

# Business Recovery Strategies For Mumpreneurs Operating In Tourism Post-COVID-19

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## ABSTRACT

Within the COVID-19 outbreak context, some industries were seriously affected, and the travel and tourism industry was undisputedly one of those industries. Mumpreneurs operating in the tourism sector are on the rise, particularly in the accommodation and hospitality sub-sector. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on mumpreneurs operating in the tourism sector as businesses were closed for some period at the beginning of the crisis, leaving them without any income. Therefore, the research paper has been undertaken to examine mumpreneurs' business recovery plans in response to new challenges within the context of the pandemic in South Africa and likewise to explore the underlying business management practices needed by mumpreneurs to recover and continue to operate post-COVID-19. Using a phenomenological research approach, in-depth interviews were conducted to comprehend the experiences of mumpreneurs and understand their recovery plans post-COVID-19. The findings of the study indicated that the pandemic impacted the business operations of mumpreneurs, and as a result, various business recovery strategies were employed to mitigate the risk posed by the pandemic. The findings can be utilized to make viable decisions to boost mumpreneurs in South Africa since they are a valuable proportion of the economy.

**KEYWORDS:** Business Recovery Strategies; COVID-19; Mumpreneurs; Tourism; South Africa.

**ABBREVIATIONS:** MCO: Movement Control Order; DMOs: Destination Marketing Organizations.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic posed a dual challenge to nations and economies around the world. Governments needed to tackle the immediate health challenges of a global pandemic, as well as the economic and welfare implications of pandemic measures and closures [1,2]. Start-ups and entrepreneurs were among the most vulnerable players in the economy [3]. Consequently, entrepreneurs felt the economic downturn associated with the pandemic to a greater extent. Entrepreneurial studies have highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship [4,5] and the need to understand the diversity in ways of working or coping with family and work life among women entrepreneurs [6]. These women's perspectives and experiences need to be heard to understand their entrepreneurial realities [7]. Mother-led businesses are usually small, and most of the entrepreneurs are self-employed, some of whom are 'forced entrepreneurs' [8].

Within the COVID-19 outbreak context, some industries were seriously affected, and the travel and tourism industry was undisputedly one of those industries. Mumpreneurs operating in the tourism sector are on the rise, particularly in the accommodation and hospitality sub-sector. A mumpreneur is a person who discovers and exploits new business opportunities within a geographical context combined with motherhood and ownership of the business [9]. Moreover, they can be defined as mums who move from traditional employment to operate and own a new business to fit with a mother and an earner by the experience of pregnancy or having children [10]. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on mumpreneurs operating in the tourism sector as businesses were closed for some period at the beginning of the crisis, leaving them without any income. In addition, mumpreneurs tend to be vulnerable during an economic crisis, in part because they have fewer resources with which to adapt to a changing context. In particular, the pandemic has wreaked financial devastation, leaving many establishments struggling to survive. As indicated by Mlotshwa and Murimbika [11], the crisis caused by the pandemic had a great impact on tourism businesses owned by mumpreneurs on both the economic and family fronts. These businesses are particularly vulnerable to interruption because, without continuous operation, whole families could fall below the poverty line, especially for female-headed households. Therefore, the research paper has been undertaken to examine mumpreneurs' business recovery plans in response to new challenges within the context of the pandemic in South Africa and likewise to explore the underlying business management practices needed by mumpreneurs to recover and continue to operate post-COVID-19. The existing literature provides some explanations concerning barriers to mumpreneurs' development and growth, antecedents of their failures [12-14] and the adverse effects on the economy, as it is a business sector regarded as a growth engine for developing countries such as South Africa, particularly in rural

areas. However, there is limited research related to recovery strategies by mumpreneurs following natural disasters such as floods, virus outbreaks or any other related disasters.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 OUTBREAK ON THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

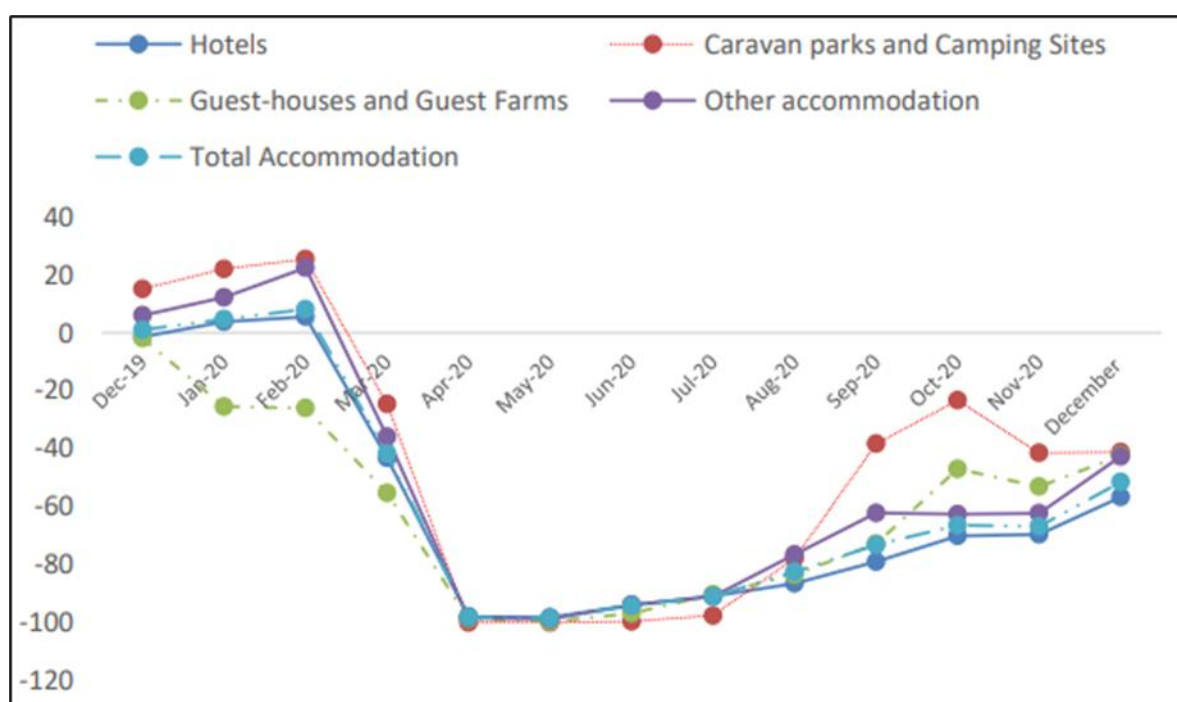
Tourism is considered a key economic sector in many countries, especially in developing countries [15-18]. However, history shows that economic, political, social, and epidemic crises such as the 9/11 attacks, the 2008 financial crisis, the SARS outbreak in 2003, the Ebola outbreak in 2014, and many more) can all hurt the tourism industry as they introduce uncertainty, travel restrictions, and expenditure considerations, as well as affect visitors' travel decisions and the destination's capacity to accommodate visitors [19-21]. The COVID-19 pandemic has had unprecedented impacts on the tourism industry worldwide [22,23]. The World Tourism Organization reported a 70% decline in international arrivals (a loss of \$730 billion in export revenues) for the first eight months of 2020 [24]. This unprecedented decline has had dramatic social and economic consequences, and, as a result, millions of jobs were lost, businesses were temporarily closed, and others liquidated [24]. The World Travel and Tourism Council estimated that as of September 2020, the pandemic had impacted more than 121 million jobs and livelihoods in the travel and tourism sector and created the worst economic and social crisis, calling for international coordination and collaboration to the sector's survival and recovery [25,23]. These impacts were worldwide, with some regions being more impacted than others, particularly in emerging economies, as indicated by Pandey *et al.* [26]. The tourism industry, which is the mainstay of most developing economies [27] and thrives on social mobility and interaction, was left in a quandary, resulting in a near collapse of some sectors and sub-sectors of the industry. This is particularly true for Africa, where the pandemic is expected to adversely affect the marginalized communities in a continent where tourism was one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors [28,29] before the pandemic in 2020. Smith *et al.* [30] argue that the pandemic had a serious adverse impact on national parks in South Africa. South African National Parks rely heavily on revenue from tourists, which renders it vulnerable, as COVID-19 wiped off the tourism market, which was the main source of funding for conservation and other projects. This confirms fears by Rogerson and Rogerson [32], who predicted the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the South African tourism economy due to underlying vulnerabilities. A study conducted by the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, which surveyed 1610 respondents, revealed that at the end of March, soon after the announcement of the lockdown on 26 March 2020, the tourism industry was thrown into financial turmoil [32]. Because of the pandemic, 83% of tourism businesses reported a 50% decline in revenue on a year-to-year basis, with 2019 as a base year. The remainder indicated that they had realized a 100% revenue loss in their business operations in March. Consequently, 54% of tourism businesses were unable to meet their fixed costs expenses, whereas 58% of tourism businesses were unable to service their debt in March. As reported by Dube [33], the prolonged lock down and closure of leisure tourism that only opened in August led to further deterioration of the situation and led to severe financial losses. StatsSA's [34] report showed that, as of May 2020, revenue losses by the accommodation sector had plunged to record lows. Figure 1 highlights that, between April and July 2020, most accommodation establishments collected less than 10% of the revenue they had collected in 2019. There were serious revenue losses across the accommodation industry, running into billions of rands, with the worst month being April and May 2020, as reported by Dube [33]. Furthermore, small businesses are usually most susceptible in times of crisis [14] because of a lack of preparedness, short-term and limited cash flows, and an inability to mobilize resources strategically. Sloane's survey, conducted in the early phases of the MCO implemented beginning 27 March 2020 by the government because of COVID-19, estimated that over 55 000 small businesses in South Africa were not going to survive the MCOs that were introduced by the government because of the COVID-19 pandemic [1]. Consequently, the findings further revealed that there could be 423,000 potential job losses in the small business segment [1]. At the same time, women who operate small businesses have received significantly less attention and support, particularly from the government, even though they have been challenged in multiple ways in recent years by the crisis brought on by COVID-19 [11,35-37]. On the one hand, as entrepreneurs and employers, they had to deal with the limitations of financial resources and other accompanying economic effects. On the other hand, as women and mothers, they typically also took on the lion's share of household and home care tasks, such as studying with children, cooking for the family or looking after elderly family members [38,39]. The subsequent section will discuss mumpreneurs' operating in the tourism industry and the effects of COVID-19 on their businesses.

### 2.2 MUMPRENEURS OPERATING IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Entrepreneurship activities led by females are increasingly making important contributions to the global economy and are developing at a faster pace than those of males, as reported by Hodges *et al.* [39]. Subsequently, according to data from the Ministry of Cooperatives, in 2015, a country such as Indonesia had over 52 million small businesses, with females running 60% of them [40,11]. Asia has witnessed rapid economic development, as female-led entrepreneurship is increasingly regarded as a key driver of economic growth and sustainable development [41]. South Africa is one of the 12 economies where female-led entrepreneurial activity rates increased, with 11.1% of working-age females engaged in early-stage entrepreneurial activities, as reported by Amitha and Sewwandi [9] and Mlotshwa and Murimbika [11]. While South Africa moved up one place from 2020 to rank 37th in 2021, with a score of 54.9, female advancement remains hampered and less supported [11]. There are three types of women entrepreneurs who take risks and uncertainty to achieve growth

and profit, namely innovators, dualists, and returners [42,43]. According to Cromie and Hayes [42], “women innovators” have a strong business commitment and do not have childcare duties. The “women dualists” are motivated to start their own businesses owing to their childcare responsibilities, which they prioritize, and the “women returners” identify opportunities to return to the workforce after raising their children by setting up their own businesses. Entrepreneurial studies acknowledge the sub-groups of dualists and returners of female entrepreneurs and refer to them as ‘mumpreneurs’ [43]. This study will primarily focus on mumpreneurs operating in the tourism sector and, in addition, the impact of COVID-19 on their business and planned recovery strategies post-COVID-19. Although Parlapiano and Cobe [44] first coined the term mumpreneur, Ekinsmyth [45] later defined a mumpreneur as an individual who takes advantage of business opportunities in a geographical and social space that allows her to combine the roles of business ownership and motherhood. Furthermore, pregnant mothers and single mothers separated from their marriages due to various causes can be considered mumpreneurs, including womanhood, motherhood, and entrepreneurship [9]. According to Makandwa *et al.* [46], the ventures enable the mumpreneurs to earn an income, improve their household’s standard of living, and create employment opportunities for local communities.

**Figure 1:** Year-on-year percentage change in income from accommodation at current prices by type of accommodation due to COVID-19.



Source: Dube (2021)

Many mumpreneurs active in the tourism sector were severely affected by the MCOs introduced by the South African government in an effort to curb the spread of the virus [1]. South Africans were ordered to stay at home and were only allowed to go out for necessities. The new regulations took everyone by surprise; the most affected group is likely those who manage a home-based business operating in the hospitality sector, such as guest houses, bed and breakfast establishments, and homestays that are predominantly located in rural areas in South Africa [47]. Due to the MCOs, the new regulations negatively affected those establishments, and the majority are operated from home by mumpreneurs. This is based on international and Hungarian research findings that MCOs triggered by the pandemic affected primarily the tourism and hospitality sector, as shown in Table 1 [3]. In the tourism sector, the rate of mothers is higher in terms of employees and the number of small enterprises owned by mothers. In fact, it was reported that mothers’ enterprises were not only negatively affected by the MCOs as traveling was restricted and, in turn, impacted the profitability of the business, but also due to the additional obligations at home. Mothers needed to work from home and, at the same time, manage their house chores. The mumpreneurs who usually work from home while taking care of the household are among the affected ones, as their children were at home rather than at school, as analyzed by Yusoff [36]. In addition, it was also argued that COVID-19 further increased the responsibility of women in taking care of the family and the socio-economic status of the family [48,49]. Emerging research suggests that the crisis and its subsequent shutdown response have resulted in a dramatic increase in this burden. The situation was further exacerbated as many small businesses lacked the liquid capital needed to tackle the crisis and did not have the required resources to lessen the impact of the pandemic as compared to well-

established enterprises [50,3]. For many mumpreneurs, a decrease in business income also threatens the livelihoods of their families. This will necessitate the introduction of proactive interventions by mumpreneurs to ensure their enterprises recover and continue to operate post-pandemic.

**Table 1:** The Share Of Respondents Affected By The Pandemic By Sector (n = 1680).

	Level of involvement in the effects of the pandemic	The rate of respondents in the given sectors	The rate of respondents affected negatively by the pandemic	Expected change in revenue
Accommodation services, hospitality sector	high	9%	84%	-47%
Community and personal services	high	19%	72%	31%
Trade and repair services	medium	20%	70%	-29%
Economic services, real estate transactions	medium	19%	59%	-19%
Industry, manufacturing	low	13%	63%	-23%
Education	low	8%	71%	-37%
Health and social care	low	6%	70%	-27%
Other	low	7%	51%	-21%

Source: Koltai *et al.* (2020).

### 2.3 BUSINESS RECOVERY STRATEGIES POST-COVID-19

With the relief of COVID-19 lockdown measures, destinations began to adopt a variety of strategies to reactivate tourism and the economy. One of the measures was necessarily in the area of health and hygiene, ensuring the implementation of safety measures such as the use of masks, the use of sanitizers in public areas, converting hotels into quarantine sites and reducing capacity for public gatherings. In previous research addressing the many roles that DMOs should play in competitive tourism destinations, crisis management is often considered paramount [51]. Firstly, DMOs assist small enterprises in their marketing efforts and delivery of coordinated and coherent promotional messages to travelers, many of them managed by mumpreneurs [52]. Secondly, they foster and coordinate collaborative marketing and promotional programs that are both flexible and creative [52]; thirdly, they facilitate the entry of new mumpreneurs in the tourism and hospitality industry by easing the burden of bureaucracy and corresponding administrative costs [53]; and lastly, they incorporate specific crisis recovery procedures in the destination's strategic planning, and the training of existing and new entrants of the hospitality sector, as the sector has evolved accordingly to meet the needs of travelers [53]. There are also strategies focused on revitalizing demand and supply, which are based on two essential pillars: marketing and communication and factors of production [51]. The proposals related to (1) marketing and communication should focus on stimulating domestic and international demand, in this order. The National Department of Tourism [54] reported that to reignite demand, it required a robust domestic marketing strategy, and domestic tourism was oriented towards hyper-local and local experiences, specifically day trips and weekend retreats as well as business travel to critical customers, sites and suppliers. Furthermore, digitization has accelerated because of the COVID-19 lockdowns, and consumers' appetites for digital technologies and experiences have grown, but unlike other industries that swiftly adopted technology solutions, the tourism and hospitality sector has lagged, as reported by Skyways [55]. The industry needs to innovate and adapt now more than ever to meet consumer demands for accommodation that cater to the changing world of business and leisure, unique stays, instant communication on their preferred platforms, and smarter technologies to enhance their experience. In relation to the (2) factors of production, the concern with bureaucratic processes and access to entrepreneurial activity is another important aspect to stimulate entrepreneurship among mothers [56]. However, the investment by the government and other role players in community training and mumpreneurs' capacity-building plays an important role in post-crisis solutions [57]. Nevertheless, because of their small size and low level of bureaucracy, mumpreneurs may have advantages in terms of flexibility, learning capabilities, innovation, and relations with customers [58]. Given their smaller size, they tend to be rather flexible when opportunities or threats arise in their environment. Furthermore, the smaller the organization, the closer the decision-makers are to their customers and other stakeholders [13]. In today's economy, small businesses that are well-diversified have a better opportunity of succeeding and prospering than undiversified businesses, according to Toneguzzi [59]. Diversification, which refers to a business extension by entering new markets with new products [60,61], constitutes an important alternative for business growth and sustainable development, especially for mumpreneurs operating in the hospitality industry. In addition, other alternative business recovery strategies will enable the survival and continuous operations of enterprises post-COVID-19 period. Mumpreneurs play an important role in the competitiveness of destinations. Since they are embedded in the local community, they occupy a prominent position to participate in local networks [51] and

to access valuable local knowledge, which is unique and difficult to imitate. This provides a fertile ground for creativity and innovation [62,51] and for more authentic experiences with a strong local identity. Furthermore, their business models are more associated with sustainable practices than large firms are [63,64] since they are particularly interested in the preservation of the local way of life and the traditional and natural environment.

### 3. METHOD(S)

A qualitative research approach was considered appropriate for the current study as the objective was to examine mumpreneurs' business recovery plans in response to new challenges within the context of the pandemic in South Africa and likewise to explore the underlying business management practices needed by mumpreneurs to recover and continue to operate post-COVID-19, and it is aligned with Husserl's descriptive phenomenology, as analyzed by Mlotshwa and Murimbika [11]. Using a phenomenological research approach, in-depth interviews were conducted to comprehend the experiences of mumpreneurs and to understand their recovery plans post-COVID-19. Furthermore, the phenomenological qualitative research approach was recognized as appropriate as it allowed for the investigation of mumpreneurs' explicit opinions relating to various discussion programs regarding COVID-19 and its economic impact, specifically on their own business, as assessed by Remler and Van Ryzin [65]. Purposive and snowball sampling was adopted for this study, as mumpreneurs who own and manage their businesses in the accommodation and hospitality industry were interviewed. The purpose of the sampling approach was to produce a diversity of views from mumpreneurs. The data was acquired through semi-structured interviews to explore and provide a deeper understanding of South African mumpreneurs. In addition, a saturation point was attained after interviewing 12 participants. The sample size for this paper comprised 15 high-level participants (interviewees) as this number generated sufficient information and data to achieve the objective of the study. The inclusion criteria to participate in the research were that all 15 mumpreneurs interviewed operated in the accommodation and hospitality industry and owned registered bed-and-breakfast (BandB) establishments situated in the North West Province of South Africa. Thereafter, data was collected in four towns, namely: (1) Mafikeng, (2) Vryburg, (3) Potchefstroom, and (4) Mogwase, as shown in Figure 2. The interview session was conveniently organized at the mumpreneurs' establishments. Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the data, and multiple themes emerged as the mumpreneurs described themselves as action-oriented, creative problem-solvers, and relationship-focused regarding how they planned for their businesses to recover and continue operating post-COVID-19. However, whenever the need arose, probing and clarifying questions were used from the hints and cues noticed during the interview to explore aspects of the lived experience much deeper, for example, how did they experience their individual business operation experiences pre-COVID, during COVID, or the management of human capital and the management of cash flow. A semi-structured interview approach permitted participants to describe their experiences freely and the intended business intervention measures to be put in place, and this allowed the researcher to enquire or probe the interviewee with supplementary questions to generate new information on the subject.

Data analysis began with a search for specific words expressed by participants. Using a summative analysis to count and contextualize them, the researcher transcribed the interviews from recorded to textual data, read and reread the transcripts to take notes while reading, and then uploaded them to Atlas.ti. Atlas.ti was used to do the search, which appears to be critical to understanding the phenomenon in focus. Using Atlas.ti, the researcher named the initial codes through the transcripts and listed the codes [11]. The researcher listed the code categories and classified the codes into themes. The researcher also generated codes into themes and addressed credibility through prolonged engagement and debriefing to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research.

**Figure 2:** Four towns in the North West province.



#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of how mumpreneurs will respond to new challenges within the context of the pandemic in South Africa and the business recovery strategy that will be developed to enable the survival and continued operations of their establishment in the tourism sector, mainly in the accommodation and hospitality sector. Table 2 below presents the demographic characteristics of the 15 mumpreneurs operating in the tourism sector to provide a better understanding of the context and content of the study findings. As reported by City Press [66], mumpreneurs are essential to the South African economy because their participation in the economy reduces poverty and creates jobs since mumpreneurs' success is tied to the success of communities, particularly in the township and rural economies. South African women, as analyzed by Mjadu [67], are renowned for their creative talents and innovative approaches to solving business problems. They start businesses because they are also primary caregivers who have families to support. Their drive comes from an intrinsic motivation to survive and the impetus to provide for their immediate family and, at times, their extended family members. As observed from Table 2, of the 15 mumpreneurs who participated in the study, 60% had over ten years of experience in managing bed and breakfast establishments.

**Table 2:** Summary of demographics of the mumpreneurs.

Demographics\Location		Mahikeng	Vryburg	Potchefstroom	Mogwase
Age group	25-39	2	1	3	
	40-49		1		1
	50-59		1	1	1
	60>	2	1		1
Education	Matric		2	1	1
	Tertiary	4	2	3	2
Experience	5-9 years	2	1	3	
	10 years>	2	3	1	3
Sector	Formal	4	4	4	3
	Informal	0	0	0	0

In these findings, there were three themes that were identified, and the data was further classified into categories and codes. The three themes are (1) COVID-19's impact on mumpreneurs' businesses, (2) business recovery strategy, and lastly, (3) destination marketing organisation. The categories allowed for probing the mumpreneurs on how the pandemic impacted their businesses, as well as the business strategies they intend to develop to facilitate business survival and sustainable development.

#### 4.1. COVID-19'S IMPACT ON MUMPRENEURS' TOURISM BUSINESS

##### 4.1.1 IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON BUSINESSES

Discussion based on the immediate impacts of COVID-19 on their business operations. Most mumpreneurs agreed that the pandemic had a negative impact on their business operations. A few respondents strongly felt that:

*"...business cashflow was severely affected as the was no cash coming in, but we had to meet business obligations such as overhead expenses. The policy and regulation for social distancing was necessary but had extremely negative effects on our businesses, as any factor that hinders traveling may have a profound impact on the tourism industry. Our accommodation established is extrinsically connected to social events, megaevents and other crowded activities".*

Since travel is requisite for tourism activity, any factor that hinders traveling may have a profound impact on the tourism industry, particularly on small business enterprises that were more severely affected by COVID-19 than larger businesses were [68]. Probing was used to determine the extent of the impact that COVID-19 has had on the tourism industry and their respective businesses, resulting in most respondents indicating that, consequently, many businesses operating in other economies closed and workers were dismissed, which further exacerbated the tenuous economy by lowering consumer demand that led to a vicious cycle that affected the economy. Even though the businesses operated by mumpreneurs are more flexible, agile, and more adaptable because of their smaller scale and being family-owned, they have less access to resources as compared to established businesses, and as a result, the impact is more severe during market volatility, creating further financial, network, and supply chain constraints. According to Manda and Chaudri [69] and Shepherd [70], mumpreneurs are not exempt from financial issues as they struggle to keep their businesses afloat in order to sustain their families [71]. On top of being in lockdown, facing challenges in sustaining their businesses takes a toll on mumpreneurs' psychological aspect, especially mumpreneurs who are concerned about childcare. The pandemic severely impacted this one respondent because not only was the business closed due to COVID-19, which was her only source of

income, but the mumpreneur's business partner and husband died as a result of the virus. Furthermore, the mumpreneur indicated:

*“the pandemic had a terrible effect on my life and business..., and I was considering selling the bed and breakfast business and seeking employment as I was previously working as a secondary school teacher or converting the business into an old-age facility to generate income because I have a family of six dependents. Equally, after the lockdown measures were eased, the business has been struggling to attract traveling consumers...”.*

Therefore, low consumer spending coupled with uncertainty in the market has significantly decreased mumpreneurs' revenues and profits to survive. Conversely, one respondent explained:

*“...my establishments were used as a quarantine site during the peak of COVID-19 – we applied to become a quarantine facility to the Department of Health, which, in turn, sent inspectors to the bed and breakfast to ensure that we complied with all its regulations. We accommodated essential workers on the establishment and the operations assisted the business to remain profitable. Subsequently, with the international borders closed, it created opportunities for innovative destination marketing organizations to optimize the involvement of local communities in tourism – my business partner with local tour operators that offered game-drive packages inside the Pilanesberg National Park that generated additional revenue for the business. In addition, in 2021, the business experienced rapid growth as COVID-19 restrictions were eased, and therefore, as part of growing my business, I acquired a farm that we are planning to use for commercial farming and leisure tourism”.*

However, most respondents indicated that COVID-19 impacted their business operations negatively. Mumpreneurs represent the most vulnerable industries, which were affected by the enforced lockdown regulations and, later, the conditional MCO. A report on COVID-19 and the tourism industry in South Africa confirms that 98% of responding tourism businesses were affected by the pandemic, with mumpreneurs being slightly more affected in terms of loss of revenue, as explained by Sucheran [72]. Respondents from Mahikeng, Potchefstroom and Vryburg mentioned that most of their consumers were business tourists, and for this reason, bed and breakfast operations were severely disrupted by the pandemic, leading to a critical decline in revenue and a pronounced threat to job security for employees. Business travelers were increasingly attending meetings virtually with the introduction of MCOs, and that impacted the revenue of bed and breakfast. The business needs to adapt to the requirements of travelers, with telecommunication being essential to that change. Telecommunication has exploded since the start of the pandemic, as evidenced by the increase in daily active users on Microsoft Teams from 75 million users in 2020 to 145 million in 2021 [55]. One respondent pointed out:

*“...several bed and breakfasts in the region had to close down and sell their assets to enable them to settle their debts. I was fortunate because I was not paying any installment for the property. However, I was struggling to pay overhead expenses, in particular salaries. This resulted in laying off some of the employees, and one general worker was retained. The bed and breakfast was converted into a monthly rental property that partially assisted in keeping the business going through the pandemic. Recently, the business was converted back to a bed and breakfast but has not fully recovered from the impact of COVID-19.”*

To exacerbate the challenges of operating during and post the pandemic, mumpreneurs also needed to take on the role of teachers since their children were starting home-schooling. Tan and Yew [10] mentioned that, unlike the flexibility provided before the pandemic with childcare activities and on-site schooling, mumpreneurs had to ensure that online educational facilities at home, such as laptops and internet connections, are available.

## **4.2 BUSINESS STRATEGIES**

### **4.2.1 REMEDIAL STRATEGIES**

The evidence obtained from the data suggests that there were remedial measures introduced to lessen the risk of the pandemic on mumpreneurs, and further business recovery strategies were developed to enable sustainable growth post-pandemic. Most respondents indicated that they closed or reduced operating hours temporarily as a cost-saving strategy during the COVID-19 outbreak. Particularly in the early stages of the outbreak, many accommodation establishments closed in an attempt to survive. Gradually, as travel restrictions were eased, mumpreneurs lowered the prices to stimulate demand among travelers and, more importantly, among domestic markets. Assaf and Scuderi [73] believe that in the short term, flexible prices, terms and conditions can reduce the financial risks for mumpreneurs tourism businesses. Furthermore, low-price strategies can be helpful to change consumers' attitudes and motivation levels toward travel. Domestic markets should lead the recovery, as well as the survival of the tourism industry during and post-COVID-19 pandemic, as tourism businesses would open first for local travel before opening for international travel for fear of importing new and emerging variants of the novel coronavirus. Domestic tourism market promotion is a default response for tourism destinations when faced with crises,

disasters, and pandemics of whatever nature, given that international tourism demand dried up due to COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions [31,74].

#### 4.2.2 INNOVATIVE PLANS

Business recovery strategies require possessing a leadership mindset, adopting multiple crisis management practices, maintaining a good relationship and robust network, identifying threats and opportunities, and taking action promptly and flexibly. Most mumpreneurs stated that entering and participating in other interrelated sectors such as agriculture or participating in other sub-sectors of tourism is a strategy that allowed their businesses to remain profitable during and post the pandemic and alternatively provides a safety net against down-turns in the accommodation and hospitality sector. Three respondents mentioned that they had acquired a farm as a form of diversifying and business expansion pre-COVID-19. One respondent indicated:

*“...my farm is operating in 45-hectare land, and the farm is demarcated into four sections: (1) is used for chicken farming where chickens are raised for sale, in addition, we have goats and pigs..., (2) used for crop farming, and (3) conference venue for the hosting of events (government events, weddings, baby showers, etc.), (4) bed and breakfast establishment. The profits made from the sub-sectors assisted with lessening the impact of the pandemic on the bed and breakfast establishment. Nevertheless, we were forced to lay off employees and downsize staff between 70 and 90% as the business faced sustainability challenges”.*

Findings have shown that mumpreneurs with strong dynamic and innovative strategies were more likely to recover rapidly from the crisis. Regarding the following probing question: “What innovative plans did the business have to retain existing customers and possibly attract new customers?” all respondents expressed interest in exploring new markets and incorporating technology into their future growth, which is another sign of active learning and improvement from the crisis. As explained by Assaf and Scuderi [73], market diversification can also reduce dependence on a limited number of source markets. One respondent remarked:

*“Through the use of social media platforms during and post the pandemic, we were able to communicate with existing and new consumers to inform them of the newest developments in the business premises, especially after the upgrading of the establishment that included the refurbishment of a conference facility, inserting a swimming pool and mini bar, and sub-contracting a massage spa in the business premises. In addition, e-commerce services were improved as existing and new clients could now make bookings online, and the Wi-Fi connections were upgraded to retain existing clients and attract more business clients...”*

The findings tend to suggest that mumpreneurs had long-term plans to grow and expand their market share to strengthen their market position.

#### 4.3 DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS (DMOs)

This industry will not look the same post-pandemic, and both the government and DMOs have a role to play in recovery efforts, as analyzed by Assaf and Scuderi [73]. Necessity has driven DMOs closer to mumpreneurs and to entrepreneurship, especially operating in the tourism and hospitality sector, which was severely impacted by the pandemic, as indicated by the literature review. Moreover, there is recent empirical evidence that DMOs can foster collaborative innovation networks, which are, in turn, instrumental in supporting the continued operations of an entrepreneurial ecosystem and, equally importantly, creating an environment whereby their enterprise will sustainably grow during the pandemic [51]. In South Africa, the Department of Tourism [75] established an intervention measure to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on small tourism businesses, including mumpreneurs. The R200 million tourism relief fund provided by the department was to assist the continued operation of small tourism businesses during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding discussions as to whether their businesses have received government loans or support from the DMOs during the lockdown, the following responses were obtained from the respondents: Most respondents revealed that their businesses did not receive any support from the Government or DMOs. The respondents further mentioned that the application process was stringent, and to date, none had received the relief funds.

*“...I was hoping to receive the short-term finance, as this will have enabled paying overhead expenses such as utilities and salaries. As a result, I had to lay off staff.”*

In contrast, the few respondents who received financial assistance pointed out that the funds provided relief as they were used to buy sanitizing materials and tools to ensure the protection of employees and customers, as well as to pay for operational expenses etc. Regarding the following probing question, “What businesses needed additional support?” all mumpreneurs stated that they would like the DMOs to assist in training not only the owners but also their employees on conducting business online due to the significant changes in the industry with the rise in digitization, especially with the pandemic, where there is great demand for online business.



## 5. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicate that the pandemic impacted the business operations of mumpreneurs and, as a result, various business recovery strategies were employed to mitigate the risk posed by the pandemic. Most respondents stated that entering and participating in other interrelated sectors, such as agriculture or participating in other sub-sectors of tourism, is a strategy that allowed their businesses to remain profitable during and post the pandemic and alternatively provided a safety net against down-turns in the accommodation and hospitality sector. Few respondents mentioned that they had acquired a farm as a form of diversifying and business expansion pre-COVID-19. The findings can also be utilized to make viable decisions to boost the mumpreneurs in South Africa since they are valuable to socio-economic development. Policymakers, entrepreneurship development institutes, educational institutes, decision-makers, and potential mumpreneurs can use this knowledge to inform business recovery strategies. Equally important, the findings can be utilized to inform policy-making processes, and the recommendations can contribute not only to the resuscitating of mumpreneurs operating in the tourism sector but can also contribute to the revival of the South African economy post-COVID-19. The managerial implication of the study is that, although the COVID-19 crisis has had an adverse impact on the tourism industry and there is limited research related to recovery strategies by mumpreneurs, this research paper has been undertaken to understand mumpreneurs' business recovery plans in response to new challenges within the context of the pandemic, as this necessitates long-term plans to allow for the survival and continual operations in the tourism sector.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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GG: Not available.

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