 11.1 illustrates the map of Langa (the study area) and the positions of other township areas around Cape Town. This township is situated on a big plot of land covering around 300 hectares and is approximately 10 km southeast of the city's central business district (Ndzumo et al., 2021). The region was founded in the 1920s as a dormitory township for Black migrant labourers, and its development represents the growth of Africans' presence in metropolitan centres throughout South Africa's history (Coetzer, 2009). It is possible to still see some of the early infrastructure works from the township's early days, such as various old churches, which are still standing today. As per the last population census in 2011, Langa recorded a total of 52,401 people constituting 17,402 households, making it a heavily populated area in South Africa (Stats South Africa, n.d.). Data from the recent census conducted in 2022 is yet to be published and is assumed to have increased with the annual population growth and immigration. Because of its development, particularly in terms of political and historical features, Langa Township became a fascinating case study to be explored in this study. The area encountered various



Fig. 11.1 Map showing study area – Langa Township. (Source: *Authors*)

difficulties in becoming an urban segregated residential township, including social conflict between municipal officials and community members (Ndzumo et al., 2021). The area has generated prospects for a unique “slum tourism” niche sector, which has resulted in several individuals travelling to the area for a unique township experience (Iqani, 2016). Some local people from Langa Township have seen opportunities offered by the area and have become entrepreneurs, running successful tourism businesses, thereby making “... a stable, lucrative, and steady income,” and as a result, money is being generated for the local economy (Iqani, 2016:71).

Focus group discussions with community tourism forum members from Langa Township were conducted on 10 November 2021. The focus group discussion method was chosen as it investigates in depth how the group members think and feel about a given topic. Before the focus group discussion, the Langa Township tourism forum chairperson invited all his members (over 25) to attend the meeting where aspects related to the study were discussed. Because of various challenges, including delayed transport to reach the meeting venue by some members, only a few arrived on time, while most only showed up when the meeting had concluded. Eventually, the researchers undertook structured and focused discussions with a small group of eight Langa Township tourism forum members. Aligning with Krueger and Casey (2002), who suggested that six to eight participants are sufficient for a focus group interview, the researchers were pleased to continue with the discussion with the eight forum members. These community tourism forum members included local community members who managed or owned a tourism business in Langa Township.

The focus group participants managed or owned businesses, including four tour guides, two tour operators and travel agencies, and two accommodation and restaurant owners. Their experiences and collective opinions regarding how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected their businesses enabled discussions around the solutions and roadmap towards industry recovery. The discussion was moderated by a researcher who asked the questions and allowed the participants to respond, add or comment, support the presented ideas, or contradict what the other participants would have highlighted. The goal of the discussion was to gather useful insights into the study phenomenon (Collins & O'Brien, 2003). While conducting the focus group discussions, the researchers had a chance to observe and consider the participants' feelings, views, expressions, beliefs, and responses, which helped make sense of the collected data (Gundumogula, 2020). Thomas et al. (1995) note that in most cases, the data acquired through social interaction is richer than that obtained from a one-to-one interview. This is mainly because a social environment could encourage participation from those who could be hesitant to be interviewed alone or those who may believe they have nothing to say (Kitzinger, 1995). The data collection process was flexible and permitted free discussion and sharing of ideas (Gundumogula, 2020).

The focus group discussion explored domestic leisure tourism to draw lessons from which township businesses could learn, especially in times of crisis such as COVID-19. This was done within 1 hour and 15 minutes and was meant to collect in-depth information and viewpoints from the eight participants. With the group's consent, the discussion was recorded and transcribed. The emerging themes from the discussion were identified and coded for analysis using thematic analysis. The analysis process followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps which started with familiarisation with the collected data to the last step, where a write-up was undertaken. The other steps in Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for conducting a thematic analysis included generating codes, searching for themes, and reviewing the themes. Direct quotations were often used to capture or express the participants' personal experiences and opinions related to the study phenomena. During the discussions, the researchers asked questions that enabled probing for more information and mainly to clarify the provided responses. To gain more understanding of the data, it was necessary to read through the transcript and listen to the recording again to help ensure that the correct information was captured during transcription.

11.4 Results and Discussion

This section discusses the study's findings from a researcher-moderated focus group discussion. The findings are presented in three ways; firstly by highlighting how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected township tourism businesses. Secondly, the ways township tourism businesses and relevant tourism stakeholders can encourage local participation in tourism are presented. Thirdly, the themes surrounding factors restricting local participation in domestic leisure travel are presented.

11.4.1 Impact of the Pandemic on Township Tourism Businesses

The pandemic reduced tourist flows to many tourist destinations, affecting several businesses. The participants' effects were "reduction in employee wages," "furlough or redundancies," "cancellation of bookings" and "postponement of travel." For those who opted to postpone their travel, it was challenging to know when they would travel, noting that regulations and travel restrictions were changed at any time, making it even worse for businesses to plan. The participants of the focus group discussions expressed how the pandemic affected tourism in Langa Township, and this is illustrated in the following excerpts:

... biggest challenge is getting many cancellations from guests ... [Guesthouse Owner].

... we are in tough times, and nearly everyone feels the effect... the small businesses suffer the most. I had cancelled several tours and did not know when things would get better [Tour Operator].

In the last 18 months, the COVID-19 pandemic with the subsequent government lockdown restrictions have decimated Langa's tourism to the brink of collapse. ... due to inactivity, many Langa tourism companies were forced to close their businesses, resulting in many tour guides being unemployed. Langa and Soweto are the most visited townships in South Africa by foreign tourists, and tourism is the lifeblood of Langa. Langa's economics were and still are negatively impacted by the events of the past 18 months. With the government slowly opening the economy and the growing number of people vaccinated, foreign tourists' arrival numbers are on the up. [Travel Agent].

I had to lay off most all my staff temporarily... the bigger businesses could make better deals such as cutting pay and taking benefits off. For small and emerging businesses, this is difficult ...I work for one company [non-tourism] and had my salary reduced by 50%, which was better. Now, think about the small operators. Where do they get the money from? [Restaurant Owner].

Most of the tours run got cancelled, leaving the staff with nothing to do, so we had to amend contracts and eventually terminate them. These were not easy decisions noting that we had established good working relationships with our staff and the entire team. Debts were missed ... as we did not have money for that [Tour Operator].

Several businesses had to close since operational costs kept increasing, which did not favour businesses. The effect of COVID-19 especially forcing businesses to halt operations, has been widely reported in the literature since the beginning of the pandemic (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020; Rogerson, 2021; Rogerson et al., 2021). Business closure was a strategic response to try and keep costs down while devising more strategies to recover from the impacts of the pandemic (Kenny & Dutt, 2022). Some forum members knew of some businesses that had to close or scale down operations, which varied with the different levels of alert levels instituted by the government as the situation was closely monitored. Despite the challenges faced by

the tourism sector, there were signs of recovery emanating from the government's easing restrictions and vaccination efforts (Dzobo et al., 2021; Mutanga & Abayomi, 2022).

11.4.2 Impediments to Local Participation in Domestic Leisure Tourism

The adoption of domestic tourism as a strategy for industry recovery has been pursued by various countries (Li et al., 2010; Cakar, 2018; Arbulu et al., 2021; Makuzva & Mabaleka, 2021). The implementation of this strategy, particularly in developing contexts such as South Africa, is challenged for several reasons. The high unemployment rate, ineffective communication, rising inflation and limited disposable income are obstacles to implementing a practical domestic tourism approach (Rogerson, 2015; Ezeuduji & Dlomo, 2020; Makuzva & Mabaleka, 2021). The focus group discussion revealed a consensus that locals do not travel, the attitude of locals towards travel has been unpleasant, especially for tourism businesses whose survival is only when there is more travel which includes locals. When the participants were prompted to highlight the reasons why locals did not travel, "affordability," "no travel interest," "perception of costs," and "differing values" emerged as some of the reasons for the lack of travel by township residents. Ezeuduji and Dlomo's (2020) study revealed a general lack of travel interest among locals, mainly from affordability. The following excerpts from the interviews highlight the factors influencing participation in domestic tourism by residents of Langa Township:

...what I have noticed, even not only locals like [such as] domestic, many people of black South Africans, do not see any interest to go to Cape Point. They might want Robben Island, just mainly for the history of South Africa relating to Mandela. They do not see the value of going to Cape Point. And these tours are very costly... [Tour Operator].

... I think tourism needs to start changing the perception [changing people's perception that tourism is expensive]. I know it has become costly, but I think you need to put a value on it so that we make it more meaningful. Because there's a lot that I think people miss around it [Tour Operator].

Lack of understanding of the concept of tourism was also mentioned as a factor influencing locals' perception of tourism. This needs to be changed to ensure that local people see value in what their destination offers. Mobilising people to see value in visiting local leisure sites, including more local marketing of the city's attraction since the market is reachable, as seen in the following quotes:

Cape Town Tourism has the mandate to market Cape Town domestically ...they tend to go to Europe, Asia and all the other continents... that is where the money is ..., but COVID taught us something we need ... my business survives through domestic market... I think it's high time we change our business model to focus domestically because one of the greatest things about business is that it's always very good to have a tangible and reachable market. I can easily get on a flight and meet a group of Stokvel in Johannesburg and convince them

to come in the next season... we need to rely on our domestic market. The domestic market lacks money, but you can be flexible with the model (costing) [Travel Agent].

As seen in the above excerpt, pursuing a domestic market is possible when certain things are done, such as extensive domestic market marketing and offering discounts and promotions to induce demand for local attractions. These strategies have been undertaken in several countries before, during and in the post-pandemic era (Matsuura & Saito, 2022). More importantly, changing the perception that travel is for white people needs to be changed, according to one of the forum members:

... there's a huge Black culture that travelling is for White people ... that is one of the things that I'm trying to change – that narrative, perception. I've got friends that will blow R2000 [+-USD\$122.00] easily on drinks [alcohol], R2000 on Friday, R2000 on Saturday, and R2000 on Sunday, it's easy ... But you need to be able to convince that person that the R6000 [+-USD\$366.00] could have been spent wisely on local travel... I really dispute the affordability issue within the Black communities ... you will find many easily buy R800 [+-USD\$52.00] worth of bottles of Whiskey. But will explain to you that they do not have the money it all points to value. Alcohol plays a huge role in all this. In fact, it's [alcohol] a very big competition, a lot of different things. [Tour Operator].

The participants stressed the need for a travel culture to be built among township residents. This can be achieved through the promotion of local travel and raising awareness about local leisure sites within their areas and city. This exercise requires unified efforts by all tourism stakeholders within the community to work towards a common goal. Based on the stakeholder theory, quality service and the success of the tourism industry are hinged on equal participation by all the key players (Freeman, 1984). Business owners can deliver guest lectures and talks at schools in townships, and in some instances, where possible, learners can be taken out to at least experience what their city offers. When the travel culture is cultivated from a younger age, it may help strengthen an understanding of the importance of travel and tourism, allowing them to see the value in travel. Brougère (2012) supports the idea of ensuring that children get to experience travel at younger ages by taking “edutainment” as this leads to better learning and appreciation of travel. Collaboration amongst businesses, mainly working towards the same goal of promoting domestic leisure travel, remains critical. Several authors (e.g. Bhaskara & Filimonau, 2021; Muresherwa et al., 2022) also note the importance of business collaboration for achieving destination goals. Local tourism organisations may also assist with providing relevant support such as information dissemination, funding where possible and working closely with the various community stakeholders to propel domestic tourism.

Thus, several factors contribute to locals not participating in domestic leisure travel, including economic conditions and leisure time (Li et al., 2016). In addition, a low travel attitude and motivation is evident in different groups of people in South Africa (Ezeudji & Dlomo, 2020). The current study revealed that township residents' lack of a “travel culture” could result from a “lack of understanding of tourism” concepts. While some attribute it to a lack of finance (e.g. Li et al., 2016), the

study participants disputed this notion indicating that value is not placed on leisure travel “I dispute the affordability issue within the Black communities...” A change in “people’s perception,” “education and awareness” would remedy this.

11.5 Conclusion and Recommendations

It is without a doubt that the tourism sector was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in numerous businesses closing down. Regrettably, the lockdown plan had to be implemented internationally to ensure public safety, especially in preventing the spread of the virus. Domestic leisure travel has been seen as a feasible strategy for the industry’s recovery. However, for its implementation to be effective, it requires careful planning and support from various industry stakeholders.

The study adds value to the understudied phenomenon of the contribution of domestic leisure tourism in helping marginalised communities to participate in domestic travel. The perspectives of township tourism business operators in domestic travel participation have been revealed. The anticipated role of government in minimising the severity of the impact of the pandemic on township tourism business operators has been discussed. Thus, the government’s involvement in promoting and encouraging local participation in domestic leisure travel remains critical. Township residents’ mobilisation through local travel campaigns, awareness geared towards changing people’s perception and offering discounts were among the strategies suggested to enhance domestic leisure participation.

This study provides destination tourism marketers with information that may assist in decision-making, particularly on how to better service the leisure travel needs of previously neglected groups of people. Furthermore, tourism planners and government agencies could benefit from the study as it highlights some insights on strategies that could work to encourage more participation in local tourism. Future studies could explore what the residents themselves think is restricting their participation in domestic leisure and what they think could be done to address this. In addition, a follow-up study could be undertaken in the post-pandemic era to ascertain if the identified factors hindering township residents’ participation in domestic travel re-emerge. The findings can then be compared with the current studies and strategies for more local participation.

Considering the study findings, the recommendations such as marketing township tourism as a niche; adopting pricing strategies (e.g. discriminatory pricing strategy) that make leisure attractions in Cape Town more affordable; more public-private awareness campaigns aimed at changing residents’ perceptions about tourism as well as government to prioritise financial support for the small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) operating within the township are proposed.

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