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The sustainability of township tourism SMMEs

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ABSTRACT

Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) are the key players in the township tourism sector, which contributes substantially to the growth of the economy in South Africa. Township tourism SMMEs are critical to uplifting the rural and township economies. However, they remain marginalized and continue to struggle to be sustainable. The following paper explains how much township tourism SMMEs use to stay sustainable. The paper aims to identify SMMEs involved in township tourism. The paper also aims to establish factors influencing the sustainability of township tourism SMMEs. In addition, the paper also aims to determine the competitive strategy for the sustainability of township tourism SMMEs. The study adopted a positivist research paradigm through a quantitative approach and a survey research design. As a result of having no reliable available sampling frame, a non-probability sampling strategy was adopted, and relevant data was generated through questionnaires. The data was gathered from 61 owners or managers of township tourism SMMEs, in uMlazi, Durban. This paper's findings revealed that the most influential factors affecting the sustainability of township tourism SMMEs were a lack of funding, strong business competition, and poor business location. The study's findings revealed that only a few entrepreneurs applied a competitive strategy to their businesses. From the data analyzed, relevant recommendations and conclusions were also drawn

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Introduction

SMMEs are significant players in the creation of wealth and increasing the living standard of people worldwide, particularly in South Africa (Rogerson and Baum 2020; Sibande 2019). SMMEs provide employment to thousands and immensely contribute to the South African Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ranging from 70 % to 95 % (Msomi, Ngibe and Nyinde, 2019). To create job opportunities and grow the economy, the government has designated SMMEs as a priority growth sector in South Africa and as a result, entrepreneurship has become the lifeblood of the townships (Botha, Smulders, Combrink, and Meiring 2021). The economic activities taking place within townships can be a mixture of formal or informal business and they increase the township economy (Frenzel 2020; Fairer-Wessels, 2017).

In South Africa, one of the entrepreneurships SMMEs taking prominence is called township tourism, where people who come from different parts of the world are attracted by township tourism to experience the culture of townships (Dolz, Iborra, and Safón 2019; Gomera, Chinyamurindi and Mishi, 2018). Township tourism exposes visitors to the realities of most South Africans' living conditions (Hoogendoorn et al, 2020). At the same time, it shows a place full of energy, culture, and hope for the future.

The main components of the township tourism SMMEs are craft markets, cultural and political sites, and local restaurants (Mxunyelwa, 2019; Letuka and lebambo, 2022). Even though South African townships have been a hive of entrepreneurial activity, many SMMEs, however, fail within the first few years of starting their business. Hence, this research article argues that more has to be done to assist these SMMEs to become sustainable in their particular townships. It would be valuable to obtain some insight into township SMMEs in order to assist these businesses.

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This paper will further make an effort to identify SMMEs involved in township tourism and establish factors affecting the sustainability of township tourism SMMEs. This is very important because these factors hinder the growth and survival of township tourism SMMEs. Thus, this study set out to determine the competitive strategy for the sustainability of township tourism SMMEs.

Literature Review

The literature review explained the empirical literature that was used to support the study. The literature is aligned with the objectives of the study.

Role of township tourism SMMEs in the sustenance of the township economies

The township is South Africa's pulsating beating heart, home to informal SMMEs that hold an entire nation together with their invaluable value chains (Rankhumise, and Letsoalo 2019; Potgieter, Berman, and Verity 2019). The township SMMEs are important and often overlooked however they contribute to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), creation of jobs, and poverty alleviation (Rogerson 2019; Rogerson, 2017). SMMEs are one of the primary drivers of the South African township economy (Bvuma and Marnewick 2020; Rogerson and Rogerson 2020; Kubone 2019). Township tourism SMMEs are one of the SMMEs that have made an important contribution to the development of socio-economic systems both locally and globally. (Scott, Hall and Gössling 2019; Manzoor, Wei, and Sif 2019; Kimbu and Tichaawa 2018). Townships are the focus of a new tourist trend in South Africa, where the emphasis is on cultural aspects (Kubone, 2019) Township tourism has grown in popularity as a "culture and heritage" activity, particularly among international visitors (Kisi, 2019). In contrast to a well-developed urban area, these outlying black settlements provide tourists with a glimpse of what is marketed as "real South African life" (Malgas, and Zondi, 2020; Rogerson, 2017). The township tourism encourages tourism enterprises to grow their businesses while providing social and economic benefits to local communities and respecting the environment (Winny, 2020).

Factors influencing the sustainability of township tourism

Business failure is defined as "the inability of an organization to conform itself with its strategic path of growth and development to attain its economic and financial objectives as well as legal obligations" (Vidishcheva and Bryukhanova 2017). They further emphasize that failure can also be defined as the inability to remain sustainable, and that business failure is synonymous with financial failure. There is a wide range of factors affecting the sustainability of township tourism in South Africa (Mazwai 2020; Ncoliwe 2019; Rogerson 2019). The most common factors cited as factors that influence the sustainability of township tourism in the literature include lack of financial support, poor infrastructure, and lack of skilled people (Rogerson and Baum 2020). Rogerson (2019) states that even though township tourism plays an important role in the development of townships, these entities are often faced with many challenges that hamper their survival. These factors influencing suitability are briefly discussed below:

Strategies employed for the sustainability of township tourism SMMEs

Sustainability has become one of the most important strategic issues for many industries (Ntinga 2019). Tourism is a crucial industry for economic and social development and may have a positive effect on employment and revenue (Vidishcheva and Bryukhanova 2017). Asmelash and Kumar (2019) state that the poor management and planning of tourism may cause permanent damage to the physical, social, cultural, and economic environment of a tourist destination. Asmelash and Kumar (2019) further state that tourism activities must be properly planned, managed, and monitored utilizing a long-term sustainable strategy. There are many strategies used for the sustainability of township tourism, one of the commonly used strategies is by the UNWTO (2017) as explained in figure 1. below.



Figure 1: Strategies Employed for The Sustainability of Township Tourism by UNWTO (2017)

Theoretical framework

Porter's Five Forces for Industry Analysis 1980 was adopted as the theoretical framework. This theory was chosen because it can identify a variety of factors that can be used to analyze organizations in their operating environments, thereby determining their success and long-term viability in the industry. Since it was established, many other theories have been developed, but the theory is still regarded by most marketers as the best tool for market analysis (Dhlomo 2017). Some of the commonly used theories and theoretical models in the sustainability of tourism and township SMMEs-related studies include SWOT analysis, the PESTLE analysis, and value chain analysis) (Nguza-Mduba and Mutaramba 2021; Dhlomo 2017; Porter 1980).

Porter's theory is schematically presented below in Figure 2:

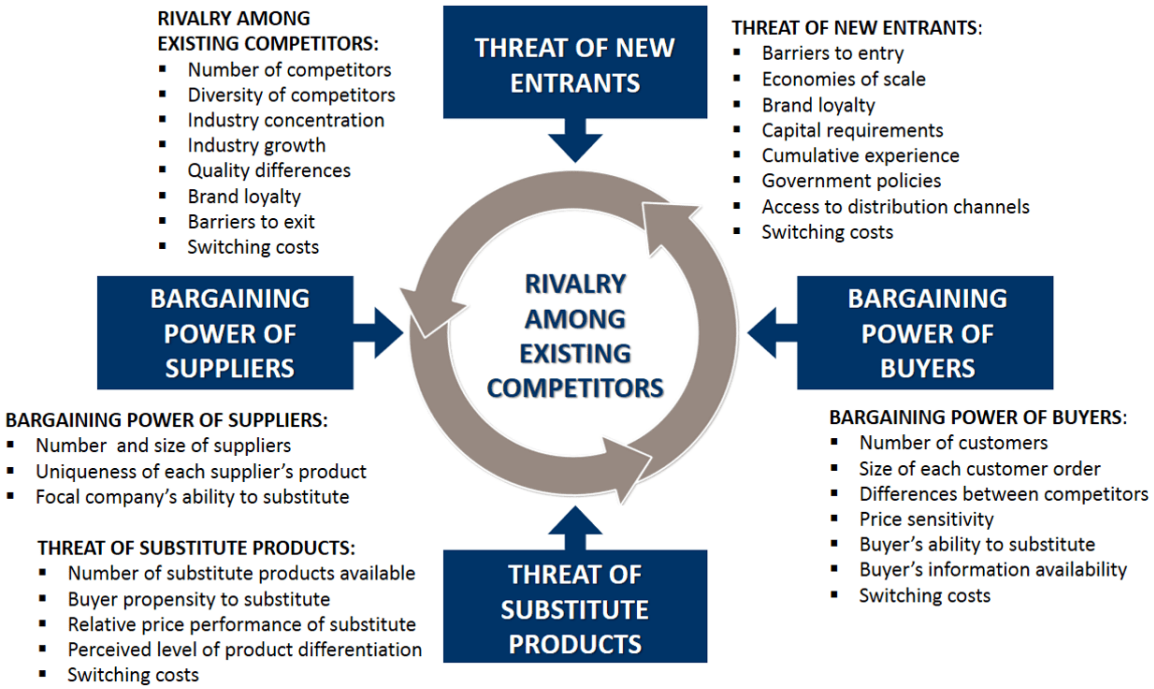

Figure 2: Porters Five Forces Theory; *Source:* Adapted from Porter 1979

Research and Methodology

The research paradigm, approach, and design

The study adopted a positivist paradigm to obtain a generic picture of a phenomenon where little is known regarding the sustainability of township tourism SMMEs. Understanding what makes the business sustainable, might make it possible to understand the opinions and beliefs affecting township tourism SMME's growth and development.

The study further adopted an explorative approach utilizing a survey questionnaire to collect data from various tourism SMMEs at uMlazi township.

Target population, sampling procedure and data collection

The population targeted for this study were township tourism SMMEs operating in UMlazi Township in KwaZulu Natal Province. Due to the lack of a reliably available sampling frame, a non-probability sampling strategy was used. Through the sampling strategy, owners and/ or managers of township tourism SMMEs were purposively approached, and they suggest through snowball sampling other SMMEs to consider for inclusion. For data collection, structured questionnaires were used by the researcher to gather data. 74 questionnaires were distributed to township tourism SMME owners/managers including art and craft centre, carwashes, shisa nyama, restaurants, Shebeens, and so forth.

Data analysis, Reliability, and Validity

Data analysis is a procedure of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the data gathered in research (Crabtree and Miller 2022; Creswell and Creswell 2018). For this paper, the researcher analyzed the quantitative data by means of descriptive statistics through Microsoft Excel. Quantitative data results were presented through descriptive statistics (tables, charts, and graphs). Qualitative data was analyzed through thematic content analysis. This involves grouping and narrating the themes emanating from the data. The response from the questionnaire were quoted verbatim. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, the collected data and questionnaires were stored and handled in a professional manner, in order not to reveal the identity or the participants' names, organizations and any other information that could lead to identifying the participants and/or their organizations. The respondents were also told about the importance of voluntary participation and that they might withdraw at any moment.

Findings and Discussions

Findings

The respondents are owners of small enterprises. A total of 61 respondents, comprising 35 (57%) females and 26 (43%) males, participated in this survey. Furthermore, in terms of age, small township tourism SMMEs are led by those aged between 36-45 years at 23 (38%), followed by the age group of 46-55 years at 14 (23%). There were insignificant postings by the age group between 19-25 years and that was 5 (8%). Regarding nationality, the findings revealed that 54 (89%) of participants were South African citizens and 7 (11 %) are non-South African citizens who have permanent resident permits. In terms of educational background, it was discovered that 25 (41%) owners have acquired tertiary education, followed by those who have obtained secondary education 21 (34%). Lastly, the owners/managers who have obtained their primary education represent only 15 (25%).

With regards to identifying the types of SMMEs involved in township tourism in UMlazi, the findings confirm that the township tourism sector in South Africa is a heterogeneous key growth sector (Winny 2020). Restaurants (eateries) and accommodation (B&B) at 43% and 24% respectively were the most common attractions with other enterprises below 15%.

In respect of the duration of business operation, it is critical to know how long a company has been in existence because most firms die before they reach a year (Sibande 2019). According to the study's findings, the majority (41%) of township tourist SMMEs have been in operation for 1-3 years, followed by (31%) of SMMEs that have been in existence for less than a year. There were 28% of township tourist SMMEs that had been in business for more than 6 years. The study findings were only generated from the existing township tourism SMMEs because there was no initial list/ database that consisted of all the township tourism SMMEs (including the ones that are no longer operating).

With respect to classification by employee size and turnover, Small, Medium, and Micro enterprises (SMMEs)are businesses whose personnel numbers fall below certain limits (Bushe 2019). Study findings revealed that (69%) of township tourism SMMEs in UMlazi are Micro enterprises, followed by small enterprises (31%) an,d none participating as Medium Enterprises. Participants in the study were hesitant to disclose their annual revenue. The study confirms Rogerson's (2018) findings that most businesses in townships are small businesses with fewer than ten paid employees.

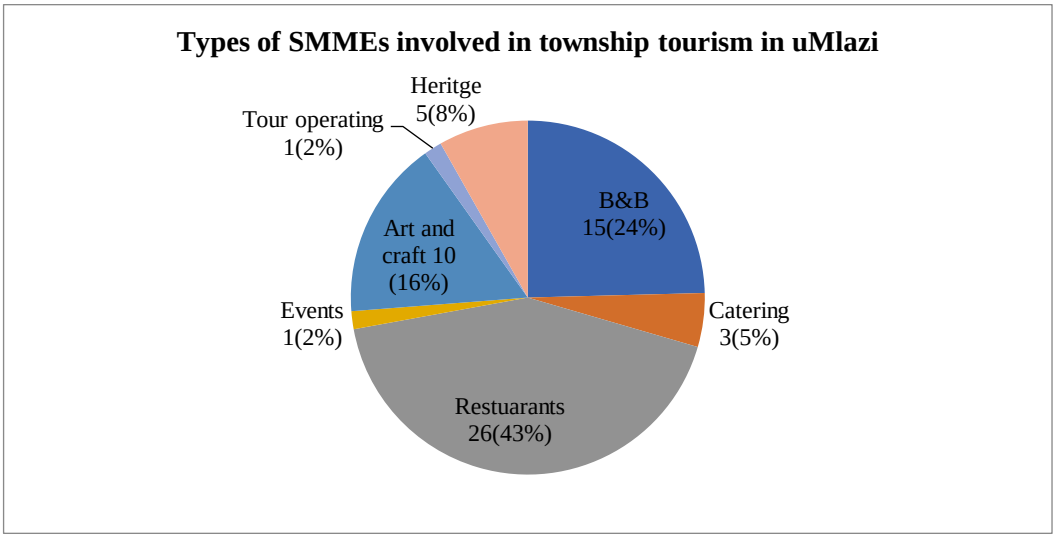

Figure 3: Types of Smmes Involved in Township Tourism Smmes in Umlazi

The results as shown in figure 3, confirm that the township tourism sector in South Africa is a diverse key growth sector (Winny 2020). Restaurants (eateries) and accommodations (B&B) were the most popular attractions, accounting for 43 % and 24 %, respectively, with other businesses accounting for less than 15 %. The study's findings corroborate the literature's observations of the increasing popularity of restaurants and accommodation activities in townships (Rogerson and Rogerson 2019). Food experiences in township tourism are becoming increasingly important for the economic growth and development of local economies (Frenzel 2020; Masama 2018), and restaurant is one of the businesses that is a reported success given the township consumption-oriented spending in food (Hanaysha et al, 2022).

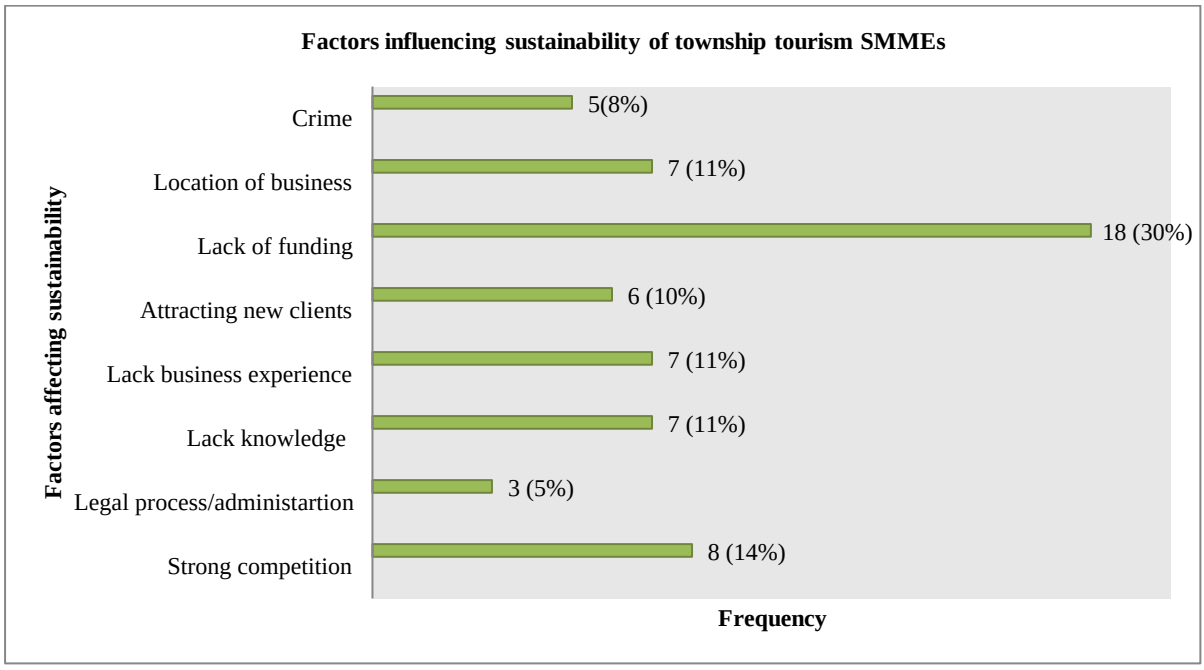

Figure 4: Factors Influencing Sustainability of Township Tourism SMMES.

The results in figure 4. identify the factors affecting the sustainability of tourism SMMEs, the findings revealed that 30 % of SMMEs are influenced negatively by lack of funding, followed by 14 % who are negatively influenced by strong competition. Access to capital and the cost of funding are significant barriers to SMME start-ups and expansion, which has a negative impact on SMME development in general, hurting the local economy severely (Bakhtiari et.al, 2020; Manyaka-Boshielo 2019).

Discussion of findings

Discussion of findings in accordance with the arising discussion points for the paper objectives

Types of SMMEs involved in tourism

With regards to identifying the types of SMMEs involved in township tourism in UMlazi, the findings confirm that the township tourism sector in South Africa is a heterogeneous key growth sector (Winny 2020). Restaurants (eateries) and accommodation (B&B) at 43% and 24% respectively were the most common attractions with other enterprises below 15%. The findings of the study concur with the observations of literature on the increasing popularity of restaurants and accommodation activities in townships (Rogerson and Rogerson 2019) food experiences in township tourism becoming increasingly vital for the economic growth and development of local economies (Frenzel 2020; Masama 2018) and, the restaurant as one of the businesses that is a reported success given the township consumption-oriented spending in food and drinks (Hanaysha et al, 2022). Mofokeng (2018) found that the links between food and accommodation in township tourism are increasingly recognized as a prospective means of multiplying tourist spending. The above perhaps explains why most people in the township start accommodation and eating establishments (Crabtree and Miller 2022).

Factors affecting the sustainability of township tourism SMMEs

With regards to factors that influence the sustainability of tourism SMMEs, a wide range of factors influencing the sustainability of township tourism SMMEs were identified from the literature by (Bruwer 2020; Bvuma and Marnewick 2020). Access to finance, the inadequacy of premises, lack of equipment and tools, inadequacy of markets or marketing, theft, lack of formal registration, and transportation are among the major obstacles to growth and development of SMMEs in South Africa, including those in the township tourism SMMEs sector (Bvuma and Marnewick 2020; Galawe 2017; Cant and Rabie 2018).

The 30% of SMMEs are influenced negatively by lack of funding, followed by 14% who are negatively influenced by strong competition. Access to capital and the cost of funding are important barriers to SMME start-ups and expansion, which has a negative impact on SMME development in general, hurting the local economy severely (Bakhtiari et.al. 2020; Manyaka-Boshielo 2019). The findings of the study are in line with the study conducted by Nieuwenhuisen (2009) who states that, regardless of where you operate your business, access to finance is one of the major constraints faced by SMMEs of all types.

Gorondutse, Arshad and Alshuaibi (2021) contradict the study findings, stating that many SMMEs fail due to their inability to embrace strategic management in their business.

Strategy for the sustainability of township tourism SMMEs

According to the data gathered, it was difficult for the participants of the UMlazi Township tourism SMME to reach and maintain sustainability. Respondents were given the opportunity to share their business practices that help them stay sustainable as part of the study. The study findings indicated that (25%) did not have any sustainable strategies for their businesses (16%) use social media marketing to show case their business to the world while attracting new customers and (8%) buy in bulk from wholesalers at low prices. SMMEs are still struggling in finding their main core competitiveness strategies in the wake of a knowledge-based economy as well as creative economy (Bushe 2019). The literature on competitive strategy for sustainability highlighted the important of (Information and communication technology (ICT) adoption when considering the sustainability of township SMMEs (Bvuma and Manerwick 2020). The use of Wi-Fi, internet, and server by township SMMES is important and could be linked to their level of ICT awareness (Bvuma and Marnewick 2020).

Conclusions

The study succeeded in identifying SMMEs involved in township tourism, to establish factors affecting the sustainability of township tourism SMMEs and to determine the competitive strategy for the sustainability of township tourism SMMEs. Based on the findings above, this study concludes that there is a high number of SMMEs operating mainly in accommodation, restaurants (entertainment), and catering. This is however becoming a problem because of saturation. Saturated markets tend to experience decreased consumer demand and multiple competitors trying to generate sales which leads the profit margin will be low.

The study recommends thatentrepreneurs should diversify to other SMMEs activities. Township tourism SMMEs experience several challenges that hinder their growth and sustainability and the difficulties are known to the government. Government organizations with a focus on SMMEs are anticipated to be at the forefront of SMME development across the entire township economy in order to help businesses by offering support and services and by fostering an environment that will foster their expansion and sustainability.

The main limitation of the study is that there was no available sample frame for the township tourism SMMEs. Snowball sampling was utilized util saturation was reached. The current study was limited to managers/ owners of businesses which is a homogeneous population. It is recommended that the future study should be expanded to other members of the business including

suppliers, and clients. Further to the mentioned, township economy is broad, other scholars can broaden the study and assess the value chain.

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