



“I DO NOT SEE THEM AS MY COMPETITORS:” SURVIVALIST IMPROVISATION THROUGH MUTUAL AID AMONG BLACK FEMALE B&B AND GUESTHOUSE ENTREPRENEURS IN THE CAPE TOWN TOWNSHIPS

Katrina T. Greene¹

¹Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies at Biola University in La Mirada, CA, USA

Abstract

This article examines how black female bed and breakfast (B&B) and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships in Cape Town, South Africa were engaged in survivalist improvisation through the extension of mutual aid to each other. The study is based upon qualitative research involving interviews of such entrepreneurs, who provided overnight accommodations to visitors to the townships of Langa, Gugulethu, and Khayelitsha. The article provides a brief history of the emergence of such entrepreneurs in the post-apartheid period, explains the gendered category that they represent, and describes their more recent primary guest clientele. It also discusses the theoretical underpinnings related to the use of the survivalist improvisation framework to understand the experiences of these entrepreneurs in the black townships. Findings from this study demonstrate that the black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs, when at capacity, were involved in survivalist improvisation related to the use of their distributed channels and networks to refer guests to other black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships. In such circumstances, they improvised with each other. Also, the findings of the study highlight how the distributed channels and networks of these entrepreneurs were shaped by social processes and relationships that facilitated survivalist improvisation through the provision of mutual aid. The black female entrepreneurs in this study were neighbors, friends, mentors, and mentees who shared information, advice, encouragement, and resources, including overflow guests, with each other. They believed that their cooperation with one another as collaborators instead of being competitors or rivals contributed to the survival of their businesses and the black township tourism accommodation subsector. In addition, the findings show that these entrepreneurs' engagement in survivalist improvisation occurred within the neoliberal context of South Africa and that their provision of mutual aid to one another did not undermine neoliberal economic practice but enhanced it by supporting entrepreneurship in the black townships in Cape Town.

Keywords

Entrepreneurs, Females, B&Bs and Guesthouses, Survivalist Improvisation, Neoliberalism, Black Townships, South Africa

Introduction

I do not see them as my competitors. When we are fully booked, I am sending guests who want a place to others. Just today, guests arrived, and we could not take them, so we sent them to Fundiswa's place. Fundiswa does the same for us.

In the above quote, Elani,ⁱ a blackⁱⁱ female entrepreneur who owned and operated a guesthouse in the black township of Gugulethu in Cape Town, South Africa, was explaining how she did not see her fellow black female bed and breakfast (B&B) and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships as her competitors. In fact, she was describing how she had earlier on the day of our interview sent several guests to Fundiswa, another black female

B&B and guesthouse entrepreneur in Gugulethu. When their establishments did not have the capacity to accommodate additional guests, both Elani and Fundiswa, like other B&B and guesthouse female entrepreneurs, engaged in extending mutual aid to one another through their referral or “sending” of guests to other black female owned and operated B&B and guesthouse establishments in the black townships. Elani indicated in her statement that she saw Fundiswa as a collaborator in accommodating visitors in the townships. According to the entrepreneurs in this study, such mutual aid contributed to their economic survival as entrepreneurs and the survival of the black township tourism accommodation subsector.

This article focuses on black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships in Cape Town, South Africa and their engagement in survivalist improvisation, a framework employed by Ferguson (2015, p. 94) in his characterization of the livelihood strategies of the poor in Southern Africa, which was a part of his larger discussion of social welfare programs and survival strategies in the region. I use such a framework to understand the experiences of black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships as they engaged in the extension of mutual aid to each other. Such mutual aid involved referring guests to other similar entrepreneurs through distributive networks and channels that reflected social processes and relationships as well as their participation in cooperative practices in a neoliberal economic context in South Africa. Research for this article emerged from a larger study conducted in summer 2018 related to further understanding the economic and social multiplier effect of B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in their communities.

In this article, I first will provide a brief history and context of black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships in South Africa. Second, I will explore the theoretical underpinnings that will frame my analysis, which involves examining survivalist improvisation as described by Ferguson (2015) and neoliberalism. Third, I will explain the methods that I used to gather and analyze the data. Fourth, I will provide qualitative data related to my study of black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships in Cape Town. Next, I will discuss the findings and how they reflect three primary correlations with the survivalist improvisation framework. Finally, I will provide my conclusions, including the need for further research in the post-COVID 19 pandemic context related to such entrepreneurs and survivalist improvisation.

Black Female B&B and Guesthouse Township Entrepreneurs

Black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in South Africa emerged in the early post-apartheid period in the context of the black township tourism industry and in response to the desire from international tourists to visit these townships for overnight stays to more experience the culture of blacks in the townships (Butler, 2010; Greene, 2012). These overnight accommodation opportunities offered international tourists the ability to engage with the black townships, areas to which they had been denied access during the apartheid period (Nemasetoni & Rogerson, 2005; Ramchander, 2007; Rogerson, 2004; Rogerson & Visser, 2007). Many of these tourists were often engaged in ethnic tourism. According to Chambers (2010), ethnic tourism involved those activities that allow tourists to view and often participate in cultural events, situations, and experiences that are different from the tourist's home culture. For the international overnight visitors to the black townships in South Africa, this included patronizing restaurants, small local taverns called *shebeens*, and local craft markets and attending festivals and other cultural events as well as staying overnight or for multiple nights at black female owned and operated B&Bs and guesthouses in the townships (Butler, 2010; George & Booyens, 2014).

Butler (2010, p. 23) in her study of South African township tourism, found that many international tourists who participated in the black township tourism industry were engaging in a type of “ethical consumption” that entailed direct interaction with the producers of culture by buying the goods and services that the producers created and sold in the townships. This also allowed international tourists to connect with “the heritage, values, and historical circumstances of people who have been marginalized or underrepresented in the past” also known as cultural or heritage tourism (Chambers, 2010, p. x). In addition, Greene (2012, p. 182) explored the gendered category of black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships in Cape Town as she examined how these women who “worked at home,” often a traditional gendered category of work that is related to women, were also making “home their work.” Women home-based B&B operators in Cape Town were able to capitalize on their association with the extension of hospitality to carve out a niche market for themselves in what Hikido (2018, p. 2584) described as “distinctly gendered enterprises.”

My earlier research (Greene 2012) of B&B and guesthouse black female entrepreneurs in the black townships of Cape Town focused on how they desired to empower themselves, their families, and their communities through their businesses. However, my more recent research (Greene 2023) that was conducted in 2018, demonstrated a shift away from catering to a declining international tourist market as well as changes in the diffusion of economic benefits to members of these entrepreneurs' communities. Those findings indicated that the majority (70%) of the black female entrepreneurs in the study had shifted to primarily accommodating South African domestic tourists who were visiting friends and relatives in the townships and to attend or participate in various life-cycle and other events, such as weddings, funerals, and circumcision celebrations as well as for hospital visits and church conferences (Greene 2023). Such findings coincided with the findings of Hikido (2021) who had

revisited black township hostesses in 2016 and 2017 from her 2014 study of women who were engaged in providing home-based township accommodations. Hikido (2021 p. 299) highlighted that they were hosting “black South African clientele instead of or in addition to white Western guests.” Such a reality also related to Rogerson and Rogerson’s (2017) discussion of the growth of domestic tourism in their study of city tourism in South Africa and in which they acknowledged that domestic tourism required more study in order to understand the complexities of tourism.

Scheyvens (2002, p. 60) argued that the economic empowerment of communities through tourism involved tourism “bringing lasting economic gains to a local community” and the money generated being “shared between many households in the community.” Women’s home-based businesses often contribute to the economic enhancement of their families and local communities (Muhammad et al., 2021). Greene (2023) found that such economic empowerment was still occurring in 2018 even with the changes in the demographics of many of the black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs’ guest clientele even though most overnight domestic guests were often not interested in engaging in many of the same ethnic and heritage tourism activities that international tourists had engaged in the townships. During that 2018 research project, I also uncovered that black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships were assisting each other by referring guests, when they were at capacity, to other similar establishments within their communities that had vacancies. Such a reality prompted my interest to understand the various strategies that black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs were engaging in the black townships of Cape Town.

Theoretical Underpinnings

In their qualitative study of the Black township tourism businesses in South Africa, Koens & Thomas (2015, p. 326) found that “strong competition between owners of the same business type” existed along with “hardly any contact with each other” and a lack of cooperation. However, the findings of my study differed from those of Koens & Thomas (2015). I argue that the black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in this study, were cooperating with each other by extending mutual and distributing resources (overflow guests) among each other, which reflected survivalist improvisation as a survival strategy. Ferguson (2015) in his book, *Give a Man a Fish*, focused on the livelihood strategies of distribution among the poor and not so poor in the Southern African context, including South Africa. He (2015) argued that those individuals who have, whether that be through wage incomes/employment, various informal activities, or state social program grants, such as pensions or child welfare grants, were often engaged in the transfer of cash to members of their families and communities who were experiencing economic need.

Ferguson (2015, p. 94) used the concept of survivalist improvisation to explain that “surviving” has more to do with “securing distributive outcomes” and “accessing or making claims on the resources of others” than the production of goods and services. This entailed the poor engaging in cash transfers with others and often expressing a demand or claim to resources (money) from those who had resources by those who did not. Ferguson (2015, p. 100) also argued that such improvisation was “not a matter of a nearly quantitative process of income distributions but rather involves (just as production does) a set of social relations, social institutions, and social processes.” In other words, such distributions were entangled in social connections and relationships that undergirded and facilitated claims to resources.

According to Ferguson (2015), distributive livelihood strategies were not incompatible with neoliberalism and in some ways were helping to facilitate some of the neoliberal agenda in South Africa. Neoliberalism is “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey (2005, p. 2). South Africa’s post-apartheid government, led by the African National Congress (ANC), implemented and promoted neoliberal economic policies in the early post-apartheid period with the stated goal of addressing economic inequalities in the country that were created by the apartheid system (Cheru, 2001; Ferguson, 2015; Fourie, 2024). This included the promotion of entrepreneurship, among poor blacks and the business sector with the goal of increasing black ownership in the economy, alleviating poverty, and combating a high unemployment rate (Barrell, 2000; Koens & Thomas, 2015). Through an analysis of the qualitative research, I examined how the black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in my study were engaged in survivalist improvisation through the extension of mutual aid in the context of a neoliberal South Africa. Prior to providing qualitative data from the research, I below detail the methods that I engaged to collect and analyze the data.

Methods

Over a five-week period in the summer of 2018, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I conducted qualitative research on the economic multiplier effect of B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships of Cape Town, South Africa. As part of that larger research project, I conducted semi-structured interviews with ten black female

B&B (n=5) and guesthouse (n=5) entrepreneurs located in three townships, including Langa (n=5), Gugulethu (n=3), and Khayelitsha (n=2) along with other township entrepreneurs, workers, and residents. I have been conducting research related to black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black Cape Town townships since 2005, and 50% (five of ten) of my 2018 interviews were with black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs who I had interviewed during previous research. The other black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the study were participants who I had not interviewed during previous research but instead uncovered due to snowball sampling with other interviewees.

During my 2018 research, I stayed for the entire five-week study as a guest in one of the black female owned and operated guesthouses in Langa, where I interviewed its owner and engaged in participant observation at her guesthouse. I was also able to travel to the homes of other B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs to conduct interviews and to engage in participant observation at those establishments. The findings of this article emerged from the transcribing, coding, and analyzing data from the ten B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs who I interviewed.ⁱⁱⁱ

Qualitative Data

In this article, I will provide qualitative data from four black female guesthouse entrepreneurs, Elani, Fundiswa, Kethiwe, and Pelesa, which I describe below.

Elani

Elani was a woman in her late fifties, married, and the mother of three adult children who had started her business in Gugulethu in 2005 as a two-bedroom guesthouse. At the time of my interview with her in 2018, Elani's guesthouse had more than quadrupled in size to eleven bedrooms and could accommodate approximately twenty guests. Her guesthouse was listed on several booking sites, including Airbnb, but she also received guests through word-of-mouth and repeat customers. Elani had originally accommodated primarily international tourists, but like many of the other black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships, had transitioned to primarily accommodating domestic visitors/guests and fewer international guests. When I asked Elani about her interactions and relationships with other black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships, she explained in the quote that opens this article, that "she did not see them as her competitors." They were not her rivals but were her collaborators in accommodating guests in the black townships.

Elani provided multiple examples of when she had sent guests, when she was at capacity, to other black female owned and operated B&B and guesthouses in the black townships as well as received guests from those establishments when they were at capacity. Regarding her cooperation with Fundiswa, another guesthouse entrepreneur in Gugulethu, and other B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs, for example, Elani stated:

Fundiswa will tell guests to come here because she's fully booked. If we have a large booking for like 25 people, we tell them that we cannot take all of them, but only some of them, and then send them to other places.

In reference to her support of other businesses in the townships, including various eateries and shops, as well as other black female owned and operated B&B and guesthouse establishments, Elani stated that "It's about sharing the business, so I'm happy to share the business with them." She described how she often split guests who arrived in large groupings between her guesthouse and other B&B and guesthouses but also stated that visitors might continue to use her guesthouse as a central meeting location for their group even if staying overnight at another B&B or guesthouse in the black townships. According, to Elani, such visitors chose to utilize her guesthouse for group meals due to size of her guesthouse and her reputation for being friendly with her guests and treating them "like family" during their stays.

Fundiswa

I also interviewed Fundiswa, a woman in her mid-forties who was unmarried and the mother of three children who were minors. She owned and operated a self-catering four-bedroom guesthouse in Gugulethu, which she had opened in 2011. Fundiswa exclusively accommodated domestic visitors, and most of her guests came through word-of-mouth as she was not listed on the internet and engaged in only limited marketing for her business in local advertisements. When I asked Fundiswa about her interactions and relationships with other B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships, she stated:

Sometimes you will find that a number of people want to book with you, and you don't have any rooms. Instead of the townships losing that business, I send them to Elani's (establishment). I always tell

them about Elani's (establishment) because she has lots of rooms, and when I started this business, she and her husband supported me, and they were like my mentors. I know that they send people here (to me) when they have overbookings.

In the above quote, Fundiswa's interactions with Elani revealed that the assistance that they extended to each other occurred in a context of reciprocity. According to Fundiswa, when either of them or other B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs did not have the capacity to accommodate additional guests, they referred their overflow of guests to other similar entrepreneurs in the black townships. Such referrals maintained the economic resources generated by such guests in the black townships instead of "losing" that business to establishments and businesses located outside of the townships.

In addition, Fundiswa's quote demonstrated that she viewed Elani as a mentor who had shared guests as well as information with her as a mentor when she (Fundiswa) started her business six years after Elani had started her guesthouse in Gugulethu. Elani had provided Fundiswa with a support system, and Fundiswa informed me that she had known Elani, as a neighbor, before she (Fundiswa) started her guesthouse. Fundiswa indicated that she trusted Elani to reciprocate guests with her as they supported each other's business.

Kethiwe

Kethiwe was a married woman in her mid-fifties with no children who opened her guesthouse in 2008 and had transitioned to accommodating more black South African domestic guests than international guests at her guesthouse. Her guests either booked with her through Airbnb, on which her accommodation was listed or, more frequently, booked directly with her as they were returning customers or had heard about her establishment through word-of-mouth. When discussing her interactions and relationships with other B&B and guesthouse female entrepreneurs in the black townships, Kethiwe stated:

I tell them in this business that you cannot work on your own. We need to work hand in hand, because if you want to work on your own, you will hit yourself in the foot in the sense that what are you going to do when there is a big number (of bookings). You can end up losing because of your selfishness and not wanting to involve other people. This is a business where you have to share. You tell people (overflow guests) that you have limited space but that you know other people who can accommodate them around Langa.

Kethiwe in her above quote, similarly to Fundiswa, acknowledged the need for B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships to work collaboratively in order to provide as much accommodation as possible for guests in their township communities and not lose business.

As stated above by Kethiwe, she believed that to meet the demand for visitors to stay in the black townships that B&B and guesthouses had to work "hand in hand" and "share" their businesses with each other by referring overflow guests to other similar establishments in the black townships. She used the phrase "hit yourself in the foot" to explain how acting "selfishly" by not referring overflow guests could result in not receiving reciprocal assistance from other entrepreneurs and the black township tourism accommodation subsector losing those guests to other establishments. In fact, Kethiwe informed me that many domestic visitors desired to stay overnight in the townships and explained that there was room for expansion of the accommodation tourism subsector but acknowledged that such expansion would require more funding and resources, which she and other black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs were lacking.

Pelesa

Pelesa was a woman in her early seventies who was widowed with two adult children and had owned and operated four guestrooms in the backyard of her house since 2015, after her retirement. She accommodated only domestic South African visitors, and marketing for her business was through word-of-mouth as she was not on any social media or internet sites. When I asked about her interactions and relationships with other B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs, she commented that she had received help and mentorship in starting and maintaining her business from Kethiwe. Such help and mentorship included Kethiwe accompanying her to buy assorted items for her guesthouse, including linens and cleaning supplies from the vendors that she (Kethiwe) used and helping her (Pelesa) to get deals and better pricing on various goods.

Pelesa explained that Kethiwe had encouraged her, based upon Kethiwe's experience as B&B and guesthouse entrepreneur, to be resilient when she (Pelesa) started her business by reminding Pelesa that it would take time for her (Pelesa) to make a profit. Pelesa stated:

Kethiwe told me to not be in a hurry to make money with this business. And I said no, this business is making me sick. Whatever I get, I must put it back into the business. She told me that I would not make money until my fifth year of business. I told her that I was going to stop, and she said no because her rooms are often full, and if I get out of the business, it will hurt her business because I would not be available to take her overbookings. I am still leaning on her. If I have a problem, I will call her, and tell her my problem, and she gives me good advice. She sends guests to me. She tells me to be strong. I am only in my third year (in this business), and business is getting better. Kethiwe has helped me a lot because she has been in this business. She tells me to just keep fighting. She tells me to be strong.

Pelesa indicated in the above quote that Kethiwe had informed her that her (Pelesa's) exit from the B&B and guesthouse business would have negative reverberations on her (Kethiwe's) business. She (Pelesa) also expressed to me that she considered Kethiwe a friend who shared business (overflow guests) with her and not as a rival. They worked together to make both of their businesses better even though Kethiwe's guesthouse business was more established and stable than Pelesa's guesthouse business. Interestingly, while Pelesa was much older than Kethiwe, Pelesa desired, solicited, and respected Kethiwe's knowledge and advice due to her (Kethiwe's) experience, success, and longevity as a black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneur.

Discussion

An analysis of the qualitative data from the interviews with black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships in Cape Town generated findings that reflect three primary correlations with the survivalist improvisation framework discussed by Ferguson (2015) in his study. The first primary correlation involves the entrepreneurs' use of distributive channels and networks to engage in a survival strategy. Unlike the poor, which Ferguson's (2015) study examined, the entrepreneurs in my study were not impoverished or engaged in cash transfers, nor expressing a demand or claim to resources (money) from other entrepreneurs. However, they were distributing resources by referring or "sending" guests from the haves to the have nots amongst themselves through their channels and networks. Instead of being competitors, all of the entrepreneurs who I interviewed indicated that the other black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships were their collaborators in the survival of their businesses. As Kethiwe iterated, for example, Pelesa's exit from the B&B and guesthouse accommodation sector would endanger her (Kethiwe's) own business, as she (Kethiwe) would not have her (Pelesa's) establishment as an outlet or distributive channel to which to refer or "send" guests who she (Kethiwe) could not accommodate but who desired accommodation in Langa.

Being "selfish," as stated by Kethiwe, and not sending or referring guests, when at capacity, to other B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships could ultimately result in all of the entrepreneurs suffering as most of their business was through word-of-mouth and involved repeat customers. She and the other entrepreneurs believed that if visitors did not feel that there was enough capacity to accommodate them in the black townships, they might decide to stay at other accommodations outside of the black townships. Therefore, these entrepreneurs understood the need to "share business" with each other due to their limited size as well as fluctuating demand and the desire to keep visitors and their economic resources in the black townships. Such distributive channels and networks had a basis in reciprocity, which was also expressed by all of the black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs who I interviewed. They had to improvise by depending upon each other to accommodate overflow guests who desired to stay overnight in the black townships through the use of their distributive channels and networks. Such improvisation contributed to the survival of the black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs and the black township tourism accommodation subsector.

The second primary correlation between the findings of this study and the survivalist improvisation framework discussed by Ferguson (2015) involved the existence of the distributive channels used by the entrepreneurs being facilitated by social processes and relationships. Ferguson (2015, p. 224) argues that "social relations are made and trended in order to access resources in a fundamentally distributive process." People engaged in such processes know each other. In my study, the black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships knew each other and often saw each other, as in the case of Elani and Fundiswa as neighbors and in the case of Kethiwe and Pelesa as friends. Understanding the social relationships between both Elani and Fundiswa in Gugulethu as well as Kethiwe and Pelesa in Langa demonstrated that their interactions did not just involve the reciprocal exchange of overflow guests, but also entailed mentorship, advice giving, information and contact sharing, and encouragement as well as other types of support.

The social interactions and relationships between the B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs helped to build and sustain the channels and networks that helped to facilitate their distribution of resources, the overflow guests.

In addition, there was also a gender component to such distributive channels and processes. Ascher (2012, p. 100) argues that female entrepreneurship “contributes to stability, to well-being among communities, and provides economic opportunities for disadvantaged groups including women, low wage earners, and minorities.” The black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs of my study were women helping women by engaging in improvisation as a survival strategy through the extension of mutual aid, which was based upon their social interactions and relationships with each other.

The third primary correlation between the findings of this study and the survivalist improvisation framework discussed Ferguson (2015) involved the distributive channels of the entrepreneurs occurring within the context of a neoliberal South Africa. Brown (2005, p. 43) states that “The model neoliberal citizen is one who strategizes for her- or himself among various social, political, and economic options, not one who strives with others to alter or organize these options.” However, my findings demonstrate that the black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs were striving together to alter and organize their options to help themselves as individual entrepreneurs as well as to assist other similar entrepreneurs through the extension of mutual aid to each other. The entrepreneurs indicated an understanding of the reality that they could not survive without mutual aid from other black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships.

The mutual aid provided by the entrepreneurs reflected survivalist improvisation that did not undermine neoliberal economic practice, but as Ferguson (2015) also argued in his study, survivalist improvisation helped to support entrepreneurialism and economic development. The black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs engaged in neoliberal practices that often involved economic advancement through individual aggrandizement by surviving through mutual aggrandizement. Therefore, their self-interests were being fulfilled by engaging in the “sharing of their business” through the distribution of overflow guests. These entrepreneurs were engaged in survivalist improvisation.

Conclusion

This article has focused on how black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships in Cape Town, South Africa were engaged in survivalist improvisation through the extension of mutual aid to each other. The findings, which were based on qualitative research among these entrepreneurs, demonstrated that when they did not have the capacity to accommodate additional guests that they were engaged in distributive channels and networks that involved the referring or “sending” of such guests to other similar establishments for accommodation. These female entrepreneurs believed that it was in their interest to cooperate with each other by distributing overflow guests amongst themselves. In addition, their distributive channels and networks reflected social processes and relationships as these entrepreneurs were friends, neighbors, and/or mentors and mentees to one another. They shared advice and information and worked together as collaborators and not competitors or rivals. This mutual aid contributed to their economic survival and the survival of the black township tourism accommodation subsector. Finally, distributive channels and mutual aid, which reflected survivalist improvisation, also occurred within the context of neoliberal South Africa and did not undermine or conflict with neoliberal economic practices. Survivalist improvisation helped to support entrepreneurialism and the economic survival of the black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs and the black township accommodation tourism subsector.

As stated above, qualitative research for this study was conducted in the summer of 2018 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Multiple scholars (Matiza & Kruger, 2024; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021a, 2021b; Urmilla & Gounden, 2024) have focused on the difficulties experienced by the South African tourism sector due to mandatory shutdowns, lockdowns, and declines in international and domestic travel related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs of this study, whose business involved welcoming people into their homes, may or may not have recovered from the recent pandemic. Therefore, follow-up research on these entrepreneurs is needed to examine if and how they have survived and how engagement in survivalist improvisation related to the COVID-19 pandemic may have played a part in their survival. Such future research may contribute to understandings of survivalist improvisation among black female B&B and guesthouse entrepreneurs in the black townships in Cape Town, South Africa.

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ⁱ All the names of interviewees are pseudonyms.

ⁱⁱ I use the term black to identify those South Africans who would have been classified as Africans by the Registration Act of 1950. Therefore, my use of the term excludes individuals who would have been classified as coloured (mixed race people) and Asian Indians during the time of apartheid.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Protection of Human Rights and Research (PHRRC) at my university granted approval for this research study. The PHRRC approval protocol number is SS18-009_AC.