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Unraveling the Fabric of Johannesburg's Informal Food Vending Sector

Abstract. This article investigates the informal food vending sector in Johannesburg. The analysis is based on empirical data obtained during interviews with 25 food vendors operating in the city. Information provided by the respondents reveal a complex web of informal food activities that take place in urban spaces, especially different locations chosen by informal food vending, such as transit hubs and public areas. The authors highlight key issues of urban governance and advancing sustainable urban development, which should be taken into account by urban planners in order to create more inclusive strategies that promote food vendors' livelihoods by acknowledging the vitality and significance of the informal food economy.

Keywords: informal food vending, urban spaces, Johannesburg, South Africa

Article history. Submitted 2024-11-26. Accepted 2025-01-10. Published 2025-01-23.

1. Introduction

The informal sector is increasingly being recognized as a major component of the economy in developing countries, particularly in Africa (Masuku & Nzewi, 2021). The sector is responsible for approximately 83% of total employment and between 40% and 60% of intra-regional trade globally (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2021). In South Africa, the informal economy employs over 2.5 million people (Statistics South Africa, 2021). The sector plays a crucial role by providing livelihoods and an essential source of household income for many families (Makoni & Tichaawa, 2021). Typical of Africa, the informal economy is

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prevalent in urban spaces, especially in capital cities or commercial hubs such as Harare in Zimbabwe, and Johannesburg in South Africa (Moyo & Gumbo, 2021; Tawodzera, 2022; Makoni, Shereni & Mearns, 2024). Most people living in these cities rely on the informal economy for survival (Makoni & Rogerson, 2023). However, the African urbanscape is faced with many challenges, such as increasing unemployment rates, the rapid growth of urban populations due to migration from rural areas, excessive bureaucracy associated with the process of starting a business, a depreciating formal sector, and complex requirements for formal employment (Mthiyane, Wissink & Chiwawa, 2022).

Despite these difficulties, the informal economy continues to thrive in Africa, with South Africa being one of many examples. Johannesburg's Informal Trading Policy recognizes the fact that the city is dominated by vendors operating in most of its urban spaces, such as pavements, open markets, public areas, taxi ranks, bus terminal areas, and informal shops (City of Joburg, 2022). These informal vendors sell second-hand clothing, fruit and vegetables, operate as taxi rank marshals and run spaza shops¹, beauty parlors, or brothels (Hikam, 2011; Selwyn, 2018; Wegerif, 2020; Khumalo & Ntini, 2021; Kushitor, Alimohammadi & Currie, 2022; Sepadi & Nkosi, 2023). The literature on the informal sector is rather scant, especially with respect to the way it evolves within urban spaces and the role it plays in the livelihoods of the vendors (Wegerif, 2020; Kushitor et al., 2022).

Despite ample research on the informal sector in developing countries, comparatively little is known about the dynamics of this sector and its impact on urban space development. Specifically, there is a research gap concerning policies and strategies targeted at fostering sustainable economies within the urban areas, particularly with regards to the livelihoods of informal vendors (Azunre et al., 2022). The purpose of the following study was therefore to bridge this gap by exploring the intersections of informality, city space and sustainability to provide practical insights into the development of policies that can improve the resilience of informal economies while simultaneously promoting sustainable urban development. In this way, the authors hope to contribute to the development of more inclusive and comprehensive policies and strategies for including informal activities into the mainstream developmental frameworks for urban planning and sustainable growth. The study focuses on Johannesburg, the commercial hub of South Africa, since it represents a dynamic urban context where informality is profoundly

¹ Spaza shops, also known as tuck shops, are micro-convenience stores operated by owners from their homes to meet the daily needs of their communities. This form of informal entrepreneurship originated during Apartheid-era South Africa when historically disadvantaged individuals were restricted from owning formal businesses.

interconnected with both urban development and economic survival (Rogerson, Malovha & Rogerson, 2024). As one of the largest and most rapidly growing cities in Southern Africa, Johannesburg offers a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities of integrating informal economies into urban planning, making it a representative case for understanding the complexities of informal sector dynamics in the broader Southern African context.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Informal Economy in Urban Spaces

Cities are major business and economic activity hubs of any country. Urban spaces, in this regard, enable city dwellers, visitors and users to move around and engage in different activities that transpire within different urban environments (Thomas, 2016). As major gateways, cities offer visitors and developers access to economic development centers, political administration, shopping and social engagements (Cobbinah, 2023). Nowadays, in addition to various formal activities, African cities are experiencing a rapid development of informal economic activity, which is particularly vibrant in the political and commercial capital cities (Makoni et al., 2024). Urban spaces in Africa are also dynamic business environments that attract local survivalists² who supply city dwellers with goods and services, such as food, medicines or electronics (Timothy & Teye, 2005; Moyo & Gumbo, 2021; Makoni et al., 2023). It is estimated that one in three goods purchased in city centers are sold in informal markets scattered within various urban spaces in Africa (Cunningham et al., 2024). According to Zack and Landau (2022), some of these activities include roadside boutiques, mobile kitchens and informal marketplaces. Studies on informal business activity in African urban spaces ((Rogerson, 2018; Makoni et al., 2023) report that the informal economy currently accounts for over 80% of all economic activity that takes place in urban spaces. This phenomenon can be observed in urban spaces of many African countries, for example in Johannesburg (Rogerson, 2015), Harare in Zimbabwe (Chikanda & Tawodzera, 2017), and Maseru in Lesotho (Rogerson & Letsie, 2013).

² Also known as survivalist entrepreneurs. The term refers to individuals who engage in small-scale, often low-profit, economic activities primarily to meet immediate personal or household needs. These businesses typically operate outside formal regulatory frameworks and may lack access to formal financial services, training, and support. They tend to focus on earning day-to-day income rather than growth or expansion.

2.2. Informal Food Vending in Urban Spaces

The most common informal activity taking place in urban spaces is undoubtedly food vending. Street food is the prevalent source of food for city dwellers and a tourism experience in numerous urban spaces (Quintero-Angel, Mendoza-Salazar & Martinez-Giron, 2022). Informal food vending is part of creative tourism and food tourism (Etim & Daramola, 2020; Nickanor et al., 2021; Gamira, 2021; Kamalipour & Peimani, 2021; Zondi & Magwaza, 2022). It provides affordable food options, particularly for low-income individuals working in cities (Tawodzera, 2023). The influx of informal food vendors into major cities is not a new phenomenon; food vending is one of the key informal economic activities that marked the emergence and evolution of the informal sector in urban spaces across the globe (Blekking et al., 2022). South Africa is estimated to have over one million food vendors across the country's major cities (Arias, 2019). Food vendors typically sell fresh fruits, snacks, fast food, and cooked meals with versatile menus (Ekobi, 2022; Lemomo, 2022). As Tawodzera and Crush (2019) observe, informal food vending comprises a diverse network of small businesses and individuals such as suppliers, informal markets, delivery, mobile traders, hawkers, retailers, and street food vendors. Food vendors strategically occupy areas surrounding heavy foot traffic, e.g. outside shopping centers, schools, transportation hubs such as taxi ranks and train stations, marketplaces, and sporting venues, where consumers can easily purchase a snack or meal while traveling (Amir, Salman, & Fahmid, 2018; Kushitor et al., 2022).

The phenomenon is defined as an activity in which hawkers or stallholders prepare, cook, or process food and sell it in urban spaces (Wegerif & Kissoly, 2022; Sinyolo, Jacobs & Maila, 2022; Roa, 2023). Tawodzera and Crush (2019) note that informal food vending in South Africa is either criminalized or ignored. However, it should not be viewed as illegal or unlawful, since it is a legitimate practice of selling legally produced goods and operating with legally purchased raw materials in environments that exist outside formal business frameworks. This mode of commerce is essential for many individuals who face barriers to formal business operation, lacking land, capital, or the necessary skills, yet it also attracts people with strong academic backgrounds and solid business acumen, who choose the informal sector for its profit potential.

According to Skinner & Watson, 2021, informal food vendors play a crucial role in providing for the needs of impoverished communities that are commonly found in developing and less developed countries. Informal food vending in developing countries plays an important role in creating jobs and sustaining local livelihoods (Rogerson, 2018; Benjamin et al., 2020; ILO, 2022). Particularly in Africa, it is

believed that the rapid urban population expansion, high unemployment, and slow industrial and economic growth are factors that motivate individuals to seek opportunities in the informal sector to escape living in poor conditions (Magidi & Mahiya, 2021; Masuku & Nzewi, 2021). According to ILO data (2022), approximately 85% of the urban working population in Sub-Saharan Africa is employed in the informal economy. By focusing on the spatial dynamics of the informal food economy in Johannesburg, the following study offers valuable insights into this sector, which can help inform more equitable urban policies to improve the livelihoods of the food vendors.

3. Methods and Data

Empirical data for the study were collected through semi-structured interviews with 25 food vendors operating in Johannesburg. Respondents were selected by snowball sampling. The sampling process was stopped after reaching data saturation, where further interviews were unlikely to yield new insights. Rather than selecting individual food vendors, the researchers interviewed representatives of informal food vending businesses to obtain a more diverse sample of this sector. This approach was chosen to enable a more nuanced exploration of the informal food economy, considering aspects such as economic sustainability, urban governance, and potential implications for inclusive urban planning and development. Basic information about the interviewees is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic information about the interviewees

Id	Sex	Age	Education	Country of origin	Years in business
FV1	Male	42	Certificate completed	South Africa	7
FV2	Female	30	Completed secondary school	Zimbabwe	8
FV3	Female	30	Completed secondary school	Zimbabwe	11
FV4	Male	44	No formal education	South Africa	25
FV5	Female	25	Completed secondary school	South Africa	6
FV6	Female	29	Some form of primary school	Malawi	10
FV7	Female	28	Completed secondary school	South Africa	8
FV8	Female	40	Completed secondary school	South Africa	19
FV9	Male	34	Diploma certificate completed	South Africa	9
FV10	Male	25	Completed secondary school	South Africa	6
FV11	Female	27	Certificates completed	Zimbabwe	7

Id	Sex	Age	Education	Country of origin	Years in business
FV12	Female	30	Diploma certificated completed	Zimbabwe	5
FV13	Female	51	No formal education	Zimbabwe	26
FV14	Male	32	No formal education	Mozambique	10
FV15	Female	26	No formal education	Mozambique	7
FV16	Male	31	No formal education	South Africa	8
FV17	Female	34	Diploma completed	Congo	11
FV18	Female	55	No form of formal education	South Africa	32
FV19	Male	31	No form of formal education	Mozambique	12
FV20	Male	30	No form of formal education	Mozambique	10
FV21	Male	29	Completed secondary school	South Africa	7
FV22	Female	59	No formal education	eSwatini	17
FV23	Female	35	Some form of formal education	South Africa	15
FV24	Female	27	Certificate completed	Zimbabwe	7
FV25	Female	30	Diploma completed	South Africa	11

Source: Authors

4. The Findings

The interview questions focused on the following main topics: (1) the socio-economic characteristics of food vendors; (2) their business activities and organization, and (3) challenges and opportunities associated with their activities.

4.1. The Socio-Economic Situation of Informal Food Vendors

Table 2. Socio-economic characteristics of the interviewees

Economic status	Total number	Total (%)
Number of dependants		
0–3	9	36
4–6	12	48
over 7	4	16
Income per week from business		
ZAR 1000–ZAR 5000	1	4
ZAR 5001–ZAR 10000	3	12
ZAR 10 001–ZAR 15 000	10	40
ZAR 15 001–ZAR 20 000	9	36
over ZAR 20 001	2	8

Economic status	Total number	Total (%)
Revenue streams		
Food vending is the sole source of income	21	84
Additional revenue streams	4	16
Main expenses besides the business expenses (NB: This was a multiple-response question)		
Food and groceries	25	100
Rent payments	18	72
Debt payments	18	72
School fees	15	60
Savings and investments	12	48
Family support (sending money)	10	40
Entertainment	9	36

Source: Authors

The ethnic diversity among informal food vendors in Johannesburg (Table 1) reflects the broader demographic fabric of Johannesburg. Vendors from various racial backgrounds operate within the city, enriching the culinary landscape and contributing to inclusivity in entrepreneurial ventures. While the sector has been dominated by women (Matinga et al., 2018; Arias, 2019), there is a growing number of men in the informal food economy of Johannesburg. This is largely the result of the shifting socio-economic realities of Johannesburg and South Africa as a whole, especially in the post Covid-19 period. The sector also reflects Johannesburg's status as a cosmopolitan city, which is a melting pot of cultures and nationalities (Nyuke, 2021). According to Masuku & Nzewi, (2021), non-South African informal food vendors constitute a significant portion of food vendors in the urban spaces, with many of them originating from neighboring countries such as Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Eswatini and Zimbabwe. This contributes to the sector's diversity and economic dynamics.

The situation in my country is unbearable, I cannot go back there to try and survive. I am honestly better off here in Johannesburg and the business really helps me survive and also send money home (FV11).

It's better to stay in streets that offer you food than being in big building 24/7 but with nothing to take home. Such is the situational comparison between Johannesburg streets and my country's formal job sector. To start with, we do not even have currency in my country. I will starve my family if I stay there. But here in Johannesburg if I come here in this street what I get through selling from 6am to 9am alone I will raise enough money for sending home to buy groceries and other necessities (FV13).

Young people often view informal food vending as a pathway to economic independence and employment opportunities, using innovative strategies to attract customers and navigating urban challenges such as unemployment (Dube, 2021).

This business was a quick way for me to start earning money because I spent over three years looking for a job which I could not find. After I started this business, I became comfortable, and I am not interested of job hunting anymore (FV10).

For the older vendors, this activity is the main source of household income.

We must keep the family running, you know. For over 12 years I have been managing to take care of my dependents and this business has really helped me with that (FV17).

The interviews indicate that food vendors have various forms of capital that are outside formal means:

I also do hairdressing. I got the money to start this from my income on doing people's hair (FV15).

My source of income to start this business is my 3 kids' social grant money I receive from the government (FV23).

Yes, I sell Tupperware which is a business I run on WhatsApp (FV24).

I got my capital from my stokvel³ money (FV25).

The economy of food vending in Johannesburg is essential for the livelihoods of many vendors, and sometimes is their only source of income.

My children and I travel from Alexandra to here in town, they school here, and their school fees is R1500 they are two so R3000 their transport and mine per day is R100 per day (FV15).

Yes, I do have expenses that I pay with the money I earn here, there are house expenses because I want to build a house back at home, furthermore there are children, there are children that I am supporting. And I am renting where I am staying (FV7).

I can support both my children with the money that I make here in the street. They are both in school. one is in primary school and the other is in pre-school. I can support them well (FV3).

There are expenses that I pay for with the money I earn here, yes, there are house ex-

³ An informal savings collaboration between two or more people, in which funds are contributed in rotation, allowing participants lump sums for family needs

penses because I want to build a house back at home, furthermore there are children, there are children that I am supporting. And I am renting where I stay (FV7).

I do not have any other job or source of income. This is what I do every day to survive (FV14).

I am only the breadwinner since I lost my husband about 12 years ago and this is the only thing I do. Everyone else is still young to work and support and you know us African families, the relatives who can help have their own lives to manage so I cannot burden them. But I am managing well with this business (FV18).

The way my work is so busy I cannot afford to have another second source of income. I only rest Sundays in the Afternoon and that time I am already too tired and preparing for Monday. Mondays are very profitable so I cannot miss that. This business alone is enough for me, and I can afford (FV21).

Selling cooked meals is a full-time job and I don't think there is anyone who can be able to manage to do something else unless they have other people to work for them. When I'm home I am preparing the food or managing the kids or resting. Then during the day, I am selling the food. It is difficult to juggle (FV23).

As can be seen, many interviewees have turned to street vending when faced with difficulties to obtain formal employment and unbearable economic conditions, which is especially true in the case of migrant entrepreneurs who come to the city to escape the economic realities of their countries.

4.2. Business Organization and Activities of Informal Food Vendors

Informal food vendors operate in various locations across Johannesburg, including markets, street corners, transportation hubs, public parks, and near educational institutions (Park-Ross, 2018). Table 3 presents the main locations used by the interviewees.

Table 3. Main locations of Johannesburg used by the interviewees

Location	%
Transport Hubs & Taxi Ranks	28
Popular Street Corners & Intersections	22
Commercial and business areas	15
Cultural & Historical Centers	13
Market & Mall Adjacent Spaces	12
Urban regeneration areas	10

Source: Authors

The choice of a particular location is mainly influenced by factors such as foot traffic, consumer demand, proximity to potential customers, and accessibility to suppliers and resources.

I chose this location because it's busy with many passersby to go catch taxis, and trains, and it suits my business (FV22).

I would say it is because the area is busy and it is surrounded by many stores and people who come here to buy stock, so I know that whilst they buy stock, they also come to buy food from me (FV4).

I sell to people who are just passing by and people who stay in these flats (FV15).



Fig. 1. Typical food vending spaces in Johannesburg city

Source: Authors

The biggest advantage of this business is that we are very flexible in changing menus to suit what people want. I have noticed on hot days people get hungry and they need heavy meals and when it's cold or raining they prefer light meals and we can quickly adapt to that. Sometimes I even see the other guys making food and copy what they are doing, its all about our customers (FV4).

My specialty is cooked meals, especially pap, rice and stews and gills. But I must check what people are buying the most and focus on that. Pap and beef stew sells most, that is what most of my customers want and I focus most on that (FV16).

I think people buy our food because they can afford it. With only 35 rands two people can share a meal we sell and can be full. So I think we have a big advantage because people do not want to spent so much money only on food (FV24).

The choice of suitable locations not only enhances sales opportunities but also fosters customer loyalty and satisfaction, contributing to the long-term sustainability of business operations. Various types of food and vegetables are sold in Johannesburg, as shown below.

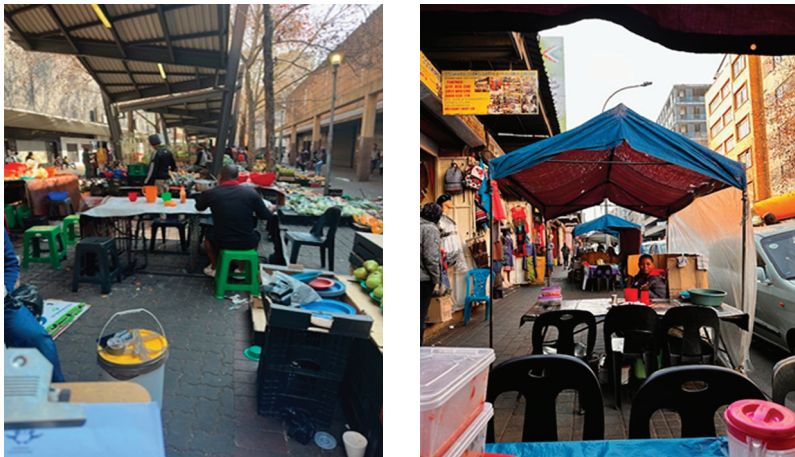


Fig. 2. Sit in spaces [informal restaurants] for informal food vendors in Johannesburg.
Source: Authors

I sell spinach, various types of spinach, tomatoes, pumpkin, and onions (FV22).

I sell potatoes, onions, tomatoes, peppers, and chilies, or mixed vegetables with all of them (FV19).

Apple, banana, grapes, pears, orange, nartjies (FV14).

I sell simple food, pap, braai meat, and vegetables (FV3).

I am selling intestines, spleen, and pap (FV4).

We sell, steak, wors, heart, liver, chicken, and ox head (FV7).

It is pap, chicken, tripe, cow throttles, boerewors, steak as well as rice (FV10).

Chicken, beef, tripe and pap (FV18).

Yes. I'm selling pap, liver, chicken, steak, ox heart and tripe, as well as steak (FV1).

It turned out that *uphutu*⁴ *ne*⁵ *nyama yenhloko*⁶ is the most frequently sold and consumed food product in Johannesburg. This can be attributed to its affordability, cultural significance, and its role in informal food economies where accessibility and low-cost meals are prioritized. Recognizing the widespread consumption of ox head is crucial for understanding the dynamics of Johannesburg's informal food sector, as it highlights both the economic and social factors driving food choices within urban spaces, directly influencing the sustainability and growth of informal food markets.



Fig. 3. Pap and ox head menu in Johannesburg city

Source: Authors

The interviewees also pointed out that they cater for various groups of customers, who are part of the heavy foot traffic in the city:

I sell my food to school kids (FV24).

⁴ A traditional South African dish made of maize, which is prepared into a crumbly or grainy porridge. It is also known as pap.

⁵ and

⁶ *Inyama yenhloko* or *yentloko* or *skopo*, *iskopo* or *skop* is ox head meat, which is traditionally boiled with salt, spices or beef stock and served with *uphuthu*.

We sell to people who like having fun around entertainment areas (FV8).

People that want to have a different variety of what's being offered, foodies, adventurous people, other caterers (FV9).

I don't really have specific customers really, everyone that passes has a chance of buying my food (FV25).

It was also noted that the vendors select local suppliers such as local butcheries as their main suppliers due to affordability and cos-efficiency they offer.

I buy my stock at big local markets (FV23).

I buy my meat at Meat Express [a local butchery] (FV2).

We buy from the butchery at MTN (Noord) at Steve Butchery [a local butchery] (FV6).

We buy it, there is a butchery that we buy our meat from Express and Steve Butchery (FV7).

Yes it is affordable I know that when I buy steak for R100 it will make R100 on top of that, it is better that way (FV3).

I choose these suppliers because they have what I need (translated from SiSwati Language) (FV22).

4.3. Push and Pull Factors of the Informal Food Vending Economy

The informal food vending activities are a major pull factor for people seeking income and survival opportunities.

I did a catering certificate, wedding planning from scratch. But you know that that one is seasonal. So, this one is throughout (FV1).

There are no jobs. I saw that there were jobs, and I started selling snacks. Then I saw that the profit was too low; I could not even afford to pay for my children's school fees. Then I started to buy pots. I started this business in 1991. I saw it necessary to start a food business (FV18).

Other pull factors are largely associated with opportunities for freedom and independence,

I like to work alone. No one can control me; sometimes you find the boss with attitude and all that other stuff (FV11).

I am unable to work for someone, that is why I chose to be self-employed (FV3).

What I like about selling is that there is no way I can be controlled by anyone, you can decide what you want to do, when you want to do it, and how much you want to make

and what you are going to do with it. You do as you please, that's why I like selling (FV2). I manage my own time, I get to travel, I get to be anywhere, anytime if I want to, to see. Not anywhere, anytime I get to give the service to people that can. instead of me being behind the restaurant behind the kitchen 24/7. I can host in the balcony, in the backyard or in the pool side you. I can go to a festival, so if I have to add up whatever that I'm making per month and compared to a person who's at a restaurant, it is probably the same amount, but I'm doing it different. Like, yeah, I am doing stuff to be here (FV9).

I like that I pay myself. That is the one which I like, and then secondly, I just enjoy seeing like being of service to other people, you understand, because seeing people enjoy their food eating as well, it's quite satisfying to understand, beyond the money. It is satisfying, but at the end of the day (FV10).

I am happy here, it is nice to sell, you laugh with customers, you get used to different customers and it's a good thing. It is nice here and I will not be able to look for another job (FV3).

The interviewees revealed other socio-economic benefits of informal food vending; this form of activity generates employment and income, helps to diversify forms of livelihood, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women, youth, migrants, and low-skilled workers.

It is not a secret that millions of South African graduates are unemployed. And I chose not to sit and wait for the government. This business has provided me with much-needed employment and source of income (FV7).

This business is awesome because truth be told, I make more money than many people who have normal jobs (FV11).

The biggest benefit of this business is that you can take care of family needs with income, and you don't have to owe anyone (FV22).

This is the biggest source of employment and you don't need any authority to ask for permission (FV25).

Despite the benefits, the interviews reported many challenges:

The challenges are that some days I sell less and must go back with stock which causes losses, another thing is during loadshedding it affects me because I don't have a generator (FV23).

And then another thing is also cooking the food because you must prepare the food at home and then bring the food here you understand. So sometimes you have load shedding [powercuts] and water shortages — so in the past week, we did not have water.

We did not have electricity, so it was a problem. The food came late, that is one of the challenges (FV10).

Yes, so prices the prices went up. So, the money that we get went down, our profit is down due to Corona since. Because ox head was the cheapest meat ever. It was the cheapest, cheapest when I started selling ox head was 8 Rand one. 8 Rand one and now I am buying it. Ox head was 8 Rand and my plate was 8 Rand, so my plate was the same price with the price of ox head. So, it went like that it went like that until after corona the price went up to three hundred. So now as I'm talking the ox head is four hundred and I cannot sell a plate for four rand, so which means my profit is dropped much, because of the rising of the price for ox head (FV13).

You know, business is not stable all the time, you know, ups and downs, you know, especially on the around 15 you know that's when the business goes down all kind of things are you know (FV1).

Prices are getting more and more expensive. So, we are trying to maintain, but at the end of the day, I think we're playing a losing game (FV16).

The problems that we face here are the boys that are thieves, especially after selling here on the streets they watch when the stall is busy after we finish for the day, they ask for the money that we made for the day around the corner. There are many problems that we encounter here but we persevere. It is part of life (FV3).

As you can see, our location we are not well covered. Another thing we are on the streets we are not indoors; weather plays a big role. You understand when it is cold no customers when is too hot sometimes customers cannot sit and enjoy meals properly because they are burning (FV16).

I have a lot of challenges; I wish that my business can grow so that I can be alright and see myself with a store or something like that and be well off and sit down. You see here we get rained on; Metro Police chase us things like that. I just wish my business can grow so that I can get a store (FV20).

Migrant vendors from other countries faced challenges of their own:

It's very challenging being a foreign national here doing this business. Every time I have to come here with my passport because police can come at anytime and ask for papers. They don't care even if I am serving a customer I must stop and listen to them. This is very bad for my business (FV12).

The challenges that we encounter are many here in the streets are many, Metro police harass us, we meet criminals that take the money that we sold items for (FV19).

5. Conclusion and Study Limitations

Overall, the findings of this study show that Johannesburg's informal food selling industry is diversified, with a range of experiences, difficulties, and motives. While migrant vendors see informal food vending in urban spaces as a means of escaping financial difficulties from their respective countries of origin, for South African vendors it is a means of providing for their families. While elder vendors place a higher value on stability and family support, younger vendors aim for financial independence. Location (high foot traffic areas), resilience and adaptability were found to be critical factors for the success of informal food vending activities in urban spaces. The interviewees reported common problems, such as growing food prices, legal restrictions, and security threats, highlighting the need for inclusive legislation. The findings demonstrate how crucial informal food vendors are to Johannesburg's economy and the pressing need for stronger support networks and regulatory frameworks.

The implications of this study extend beyond the scope of urban economics to areas such as tourism and hospitality, where a better understanding of the role of informal food vending can inform policy development and urban planning strategies. By examining the intersection of informal food vending with tourism, policymakers and stakeholders can identify opportunities for sustainable economic growth, inclusive tourism, and job creation, particularly in developing nations. The authors believe that in order to maximize the potential of informal food vending it is crucial to foster collaborative relationships between formal and informal sectors, improve urban infrastructure, and promote inclusive governance frameworks. By facilitating the assimilation of informal food vending activities into mainstream strategies for the sustainability of urban spaces, Johannesburg and similar destinations can harness the full potential of this thriving and vibrant economic activity.

The main limitation of the study is the fact it only relies on qualitative data, which cannot be used to provide a more accurate spatial picture of informal food vending in Johannesburg. Without representative quantitative data it was also not possible to conduct a detailed analysis of differences between local versus migrant food vendors that could offer useful insights into the different entrepreneurial strategies, opportunities and challenges experienced by different groups within this sector.

Acknowledgements

This paper is a component of an Honors Dissertation completed at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. The financial support of the University of Johannesburg is acknowledged.

CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

Conceptualization: **TRN, LM** and **KM**, data curation: **TRN, LM** and **KM**, formal analysis: **TRN, LM** and **KM**, writing: **TRN, LM** and **KM**, review & editing: **TRN, LM** and **KM**. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

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Analiza nieformalnej branży gastronomicznej w Johannesburgu

Streszczenie. Przedstawiona w artykule analiza nieformalnej branży gastronomicznej w Johannesburgu opiera się na danych empirycznych zebranych podczas wywiadów przeprowadzonych z 25 sprzedawcami artykułów spożywczych i posiłków działającymi na terenie miasta. Informacje przekazane przez respondentów ukazują złożoną sieć nieformalnej działalności gospodarczej związanej ze sprzedażą jedzenia, która odbywa się w przestrzeniach miejskich, w szczególności w punktach takich jak główne węzły komunikacyjne i inne miejsca użyteczności publicznej. Autorzy zwracają uwagę na kwestie zarządzania miastem i promowania zrównoważonego rozwoju miejskiego, które powinny być uwzględniane przez urbanistów w celu tworzenia bardziej inkluzywnych strategii, wspierających nieformalnych sprzedawców żywności poprzez uznanie istotnej roli nieformalnej branży gastronomicznej dla całej gospodarki miejskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: nieformalna sprzedaż żywności, przestrzenie miejskie, Johannesburg, Republika Południowej Afryki



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