Investigating the socio-economic profile of informal street traders in Cape Town's central business district: A COVID-19 perspective

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, my guardian angel.

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ABSTRACT

Informal street trading, one of the most visible and prominent activities in the informal sector, is an important source of livelihood that entails various financial and social benefits. However, the livelihood of informal street traders is constrained by various challenges and exogenous shocks – of which COVID-19 is a prime example.

This qualitative study used the Cape Town CBD as a descriptive case study to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the location-specific dynamics, benefits and barriers associated with informal street trading. The primary objective of this study was to use the framework and understanding provided by Amartya Sen's capability approach to investigate the factors that have a positive and negative influence on the ability of these traders to generate a sustainable livelihood. Throughout the study, a particular focus was placed on the impact and hardships associated with COVID-19.

Respondents identified camaraderie with other traders, interactions with customers and high levels of foot traffic as the key factors that have a positive influence on their work and that further enhance the positive outcomes associated with informal street trading.

On the other hand, several respondents identified insufficient infrastructure as significant constraints, which are especially evident during wind and rain. Other prominent challenges include crime and corruption, volatile revenues, rising costs, increased competition, insufficient capital and access to formal financial institutions, and limited or no support. Many of these challenges are further aggravated by the uncertain trading environment as a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 and the associated lockdown regulations led to unexpected and prolonged closures of informal street trading enterprises, characterised by no income, no or minimal remittances, and exposure to food insecurity. Several of the adverse effects continued even after the traders were able to gradually resume their activities after the initial hard lockdown. The results also question the theoretical shock absorber function of the informal sector.

Keywords: Cape Town; COVID-19; informal sector; Sen's capability approach; street traders

OPSOMMING

Informele straathandel, een van die mees sigbare en prominente aktiwiteite in die informele sektor, is ŉ belangrike vorm van lewensbestaan wat verskeie finansiële en maatskaplike voordele inhou. Die lewensbestaan van informele straathandelaars word egter beperk deur verskeie uitdagings en eksogene skokke – waarvan die COVID-19-pandemie ŉ uitstekende voorbeeld is.

Hierdie kwalitatiewe studie het die sakekern in Kaapstad as ŉ beskrywende gevallestudie gebruik om ŉ diepgaande begrip te verkry van die dinamika, voordele en uitdagings wat met informele straathandel in hierdie spesifieke gebied geassosieer word. Die primêre doel van die studie was om die vermoënsbenadering van Amartya Sen as ŉ raamwerk te gebruik om die faktore te ondersoek wat ŉ positiewe en negatiewe invloed op straathandelaars se lewensbestaan het. Daar is ŉ deurlopende fokus op die impak en hindernisse wat met COVID-19 verband hou.

Die respondente het solidariteit met medehandelaars, gesprekke met kliënte en baie voetgangers geïdentifiseer as die sleutelfaktore wat ŉ positiewe invloed op hul werk het en wat die positiewe gevolge van informele straathandel verhoog. Verskeie respondente het onvoldoende infrastruktuur as ŉ beduidende uitdaging geïdentifiseer, wat veral sigbaar is tydens wind en reën. Ander prominente uitdagings behels misdaad en korrupsie, wisselvallige inkomstes, stygende uitgawes, verhoogde mededinging, onvoldoende kapitaal en toegang tot formele finansiële instellings, sowel as beperkte of geen ondersteuning nie. Baie van hierdie uitdagings word vererger deur die onsekerhede en impak van die COVID-19-pandemie.

COVID-19 en die gepaardgaande regulasies het gelei tot onverwagse en langdurige sluitings van informele straathandelondernemings, wat gekenmerk was deur geen inkomste, geen of minimale oorbetalings aan familie en gebrekkige voedselsekerheid. Verskeie van hierdie nadelige gevolge het voortgeduur selfs nadat die straathandelaars hulle aktiwiteite geleidelik kon hervat na die aanvanklike vlak 5-inperking. Die resultate bevraagteken ook die teoretiese aanname dat die informele sektor die nadelige gevolge van eksterne skokke sal absorbeer.

Sleutelwoorde: Kaapstad; COVID-19; informele sektor; Sen se vermoënsbenadering; straathandelaars

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBD	Central Business District
CCID	Central City Improvement District
CDE	Centre for Development and Enterprise
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
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EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGP	Gross Geographic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
ICLS	International Conference of Labour Statisticians
ILO	International Labour Organization
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
MERS	Middle East Respiratory Syndrome
NICD	National Institute for Communicable Diseases
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLAAS	Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
UN	United Nations
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and background to the study

The informal sector is an important and often long-term contributor to employment, poverty alleviation, food accessibility and food security (Blaauw, 2017:339; Fourie, 2018a:471; Rogan & Skinner, 2017:3; Tawodzera & Crush, 2019:1). It is also imperative to acknowledge that the informal sector is dynamic and diverse in its scope, employment relations and range of activities (Valodia *et al*., 2006:108).

Participation in the informal sector comprises own-account workers, paid and unpaid family workers, home-based work, short-term contracts, and casual labour (Bonnet *et al*., 2019:1; ILO, 2013:3). Key activities in the South African informal sector include spaza shops, shebeens, street trading, cooked food and take-aways, construction, manufacturing, waste-picking, crafts, domestic work, transport and hairdressers (Charman & Petersen, 2018:253; Rogan & Skinner, 2018:89; Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation, 2016:20).

Participation in the informal sector is a survivalist livelihood strategy[1] for many vulnerable and historically disadvantaged individuals, including the urban poor, female heads of households, and refugees (Andrag, 2011:5; Makaluza & Burger, 2018:195; Stats SA, 2019:9). These individuals' household responsibilities often outweigh their limited household income (Makaluza & Burger,2018:195). In addition, several of the individuals who participate in the informal sector have limited education and training, preventing them from obtaining employment opportunities in the formal sector (Blaauw, 2017:348; Ledingoane & Viljoen, 2020:1; Western Cape Government Provincial Treasury, 2019:88-89).In addition to the survivalist component, the informal sector also provides growth-oriented and higher-income business opportunities for entrepreneurs (Ligthelm, 2004:39; Makaluza & Burger, 2018:194-195). Makaluza and Burger (2018:194) estimate that approximately 27 per cent of the participants in the informal sector fall within the growth-oriented component. Blaauw (2017:353) also found that several of the components and participants entailed in the informal sector are driven by a *"a spirit of entrepreneurship"*. This also applies to informal street trading, which *"is not solely a survival activity as there are possibilities for growth and potential for capital accumulation" (*Tabe, 2014:167).

Stats SA (2021:26-27) report that 2.686 million people (1.740 million males and 946 000 females) were employed in South Africa's non-agricultural informal sector in the second quarter of 2021,

[1] Livelihood strategy refers to the *"range and combination of activities and choices that people make in order to achieve their livelihood goals"* (Kobayashi, 2020:194).

accounting for 18.0 per cent of total employment. In terms of South Africa's agricultural employment, it is estimated that between 400 000 and 500 000 people are employed in informal-sector farming (Cousins (2018:377).

The size and composition of the informal sector varies across provinces. In the second quarter of 2021, Limpopo (27.2 per cent) and Mpumalanga (26.2 per cent) had the highest proportion of non-agricultural informal sector employees (Stats SA, 2021:64-68). Conversely, the Northern Cape (7.8 per cent) and the Western Cape (9.6 per cent) recorded the lowest share of non-agricultural informal sector employment (Stats SA, 2021:64-68).

Despite the Western Cape's comparatively small non-agricultural informal sector, it is a valuable source of employment for 217 000 people, of whom 152 000 (70.0 per cent) were in the Cape Town metro (Stats SA, 2021:64). Based on these figures, the non-agricultural informal sector accounts for approximately 10.5 per cent of the metro area's total employment (Stats SA, 2021:64) and overall, the City of Cape Town (2020a) states that the informal sector is the city's fifth largest employment sector. The Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation (2018) states that the *"informal economy contributes between R4.3 and R6 billion to Cape Town's gross geographic product (GGP)."* In addition, income generated in the informal sector reduces the poverty rate in Cape Town with 4.5 per cent (City of Cape Town, 2015:50).

In terms of sectoral distribution, informal retail trade (including spaza shops and street trading) is one of the most visible and prominent activities in South Africa's informal sector (Ligthelm, 2003:54; Roever & Skinner, 2016:359; Rogan & Skinner, 2017:18; Stats SA, 2019:6). Rogan and Skinner (2017:18, 21) indicate that, in 2014, 42 per cent of South Africa's non-agricultural informal sector employment was in the trade industry, and 34.1 per cent of the people who are self-employed in the non-agricultural informal sector are street traders.

Nkrumah-Abebrese and Schachtebeck (2017:128) state that street trading is an increasingly significant activity in inner cities, especially in central business districts (CBDs). In line with the national prevalence, trade is the largest component of the Cape Town metro's informal economy (City of Cape Town, 2015:52). Andrag (2011:40) reported that there were approximately 800 informal street traders operating in the CBD in 2011. When considering the Municipality's number of designated trading bays, the City of Cape Town's (2021a) dataset on informal trade goods and services for September 2021 includes 614 trading bays in Cape Town Central.

Despite this significant contribution, South Africa's informal sector is viewed as relatively small compared to many other developing countries, especially in light of the country's high levels of unemployment (Kingdon & Knight, 2001; Blaauw, 2017:339; Haysom *et al*., 2017:14; Rogan &

Skinner, 2017:1). This may signal, among other aspects, that there are numerous and possibly significant barriers to enter and remain in the informal sector (and informal street trading).

External economic and health shocks, in particular, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, have adverse effects on the informal sector. Despite optimistic beliefs that the informal sector can theoretically mitigate some of the adverse effects of external shocks by absorbing the job losses that occurred in the formal sector, previous studies indicate the contrary – the informal sector is often disproportionately affected by external economic and health shocks, especially in South Africa (Bassier *et al.*, 2020; Rogan & Skinner, 2018; Skinner & Rogan, 2019; UN *et al.*, 2015; UNDP, 2014).

The COVID-19 pandemic (and associated lockdown regulations) followed the same trend as previous crises, disproportionately affecting participants in the informal sector, especially females and migrant workers (Bassier *et al.*, 2020:1; Jain *et al*., 2020:11,20; Rogan & Skinner, 2020:21; Valodia, 2020). This is largely because participants in the informal sector generally do not have social and employment protection, and have limited access to relief measures (Bassier *et al.*, 2020:1; Rogan & Skinner, 2020:22).

This study, therefore, aims to provide a detailed understanding of the location-specific characteristics, issues and experiences of informal street traders in the Cape Town CBD within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It uses the framework and understanding provided by Amartya Sen's capability approach as a foundation to investigate the factors that have a positive and negative influence on the ability of these traders to generate a sustainable livelihood[2], especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sen's capability approach was chosen as the preferred theoretical framework because it can accommodate the dynamic and diverse nature of the informal sector, including informal street trading. The capability approach is a versatile and multi-dimensional framework that investigates various elements of well-being and can be applied to different evaluative purposes (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009:22; Dang, 2014:463; Robeyns, 2005:93; Sen, 2005:157; Schischka *et al.*, 2008:231). This people-focused approach also acknowledges human diversity and contextual factors (Alkire, 2010:15; Alkire & Deneulin, 2009:23; Dang, 2014:462).

[2] *"A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term"* (Chambers & Conway, 1991:6).

1.2 Problem statement

Despite its significant contribution to both survivalists and entrepreneurs, South Africa's informal sector is relatively small compared to many other developing countries, especially within the context of the country's high levels of unemployment (Blaauw, 2017:339; Haysom *et al*., 2017:14; Kingdon & Knight, 2001; Rogan & Skinner, 2017:1). Rogan and Skinner (2017:23,29), therefore, suggest that it is essential to investigate the barriers to entry, especially in provinces (and cities) with relatively small informal sectors, such as the Western Cape and Cape Town (City of Cape Town, 2021b:13; Stats SA, 2021:64-68). Particularly because the informal sector is a long-term phenomenon (Chen, 2007:2) – as claimed by Fourie (2018b:xvii), the informal sector is *"here to stay for the foreseeable future"*.

Previous studies pertaining to Cape Town's informal sector have predominantly focused on the township economy, foodservices, and the role of migrants, policies and governance. Key examples include the work of Petersen *et al.* (2018), Charman *et al.* (2019), Hill *et al.* (2018), Tawodzera (2019), Battersby *et al.* (2016), Hill *et al.* (2016), Lapah and Tengeh (2013), Rogerson (2018), Tawodzera *et al.* (2015), and Charman and Petersen (2018). However, there is limited recent research focusing on Cape Town's CBD, especially regarding the various activities, spatial characteristics and business strategies of street traders in the CBD. In addition, the City of Cape Town acknowledges *"the scarcity of data about the size, location and activities of the informal economy"* (City of Cape Town, 2021b).

The informal sector's dynamic and diverse nature signifies that there are varying productive capabilities, employment and growth trajectories, challenges and spatial characteristics across the different activities performed within the sector (Fourie, 2018a:471; Rakabe, 2018:305). As the composition and characteristics of informal activities also differ across geographic locations, national-level overviews might not accurately reflect local characteristics and challenges (Charman & Petersen, 2018:254; Haysom *et al*., 2017:15). Without an in-depth understanding of location-specific issues and possible barriers to entry, the informal sector may not be able to expand and provide sustainable livelihoods as envisaged by policymakers.

1.3 Research objectives

1.3.1 Primary objective

This study aims to conduct location-specific research to get a detailed and differentiated understanding of a particular component of the informal sector – severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This study, therefore, aims to provide a detailed understanding of the status-quo, location-specific characteristics, issues and experiences of informal street traders in

the Cape Town CBD within the context of the pandemic and resultant lockdown regulations. Particular emphasis is placed on the factors that have a positive and negative influence on an individual's ability to generate a sustainable livelihood in the informal sector as a street trader, especially in light of exogenous shocks such as the current COVID-19 pandemic.

1.3.2 Secondary objectives

The literature review and empirical component of this study aim to:

- Determine the status quo of informal street traders and trading activities in the Cape Town CBD. Of particular interest is how these patterns changed (or remained the same) over time, especially in relation to the impact of COVID-19 and the various lockdown regulations associated with the pandemic.
- Identify the importance and positive outcomes associated with informal street trading.
- Explore the challenges experienced by informal traders, with a particular focus on the hardships associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, explore the enabling environment and other factors that have a positive influence on the ability of informal street traders to generate a sustainable livelihood.
- Acquire insights pertaining to the personal and business-related motivations and aspirations of informal street traders, as well as the key strategies implemented to achieve these aspirations and remain competitive.

1.4 Research design and methodology

This qualitative research approach uses a descriptive case study, as the methodology is based on a variety of data collection methods and approaches.

1.4.1 Defining the case study area

This study uses the Cape Town CBD as the case study for this study to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the location-specific dynamics and barriers associated with informal street trading. The specific study area was selected to be representative of the locational characteristics of informal street trading, i.e. near transport interchanges, public transport routes, shopping centres and formal business areas (Andrag, 2011:12; Charman *et al*., 2019:34; Charman *et al*., 2017:50; Hill *et al*., 2018:11; Ligthelm, 2013:60; Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017:131; Tawodzera, 2019:452).

1.4.2 Data collection

Creswell (2013:98) and Mills *et al.* (2010:274) argue that a single data source or method is generally insufficient to develop the comprehensive understanding required for case study research. This study, therefore, used a variety of data collection sources and approaches, with a specific focus on the use of observations and interviews.

The researcher conducted nine site visits from June to October 2020 to obtain a detailed understanding of the location, product offering and prevalence of informal street traders in the study area, with a particular focus on how these patterns changed (or remained the same) over time, especially in relation to the impact of COVID-19 and the various lockdown regulations associated with the pandemic. The key findings resulting from the observations also informed and substantiated the interviews with informal street traders.

Between April and May 2021, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 informal street traders, representing 19 informal street enterprises. The interview questions were formulated to help address key themes such as demographic information, characteristics and strategies of informal street trading enterprises, the impact of COVID-19, the advantages of informal trading, access to resources, challenges experienced, as well as personal and business-related motivations and aspirations.

The researcher used purposeful sampling to include 'information-rich' cases in the sample (Flick, 2018:88; Flick, 2014:62; Mills *et al.*, 2010:837; Patton, 2002:40). The duration and frequency of the observations, as well as the sample size for the interviews were determined by data and thematic saturation. The researcher collected data until the acquisition of additional data did not introduce new themes, insights or perspectives (Creswell, 2014:248; Suri, 2011:72).

1.4.3 Data analysis

The data was used to compile consolidated datasets (which were subject to several quality control measures) to thematically analyse and report on the key findings. Guided by the protocol and best practice established by Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014:230) and Guest *et al.* (2012:7), the researcher revisited the data and identified themes multiple times to refine the analysis.

The key findings emerging from the observations are used to demonstrate how COVID-19 and the various lockdown regulations associated with the pandemic altered the prevalence of informal street traders operating in the study area, as well as the product/service offering and trading hours associated with these informal trading enterprises.

Descriptive statistics are used to portray the demographic and business characteristics of respondents who participated in the interviews. The rest of the thematic analysis provides a comprehensive discussion of various factors that have a positive and negative influence on the ability of informal street traders to generate a sustainable livelihood – with a particular focus on the impact of COVID on this segment of the informal economy.

1.5 Ethical considerations

The researcher adhered to the North-West University's code of conduct for researchers throughout the study. In addition, the empirical component of the study only commenced after the researcher obtained ethics clearance from the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences' Research Ethics Committee at the North-West University[3].

More specifically, the following ethical principles were adhered to while conducting interviews with informal street traders:

- As an introduction, each participant was sufficiently informed of the key components and objectives of the study.
- It was emphasised that the respondent will not directly benefit or be rewarded for participating in this study.
- Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants may have, therefore, declined participation in the discussion and were in no way compelled to answer all of the questions. They were able to opt-out of the interview at any time and could decline to disclose sensitive information.
- Participants must have been at least 18 years old at the time of the interview.
- Permission was requested to record the conversation. It should be noted that these recordings were merely for note-taking purposes, especially to supplement the notes that were taken during the interaction.
- Inputs will remain confidential as the results will be reported and presented in an aggregated and anonymised format. In addition, none of the statements or opinions will be directly attributed to any individuals.
- Written informed consent was obtained from each participant, acknowledging that they were sufficiently informed of and agree with the key principles discussed in the preceding bullets.

[3] The ethics number allocated to this study is NWU-00776-20-A4.

In addition, the following overarching ethical principles were implemented throughout the study:

- The researcher adhered to the national lockdown regulations and social distancing principles. For example, the observations and interviews only took place when lockdown regulations permitted these activities.
- Participants were treated with dignity and respect.
- Although it is not required to gain permission from the City of Cape Town to conduct surveys in public spaces, key officials have been informed of the proposed study.

1.6 Contribution of the study

This study addresses existing research gaps by providing a detailed understanding of location-specific characteristics, issues and experiences of informal street traders in the Cape Town CBD within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Understanding and addressing the factors that have a positive and negative influence on informal street trading enterprises may assist this component of the informal sector to expand and provide sustainable livelihoods. Over the long term, these insights could possibly inform evidence-based legislature, policies and interventions that govern and support informal street trading.

Additional contributions of this study can be summarised as follows:

- The observations do not only illustrate the location and main product/service classification of all the street traders in the study area, but can also be used to analyse potential spatial and clustering patterns (Charman *et al*., 2019:13). In turn, this could possibly assist municipalities when determining the location of approved trading bays.
- Insights pertaining to the impact of exogenous shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on informal street traders could possibly inform COVID-19 regulations and relief measures for informal traders.
- Insights pertaining to motivational factors, key strategies associated with informal street trading enterprises, and aspirations of informal street traders will inform a better understanding of the resilience and innovative approaches displayed by informal street traders in general, and specifically in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Thematically exploring the positive outcomes and functionings resulting from the informal street traders' continued endeavours will help to understand the importance of informal trading in the lives and livelihoods of many people in the informal sector.

1.7 Limitations and challenges

The following limitations and challenges can be ascribed to the study, especially regarding the data collection phase:

- The dynamic presence of informal street traders and high levels of foot traffic made it difficult to guarantee a faultless count and classification at some of the streets/landmarks (for example, the Grand Parade and the taxi rank). This will, however, not have a significant negative influence on the overarching trends and patterns that were observed.
- External factors, such as protests, hindered the researcher to conduct detailed observations at specific streets/landmarks during a few of the site visits.
- The researcher incorporated a data validation component to confirm that saturation was reached in terms of the advantages associated with informal street trading, the challenges experienced, and the impact of COVID-19. However, due to the purposefully selected and relatively small sample size, the demographic characteristics of the respondents are not necessarily representative of all the informal street traders in the study area. This is not claimed in the study and does not detract from findings of the qualitative nature of the study.
- Although the researcher scheduled the interviews beforehand, adverse weather conditions prevented some of the traders to operate on certain days – reiterating that wind and rain are significant challenges to experience by informal traders. Where possible, the interviews were rescheduled.

1.8 Outline of the dissertation

The dissertation contains five chapters – as outlined below.

Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the study

This introductory chapter provides background to the study and summarises the key components of the study. It includes an overview of the problem statement, research objectives, research design and methodology, ethical considerations, contribution of the study, limitations and challenges.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The literature review entails a comprehensive and thematic synthesis of previous studies and key documents that pertain to the informal sector, particularly informal street trading, which is one of the most visible and prominent activities in the informal sector. More specifically, this chapter provides a global and national overview of the informal sector, and illustrates the importance, demographic and business characteristics, and key challenges associated with informal street traders. This chapter also describes how the informal sector is affected by external shocks, with a particular focus on the impact of COVID-19 on informal traders.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Chapter 3 provides a detailed overview of the research approach and design, as well as the data collection and analysis underpinning the methodology applied throughout this study.

Chapter 4: Findings, results and discussion

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the key findings emerging from the observations and qualitative interviews. Descriptive statistics are used to portray the demographic and business characteristics of respondents who participated in the interviews; while the rest of the chapter provides a comprehensive and thematic discussion of various factors that have a positive and negative influence on the ability of informal street traders to generate a sustainable livelihood – given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter also provides insights pertaining to motivational factors, key strategies associated with informal street trading enterprises, and aspirations of informal street traders.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

This concluding chapter summarises the research objectives, findings and contribution of the study, as well as provide policy recommendations and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study uses the framework and understanding provided by Sen's capability approach as a foundation to investigate the factors that have a positive and negative influence on the ability of informal street traders in the Cape Town CBD to generate a sustainable livelihood, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous studies indicate that some of these enablers could include information sharing, flexible trading hours, solidarity with other traders, access to support services and social networks, and good working relationships with suppliers and customers (Ligthelm & Van Wyk, 2004:4; Mkhize *et al.*, 2013:25-26; Northcote, 2015:64). Conversely, negative perceptions towards informal traders, crime, cumbersome licencing procedures, insufficient infrastructure, and limited access to finance, training and information hinder informal street traders' ability to generate a sustainable livelihood (Ligthelm & Van Wyk, 2004:4; Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017:132; Petersen *et al.*, 2018:87; Tawodzera *et al.*, 2015:5).

The literature review entails a comprehensive and thematic synthesis of previous studies and key documents that pertain to the informal sector, particularly informal street trading, which is one of the most visible and prominent activities in the informal sector. More specifically, this chapter provides a global and national overview of the informal sector, and illustrates the importance, demographic and business characteristics, and key challenges associated with informal street traders. Lastly, this chapter also depicts how the informal sector is affected by external shocks, with a particular focus on the impact of COVID-19 on informal traders.

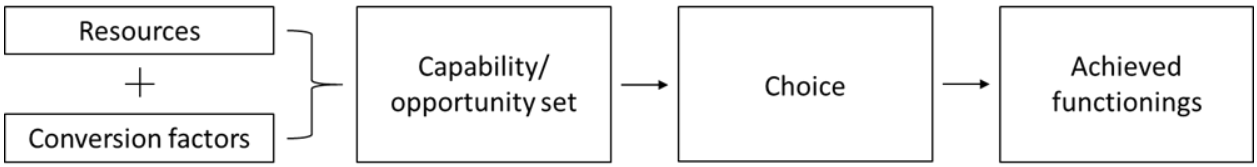
2.2 Theoretical framework: Amartya Sen's capability approach

The capability approach of Amartya Sen provides a universal framework to assess well-being, human development, quality of life and social arrangements (Alkire, 2010:14; Binder, 2014:1204; Robeyns, 2005:93). More specifically, this framework was developed by Sen as a framework to help evaluate a *"person's achievements and freedoms in terms of his or her actual ability to do the different things a person has reason to value doing or being"* (cited by Robeyns, 2017:7). Some of the key publications pertaining to the capability approach include Sen (1980; 1985; 1992; 1999), Nussbaum (2000), and Robeyns (2017).

2.2.1 Key components of the capability approach

As illustrated by Binder (2014:1203), and in the figure below, the capability approach investigates how an individual utilises and transforms his accessible resources into achieved functionings.

Figure 2.1: Essential components and sequence of the capability approach (adapted from Pelenc, 2014:3; Robeyns, 2005:98)



Resources include the tangible, intangible, marketable, and non-marketable goods and services that an individual has access to (Pelenc, 2014:3; Robeyns, 2017:45). Conversion factors refer to the broader context that determines if and to what extent an individual can transform his resource(s) into functionings (Pelenc, 2014:3; Robeyns, 2017:45). Dang (2014:462) and Robeyns 2005:99) explain that these factors can be clustered under three main categories, namely personal conversion factors (such as physical condition and gender), social conversion factors (such as social norms and public policies), and environmental conversion factors (such as climate and public facilities). When looking at the resources and conversion factors pertaining to informal traders, Rolfe *et al.* (2011:65) found that start-up capital and positive urban externalities are important determinants of informal entrepreneurs'[4] ability to generate a sustainable livelihood. In addition, information sharing, flexible trading hours, solidarity with other traders, access to support services, and good working relationships with suppliers and customers are also positive contributors (Ligthelm & Van Wyk, 2004:4; Mkhize *et al.*, 2013:25-26). On the other hand, negative perceptions towards informal traders, crime, cumbersome licencing procedures, insufficient infrastructure, and limited access to finance, training and information hinder informal street traders' ability to generate a sustainable livelihood (Ligthelm & Van Wyk, 2004:4; Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017:132; Petersen *et al.*, 2018:87; Tawodzera *et al.*, 2015:5). These challenges also influence traders' *"fulfilment of their potential well-being"* (Sassen *et al.*, 2018:32).

A capability set includes all the feasible functionings (and combinations of functionings) that an individual has the potential to achieve and choose between (Alkire, 2002:184; Dang, 2014:462). These functionings can range from basic and specified needs (like having access to clean water) to more advanced and general activities (like having self-respect and being able to visit loved ones) (Alkire, 2010:25; Alkire & Deneulin, 2009:31; Dang, 2014:461-462). Similarly, informal traders' capability sets entail both a survivalist and entrepreneurial component. Several informal traders mainly aim to generate an income so that they can cover their basic needs, obtain financial security, become independent, and remit money to their family members (Northcote & Dodson, 2015:152; Tabe, 2014:176; Tawodzera, 2019:447). Regarding enterprise development, several

[4] The ILO (2018:18) defines informal entrepreneurs as *"employers and own-account workers in the informal sector."*

informal traders aspire to own more stalls, expand their operations to additional locations, diversify their product range, operate from a bigger premise, or to migrate the enterprise to the formal sector (Nkrumah-Abebrese, 2016:88-89; Tawodzera, 2019:456).

The capability approach acknowledges an individual's freedom to choose *"between many different functionings and pursue a variety of different life paths"* (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009:32). Although some informal traders chose the profession because they were unemployed or unable to find employment in the formal sector, others chose informal trading because *"they had always wanted to run a business"*, *"to be their own boss"*, and have more flexible working hours so that they can attend to their children (Tabe, 2014:176; Tawodzera, 2019:447-448). Some of the enterprise-related choices that informal traders have to make pertain to elements such as location, product range, trading hours, and which suppliers to use.

Sen (as cited by Dang, 2014:461) explains that *"functionings are what a person manages to do or to be."* Functionings can also be defined as achieved *"beings and doings that people value and have reason to value"* (Alkire, 2010:25). Some of the key functionings associated with informal street trading include earning a vital source of household income, the opportunity to share information and meet new people, independence, and an increased sense of self-worth (Ah Goo & De Wit, 2015:78-79; Horber: 2018:13; Ligthelm, 2004:45; Mkhize *et al.*, 2013:26). For example, Sassen *et al.* (2018:32) indicate that street trading provides an income-generating opportunity and gives traders *"a sense of belonging through their collective purpose and sharing between women street traders."*

2.2.2 Application of the capability approach

The capability approach is a versatile framework that can be applied to different evaluative purposes (Sen, 2005:157; Schischka *et al.*, 2008:231). This study will use the framework and understanding provided by the capability approach as a foundation to investigate the factors that have a positive and negative influence on the ability of informal street traders in the Cape Town CBD to generate a sustainable livelihood, especially in light of exogenous shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

More specifically, this study will investigate the following factors under each of the essential components of the capability approach (as illustrated in Figure 2.1):

- Resources and conversion factors: demographic characteristics of informal street traders, characteristics and strategies of informal street trading enterprises, access to resources, challenges experienced by informal traders, and the impact of COVID-19 and associated lockdown regulations.

- Capability/ opportunity set and choice: personal and business-related motivations and aspirations of informal street traders.
- Achieved functioning's: importance and positive outcomes of informal street trading.

2.3 Contextualising the informal sector

2.3.1 Defining key concepts associated with the informal sector

The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) defines the informal sector based on the characteristics of the workers and enterprises (Chen *et al.*, 2006:2132; ILO, 1993; ILO, 2018:7). The informal sector is clustered as a subset of the household sector and *"may be broadly characterised as consisting of units engaged in the production of goods or services with the primary objective of generating employment and incomes to the persons concerned. These units typically operate at a low level of organisation, with little or no division between labour and capital as factors of production and on a small scale"* (ILO, 1993:2).

The ILO later expanded this definition to consider the nature and conditions of employment, resulting in the conceptual framework for informal employment (ILO, 2018:7). Informal employment can occur in both the formal and informal sector, and entails *"self-employment (including employers, own-account operators and contributing family workers), wage employment and intermediary categories (such as contract workers and industrial outworkers)"* (Chen *et al.*, 2006:2132; Chen, 2018:28).

Figure 2.2: Conceptual framework for informal employment (17th ICLS guidelines)

Production units by type	**Jobs by status in employment**								
	Own-account workers		Employers		Contributing family workers	Employees		Members of producers' cooperatives	
	Informal	Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal	Informal	Formal	Informal	Formal
Formal sector enterprises					1	2			
Informal sector enterprises	3		4		5	6	7	8	
Household	9					10			

Source: ILO (2013:37)

The conceptual framework for informal employment depicts that *"cells shaded in dark grey refer to jobs, which by definition do not exist in the type of production unit in question. Cells shaded in light grey refer to formal jobs. Unshaded cells represent the various types of informal jobs"* (ILO,

2013:37). More specifically, employment in the informal sector is indicated by cells three to eight, while informal employment is indicated by cells one to six, and eight to ten (ILO, 2013:37).

2.3.2 Global overview of the informal sector

The informal sector is often utilised by individuals who could not access similar opportunities in the formal sector (ILO, 2013:3, Otoo, 2012:17). The sector is a significant source of livelihoods, employment and gross value added (GVA) in several countries across the world, particularly in developing and emerging countries (Bonnet *et al*., 2019:1; ILO, 2013:3; OECD & ILO, 2019:27). Africa has the largest informal economy, with employment in the informal sector accounting for 76.0 per cent of the continent's total employment and 59.2 per cent of non-agricultural employment (ILO, 2018:23).

Previous research also indicates that there is an inverse relationship between the level of education and the prevalence of informal employment (ILO, 2018:19; OECD & ILO, 2019:17). However, statistics indicating the exact size, composition, contribution and gender distribution of the informal sector vary, because of different definitions, methodologies and data availability. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 use selected sources to illustrate the estimated size of employment in the informal sector and informal employment in various geographical settings across the world.

Table 2.1: Selected size estimates of employment in the informal sector

Source	Region	Results in terms of size
Employment in the informal sector		
ILO (2018:23)	Global	51.9% of total employment and 40.8% of non-agricultural employment
	Africa	76% of total employment and 59.2% of non-agricultural employment
	Arab States	60.9% of total employment and 55.1% of non-agricultural employment
	Asia and Pacific	58.8% of total employment and 48.9% of non-agricultural employment
	Americas	29.3% of total employment and 26.0% of non-agricultural employment
	Europe and Central Asia	19.4% of total employment and 15.2% of non-agricultural employment
Grabrucker (2018:52-53)	Kenya	79.1% of all non-agricultural employment in 2007
	Rwanda	73.4% of all non-agricultural employment in 2005
	Mali	71.4% of all non-agricultural employment in 2004
	Zambia	64.6% of all non-agricultural employment in 2008
	Mauritius	11.9% of all non-agricultural employment in 2009
	Botswana	14.4% of all non-agricultural employment in 2006
	South Africa	**17.8% of all non-agricultural employment in 2010**
Bonnet *et al.* (2019:5)	Developing countries	81% of total employment
	Emerging countries	57% of total employment
	Developed countries	15% of total employment

Source: Author's compilation from various sources

Table 2.2: Selected size estimates of informal employment

Source	Region	Results in terms of size
OECD and ILO (2019: 16)	Developing and emerging countries	70% of total employment
	Developed countries	18% of total employment
	Africa	86% of total employment
	Arab States, Asia and the Pacific	68% of total employment
	Americas	40% of total employment
	Europe and Central Asia	25% of total employment

Source: Author's compilation from various sources

In terms of the informal sector's contribution to non-agricultural GVA in developing countries, Chen (2018:35) indicates that Benin (62 per cent) had the highest contribution, while South Africa's informal sector had the smallest contribution (6 per cent). Table 2.3 depicts the informal sector's contribution to non-agricultural GVA in selected developing countries between 2000 and 2013.

Table 2.3: The informal sector's contribution to non-agricultural GVA in developing countries

Country	Percentage
Sub-Saharan Africa	
Benin	62% of non-agricultural GVA in 2000
Burkina Faso	36% of non-agricultural GVA in 2000
Cameroon	46% of non-agricultural GVA in 2003
Niger	52% of non-agricultural GVA in 2006
Senegal	49% of non-agricultural GVA in 2000
South Africa	**6% of non-agricultural GVA in 2013**
Togo	56% of non-agricultural GVA in 2000
Asia, Latin America, Middle East and North Africa	
India	46% of non-agricultural GVA in 2008
Colombia	32% of non-agricultural GVA in 2006
Guatemala	34% of non-agricultural GVA in 2006
Honduras	18% of non-agricultural GVA in 2006
Venezuela	16% of non-agricultural GVA in 2006
Algeria	30% of non-agricultural GVA in 2003
Egypt	17% of non-agricultural GVA in 2008
Iran	31% of non-agricultural GVA in 2007
Tunisia	34% of non-agricultural GVA in 2004
Palestine	33% of non-agricultural GVA in 2007

Source: Chen (2018:35)

Like the size and contribution of the informal sector, the gender distribution of informal sector participants often varies or aligns across different geographical locations. Although there are more countries with more informally employed females than males, overall, *"informal employment is a greater source of employment for men than for women"* (ILO, 2018:20-21). The majority of

employed females in Africa (89.9 per cent) are informally employed; conversely, males comprise the largest proportion of informal employment in the Americas, Arab State, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia (ILO, 2018:20, 25). Furthermore, a research paper published by the World Bank states that informal sector employment accounts for 60 per cent of female employment in developing countries and 84 per cent of female employment in sub-Saharan Africa (Benjamin *et al*., 2014:7).

2.3.3 The nature of the informal sector in South Africa

2.3.3.1 The dynamic nature of the informal sector

It is important to acknowledge that the informal sector is dynamic and diverse in its scope, employment relations and range of activities (Valodia *et al*., 2006:108). Participation in the informal sector comprises own-account workers, paid and unpaid family workers, home-based work, short-term contracts, and casual labour (Bonnet *et al*., 2019:1; ILO, 2013:3). Key activities in the informal sector include spaza shops, shebeens, street trading, cooked food and take-aways, construction, manufacturing, waste-picking, crafts, domestic work, transport and hairdressers (Charman & Petersen, 2018:253; Rogan & Skinner, 2018:89; Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation, 2016:20).

Some segments of the informal sector are a survivalist livelihood strategy for many vulnerable and historically disadvantaged individuals such as the urban poor, female heads of households, and refugees (Andrag, 2011:5; Makaluza & Burger, 2018:195; Stats SA, 2019:9). Makaluza and Burger (2018:195) found that these individuals generally have significant household responsibilities despite limited household income. In addition, many of the individuals who participate in the informal sector could not access employment opportunities in the formal sector, mainly because of their limited educational attainment and training (Blaauw, 2017:348; Ledingoane & Viljoen, 2020:1; Western Cape Government Provincial Treasury, 2019:88-89). Although the informal sector mainly comprises survivalist individuals who are confronted with unemployment and low income, the sector also provides growth-oriented and higher-income business opportunities for entrepreneurs (Ligthelm, 2004:39; Makaluza & Burger, 2018:194-195). It is estimated that the growth-oriented component accounts for approximately 27 per cent of the informal sector, and several of the components and participants entailed in the informal sector are driven by a *"a spirit of entrepreneurship"* (Blaauw, 2017:353; Makaluza & Burger, 2018:194). Similarly, Tabe (2014:167) *"argues that street trading is not solely a survival activity as there are possibilities for growth and potential for capital accumulation."* The similar motivational factors to participate in informal street trading can also be categorised as survivalist or growth-oriented.

The informal sector's dynamic and diverse nature signifies that there are varying productive capabilities, employment and growth trajectories, challenges and spatial characteristics across the different activities performed within the sector (Fourie, 2018a:471; Rakabe, 2018:305). As the composition and characteristics of informal activities also differ across geographic locations, national-level overviews might not accurately reflect local characteristics and challenges (Charman & Petersen, 2018:254; Haysom *et al*., 2017:15).

2.3.3.2 The contribution of the informal sector to South Africa's economy

The informal sector is a vital, and often long-term, contributor to employment (including both employment creation and retention), poverty alleviation, food accessibility and food security (Blaauw, 2017:339; Fourie, 2018a:471; Rogan & Skinner, 2017:3; Tawodzera & Crush, 2019:1).

Ligthelm (2006:50) estimates that the informal sector accounted for 4.6 per cent of South Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) at basic prices in 2004, while Stats SA (2014:9) indicates that the informal sector's contribution to GDP remained relatively stable between 2008 and 2013, slightly fluctuating between 5.5 per cent in 2008 and 5.9 per cent in 2013. More specifically, the Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation (2018) states that the *"informal economy contributes between R4.3 and R6 billion to Cape Town's gross geographic product (GGP)"*.

During the second quarter of 2021, 2.686 million people (1.740 million males and 946 000 females) were employed in South Africa's non-agricultural informal sector, accounting for 18.0 per cent of total employment (Stats SA, 2021:26-27). In terms of agricultural employment, Cousins (2018:377) estimates that between 400 000 and 500 000 people are employed in informal-sector farming.

The size and composition of the informal sector varies across provinces. In the second quarter of 2021, Limpopo recorded the highest proportion of informal sector employees, with non-agricultural informal sector employment accounting for 27.2 per cent of the province's total employment, followed by Mpumalanga (26.2 per cent) and the Eastern Cape (25.3 per cent) (Stats SA, 2021:64-68). Conversely, the Northern Cape and the Western Cape recorded the lowest share of informal employment, with non-agricultural informal sector employment accounting for 7.8 per cent and 9.6 per cent of the province's total employment, respectively (Stats SA, 2021:64-68). More specifically, 217 000 people were employed in the non-agricultural informal sector in the Western Cape, of whom 152 000 (70.0 per cent) were in the Cape Town Metro, accounting for approximately 10.5 per cent of the metro area's total employment (Stats SA, 2021:64). The City of Cape Town (2020a) indicates that the informal sector is the city's fifth largest employment sector.

Cichello and Rogan's (2018:237) research on the impact of the informal sector on employment and poverty reduction in South Africa found that income received by self-employed participants in the informal sector account for 3.1 per cent of the total per capita income received by households and contributes 3.6 per cent towards poverty reduction, while the income received through informal wage employment accounts for 2.4 per cent of total per capita income, and between 4.3 and 4.5 per cent of total poverty reduction (Cichello & Rogan, 2018:237). On a municipal level, the income generated in the informal sector reduces the Cape Metro area's poverty rate with 4.5 per cent (City of Cape Town, 2015:50).

Despite this significant contribution, South Africa's informal sector is small compared to other developing countries, especially in light of the country's high levels of unemployment (Kingdon & Knight, 2001; Blaauw, 2017:339; Haysom *et al*., 2017:14; Rogan & Skinner, 2017:1). It is estimated that, since 2008, the number of unemployed people in South Africa has been approximately two to three times higher than the number of participants in the informal sector (Burger & Fourie, 2019:1). This may signal that there are numerous and possibly significant barriers to enter and remain in the informal sector. Without an in-depth understanding of location-specific issues and possible barriers to entry, the informal sector will not be able to expand and provide sustainable livelihoods as envisaged by policymakers. Rogan and Skinner (2017:23,29), therefore, suggest that it is essential to investigate the barriers to entry, especially in provinces (and cities) with notably small informal sectors, such as the Western Cape and the Cape Town Metro; particularly because the informal sector is a long-term phenomenon *"that is here to stay for the foreseeable future"* (Chen, 2007:2; Fourie, 2018b:xvii).

2.3.3.3 Contextualising street trading

Informal retail trade (including spaza shops and street trading) is one of the most visible and prominent activities in South Africa's informal sector (Ligthelm, 2003:54; Roever & Skinner, 2016:359; Rogan & Skinner, 2017:18; Stats SA, 2019:6). In the second quarter of 2021, employment in the trade sector accounted for 41.1 per cent of total employment in the non-agricultural informal sector (Stats SA, 2021:63).

According to the Small Enterprise Development Agency (as cited by Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017:129), there were nearly 150 000 street traders in South Africa during the 1990s. Ligthelm (2006:44) estimates that there were 261 000 hawkers and 127 600 spaza shops in 2004. More recently, Rogan and Skinner (2017:18, 21) indicate that, in 2014, 42 per cent of South Africa's non-agricultural informal sector employment was in the trade industry, and 34.1 per cent of the people who are self-employed in the non-agricultural informal sector are street traders.

Nkrumah-Abebrese and Schachtebeck (2017:128) state that street trading is an increasingly significant activity in inner cities, especially in CBDs. In line with the national prevalence, trade is the largest component of the Cape Town metro's informal economy (City of Cape Town, 2015:52). Andrag (2011:40) reported that there were approximately 800 informal street traders operating in the Cape Town CBD in 2011. When considering the Municipality's number of designated trading bays, the City of Cape Town's (2021a) dataset on informal trade goods and services for September 2021 includes 614 trading bays in Cape Town Central.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation indicates that there two types of informal traders in Cape Town, namely general traders and specialised traders. General traders have *"a high reliance on providing convenience"* and sell items such as *"wrapped foods, fruit and vegetables, cell phone accessories, cosmetics, clothes and accessories"* (Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation, 2018:2). Specialised traders, on the other hand, provide a *"niche product or service, unique and reliable market, relies less on convenience and more on clustering and become destinations in their own right",* and include *"tailors, hair salons, cobblers, traditional healers and cooked food"* (Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation, 2018:2).

2.4 The nature of informal street trading

2.4.1 The importance of informal street trading

The informal sector, including informal street trading, is a vital source of employment, poverty alleviation, food accessibility and food security (Blaauw, 2017:339; Fourie, 2018a:471; Rogan & Skinner, 2017:3; Skinner & Watson, 2020:1; Tawodzera & Crush, 2019:1). This is especially true for households in informal urban settlements and individuals who were unemployed or are unable to access employment opportunities in the formal sector (Blaauw, 2017:348; Ledingoane & Viljoen, 2020:1; Ligthelm, 2006:32; Skinner & Rogan, 2019:5).

"The informal sector is an important source of employment and of paid employment, with a growing propensity to employ" (Fourie, 2018a:471). In addition to providing self-employment for 34.1 per cent of all the people who were self-employed in South Africa's non-agricultural informal sector in 2014, street trading also provides paid (and unpaid) employment opportunities for family and non-family members (Rogan & Skinner, 2017:21). A study on street trade in Durban discovered that 30 per cent of the respondents employed at least one person (Mkhize *et al*., 2013:1). Similarly, a study on the informal food sector in Cape Town found that approximately one-third of the vendors had employees; most of these vendors employed one person (54 per cent), while 31 per cent of these vendors employed two people (Tawodzera & Crush, 2019:41). A survey of 518 migrant-owned microenterprises in Cape Town revealed that these owners

created job opportunities for 148 family members and 496 non-family members (Tawodzera *et al*., 2015:5). Informal traders also provide income opportunities for 'trolley-pushers', who assist the traders to transport their merchandise and stall infrastructure between the storage facility and the trading bay (Andrag, 2011:46; Horber, 2018:52; Washinyira, 2019).

Previous studies pertaining to the informal sector found that informal trading is often the main source of household income and employment (Goo & De Wit, 2015; Ligthelm, 2004; Mkhize *et al.*, 2013; Petersen *et al.*, 2018; Tawodzera, 2019). Ligthelm's (2004:45) research on informal microenterprises in South Africa's retail sector found that the income generated through the informal entity was the only source of income for 73.1 per cent of the hawkers and their household members. A study on street trade by Mkhize *et al*. (2013:1) in Durban discovered that half of the respondents were the only household member generating an income, while a study on the role of informal trade in medicinal plants in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality found that 67 per cent of the traders were the only breadwinners in their family (Ah Goo & De Wit, 2015:74). In Cape Town, a study among informal food vendors discovered that income derived from the informal entity accounted for 77.9 per cent of household income on average and was the only source of household income for 45.1 per cent of the participants (Tawodzera, 2019:452). Another study on informal foodservices in Cape Town townships found that the income generated from operating the informal entity was the main source of household income for 70 per cent of the respondents (Petersen *et al*., 2018:80).

Informal trade is a vital distribution channel and source of food security and food accessibility, especially for poor and low-income households with limited disposable income (Haysom *et al*., 2017:49; Ligthelm, 2003:54; Ligthelm, 2004:39; Skinner & Haysom, 2016:15). More specifically, informal traders are prominent value chain actors in the distribution of fresh produce (Cousins, 2018:376; Skinner & Watson, 2020:2; Wegerif, 2020:798). Hill *et al*. (2016:27) found that 50.6 per cent of the respondents in Cape Town who consume street food had monthly earnings below R3 000, and Battersby *et al.* (2016:5) report that 66 per cent of poor households in Cape Town buy food from informal traders.

Informal street traders provide consumers with convenient access to smaller quantities of culturally responsive[5] goods at affordable prices (Charman *et al*., 2019:1; Mkhize *et al.*, 2013:37; Petersen & Charman, 2018b:19-20). They enable households without refrigerators to frequently purchase small quantities of fruit and vegetables and *"if one is financially broke, you can always find enough money to purchase (for example) cooked chicken feet in the township – a product*

[5] Culturally responsive goods *"reflect cultural preferences and styles"* (Charman *et al.*, 2019:43); for example, informal traders in Philippi *"selling braaied meat sell a product steeped in cultural significance (via the open fire) and responsive to consumer taste preferences"* (Charman *et al.*, 2019:57).

largely unavailable informal outlets" (Charman *et al*., 2019:47; Petersen *et al*., 2018:83). As informal traders generally have more flexible trading hours based on consumer demand and are mainly located along transport and pedestrian routes, they provide consumers with ready-to-eat products close to their homes or place of work (Horber, 2018:20). As stated by two informal traders in Durban, *"we help the community by providing them with their basic needs at affordable prices cheaper and closer to their homes"* and *"vendors are important because they bring every good that people need closer to them"* (Mkhize *et al*., 2013:37).

Informal street trading also entails non-financial benefits for participants, including a sense of self-worth and independence, increased flexibility to be able to care for their children and attend to other responsibilities, solidarity with fellow traders and increased entrepreneurial orientation (Ah Goo & De Wit, 2015:78; Horber, 2018:13; Ligthelm, 2004:39; Sassen *et al*., 2018:31; Willemse, 2013:182).

2.4.2 Demographic characteristics of informal street traders

The key characteristics of informal street traders often vary (or align) across different geographic locations and nature of informal trade activities.

For example, a study on street traders in the Tshwane CBD revealed that 63 per cent of the traders in the sample were female and the majority of the traders were between the ages of 18 and 30 (43 per cent), followed by traders who were aged between 31 and 40 (33 per cent) (Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017:133). The study also found that 63 per cent of the traders were South African nationals, and the majority completed matric (67 per cent), followed by 30 per cent of the traders who obtained a qualification after school (Nkrumah-Abebrese, 2016:80-81).

Most of the street traders who were interviewed by Mkhize *et al.* (2013:10-11) in Durban were between 35 and 39 years old, attained some level of secondary education, and generated an average monthly turnover of R2 712.

A study among food traders in Cape Town and surrounding areas indicated that 52.9 per cent of the traders were female, 82 per cent were South African nationals, 64.3 per cent were between 25 and 44 years old, 74.1 per cent of the traders have not completed matric and most of the traders earned less than R1 000 per week (Hill *et al*., 2018:5-7). In another study on informal street traders in Cape Town, Tawodzera (2019:446-447, 451) revealed that most of the respondents were male (53.5 per cent), foreign nationals (51.7 per cent), between 30 and 34 years old (23.6 per cent), who completed some level of high school education (35 per cent), and realised an average profit of R6 559.04 in the previous month.

2.4.3 Characteristics of informal street trading enterprises

2.4.3.1 Start-up capital

Most informal enterprises, including informal street trading enterprises, are established with the trader's personal savings, followed by loans and contributions from family members and friends (Henning & Akoob, 2017:6; Ledingoane & Viljoen, 2020:7; Ligthelm, 2004:48; Tawodzera *et al*., 2015:3). There are also several informal traders who use their social grants to establish and maintain informal enterprises (Mkhize *et al.*, 2013:12; Nnaeme *et al.*, 2019). Most street trading enterprises are established with minimal start-up capital. In a study by Willemse (2013:176) about female street traders in Johannesburg and Tshwane, nearly half of the respondents indicated that their start-up capital was less than R500, followed by approximately 30 per cent of the respondents who used a maximum of R1 000 to establish their informal street trading entity, while 87.4 per cent of the respondents that sell food items in Cape Town used their personal savings to establish the entity, with 37.1 per cent of the respondents using between R20 and R500 to start their business, followed by 14.8 per cent of the traders who reported a start-up cost between R501 and R1 000 (Tawodzera, 2019:450).

2.4.3.2 Key strategies associated with informal street trading enterprises

Informal traders, particularly street traders, are dependent on high levels of foot traffic and informal street trading enterprises are, therefore, mainly based near transport interchanges, public transport routes, shopping centres and formal business areas (Andrag, 2011:12; Charman *et al*., 2019:34; Charman *et al*., 2017:50; Hill *et al*., 2018:11; Ligthelm, 2013:60; Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017:131; Tawodzera, 2019:452). These locations are advantageous for the traders as well as their customers. Being located near transport routes provides the traders access to a large number of customers and makes it easier to transport their stock; it also provides convenience for customers, who can now access a variety of goods and services as part of their daily commute (Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation, 2018; Tawodzera, 2019:452).

In addition, informal street traders generally prefer to form clusters instead of operating from dispersed locations because clustering makes it more convenient for the customers and increases the traders' collective ability to attract more customers (Dewar, 2005:8-9; Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation, 2018). On the other hand, some traders prefer to trade from various locations throughout the day, as mobile trading enables them to reach more customers and reduces the risk of confiscation and fines if the traders are not adhering to regulations (Tawodzera, 2019:453; Willemse, 2013:170).

Similar to the demographic characteristics of informal traders, the product range of informal street trading enterprises often varies or aligns across different geographic locations. Street traders in Durban mostly sell clothing and accessories, traditional medicine, and fresh produce, while 55 per cent of the street traders in the Tshwane CBD sell food items (Mkhize *et al*., 2013:15; Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017:133). Another study focusing on informal street traders from sub-Saharan Africa found that most of the respondents who are based in Johannesburg sell shoes (38 per cent) and accessories (31 per cent), while most of the traders who are based in Tshwane sell fresh produce (35 per cent) and processed foods (Willemse, 2013:176). The City of Cape Town (2015: 49) indicates that traders at the jetty in Strand mostly sell clothing and accessories; traders at the taxi rank in Khayelitsha mostly sell locally manufactured clothes; and traders at the Wynberg station mostly sell food.

The presence of traders and their associated product range sometimes varies throughout the day. For example, in the morning, a specific location might be characterised by traders who sell breakfast-related items (such as vetkoek and boiled eggs), but in the afternoon, the same location is mainly characterised by traders who sell fruit and vegetables (Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation, 2018). The gender disparities associated with the product offering should also be noted, especially among migrant traders. Male street traders tend to sell non-perishable goods and provide services with higher profit margins, while female traders more likely sell perishable products with lower profit margins (Chen, 2007:4; Mkhize *et al*., 2013:4). Males generally manage spaza shops, produce and sell crafts, repair cell phones, and provide barber services, while females mainly participate in street trading, selling flowers and cooked food, and providing hair braiding services (Northcote, 2015:65; Northcote & Dodson, 2015:160; Tabe, 2014:182). This is aligned with Makaluza and Burger's (2018:195) statement that proportionally more females are participating in survivalist activities, while more males are operating in the growth-oriented segments of the informal sector.

Several informal sector activities are categorised by long working hours and limited remuneration (Skinner & Rogan, 2019:7). Street trading is no exception. Informal street traders in the Tshwane CBD generally work 13 hours a day and their counterparts in Durban work 56 hours a week (Mkhize *et al*., 2013:14; Nkrumah-Abebrese, 2016:74). Most of the street traders selling food items in Cape Town work six or seven days a week, and more than eight hours a day, while 67 per cent of the informal traders surrounding the Nolungile Station in Khayelitsha work 12 hours a day, six days a week (Hill *et al*., 2018:6; Zulu, 2015:82). It should also be noted that several township-based traders have flexible trading hours based on consumer demand, and some of the traders only operate during these peak hours (Charman *et al*., 2018:85; Charman *et al*., 2019:45).

2.4.4 Challenges experienced by informal street traders

Insufficient infrastructure is often viewed as the biggest challenge experienced by informal street traders. Several traders do not have access to electricity, running water, facilities to safely reheat food, toilets, waste disposal, refrigeration, storage facilities (especially storage facilities near their trading sites) and shelter (Andrag, 2011:46; Hill *et al.*, 2018:2; Ligthelm & Van Wyk, 2004:5; Mkhize *et al.*, 2013:1; Mubaiwa, 2014:91; Petersen *et al.*, 2018:87; Tabe, 2014:183; Zulu, 2015:111). In addition, the lack of shelter exposes the traders and their goods to harsh weather conditions such as rain, wind and direct sunlight, and together with insufficient storage facilities, can reduce the shelf life of certain goods.

Informal entrepreneurs, including street traders, are often confronted with insufficient funds and limited access to or inability to meet the requirements for loans from government agencies or formal financial institutions (Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017:132; Tawodzera, 2019:443; Tawodzera & Crush, 2019:2013). Previous studies suggest that the latter is especially applicable to migrants (Crush *et al.*, 2015:6; Rogerson, 2018:164; Tawodzera, 2015:3). In a study among informal female entrepreneurs in the North West Province, all the respondents indicated that they did not have access to financing options provided by banks, while only 17 out of 1 018 informal food traders in Cape Town had a loan from government support structures (Henning & Akoob, 2017:6; Tawodzera & Crush, 2019:35-36). Insufficient collateral and documentation are perceived as the main reasons for informal traders' inability to obtain funding from banks (Rogerson, 2018:164; Tawodzera & Crush, 2019:36).

Informal entrepreneurs are also hindered by insufficient access to information and limited training opportunities, especially training and experience pertaining to business and financial skills (Ah Goo & De Wit, 2015:80; Henning & Akoob, 2017:8-9; Jiyane *et al.*, 2012:709; Mkhize *et al.*, 2013:3; Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017:133). Some traders are also unaware of municipal trading policies and by-laws (Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017:134).

Additional challenges experienced by street traders and other participants in the informal sector include robberies, xenophobic behaviour towards migrants, perceived harassment by law enforcement, confiscation of goods and income insecurity (Blaauw, 2017:354; Crush *et al.*, 2015:158; Mkhize *et al.*, 2013:2; Roever, 2016:27; Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation, 2016:43; Tawodzera *et al.*, 2015:1, 5-6; Zulu, 2015:112). Despite the long working hours, the income generated through informal street trading is volatile, ranging from high sales, to limited sales and even no sales on certain days (Ah Goo & De Wit, 2015:75; Crush *et al.*, 2015:152; Tabe, 2014:200). It should also be noted that female entrepreneurs in the informal sector, including street traders, are confronted with additional gender-specific constraints such as lower start-up

capital, educational attainment and earnings than their male counterparts (Mkhize *et al.*, 2013:4, 10; Rolfe *et al.*, 2011:16; Tawodzera, 2019:450).

2.4.5 Previous studies on Cape Town's informal sector

Previous studies pertaining to Cape Town's informal sector have predominantly focused on the township economy, foodservices, the role of migrants, policies and governance. Key examples include the work of Petersen *et al.* (2018), Charman *et al.* (2019), Hill *et al.* (2018), Tawodzera (2019), Battersby *et al.* (2016), Hill *et al.* (2016), Lapah and Tengeh (2013), Rogerson (2018), Tawodzera *et al.* (2015), and Charman and Petersen (2018). However, there is limited recent research focusing on Cape Town's CBD, especially regarding the various activities, spatial characteristics and business strategies of street traders in the CBD.

Van Heerden's (2011) thesis focused on the relationship between local government and street traders in the Cape Town CBD. In terms of the demographic profile of the street traders, his research revealed that most of the traders in the sample were male (69 per cent), foreign nationals (64.8 per cent), without a matric certificate (43.7 per cent), who earn more than R300 per week (70.4 per cent) (Van Heerden, 2011:52-54,69). Regarding the characteristics of the street trading enterprises, Van Heerden (2011:48) reported that the traders mostly sold snacks (26.5 per cent), clothes (14.5 per cent) fruit (9.5 per cent) and cosmetics (9 per cent).

Andrag (2011) investigated the spatial dynamics of informal trade surrounding the Cape Town Station and found that the key demographic characteristics of the traders vary across different locations in the CBD. For example, 80 per cent of the traders based on the Grand Parade are foreign nationals, while most of the traders based on the Station Deck and streets within the study area were South African nationals, accounting for 92 per cent and 60 per cent of the traders, respectively (Andrag, 2011:40,50). Similarly, the income generated by informal traders also varies, with traders who were based near transport routes and areas with high foot traffic reporting the highest earnings (Andrag, 2011:48).

2.5 The socio-economic impact of external shocks on the informal sector

Despite optimistic beliefs that the informal sector will mitigate the adverse effects of external shocks by absorbing the job losses that occurred in the formal sector, previous studies indicate the contrary – the informal sector is often disproportionately affected by external economic and health shocks, especially in South Africa (Bassier *et al.*, 2020; ILO, 2020c; Rogan & Skinner, 2018; Skinner & Rogan, 2019; UN *et al.*, 2015; UNDP, 2014).

Research about the impact of the 2008/09 global financial crisis on the informal sector in Asia, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa found that there was *"a lag in recovery in the informal economy"* and that participants in the informal sector experienced increased input costs, a decline in wages and reduced consumer demand (Horn, 2010:263; Horn, 2011:13,30). More specifically, the study also found that street traders were particularly vulnerable in terms of changes in local income dynamics, possibly because street traders are often the only breadwinner in the household (Horn, 2009:6,8). Similarly, Rogan and Skinner (2017:2) found that *"there were significant and disproportionate job losses in the South African informal sector over the 2008-9 global crisis period."*

The outbreak and containment measures associated with the Ebola virus disease (EVD) in West Africa had a particularly adverse effect on the informal sector, which is the largest source of employment in several West African countries, especially on the informal trade, agricultural and tourism subsectors, which are mainly dominated by female participants (Glennerster & Werker, 2015:12; UN *et al.*, 2015:12,31; UNDG, 2015:iii,57; UNDP, 2014:32-33).

Likewise, the informal sector in China was also disproportionately affected by the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) (Urban, 2003:3). The outbreak of the Zika virus in Latin America and the Caribbean had a significant impact on females, who are mainly informally employed and associated with limited incomes, as they had to forfeit their income earning capabilities to become primary caregivers, especially for children who were born with Congenital Zika Syndrome (Human Rights Watch, 2017; ILO *et al*., 2013:13-14; Schalatek, 2020; UNDP & IFRC, 2017:32).

2.5.1 The impact of COVID-19

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2021a) defines COVID-19 as *"an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus."* More specifically, *"coronaviruses are a large family of viruses" that often "cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)"* (South African Government, 2021). In January 2020*, "severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) was confirmed as the causative agent of COVID-19"* (NICD, 2020a).

The first case of COVID-19 was observed in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, and the first case in another country was confirmed in Thailand on 13 January 2020 (WHO, 2021b). In South Africa, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on 5 March 2020 (NICD, 2020b). On 4 December 2021, nearly 21 months later, there were 3 020 569 cumulative COVID-19 cases in South Africa and 89 965 COVID-19-related deaths (NICD, 2021).

The virus is transmitted when inhaling respiratory droplets of a person who has COVID-19 – these droplets are mainly discharged when a person sneezes or coughs and can also transmit the virus when you touch your face after touching a surface that has been contaminated with the droplets (NICD, 2020a; UNICEF *et al.*, 2020:2). Therefore, the WHO's guidelines and restrictions implemented by the government mainly aim to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 by encouraging social and physical distancing (Köhler & Bhorat, 2020:3; WHO, 2020).

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic followed the same trend as previous crises, disproportionately affecting participants in the informal sector, especially females and migrant workers, as participants in the informal sector generally do not have social and employment protection, and have limited access to relief measures (Diwakar, 2020:12; ILO, 2020a:7; ILO, 2020b:1-2; UNDP, 2020:4,7-8). These findings are also applicable to the South African context (Bassier *et al.*, 2020:1; ILO, 2020c:26; Jain *et al*., 2020:11,20; Rogan & Skinner, 2020:21; UNDP South Africa, 2020:10,20; Valodia, 2020).

Stats SA (2020:4-5) indicates that there was a nett loss of 640 000 jobs in the informal sector during the second quarter of 2020, with the most job losses recorded in the trade industry. It is the highest number job losses experienced in the informal sector since the data became available in 2008. When considering the participants in the informal economy who did not lose their jobs in April, Rogan and Skinner (2020:2-3) found that 31 per cent of the individuals were *"locked out of employment";* females experienced a 49 per cent decline in their typical working hours and males reported a 25 per cent reduction. In addition, self-employed individuals who worked during February and April reported that their average earnings and typical earnings declined by 27 per cent and 60 per cent, respectively (Rogan & Skinner, 2020:3).

More specifically, several informal street traders reported reduced sales during the build-up towards the national lockdown that commenced on 27 March 2020 and initially prohibited informal street traders from operating (Hendricks, 2020; PLAAS, 2020). Although the Department of Co-Operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (2020:12) amended the regulations on 02 April 2020 to *"grocery stores and wholesale produce markets, including spaza shops and informal food traders, with written permission from a municipal authority to operate being required in respect of informal food traders"*, numerous traders struggled to obtain written permission and traders who sell cooked food and non-food items were still unable to operate under alert level 5 that ranged from 28 March 2020 to 30 April (Maphanga, 2020; Rafapa, 2020). Although there was an increase in permissible economic activities under alert level 4 (May 2020) and 3 (June 2020 to 17 August 2020), informal traders were still unable to operate from most markets and could only sell cooked food if they provided a delivery service (Department of Small Business Development, 2020:2; South African Informal Traders Alliance, 2020). Informal traders were also hampered by limited

access to transport, difficulty in purchasing supplies, and confiscation of goods (Heneck, 2020; Skinner & Watson, 2020:3).

In addition, several informal traders, especially migrants, are unable to access government relief measures, mainly because they cannot adhere to the *"strict formalisation requirements"* (Bassier *et al.*, 2020:2; CDE, 2020:6; ILO, 2020c:21,23-24; Rakabe, 2020). Positively, the Western Cape Government initiated a 'C-19 Business Relief Fund', with categories for both formal and informal businesses, and the City of Cape Town are aiming to distribute 'COVID-19 toolkits' among 10 000 of the informal traders registered on their database (Cape Town CCID, 2020; Department of Economic Development and Tourism, 2020). In mid-August 2020, the City of Cape Town (2020b) confirmed that more than 4 000 toolkits have been distributed to informal street traders across the metro area.

The textbox below further demonstrates how the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown regulations are affecting informal street traders across South Africa. More specifically, the textbox illustrates some of the key responses from informal traders who were interviewed as part of various newspaper articles.

Many traders do not have savings to assist them, expressing that *"whatever we earn, we immediately have to spend to feed our children"* and *"we have not been in a position to save"* (Hendricks, 2020).

"In 37 years in this business I never experienced this hardship" (Sizani, 2020).

"It is such a relief to have to sell again. But my clients have already bought more than they have to consume from supermarkets, which means I can't sell them my product to them" (Mvelashe, 2020).

"There are no people in the streets. Who are we going to sell to?" (Ntshidi, 2020).

A component of this study will investigate the impact of COVID-19 on informal street traders in the Cape Town CBD.

2.6 Conclusion

Despite its significant contribution to both survivalists and entrepreneurs, South Africa's informal sector is relatively small compared to other developing countries, especially in light of the country's high levels of unemployment (Kingdon & Knight, 2001:1; Blaauw, 2017:339; Haysom *et al.*, 2017:14; Rogan & Skinner, 2017:1). This may signal that there are numerous and possibly significant barriers to enter and remain in the informal sector. In addition, the informal sector is disproportionately affected by external economic and health-related shocks, especially in South Africa.

The informal sector's dynamic and diverse nature also signifies that there are varying productive capabilities, employment and growth trajectories, challenges and spatial characteristics across the different activities performed within the sector (Fourie, 2018a:471; Rakabe, 2018:305). As the composition and characteristics of informal activities also differ across geographic locations, national-level overviews might not accurately reflect local characteristics and challenges (Charman & Petersen, 2018:254; Haysom *et al.*, 2017:15). Without an in-depth understanding of location-specific issues and possible barriers to entry, the informal sector will not be able to expand and provide sustainable livelihoods as envisaged by policymakers.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Despite its importance and significant contribution, South Africa's informal sector is relatively small and disproportionately affected by external economic and health-related shocks. Without an in-depth understanding of location-specific issues and barriers to entry, the informal sector will not be able to expand and provide additional livelihoods as envisaged by policymakers.

This study, therefore, aims to provide a detailed understanding of location-specific characteristics, issues and experiences of informal street traders in the Cape Town CBD. It specifically investigates the factors that have a positive and negative influence on their ability to generate a sustainable livelihood – especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the research approach and design, as well as the data collection and analysis underpinning the methodology applied throughout this study. It also discusses the ethical considerations, limitations and challenges associated with the study.

3.2 Research approach

Creswell (2014:3) explains that there are three types of research approaches, namely qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. This study uses qualitative research, an approach that is mainly implemented to explore and obtain a more detailed understanding of a specific study group or issue (Creswell, 2014:4; Creswell, 2007:39-40). This is particularly important for research into aspects of the informal economy and businesses. Charman *et al*. (2017:54) point out that qualitative data *"allows the researcher to develop more accurate understandings and explanations of informal business responses, local market conditions, and external sociocultural or political influences."*

Qualitative researchers use open-ended research instruments to collect detailed information from relatively few and often purposefully selected participants until data saturation is reached, and then use words to convey the key findings and patterns emerging from the research (Creswell, 2015:2,5; Creswell, 2014:xxiv; Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:137,173; Flick, 2018:88,90; Hancock & Algozzine 2017:5; Miles *et al*., 2014:31; Patton, 1990:169; Saunders, 2018:1894; Starr, 2014:239,243).

Tables 3.1 to 3.3 provide a more detailed overview of the key characteristics, data sources and approaches associated with qualitative research.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of qualitative research

Characteristic	Overview
Natural setting	Data is collected through face-to-face interactions with respondents in a real-life setting, i.e. during the natural occurrence of the issue being studied.
Researcher a key instrument	Although several data collection tools are implemented, the researchers mainly collect the data themselves during qualitative research. For example, the researchers compile field notes.
Multiple methods/ sources of data	Qualitative research is associated with a variety of methods and types of data. For example, the researcher will identify overarching themes emerging from the joint use of interviews, observations and documents.
Inductive and deductive data analysis	Qualitative research initially follows an inductive approach to data analysis; collecting detailed information, which is then analysed to identify specific themes emerging from the data. Thereafter, a deductive approach is followed, determining whether the data contains sufficient evidence to underpin each theme.
Participants' meaning/ perspectives	Qualitative research aims to portray the occurrence under study from the participants' point of view.
Emergent design	The initial research process is relatively flexible, and often evolves while the data is being collected in the field.
Reflexivity	Qualitative researchers often provide more information or reflect how their background could influence their interpretations throughout the study.
Holistic account	Qualitative research aims to provide a comprehensive explanation of the issue being studied by illustrating the 'big picture', multiple perspectives and various interactions.

Source: Creswell (2014:185; 2013:45-47), Hatch (2002:6-7,10), Marshall and Rossman (2006:2-3), Rossman and Rallis (2012:8) and Yin (2011:7-8)

Table 3.2: Qualitative data sources

Method	Overview
Observation	Qualitative researchers use field notes to record the behaviours, actions and interactions that they observe in the study area. The notes often describe the context and experiences of the researcher and/or the participants.
Interviews	Qualitative researchers use focus group discussions, face-to-face, telephonic and virtual interviews to engage with participants. The interviews mainly consist of open-ended questions and aim to gather detailed information about the respondents' views and experiences.
Documents	Qualitative research draws on various public and private documents, including publications, meeting notes, reports, diaries and letters.
Audio and visual data sources	Researchers often collect and analyse photos, videos, recordings and other memorabilia when conducting qualitative research.

Source: Creswell (2014:190-192) and Patton (2002:4)

Table 3.3: Types of qualitative research approaches

Approach	Overview
Narrative research	Narrative research uses interviews, observations, documents and audio-visual materials to study and portray the experiences and stories of individuals. The information is often conveyed in a chronological order and reflects the viewpoints of both the individuals and the researcher.
Phenomenological research	Phenomenological research explores and portrays the overarching meanings and experiences of several individuals who experienced the same phenomenon. The research is based on philosophical concepts and aims to describe the essence of the shared experiences.
Grounded theory	Grounded theory aims to compile a theory or explanation of a specific process, action or interaction that is based on the views of several participants who experienced the process under study. It often entails numerous rounds of data collection, especially interviews.
Ethnography	Ethnographic research explores the patterns and meanings of the values, behaviours, beliefs and language associated with an intact culture-sharing group. Data is collecting over a long period, often through interviews and observing the day-to-day activities of the respondents.
Case studies	Case studies use multiple data sources to obtain a comprehensive understanding about a specific case that is bound by time and activity. The researcher describes the case and specific themes associated with the case.

Source: Creswell (2014:13-14; 2013:69-107) and Hancock and Algozzine (2017:9-10)

This study is based on the case study approach and multiple qualitative data sources. The research design will be discussed in more detail in the remaining sections of this chapter.

3.3 Research design

Yin (2009:18; 2003:14) describes a case study as a holistic approach *"to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context"*. It provides a comprehensive understanding of the particular, complex and lived experiences and activities of participants in specific circumstances (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:178; Stake, 1995:xi). Therefore, this approach is mainly used to address 'how' or 'why' questions by exploring a complex, under-researched phenomenon (Dul & Hak; 2008:24; Yin, 2003:1).

The key characteristics and data sources associated with case studies are aligned to those of qualitative research. Case study research is characterised by a detailed exploration of a single or multiple cases in a natural setting over time, and is based on multiple data sources (Creswell, 2013:97-98; Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al*., 2014:178; Guest *et al.*, 2013:14; Hancock, 2017:16; Jupp, 2006:20; Mills *et al.*, 2010:274; Starr, 2014:241; Swanborn, 2010:12-13). These include interviews, interactions, field notes, checklists, transcriptions, observations, documents and artefacts (Hancock, 2017:16; Mills *et al.*, 2010:274; Yin, 2009:99,109). The researcher often uses quotes, anecdotes and narratives to translate the data into a holistic account of the case and themes associated with the case (Creswell, 2013:97-99; Hancock, 2017:16).

As illustrated in Table 3.4, there are three types of case studies, namely descriptive, exploratory and explanatory case studies.

Table 3.4: Types of case studies

	Overview
Descriptive case study	Provides a comprehensive analysis of a phenomenon or case by considering the context within which it occurred. The researcher tends to convey the propositions and questions early in the research process.
Exploratory case study	Provides a preliminary analysis of the phenomenon or case. Fieldwork frequently occurs before the research questions and hypotheses have been finalised, indicating that the data collection phase informs the latter.
Explanatory case study	Defines how certain events and phenomena occurred by explaining the causal relationships associated with the case. This approach is often used to develop a theory.

Source: Jupp (2006:20), Mills *et al.* (2010:288,370,372) and Yin (2003:5-6)

This study can be categorised as a descriptive case study, as it aims to provide a detailed description of informal street trading in the Cape Town CBD, especially within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.3.1 Defining the case study area

South Africa's informal sector is characterised by insufficient depth and scope in the existing body of research (Blaauw, 2017:339). Previous studies pertaining to Cape Town's informal sector have predominantly focused on the township economy, foodservices, and the role of migrants, policies and governance, likely because many migrants participate in the informal sector in urban centres, and informal food trade is a significant source of food security and livelihoods, especially in townships (Hill *et al.*, 2018:1; Petersen *et al.*, 2018:70; Rogerson, 2018:157). However, there is limited recent research focusing on Cape Town's CBD, especially regarding the various activities, spatial characteristics and business strategies of street traders in the CBD.

This study, therefore, uses the Cape Town CBD as a case study to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the location specific dynamics and barriers associated with informal street trading. The specific study area was selected to be representative of the locational characteristics of informal street trading, i.e. near transport interchanges, public transport routes, shopping centres and formal business areas (Andrag, 2011:12; Charman *et al*., 2019:34; Charman *et al*., 2017:50; Hill *et al*., 2018:11; Ligthelm, 2013:60; Nkrumah-Abebrese & Schachtebeck, 2017:131; Tawodzera, 2019:452).

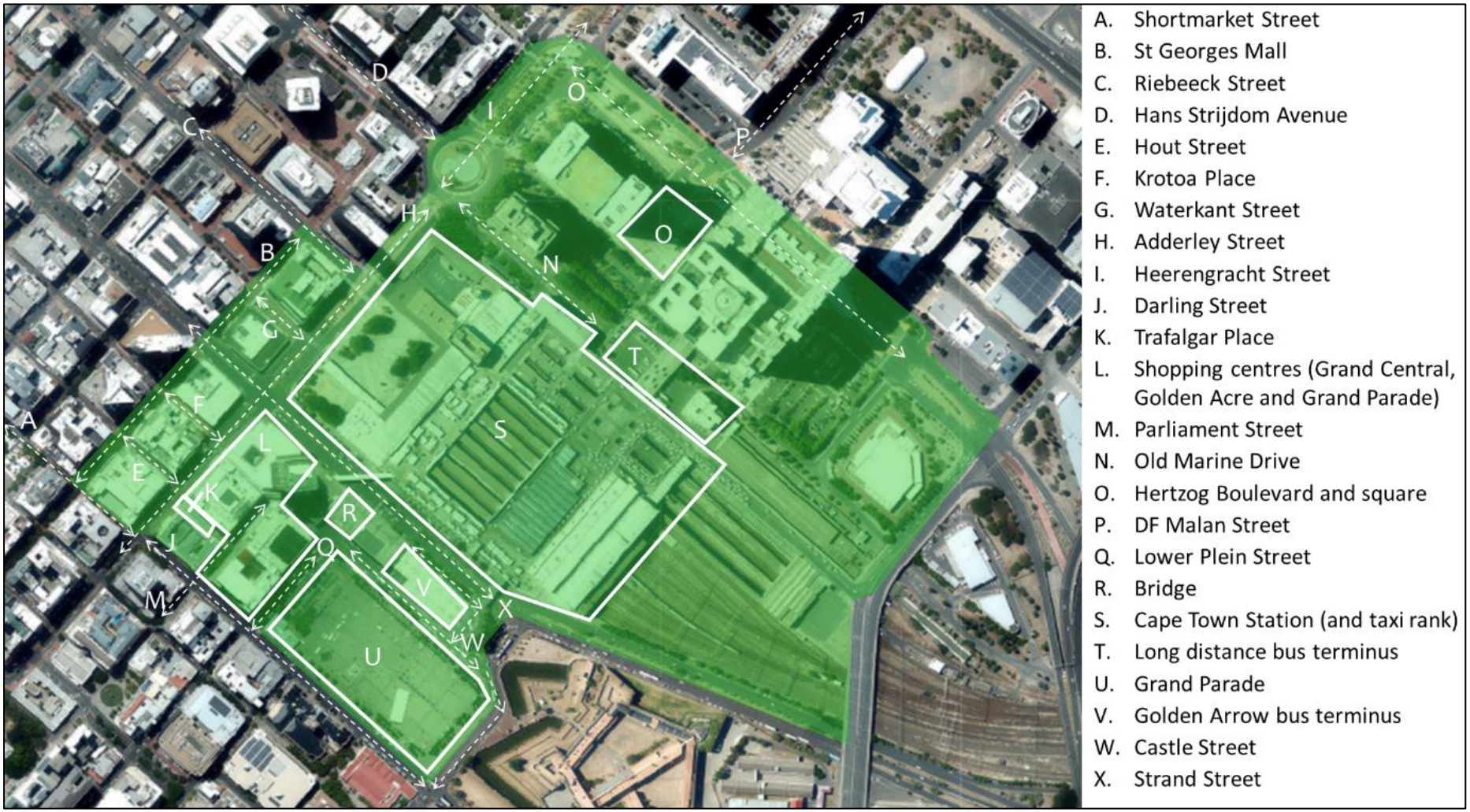
As illustrated in Figure 3.1, the study area is bordered by Heerengracht Street and Hertzog Boulevard to the north; Christiaan Barnard Street/Oswald Pirow Street (M60) to the east;

Newmarket Street, Castle Street and Darling Street to the south; and Shortmarket Street, St Georges Mall and Adderley Street to the west.

The key attributes of the study area can be summarised as follows:

- The study area encompasses several transport interchanges and public transport routes, namely several bus stops, two MyCiti bus stations, a Golden Arrow bus terminus, a long-distance bus terminus, the Cape Town train station, and the station deck taxi rank.
- There are several retail outlets in addition to the Golden Acre Shopping Centre, Grand Central Shopping Centre, and the Grand Parade Centre.
- The study area hosts numerous informal trading bays and clusters such as the Trafalgar Place Flower Market, Station deck (taxi rank), St Georges Mall and the Grand Parade.

Figure 3.1: Demarcation of the study area



Source: Compiled by the author using a base map from the City of Cape Town Map Viewer, 2020

3.4 Data collection

Creswell (2013:98) and Mills *et al.* (2010:274) argue that a single data source or method is generally insufficient to develop the comprehensive understanding required for case study research. This study, therefore, used a variety of data collection sources and approaches, with a specific focus on the use of observations and interviews – as discussed next.

3.4.1 Observations

Observation is a valuable source of data collection that enables the researcher to directly examine activities while they are occurring, instead of merely relying on reflections from participants after the activities have occurred (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008:87; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:137,139; Mills *et al.*, 2010:301; Yin, 2001:143). The researcher, therefore, conducted multiple site visits to observe informal street trading activities in the study area.

The objectives associated with the observations are two-fold. Firstly, this study used observations to obtain a detailed understanding of the location, product offering and prevalence of informal street traders in the study area. Secondly, the observations were used to examine how these patterns changed (or remained the same) over time, especially in relation to the impact of COVID-19 and the various lockdown regulations associated with the pandemic. The observations also provided insights pertaining to trading hours and physical structures, and can be used to analyse potential spatial and clustering patterns (Charman *et al.*, 2019:13).

For each street and landmark along the route, the researcher used the checklist to record all the informal street trading activities based on the most visible and predominant product/service offering. It should be noted that the location of mobile[6] traders was recorded at the first point of interaction. Following the established protocol in the literature (Charman *et al.*, 2019:13), the researcher also recorded information pertaining to trading hours, clustering, infrastructure, physical structures and overarching reflections.

As supporting data sources, the researcher took photos and videos where possible to help illustrate and compare the key findings emerging from the observations over time. The researcher also used field notes to record preliminary themes, patterns and reflections. As argued by Mills *et al.* (2010:396), *"without proper field notes, the translation of fieldwork into a case study cannot be successful."*

[6] This study categorised a trader as a mobile trader when he was observed as walking around during the site visit instead of being based at a single location.

More specifically, the researcher used previous studies and knowledge of the study area to identify various streets and landmarks in the study area (refer to Figure 3.1), compile a route to follow during the observations, and a preliminary checklist containing a list of prominent informal trading product/service offerings. Once lockdown regulations permitted, the researcher conducted an exploratory site visit on 6 June 2020 to validate and make the necessary adjustments to the preliminary data collection tools. Figure 3.2 depicts the 6-kilometre route, and Table 3.5 outlines the prominent product/service offering categories.

Figure 3.2: Route traversed during the observations

Source: Compiled by the author using a base map from the City of Cape Town Map Viewer, 2020

Table 3.5: Most prominent product/service offerings contained in the checklist[7]

• Arts/crafts/curios • Beauty products/toiletries/ cosmetics/ medicine/vitamins/baby formula[8] • Cell phone repair • Clothing and/or shoes • Electronics • Flowers • Fruit and vegetables • Hair braiding/ hairdressing/barber	• Homeware and appliances • Jewellery, accessories and bags • Masks • Material/curtains/carpets/ towels/bedding • Medicinal plants/herbs • Mobile traders • Snacks/sweets and cold drinks • Take-aways/prepared meals/cooked food/ wrapped foods

As illustrated in Table 3.6, the researcher conducted nine subsequent site visits from June 2020 to October 2020. The site visits occurred at different times and days to get a holistic account of informal street trading activities in the study area. In addition, the frequency of the site visits decreased over time as limited additional findings started to emerge.

Table 3.6: Observation schedule

Date	Time	Frequency	Lockdown level
Tuesday 9 June 2020	11:15-13:30	Weekly	Level 3
Friday 19 June 2020	12:00-14:45		
Wednesday 24 June 2020	13:45-15:30		
Friday 3 July 2020	08:40-11:15		
Monday 20 July 2020	09:00-11:00		
Thursday 13 August 2020	12:45-15:15	Every three weeks	
Thursday 3 September 2020	09:30-12:00		Level 2
Friday 2 October 2020	14:30-16:30	Every four weeks	Level 1
Wednesday 28 October 2020	12:00-15:00		

The key findings resulting from the observations will inform and substantiate the subsequent data collection approaches. As indicated by Merriam and Tisdell (2016:139), insights gained through observations can be used as *"reference points for subsequent interviews"*, and to triangulate and substantiate overall findings by using it *"in conjunction with interviewing and document analysis".*

3.4.2 Interviews with informal street traders

Qualitative interviews are often referred to as *"conversations with purpose"* and mainly gather information through open-ended questions (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:188; Mills *et al.*, 2010:495). For example, Charman *et al.* (2017:46) found that this approach *"allowed new topics*

[7] The checklist was expanded as new categories were noted during the observation phase – the results document 31 categories.

[8] Several of the traders who sell beauty products/toiletries/cosmetics/medicine/vitamins/baby formula also sell coffee.

to emerge and provided insights into the (informal) sector that could not have been obtained through quantitative surveys."

The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide (refer to Annexure A) to conduct detailed conversations with informal street traders. The interview guide mainly comprised open-ended questions, along with a few closed-ended (for example demographic characteristics) and observational questions. These questions were guided by findings and questions contained in previous studies[9], insights obtained through a comprehensive literature review, and knowledge obtained during the observation phase of this study.

The questions in the interview guide were specifically formulated to help determine the:

- Demographic and business characteristics of the respondents;
- Information on the broader context wherein street traders operate; and
- Factors that have a positive and negative influence on the ability of informal street traders in the Cape Town CBD to generate a sustainable livelihood, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

More specifically, the interview guide addressed key themes such as characteristics and strategies of informal street trading enterprises, the impact of COVID-19, advantages of informal trading, access to resources, challenges experienced, personal and business-related motivations and aspirations. As demonstrated in section 2.2.2, each of these themes are aligned to the essential components of the capability approach.

Similar to the observations, the researcher compiled detailed field notes[10] and took photos if possible. Where respondents provided consent, the interview was also recorded.

3.4.3 Sampling

The researcher used purposeful sampling, also referred to as purposive sampling, to include 'information-rich' cases in the sample (Flick, 2018:88; Flick, 2014:62; Mills *et al.*, 2010:837; Patton, 2002:40). As explained by Creswell (2013:156), the researcher selected "*individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study".*

[9] Some of these key studies include the work of Andrag (2011), Mkhize *et al.* (2013), Petersen *et al.* (2018), Schenck *et al.* (2020) and Van Heerden (2011).

[10] These field notes mostly contain observations made by the researcher and a non-verbatim transcription of the interview. The respondents mainly narrated their answers to the interviewer, who then captured it in their own writing on the forms.

The selection criteria for the envisaged respondents entailed licenced and unlicensed street traders who are at least 18 years old and willing to participate in the study. As an introduction, each participant was informed about the objectives and key components of the study – including the voluntary, confidential and non-beneficial nature of the interview (these ethical principles are discussed in more detail in section 1.5). Before starting with the questionnaire, written informed consent was obtained from each participant to acknowledge that they were sufficiently informed of and agree with the key principles outlined in the introduction.

It should also be noted that the exact composition of the sample evolved as the fieldwork progressed and the researcher obtained a more detailed understanding of the key features of informal street trade in the Cape Town CBD (Flick, 2018:88; Miles *et al.*, 2014:31).

3.4.4 Fieldwork

As illustrated in Table 3.7, the interview phase comprised four key components, jointly administering 19[11] interviews between April and May 2021.

Table 3.7: Interview schedule

Component	Date	Number of interviews
Pilot	23 April 2021	3
Schedule interviews	4 May 2021	N/A
Conduct interviews (With supervisor and co-supervisor)	6 May 2021 to 8 May 2021	13
Data validation	21 May 2021	3

The pilot phase helped to identify potential challenges, traders' willingness to participate, the most suitable way to approach participants, the time required to conduct each interview, whether the questions are correctly phrased and clearly understood, and whether sufficient information is obtained.

Although the initial approach was to directly engage with the traders at their stalls, the researcher became cognisant of the traders' restricted availability during operating hours and preferences regarding privacy. Therefore, the researcher approached the traders beforehand to schedule appointments at times of their convenience.

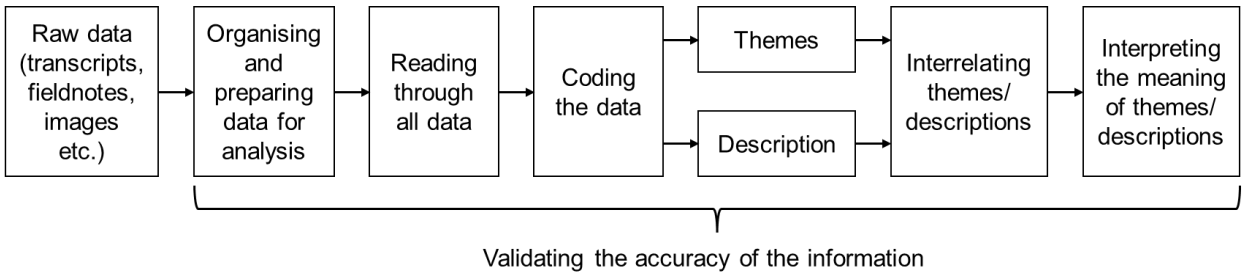
[11] During two of these interviews, there were two respondents from the same stall participating in the interview. Therefore, the researcher engaged with 21 informal street traders, representing 19 informal enterprises.

The duration and frequency of the observations, as well as the sample size for the interviews were determined by data and thematic saturation. The researcher collected data until the acquisition of additional data did not introduce new themes, insights or perspectives (Creswell, 2014:248; Suri, 2011:72). Regarding the interviews, saturation particularly pertains to the advantages associated with informal street trading, the challenges experienced and the impact of COVID-19. As part of the data validation component, the researcher conducted three interviews to confirm that the themes are recurring and that limited if any new information will be obtained by conducting additional interviews.

3.5 Data analysis

Creswell (2014:196) proposes a multi-level and interactive approach to qualitative data analysis. Assigning codes and identifying themes within the data are essential components of qualitative data analysis. Coding can be defined as the *"labelling of a data segment using a term that capture's the researcher's interpretation of its essential meaning"* (Mills & Birks, 2014:43). Thereafter, the codes are combined into themes, which can be described as *"broad units of information"* that *"form a common idea"* (Creswell, 2013:186).

Figure 3.3: Data analysis in qualitative research (adapted from Creswell, 2014:197)



Thematic analysis was used to *"identify, analyse and describe patterns or themes"* emerging in the various data sources that were collected throughout this study (Bryman & Bell, 2014:439, Mills *et al.*, 2010:926). Guided by the protocol and best practice established by Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014:230) and Guest *et al.* (2012:7), the researcher revisited the data and identified themes multiple times to refine the analysis. The handling of the various data sources is described in the following subsections.

3.5.1 Observations

Shortly after each site visit, the researcher compiled a PowerPoint presentation to consolidate the information contained in the checklist, field notes and photos. After the observation phase, these presentations were used to compile a comprehensive dataset in Microsoft Excel to illustrate the results for each street/landmark over time. As a quality control measure, the researcher compared

the data in the presentations and the consolidated dataset with the handwritten field notes to ensure accuracy.

Thereafter, the researcher used the data to describe how the location, product offering and prevalence of informal street traders changed (or remained the same) over time – in relation to the various lockdown regulations associated with the pandemic. The researcher also identified patterns and themes pertaining to specific streets/landmarks, product offerings and the study area as a whole.

3.5.2 Interviews

The researcher compiled a detailed transcription for each interview, which was used to create a consolidated dataset in Microsoft Excel. Where respondents did not provide consent for the interview to be recorded, the researcher supplemented the field notes with a more detailed description shortly after the interview. Similar to the observations, the researcher compared the dataset with the transcriptions to ensure accuracy, and to flag incomplete or unclear answers.

The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyse the demographic information and characteristics of the informal street trading enterprises. For each open-ended question, the researcher grouped the responses to enable a thematic analysis. Where possible, the researcher will compare the key results with previous studies pertaining to Cape Town's broader informal sector where it is applicable.

3.6 Conclusion

This qualitative study can be categorised as a descriptive case study and is based on a variety of data collection methods and approaches, with specific focus on the use of observations and interviews. The duration and frequency of the observations, as well as the sample size for the interviews were determined by data and thematic saturation.

The researcher conducted nine site visits from June to October 2020 to explore how the location, product offering and prevalence of informal street traders changed (or remained the same) over time. Insights obtained during the observations informed and substantiated the 19 semi-structured interviews that took place between April and May 2021.

The data was used to compile consolidated datasets (which were subject to several quality control measures) to thematically analyse and report on the key findings – as discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

Despite its significant contribution to both survivalists and entrepreneurs, South Africa's informal sector is relatively small compared to many other developing countries (Blaauw, 2017:339; Kingdon & Knight, 2001:1). Rogan and Skinner (2017:23,29), therefore, suggest that it is essential to investigate the barriers to entry, especially in provinces (and cities) with notably small informal sectors, such as the Western Cape and Cape Town.

The varying spatial characteristics, human dynamics and capital attainment, survival strategies, subjective experiences, and motivation associated with informal employment are also additional gaps and suggestions for future research (Blaauw, 2017:357; Petersen & Charman 2018a:565; Petersen *et al*., 2018:565). In addition, the impact of exogenous economic shocks, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, requires focused research to determine the impact thereof on lives and livelihoods in the informal sector.

This study, therefore, aims to provide a detailed understanding of location-specific characteristics, issues and experiences of informal street traders in the Cape Town CBD within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study is based on a variety of data collection methods and approaches, with a specific focus on the use of observations and interviews. The researcher conducted nine site visits from June to October 2020 to explore how the location, product offering and prevalence of informal street traders changed (or remained the same) over time. Insights obtained during the observations informed and substantiated the 19 semi-structured interviews that took place between April and May 2021.

This chapter provides an overview of the key findings emerging from the observations and qualitative interviews. This is especially important in relation to the impact of COVID-19 and the various lockdown regulations associated with the pandemic. Descriptive statistics are used to portray the demographic and business characteristics of respondents who participated in the interviews. The rest of the chapter provides a comprehensive and thematic discussion of various factors that have a positive and negative influence on the ability of informal street traders to generate a sustainable livelihood – given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter also provides insights pertaining to motivational factors, key strategies associated with informal street trading enterprises, and aspirations of informal street traders. These insights are important as the study aims, among other aspects, to understand the resilience and innovative approaches displayed by the informal street traders in general, and specifically in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2 Key findings emerging from the observations

The researcher conducted nine site visits from June to October 2020 to obtain a detailed understanding of the location, product offering and prevalence of informal street traders in the study area. The observations were also used to examine how these patterns changed (or remained the same) over time, especially in relation to the impact of COVID-19 and the various lockdown regulations associated with the pandemic.

The key findings of the observations can be summarised as follows:

- The informal street traders are mainly clustered near locations with high volumes of pedestrian traffic.
- In relation to the various lockdown regulations associated with the pandemic, the traders' product offering gradually changed from mainly essential goods and services to a broader range of products over time. Similarly, the prevalence of informal street traders in the study area increased over time, as more and more street traders resumed their activities after the initial hard lockdown.
- The trading hours and physical structures associated with the informal street trading enterprises often vary or align across different streets/landmarks and product/service offerings.

Table 4.1 provides a more detailed overview of the findings emerging from the observations.

Table 4.1: Summary of key findings emerging from the observations

Category	Overview
Location	Most of the traders were observed in clusters near locations with high volumes of pedestrian traffic, especially during the initial site visits, when the pedestrian traffic was mainly centred around the Cape Town Station and taxi rank. Interestingly, traders, based in Hertzog Boulevard and square, and the boundary line in Heerengracht Street, were more dispersed. In some instances, traders selling the same products formed clusters at specific streets/landmarks. For example, there are several traders selling clothing and/or shoes at Krotoa Place. All the traders selling flowers are based at Trafalgar Place, and nearly all the traders in Darling Street sell beauty products/toiletries/cosmetics, medicine/vitamins/baby formula. Similarly, traders selling snacks/sweets and cold drinks at the Grand Parade mainly cluster along the boundary with the Golden Arrow bus terminus. There were no mobile traders present at some of the streets/landmarks (such as the bridge, shopping centres and Waterkant Street), while there was a relatively high presence of mobile traders surrounding the Cape Town Station (and taxi rank) and long-distance bus terminus.
Product/service offering	The product offering changed from mainly essential goods and services to a broader range of products over time. For example, there were more traders, especially mobile traders, exclusively selling masks and toilet paper during the first four site visits compared to the last four site visits. On the other hand, traders selling arts/crafts/curios and books were not present during the first couple of site visits. Some of the existing traders changed their product offering as time progressed. For example, several traders incorporated masks into their product offering, while other traders were re-classified to

Category	Overview
	mainly selling art/crafts/curios during the last couple of site visits. The mobile traders mainly sold masks and electronics, as well as snacks/sweets and cold drinks as time progressed.
Prevalence of traders	There was an increase in the overall prevalence of traders over time. However, the presence of mobile traders declined over time. There was a temporary influx of mobile traders around the Cape Town Station and taxi rank in June, followed by another temporary increase between mid-July and mid-September. Similarly, some of the other streets/landmarks were also characterised by a temporary increase in the prevalence of mobile traders between mid-July and mid-September. Traders selling certain products were more consistently present than other traders. For example, traders selling fruit and vegetables, and snacks/sweets and cold drinks were consistently present, but the presence of mobile traders and traders selling medicinal herbs/plants varied. Similarly, the prevalence of traders and product offerings at certain streets/landmarks were more consistent than others. For example, Krotoa Place, Parliament Street and Hertzog Boulevard had relatively consistent findings, but the prevalence of traders and product offerings at the Grand Parade, long-distance bus terminus, Cape Town Station (and taxi rank) frequently varied. There were fewer traders present on days with excessive wind and rain. For example, during the site visit on 2 October 2020, a very windy day, nearly all the streets and landmarks in the study area had fewer traders compared with the previous and following site visit.
Trading hours	The presence of traders and their associated product range sometimes varies throughout the day. For example, in the morning, Cape Town Station's entrance in Strand Street is mainly characterised by traders selling vetkoek and snacks/sweets and cold drinks, but in the afternoon, the landmark is mainly characterised by traders selling snacks/sweets and cold drinks and a significant prevalence of traders selling fruit and vegetables – who tend to cluster here in the late afternoon. There were similarities and differences in terms of trading hours across different streets/landmarks and product/service offerings. For example, some of the traders selling fruit and vegetables started to trade early in the morning, while others were only present in the afternoon. Traders selling vetkoek and other baked goods were mainly present in the morning, while traders selling medicinal plants/herbs were mainly observed in the afternoon.
Physical structures	The physical structures associated with the informal street trading enterprises varied or aligned across different streets/landmarks and product/service offerings. For example, traders selling snacks/sweets and cold drinks mainly had steel structures with plastic covering. Traders selling vetkoek and other baked goods did not have any infrastructure except for a large plastic container, and traders selling medicinal plants/herbs mainly use blankets on the floor to showcase their goods. Although some of the traders selling fruit and vegetables had steel structures or coverings, most of the traders used upside down crates or boxes packed on the floor at different heights to display the goods, while several other traders sold the fresh produce from trolleys instead of steel structures. When considering specific streets/landmarks across the study area, nearly all the informal street trading enterprises in St Georges Mall and Parliament Street comprised steel structures, while informal traders at the taxi rank mainly carried their goods or used tables and blankets on the floor.

COVID-19 and the various lockdown regulations associated with the pandemic altered the prevalence of informal street traders operating in the study area, as well as the product/service offering and trading hours associated with these informal trading enterprises. The national lockdown, which commenced on 27 March 2020, initially prohibited informal street traders from operating (Hendricks, 2020; PLAAS, 2020). Although there was an increase in permissible economic activities under subsequent alert levels, informal traders remained hampered in terms of permissible product/service offerings, locations and trading hours. In addition, high volumes of

pedestrian traffic are a vital prerequisite for the success of informal street trading enterprises, but the social and physical distancing protocols associated with the pandemic led to a significant decline in pedestrian traffic. These factors have a negative impact on the ability of informal street traders to generate a sustainable livelihood.

Insights obtained during the observations informed and substantiated the subsequent data collection approaches used in this study, particularly the interviews – as discussed next. More specifically, the next subsection discusses the demographic and business characteristics of the respondents as a precursor for the rest of the thematic analysis on the impact of COVID on this segment of the informal economy.

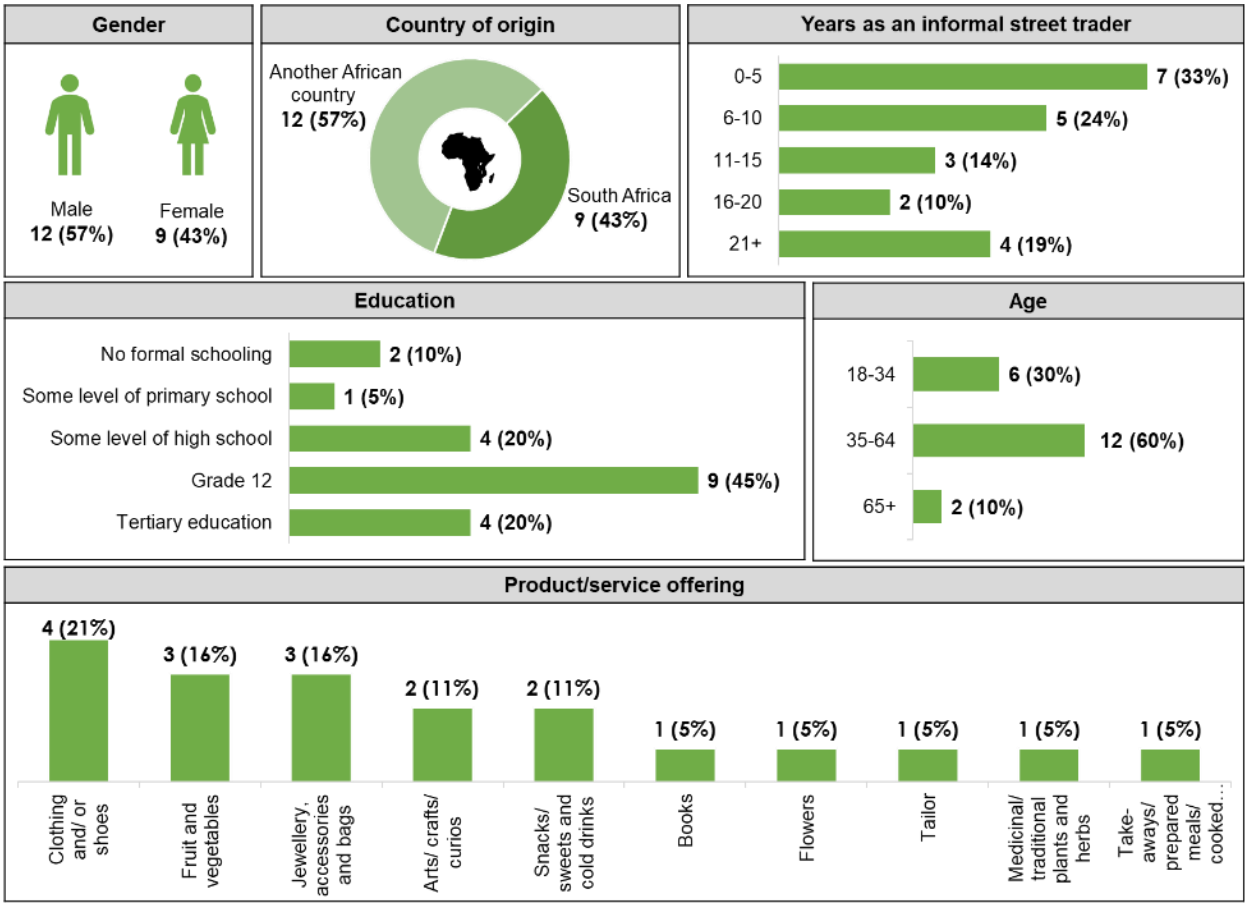
4.3 Demographic and business characteristics of the respondents

Between April and May 2021, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 informal street traders, representing 19 informal street enterprises. The interview questions were formulated to help address key themes such as demographic information, characteristics and strategies of informal street trading enterprises, the impact of COVID-19, the advantages of informal trading, access to resources, challenges experienced, as well as personal and business-related motivations and aspirations.

The demographic and business characteristics of the respondents are illustrated in Figure 4.1. Most of the respondents are male and the majority completed matric. Four (20 per cent) respondents obtained a tertiary education and seven (35 per cent) respondents had less than matric. The respondents are mainly foreign nationals, largely from Cameroon, Somalia and Malawi. Most of the South African nationals who disclosed their province of origin are from the Western Cape, followed by the Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. The respondents are mainly between 35 and 64 years old; the youngest trader is 23 years old and the oldest trader is 74.

At the time of the interviews, the most prominent product/service offering was clothing and/or shoes, followed by fruit and vegetables, as well as jewellery, accessories and bags. The respondents' experience as a trader ranges from approximately one year to 56 years. Most of the respondents (33 per cent) have been trading between zero and five years, followed by five respondents (24 per cent) who have been trading between six and ten years. The remaining respondents have been operating as informal traders for more than ten years, reiterating that the informal sector is a long-term phenomenon for several participants (Chen, 2007:2).

Figure 4.1: Demographic and business characteristics of respondents

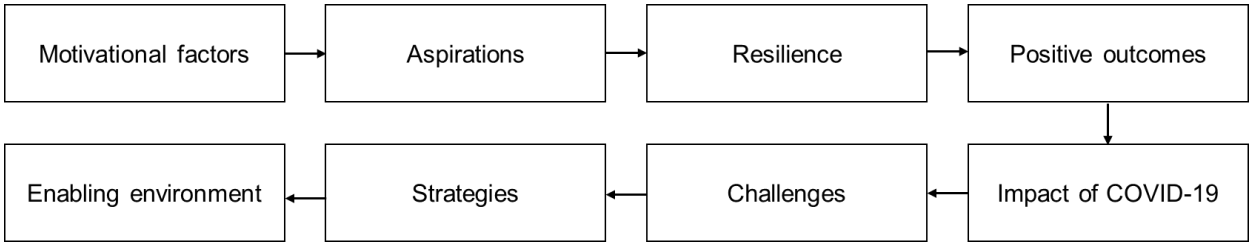


The following subsection discusses the findings of the thematic analysis performed on the qualitative data collected.

4.4 Thematic analysis

Assigning codes and identifying themes within the data are essential components of qualitative data analysis. The thematic analysis was performed in terms of the structure and best practice suggested by Cresswell (2013; 2014). Figure 4.2 illustrates the key themes emerging from the qualitative data.

Figure 4.2: Key themes emerging from the qualitative data



Source: Compiled by the author

4.4.1 Motivational factors

The personal and business-related motivations and aspirations of informal street traders inform an understanding of why individuals enter and remain in the informal sector – despite several challenges and the adverse effects of COVID-19.

The respondents' motivation to participate in informal street trading entails both a survivalist and growth-oriented component. Several of the respondents resolved to informal trading to earn an income because they were unemployed and unable to secure formal employment. Although Amartya Sen's capability approach refers to an individual's freedom to choose *"between many different functionings and pursue a variety of different life paths"* (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009:32), some of the respondents indicated that they had no choice but to enter the informal sector.

"This is not really what I want to do, but I do not have a choice.... Because I did not study, I am not going to get a real job, so I have to make a plan and do this to survive."

"I did not have a choice because I needed some money in my pocket. I did not have a job and I was living on the streets."

"*I do not like it, but I got no choice, because there is no money.*"

It should also be noted that two of the traders, who used to be a trolley-pusher and an arts/crafts trader at another market in town, started their specific informal trading enterprise in the study area because the market was closed for a very long time because of COVID-19. The advent of COVID-19 therefore took away their existing way of earning a living. This motivated some traders to make the decision to venture into their own informal trading activity as an attempt to counteract the negative impact of the pandemic.

For many of the traders, providing for their children and family is the biggest motivational factor.

"He is working (every day) because he has a sick child in Somalia that he has to send money to."

"He is going to work through rain and wind… because his kids have to eat… Here we have to struggle so that we can give our children a piece of bread every day."

"*We have families to feed, we have to send money to Zimbabwe*."

On the other hand, several of the respondents chose the profession because they identified it as a good opportunity to be self-employed, to continue with the family business, and to *"have a better life"*.

Other respondents chose informal trading because it is something that they have experience with, are passionate about, and enjoy.

"To make something with your hands is better than looking and waiting for people to employ you."

"I have to stand up for myself now."

"It will be an honour for me to take that lead from my dad."

When asked if they would rather prefer a full-time job, most of the respondents indicated that they do not prefer or will not be able to obtain a full-time job. Expressing that they *"prefer being their own boss"*, currently have more flexible working hours, are too old to secure a formal job, enjoy informal street trading, and are optimistic about the future prospects associated with informal trading. Conversely, one of the respondents indicated that he would prefer a full-time job, while two respondents indicated that it would depend on the situation.

4.4.2 Aspirations of informal street traders

Like the motivational factors to participate in informal street trading, the traders' aspirations entail both a survivalist and growth-oriented component. In terms of business-related aspirations, more than half of the respondents revealed that they would like to expand their informal street trading enterprise by having more and/or bigger stalls in the Cape Town CBD and other locations. Several of the respondents aspire to having formal shops, followed by three traders who strive to train and enable more individuals to become self-employed. Other aspirations include *"starting a business with family"* and *"eliminating the intermediary."*

"I want to be everywhere in the Cape."

"I would love to have other shops."

"Teach more people how to do this so they can help themselves."

However, some of the respondents expressed that they are merely aiming to survive or maintain their enterprise. This is mostly because financial constraints and the impact of COVID-19 are preventing them from expanding their enterprise and pursue other business-related aspirations.

"Before COVID we had a fantastic business, had a lot of dreams, had a lot of goals, a lot of aspirations. The only thing right now, after COVID, as we are sitting here, would be survival. Can I manage to still operate within the next year…? That is not even being pessimistic; it is just reality right now."

In terms of personal aspirations, some of the respondents would like to travel, be able to provide for their children, get married and complete their studies.

4.4.3 Resilience, perseverance and positivity

The informal sector is confronted with location-specific issues and possible barriers to entry, and the sector is disproportionately affected by external economic and health-related shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these challenges, informal street traders remain positive and continue to participate in the informal sector.

The traders' resilience, perseverance and positivity despite challenging circumstances are remarkable. They are constantly revisiting their resources, product/service offering, trading hours and other business strategies so that they can adapt to exogenous factors (of which COVID-19 is a prime example) and aim to generate a sustainable livelihood. These findings are discussed in more detail in the remaining sections of this chapter.

"What are you waiting for, you must run with it. When you have the opportunity, you must carry on."

"I have to be positive… one day it is going to pick up."

"It is tough, but you must carry on."

4.4.4 Positive outcomes associated with informal street trading

Thematically exploring the positive outcomes and functionings resulting from the informal street traders' continued endeavours will help to determine the importance of informal trading.

The informal sector, including informal street trading, is a vital source of employment, poverty alleviation, food accessibility and food security (Blaauw, 2017:339; Fourie, 2018a:471; Rogan & Skinner, 2017:3; Skinner & Watson, 2020:1; Tawodzera & Crush, 2019:1). Informal street trading also entails several non-financial benefits for participants.

4.4.4.1 Positive outcomes for the street traders and their families

More than half of the respondents listed financial gains as one of the key advantages and positive outcomes associated with informal street trading. It enables them to support themselves and their families by sending remittances and paying tuition fees, for example. In some instances, the informal enterprise provides employment and income-generating opportunities for the trader and some of his family members.

"This is something that God gave us, it is our daily bread. We do not have any other source of income, so this is what they get educated with and this is what feeds them."

"If I do not send money to them, I think they are going to suffer, they won't have food to eat."

The sense of independence and *"being your own boss"* is perceived as the second most important advantage. It permits the respondents to have more decision-making authority in terms of enterprise-related choices, especially regarding trading hours. In turn, more flexible working hours give the individuals more time to spend with their children and family. Three of the respondents resigned from their previous full-time jobs because they had a baby and/or the cumbersome working hours did not allow them to attend to their family responsibilities.

"*I like to be my own boss because in terms of being your own boss, there is a probability of going/being bigger than what I am today.*"

"*You are independent, financially and everything.*"

Several respondents also highlighted the opportunity to meet and interact with different people as a non-financial benefit associated with informal street trading. The human interaction, information sharing, *"listening to people's stories and being part of their lives"* are highly valued by some of the traders.

"My business financially is going through a lot, but I have been gaining in other ways. Like I need to speak to people, I need to see people, I need to interact with people."

"Being here for the whole day, even though I do not even make maybe a R200 or R300, but you have somebody that can come and talk to you and have a positive impact on you and ask you about the business… That is even for me something that I have been paid off with."

Merely being able to work with the specific product is a positive outcome for some of the traders. In addition, three of the respondents indicated that they are slightly *"better off"* compared to before they worked as informal street traders.

4.4.4.2 Positive outcomes for the community

The informal street trading enterprises provide employment opportunities, and have positive backward and forward linkages with both the formal and informal sector. In addition to employing assistants and 'trolley-pushers', some of the traders also provide training opportunities, contribute towards storage facilities and transport services, sell merchandise to other informal traders, and purchase stock from formal enterprises.

"Since I started here, I trained about eight or nine people."

"I had four ladies that I could employ… which means that four families were being fed."

The respondents also expressed that they provide more affordable products and convenience to their customers. The traders sell new and second-hand products that are more affordable than

the products sold in most chain stores. The location of the enterprises enables customers to purchase goods while travelling to or from work and during limited lunch breaks.

"Those old magogos… they used to buy a lot of pairs to send to their children, to send to their home area, to their relatives also, because for them it was cheaper here."

Several of the respondents also explained how they help people and 'give back' to the community by donating products to charities and food to the homeless. The trader selling medicinal herbs/plants expressed how he daily helps *"people who are sick or have problems."*

"What I enjoy the most is the street children we are with. We are not just here for money… we are involved in many people's lives, to change people's lives."

4.4.5 The impact of COVID-19 and associated lockdown regulations

Owing to the importance of informal street trading, it is necessary to explore the impact of exogenous shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic on informal street traders – particularly on their ability to generate a sustainable livelihood. In the short term, these insights could possibly inform COVID-19 regulations and relief measures for informal traders.

The COVID-19 pandemic followed the same trend as previous crises, disproportionately affecting participants in the informal sector (and informal employment), especially females and migrant workers (Bassier *et al.*, 2020:1; ILO, 2020c:26; Jain *et al.*, 2020:11,20; Rogan & Skinner, 2020:21; UNDP South Africa, 2020:10,20; Valodia, 2020). The observations and field visits confirmed the devastating impact of COVID-19 and the associated lockdown regulations on informal street traders in the Cape Town CBD.

The textbox below summarises some of the key responses pertaining to the overarching impact of COVID-19.

"It is very difficult now."

"It was very bad. Very, very bad."

"It's a disaster, it is a terrible situation."

"It has been a hell of a journey."

4.4.5.1 Adverse effects of COVID-19

The respondents indicated that their informal street trading enterprises were closed for between one and five months because of COVID-19 and the associated lockdown regulations. The unexpected and prolonged closures led to stock losses and left most of the traders with limited

savings and no income. In addition, two respondents expressed that some of their family members also lost their jobs because of COVID-19, which put additional strain on the overall household income and socio-economic well-being.

"I was closed for between four and six months with no income during that time."

"It was the first time in our lifetime that we were closed… we did not work for months, we did not earn anything."

"I didn't even have a saving of R1 000 and I am a man of a family… I stayed in lockdown for 70 days… It was terrible…"

An employee at one of the informal street trading enterprises explained that he had two stalls of his own, but that all his stock expired during the lockdown – *"he lost everything"* and *"has not been able to start a stall again."*

Consequently, some of the traders were faced with food insecurity.

"Even my lady, when she came in last week for the first time, she said to me, you know what, when we did not have money, I had to give my children porridge for morning, porridge for afternoon and porridge at night, to the point where my daughter said she was not hungry anymore."

"It was very difficult, we struggled a lot with food."

"The minute they said that COVID has hit us and that we cannot trade… it was like devastation; I could not believe it. It was complete, where does your next bread come from sort of thing."

Because of the closures and lack of income, several of the traders could send no or minimal remittances to their families and had to lay off some of their employees. These and other adverse effects continued even after the informal enterprises reopened, with several respondents illustrating *"that they are still struggling to find their feet."*

One of the respondents expressed that she could always send remittances home to her family, but she cannot do it now as there is often too little for herself.

Another respondent explained that she had to lay off two employees and now has to do everything by herself, including pushing the trolley to and from the storage facility.

Nearly all the respondents highlighted a lack of customers as a significant negative impact of COVID-19. The reasons for this are mainly because there are minimal numbers of tourists, and most local customers are working from home and/or avoiding public spaces to adhere to social distancing principles. Interestingly, some product offerings (such as flowers and fruit and vegetables) mainly have a local customer base, while traders selling art/crafts/curios and some of the traders selling jewellery, accessories and bags were largely supported by tourists. In addition, several respondents expressed that the tourists used to have a positive influence on their profit margin because tourists purchase higher-priced products than local customers.

"I feel it most because most of my products are made for the tourism section."

"There are no tourists. You can see the street is empty, no one is coming."

"*There are no customers. As you can see, Cape Town is quiet.*"

In addition, some of the respondents pointed out that they had to postpone their opening time since COVID-19, as they no longer have sufficient *"morning customers"*.

"Nowadays we do not have morning customers… so it is forcing us to open late."

"I tried to open early, but it does not help."

Several respondents further expressed that a significant number of their local customers lost their jobs and do not have money, so they purchase fewer products and services than before COVID-19.

"Many of our customers lost their jobs during COVID."

"People don't have so much money to spend anymore… everyone is struggling."

"*Even the locals, they can support me, but not much because they don't have money."*

4.4.5.2 Mitigation measures

When asked what they did to survive during lockdown, some of the respondents indicated that they used their limited savings. However, two of the traders felt that they had limited options and another trader *"borrowed money to buy food sometime."*

"The small that you saved is the one you used."

"There was nothing, because we were locked in, so you cannot do anything."

Two of the traders sold some of their personal belongings to generate an income, while two other traders managed to sell some of their products from home by using social media platforms and providing a delivery service. Many of the respondents explained that they reopened their informal street trading enterprises as soon as lockdown regulations permitted because trading was a vital means to sustain them through the remaining lockdown levels.

One of the traders explained how she sold her old clothes and her child's clothes to survive, until they had nothing left to sell.

"I survived with my business."

"There was not a choice, you needed to come and work to survive… If I did not have my business, I would be set back a lot more."

However, some of the respondents had to reduce the employees' working hours and/or compensation to mitigate the adverse effects of COVID-19 and the associated lockdown regulations.

Some of the traders pointed out that government support helped to temporarily mitigate some of the adverse effects of COVID-19 and the associated lockdown regulations. For example, some of the traders were exempt from paying permit fees for various periods of time and one of the traders received *"some COVID sanitiser and cloths from the City of Cape Town."* Another respondent and her employees received pay-outs from the Unemployment Insurance Fund.

Overall, many of the respondents feel that faith carried them through.

"I did not have anything in the house… by the mercy of the Almighty Creator we pulled through."

"I survived by the Grace of God."

4.4.5.3 The effect of COVID-19 on profit

The textbox illustrates the respondents' overarching statements regarding the impact of COVID-19 and the associated lockdown regulations on the profit generated by their informal street trading enterprises.

"After COVID, it was a big blow, it was like somebody chopping off your feet and you cannot walk."

"It is like from 100 to zero. We were on a hundred, and now we are on a zero. Not even one, zero."

"I was able to live with what I made, although it was not a lot, but now it is difficult."

"There are weeks that I wanted to cry… The profit is very little… barely enough to sustain you through the week."

Most respondents expressed that their average monthly profit since the initial 'hard' lockdown is approximately 50 per cent less than the average monthly profit that was generated by the enterprise before COVID-19. This was followed by three enterprises that only generate about a third of what they used to before COVID-19; two enterprises that generate less than a third; and one enterprise whose profit was about 20 per cent to 30 per cent less than before COVID-19. As mentioned earlier, some days are characterised by no profit.

More specifically, three of the enterprises generated an average monthly profit of between R6 000 and R10 000 before COVID-19, and two of the enterprises generated an average daily profit of between R250 and R300. However, in the last year since the pandemic, three of the enterprises generate an average monthly profit of between R2 000 and R5 000 and several enterprises generate an average daily profit of between R100 and R200 only.

In terms of turnover, one enterprise generated an average monthly turnover of R20 000 before COVID-19, and two enterprises generated an average daily turnover between R1 000 and R2 000. However, since the pandemic, one of these enterprises only generates an average monthly turnover between R6 000 and R7 000, while the other two enterprises generate an average daily turnover between R100 and R200.

4.4.6 Challenges experienced by informal street traders

Several respondents identified the wind and rain as significant challenges (especially in the winter) that often prevent them from operating – largely because their informal enterprises have inadequate shelter. Some of the traders also explained that they sometimes were forced to throw stock away. This is aggravated by inadequate shelter, which exposes the traders and their goods to harsh weather conditions and together with insufficient and less than adequate storage facilities, can reduce the shelf life of certain goods. Other infrastructure-related challenges include the absence of fitting rooms and insufficient ablution facilities, waste disposal, parking and space.

"I have covering, but it is not enough for the rain and wind."

"Sometimes we cannot open because of the rain."

"Sometimes when it is raining it is a big problem… the wind sometimes breaks all the stuff."

The respondents identified crime, especially robberies and pickpocketing, as the second most prominent challenge. The high incidence of crime in areas beyond the CBD also has a negative effect on informal traders. For example, some of the traders have been robbed on their way to or from work and must reduce their trading hours to avoid travelling in the dark. In addition, the crime rate and request for 'protection money' hinder informal traders from expanding their enterprises to these areas. Some of the respondents also identified corruption as a related challenge, expressing that some security staff seem to be collaborating with the criminals and conduct limited checks that have consequences for traders who are operating without permits.

"The crime rate is pathetic."

"Pickpocketing is the other main issue which is destroying this business…Crime is the big problem."

The income generated by informal trading is volatile, and some days are characterised by no sales at all. This situation is acerbated by the uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As a business, sometimes it is good and sometimes it is bad."

"Sometimes I do not even get transport money to go home."

The respondents are also confronted with rising costs and increased competition, especially from traders who do not have permits[12]. Unlike permit holders, the locations of these competitors are not restricted or predetermined, and because they do not have the extra expense of trading permits, they can reduce their selling price – often *"undercutting the prices"* of permit holders.

Two of the respondents pointed out that the increased competition from traders who do not have permits was particularly prevalent after the initial hard lockdown. This coincides with the observations, which found that there was a temporary influx of mobile traders in June, followed by another temporary increase between mid-July and mid-September. A previous study (Horn, 2009) on the impact of the global financial crisis on the informal sector found similar results. Street traders reported a significant increase in competition because several *"people who lost their jobs or had to supplement incomes turned to vending as a possible source of income"* (Horn, 2009:17). At first glance, the increased prevalence of street traders might seem that the informal sector successfully absorbed several job losses ascribed to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the increased numbers of participants are competing within the context of reduced customers and spending power, resulting in reduced, and often insufficient, incomes. Therefore, this again questions the theoretical shock absorber function of the informal sector.

The key costs associated with informal street trading include transportation costs, salaries and wages, permit fees and storage costs. More specifically, three of the traders expressed that the storage costs are between R800 and R1 000 per month.

In addition to the challenges described above, several respondents expressed that they have insufficient capital and access to formal financial institutions, as well as limited or no support. For example, one of the traders pointed out that they have to work through an intermediary because they do not have capital to purchase stock, while another trader does not have capital to access the internet to advertise.

"You are an informal trader, you cannot go to a financial institution to go and make a loan. The first thing they are going to check is no, she is an informal trader, she does not earn so and so much money, so we cannot help."

"There is not support for us… there is not a structure… we do not sit in workshops."

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[12] Informal trading permits for dedicated trading bays are issued by the City of Cape Town; the monthly permit fees range between R80 and R1 500 (City of Cape Town, 2021c).

4.4.6.1 Challenges specifically attributed to COVID-19

Although some of the respondents received support and benefited from the COVID-19 relief measures from government, several respondents (including South African and foreign nationals) reported that they received limited or no support. For example, one of the traders said that although her business is registered, it did not qualify for "COVID debt relief funds". In addition, two respondents explained that they could not renew their expired documents and trading permits because Home Affairs was closed.

"During the lockdown they wrote a letter to us that we must not pay, but I think only one month then they wrote another letter that we have to."

"Did not get anything from government because I am not a South African."

As indicated earlier, informal traders have limited access to formal financial institutions, which intensified their insufficient capital during lockdown. Other aspects that were mentioned include the high costs of permits, sanitiser and stock in relation to their reduced income as a result of COVID-19 and the associated lockdown regulations.

"During the lockdown a lot of people were affected… except those that have got big companies; they can get anything, loans and other. But for us, most small businesses, there is nowhere to, you just depend on yourself."

4.4.7 Key strategies associated with informal street trading enterprises

Exploring the key strategies associated with informal street trading enterprises will inform a better understanding of informal business behaviour. This is particularly important to understand the strategies implemented by informal traders to remain competitive despite numerous challenges – especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the strategies implemented by the informal street traders aimed to meet customers' needs and preferences.

The respondents highlighted the importance of location, especially being based in a location with high volumes of pedestrian traffic. For example, the traders at the Trafalgar Place Flower Market rotate every month so that the enterprises take turns to have a street-facing location. On the other hand, some of the respondents have more than one stall in the CBD or sometimes sell at other locations or markets. One of the respondents also provides a delivery service to reach more customers.

"People must see you."

The respondents echoed previous studies (Hill *et al.*, 2018:6; Skinner & Rogan, 2019:7) that associate informal sector activities with long working hours despite limited remuneration.

"I come here very early and I close late."

"I work every day."

Another prominent strategy is to build up a clientele and retain regular customers through relationship building and service delivery.

"It is about keeping you happy as a customer…. If we do not have the specific colour, we chase, we search; even if we do not make a profit on it but keep that customer happy."

"Trust is big for customers… we have already built a relationship."

"If you are nice with your customers, they will always come back to you."

The respondents expressed that it is important to have fresh and constant stock that aligns with customers' preferences. Specifically, most of the traders selling fruit and vegetables purchase stock on a daily basis from the Cape Town Market early in the morning; some of the traders make their own products, purchase stock from local entities, purchase stock from other provinces, and one of the respondents imports goods from Europe.

"My strategy is to constantly have fresh herbs and new items that people want."

In terms of COVID-19, two respondents explained how their product offering changed over time in line with the lockdown regulations and associated consumer demand. Some of the traders use digital and social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp to purchase stock and advertise their product/service offering. Two of the respondents also had card swipe facilities and another informal enterprise had SnapScan as a payment method.

In terms of financial strategies, several respondents aim to remain competitive by either reducing their prices or by maintaining constant prices. One of the traders sell on credit and two of the traders often sell the product at a reduced priced *"if the customer is a couple rand short"*. Interestingly, many of these customers bring the outstanding amount shortly afterwards. Some of the respondents also implement various financial planning methods, mainly because the income generated by informal trading is volatile. For example, two of the traders only take a limited portion of the profit and keep the rest for unplanned business expenses, while another trader puts money away for the permit every day.

"They cannot afford to buy, so you must come down so that they can be able to take it so that you can get something to earn your living."

"That also brings me success because that customer will come back, he will give me my R1, and he will buy again and tell his friends."

Some of the traders implement strategies specifically related to COVID-19. In addition to wearing masks, some of the traders have sanitiser and at least one of the traders initially wore gloves to adhere to lockdown regulations and ensure the safety of their customers. One of the respondents expressed that as part of the import regulations, she obtained a certificate that confirms that the clothing has been sanitised, and this also helps to reassure customers. During the site visits, the researcher also observed that some of the stalls had printed A4 posters from the City of Cape Town that encouraged social distancing.

4.4.8 Enabling environment

Understanding and enhancing the factors that have a positive influence on informal street trading enterprises could assist the informal sector to expand and provide sustainable livelihoods as envisaged by policymakers. Over the long term, these insights could possibly inform legislature, policies and interventions that govern and support informal street trading.

Several respondents expressed that camaraderie with other traders, interactions with customers, and support from both traders and customers are factors that have a positive influence on their work.

"We share money and help each other… we call if the other one is not here."

"We encourage each other."

"If my customers don't see me, they worry."

Similarly, three respondents identified support as an enabling factor; respectively explaining that they can purchase stock interest-free on credit, are well represented by the chairlady, and can report any complaints to the City of Cape Town.

Location-specific factors include the relative safety[13] and foot traffic in the CBD compared to other locations, as well as selling at additional locations or markets. Additional factors that have a

[13] Although crime has been identified as a prominent constraint, some of the respondents expressed that it is safer in the CBD than in other areas, especially townships, hence, they identified the relative safety of the CBD as enabling factor.

positive influence on their ability to generate a livelihood include experience and that the permit fees are lower than the rental fees of formal shops.

4.4.8.1 Recommendations from respondents

Respondents were asked what could be done to help reduce the challenges that they are experiencing and to achieve the goals that they have for their informal street trading enterprise.

Several respondents expressed that infrastructure-related improvements would help to create an enabling environment for informal street traders. Suggestions include more space, waste removal, ablution facilities, sufficient covering, as well as steel- or permanent structures.

The traders also provided recommendations pertaining to COVID-19, mainly expressing that for their informal enterprises to be successful, customers (especially tourists) need to come back to the CBD. Some of the respondents also plead with local customers to support them.

"We need the people who are in Cape Town come back and support us."

"The world needs to be opened for the tourists to come and then you can be able to survive, otherwise, it is very difficult."

Additional recommendations include access to capital, someone to invest in the informal enterprise, improved security, workshops and to ensure that the designated trading bays are located along routes with high levels of foot traffic.

"Police have to intervene, especially with the pick pocketers… If they do not take care of it, it is going to destroy our market."

"If we could have workshops then we could chat about it."

4.4.9 Synthesis of the thematic analysis

Overall, the key findings of the thematic analysis can be summarised as follows:

- Camaraderie with other traders, interactions with customers and high levels of foot traffic are some of the key factors that have a positive influence on the ability of informal street traders to generate a sustainable livelihood.
- COVID-19 and the associated lockdown regulations are having a particularly devastating impact on informal street traders in the Cape Town CBD. Additional factors that have a negative influence on the ability of informal street traders to generate a sustainable livelihood include infrastructure-related challenges, crime and corruption.

Table 4.2 provides a more detailed summary of the findings emerging from the thematic analysis performed on the qualitative data collected.

Table 4.2: Summary of findings and results

Theme	Key points
Positive outcomes associated with informal street trading	• Financial gains • Sense of independence • Flexible working hours • Relationship building • Employment creation • Positive linkages with the formal and informal sector • Provide more affordable products and convenience to customers • 'Give back' to the community
Key strategies associated with informal street trading enterprises	• Long working hours • Affordable prices • Ensuring fresh and constant stock that aligns with customers' preferences. • Using digital platforms • Retaining regular customers through relationship building and good service
Factors that have a positive influence on the ability of informal street traders to generate a sustainable livelihood	• Camaraderie with other traders • Interactions with customers • High levels of foot traffic
Factors that have a negative influence on the ability of informal street traders to generate a sustainable livelihood	• Infrastructure-related challenges (especially evident during wind and rain) • Crime and corruption • Rising costs and increased competition • Insufficient capital and access to formal financial institutions • Limited or no support
The impact of COVID-19 and associated lockdown regulations	• Unexpected and prolonged closures (no income) • Insufficient COVID-19 relief measures • Food insecurity • Could send no or minimal remittances • Had to lay off some of their employees • Limited customers, especially tourists. In addition, local customers lost their jobs and do not have money • Significant decline in profit • Could not renew documents because Home Affairs was closed

Despite the financial and social benefits associated with informal street trading, this segment of the informal sector is constrained by several challenges. This is especially true in the uncertain trading environment resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to understand and address these location-specific issues and barriers so that the informal sector can expand and provide additional livelihoods as envisaged by policymakers.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed and thematic discussion of the key findings emerging from the observations and qualitative interviews. A particular focus was placed on the location-specific

characteristics, issues and experiences of informal street traders in the Cape Town CBD within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature describes the informal sector as dynamic and diverse (Fourie, 2018a:471; Valodia *et al*., 2006:108). The results of this study demonstrate that street trading is no exception. For example, some of the traders have steel carts, use digital platforms and aim to expand their informal street trading enterprise. On the other hand, some of the traders have minimal infrastructure and merely aim to survive.

The observations depict how the location, product offering and prevalence of informal street traders in the study area were altered by COVID-19 and the various lockdown regulations associated with the pandemic. As more street traders were able to resume their activities after the initial hard lockdown, the prevalence of traders and diversity of the product/service offering increased over time.

The thematic analysis highlighted various benefits associated with informal street trading, including financial gains, employment creation, non-financial benefits for the trader and social benefits. Camaraderie with other traders, interactions with customers, support and high levels of foot traffic further enhance the positive outcomes associated with informal street trading.

Despite these benefits, this segment of the informal sector is constrained by several challenges. COVID-19 and the associated lockdown regulations in particular have a devastating impact on informal street traders in the Cape Town CBD. Other prominent constraints include infrastructure-related challenges, crime and corruption. The results also question the traditional theory and optimistic belief that the informal sector can serve as a shock absorber for external shocks and job losses in the formal sector.

It is essential to understand and address the factors that have a positive and negative influence on informal street traders so that this segment of the informal sector can expand and provide additional livelihoods.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This qualitative study provided a detailed and differentiated understanding of informal street trading, one of the most visible and prominent activities in the informal sector, which has been severely affected by COVID-19. More specifically, the study used the Cape Town CBD as a descriptive case study to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the location-specific dynamics, benefits and barriers associated with informal street trading – especially in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Informal street trading is a vital source of livelihood that entails various benefits for traders, their families and the broader community. However, similar to other components of the informal sector, informal trading is characterised by significant challenges that hinder the enhancement of the sector, both in terms of size and the functionings that can be realised by participants. Obtaining a better understanding of the key features of informal street trading creates an opportunity for informed interventions and decision-making to address the challenges and create a more enabling environment, so that the sector can expand and possibly provide additional livelihoods.

This study, therefore, followed up the literature review with a variety of data collection sources and approaches to explore and describe various aspects of informal street trading in the Cape Town CDB. Throughout the study, a particular focus was placed on the impact and hardships associated with COVID-19. The extent of the data collection was determined by data and thematic saturation, and the key data collection methods include nine site visits from June to October 2020, 19 semi-structured interviews between April and May 2021, and supporting data sources such as field notes and photos. Thereafter, consolidated datasets (which were subject to several quality control measures) were compiled and revisited multiple times to thematically analyse and report on the key findings.

5.2 Synthesis of the research objectives and findings

The primary objective of this study was to determine the factors that have a positive and negative influence on the ability of informal street traders to generate a sustainable livelihood. A particular focus was placed on contextualising these factors in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic and resultant lockdown regulations.

To achieve the primary projective, the primary researcher set out to answer four interrelated secondary research objectives. The research methodology and chapter reference associated with

each of these secondary objectives are outlined in Table 5.1, while the key findings are discussed in the subsequent subsections.

Table 5.1: Addressing the secondary research objectives

Secondary research objective	Research methodology	Chapter reference
Determine the status quo of informal street traders and trading activities in the Cape Town CBD. Of particular interest is how these patterns changed (or remained the same) over time, especially in relation to the impact of COVID-19 and the various lockdown regulations associated with the pandemic.	Observations and interviews.	Chapter 4: Sections 4.2 and 4.3.
Identify the importance and positive outcomes associated with informal street trading.	Literature review and interviews with informal street traders.	Chapter 2: Sections 2.3.3.3 and 2.4.1. Chapter 4: Section 4.4.4.
Explore the challenges experienced by informal traders, with a particular focus on the hardships associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, explore the enabling environment and other factors that have a positive influence on the ability of informal street traders to generate a sustainable livelihood.	Literature review and interviews with informal street traders.	Chapter 2: Sections 2.4.4 and 2.5.1. Chapter 4: Sections 4.4.5, 4.4.6 and 4.4.8.
Acquire insights pertaining to the personal and business-related motivations and aspirations of informal street traders, as well as the key strategies implemented to achieve these aspirations and remain competitive.	Literature review and interviews with informal street traders.	Chapter 2: Sections 2.2.1 and 2.4.3.2. Chapter 4: Sections 4.4.1, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 4.4.5.2 and 4.4.7.

5.2.1 Status quo of informal street trading activities in the Cape Town CBD

This study aimed to determine the status quo of informal street trading activities in the Cape Town CBD by obtaining a detailed understanding of the location, product offering, trading hours, physical structures, and prevalence of informal street traders in the study area, as well as discussing the demographic and business characteristics of the respondents.

The observations revealed that informal street traders are mainly clustered near locations with high volumes of pedestrian traffic, and that the trading hours and physical structures associated with informal street trading enterprises vary or align across different streets/landmarks and product/service offerings. The prevalence of informal street traders increased and the product offering diversified over time as more traders resumed their activities after the initial hard lockdown.

The respondents who participated in the interviews were mainly male, foreign nationals, between 35 and 64 years old, and the majority completed matric. Most of the respondents have been trading between zero and five years and mostly sold clothing and/or shoes at the time of the

interviews. It should be noted that the characteristics of the respondents are not necessarily representative of all the informal street traders in the study area[14].

5.2.2 Importance and positive outcomes of informal street trading

Informal street trading entails the following positive outcomes for the respondents and their families: financial gains (being able to send remittances and pay tuition fees as an example), a sense of independence, flexible working hours that give the individuals more time to spend with family, and the opportunity to meet and interact with different people.

The community benefits associated with informal street trading include employment creation, positive linkages with the formal and informal sector and more affordable and convenient access to goods and services. Several of the respondents also expressed that they help people and 'give back' to the community.

Respondents furthermore identified camaraderie with other traders, interactions with customers and high levels of foot traffic as the key factors that have a positive influence on their work and further enhance the positive outcomes associated with informal street trading.

5.2.3 Challenges and enabling environment

Several respondents identified insufficient infrastructure as significant constraints, which are especially evident during wind and rain. Other prominent challenges include crime and corruption, volatile revenues, rising costs, increased competition, insufficient capital and access to formal financial institutions, and limited or no support. Many of these challenges are further aggravated by the uncertain trading environment as a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2.4 Motivations, aspirations and strategies associated with informal street trading

The motivational factors and inspirations of informal street traders entail both a survivalist and growth-oriented component. Some of the respondents expressed that they had no choice but to enter and remain in the informal sector so that they can generate an income. Several of the respondents resolved to informal trading because they were unemployed and were unable to secure formal employment. Many of these individuals are merely aiming to survive, provide for their family and maintain their enterprise.

[14] This is not claimed in the study and does not detract from the findings of the qualitative nature of the study.

On the other hand, several respondents deliberately chose the profession because it is something that they have experience with and are passionate about, and it provides an opportunity to be self-employed, continue with the family business, and *"have a better life"*. Many of these traders aspire to expand their informal street trading enterprise, establish a formal shop and train others, but financial constraints and the impact of COVID-19 are constraining these aspirations.

Informal street traders implement various strategies, which mainly aim to meet customers' needs and preferences, in an attempt to achieve their aspirations and remain competitive despite numerous challenges. Some of the key strategies implemented by the respondents include long working hours, affordable prices, ensuring fresh and constant stock that aligns with customers' preferences, using digital platforms, and retaining regular customers through relationship building and good service.

5.2.5 Overarching findings and results in view of the COVID-19 pandemic

Informal street trading is a multifaceted occupation and the participants have varying motivations, aspirations, strategies, business characteristics, access to resources and revenues. Overall, informal street trading entails financial and non-financial benefits for participants, their family members and the broader community. However, as highlighted in this study, the livelihood of informal street traders is constrained by various challenges and exogenous shocks – of which COVID-19 is a prime example.

COVID-19 and the associated lockdown regulations led to unexpected and prolonged closures of informal street trading enterprises, characterised by no income, no or minimal remittances, and exposure to food insecurity. Although traders were able to gradually resume their activities as more economic activities became permissible after the initial hard lockdown, several of the adverse effects continued even after the informal enterprises reopened. For example, several respondents reported a significant decline in profit, insufficient access to COVID-19 relief measures, limited customers (especially tourists) and reduced spending power of customers. The above context and findings, therefore, question the perceived ability of the informal sector to serve as a shock absorber for external shocks and job losses in the formal sector.

5.2.6 Contextualising the findings in light of Sen's capability approach

Based on the key findings of this study, this subsection uses the essential components and sequence of the capability approach to summarise how the respondents utilise and transform their accessible resources into achieved functionings.

Informal traders' capability sets entail both a survivalist and growth-oriented component. Some of the respondents are merely aiming to survive, provide for their family and maintain their enterprise, while other respondents aspire to expand their informal street trading enterprise, establish a formal shop and train others.

Positively, several of the respondents have been able to achieve these aspirations. The respondents identified financial gains that enable them to support themselves and their families, a sense of independence, flexible working hours that allow more family time, and the opportunity to meet and interact with different people as key achieved functionings associated with informal street trading.

In an attempt to achieve these functionings, the respondents work long hours, offer affordable prices, ensure fresh and constant stock that aligns with customers' preferences, use digital platforms, and aim to retain regular customers through relationship building and good service. These strategies, together with positive conversion factors like camaraderie with other traders, interactions with customers, and high levels of foot traffic further assist traders to realise and enhance their achieved functionings.

On the other hand, insufficient infrastructure, crime and corruption, volatile revenues, rising costs, increased competition, insufficient capital and access to formal financial institutions, and limited or no support are negative conversion factors that limit the respondents capability set and achieved functionings. COVID-19 and the associated lockdown regulations had a particularly devasting impact on the resources, conversion factors and achieved functionings of informal street traders.

5.3 Contribution of the study

This study provided a detailed understanding of location-specific characteristics, issues and experiences of a specific segment of the informal economy, namely informal street traders in the Cape Town CBD, thereby addressing certain existing research gaps and suggestions for future research.

This study's specific focus on the impact and hardships associated with the current COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdown regulations helps determine the impact thereof on lives and livelihoods in the informal sector, especially regarding informal street trading. Insights pertaining to the impact of exogenous shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on informal street traders could possibly inform regulations and relief measures for informal traders.

The observations helped to better understand the status quo of informal street trading activities in the Cape Town CBD by exploring the location, product offering, trading hours, physical

structures, and prevalence of informal street traders in the study area. Charman *et al.* (2019:13) point out that this information can be used to analyse potential spatial and clustering patterns. In turn, these insights could possibly assist municipalities when determining the location of approved trading bays.

The thematic analysis provided insights pertaining to the motivational factors, aspirations and key strategies associated with informal street trading enterprises. These insights can inform a better understanding of the resilience and innovative approaches displayed by informal street traders in general, and specifically in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, thematically exploring the positive outcomes and functionings resulting from the informal street traders' continued endeavours will help to understand the importance of informal trading in the lives and livelihoods of many people in the informal sector.

Over the long term, the insights gathered through this study could possibly inform evidence-based legislature, policies and interventions that govern and support informal street trading. Understanding and addressing the factors that have a positive and negative influence on informal street trading enterprises may assist this component of the informal sector to expand and provide more sustainable livelihoods.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Policy recommendations

This study highlighted the need for a more conducive trading environment by alleviating some of the challenges experienced by informal street traders. It is advisable for the local municipality to initiate infrastructure-related improvements such as shelter from the wind and rain, increased access to waste removal and ablution facilities, and steel or permanent structures. Improved shelter and storage facilities could help extend the shelf life of certain goods, which will reduce the amount of stock that the informal street traders have to throw away.

The importance of being located along high volumes of pedestrian traffic and the heterogeneous nature of informal street trading should be considered by policymakers when determining the size and location of informal street trading bays. In line with the varying growth trajectories, aspirations and business characteristics, some of the informal street trading enterprises require larger trading bays than others. Similarly, access to resources (such as water and electricity) also varies based on the product/service offering.

It is also advisable to implement increased security measures to address crime, especially robberies and pickpocketing, and perceived corruption. Examples of these measures are increasing the visibility and awareness of security staff, rotating security staff between various

streets and landmarks, and increased collaboration between informal traders, formal businesses and security staff.

Targeted support and interventions are required to mitigate the adverse effects of COVID-19 and the associated lockdown regulations on informal street traders. These interventions could include assisting the traders to renew their expired documents and trading permits, reduced permit fees or extended exemptions, and more affordable access to sanitiser. The respondents also highlighted that customers, especially tourists, need to return to the CBD for their informal enterprises to be successful. Awareness campaigns could be launched to reassure customers that it is safe to visit the CBD and purchase from informal enterprises, and inform them about the positive backward and forward linkages when supporting informal street traders.

Several informal traders have insufficient capital and limited access to formal financial institutions, which increases their vulnerability to exogenous shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. There is an opportunity for co-funding, micro-insurance and financing, incentive schemes, investment funds and subsidised loans from government institutions, civil society and the private sector.

Overall, improved dialogue between all stakeholders is advised to get a better understanding of the expectations, experiences, challenges, ideas, mandate and capabilities of all the role-players. This could include workshops between policymakers and informal street traders, collaborations between informal street traders and formal businesses, and an informal street traders' forum.

5.4.2 Recommendations for further research

Longitudinal and follow-up studies with the same respondents will help to explore the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Key themes that could be addressed in these follow-up studies include the adjustment (such as innovations and adaptive strategies) of informal street traders to the 'new normal', the effect of local customers and tourists returning to the CBD (or not), as well as the impact of new policy responses, relief measures and interventions.

As the informal sector is dynamic and diverse, similar studies to determine the location-specific characteristics, experiences and challenges of informal street traders in other locations will enable researchers and policymakers to analyse the similarities and differences across various geographic locations. In turn, this can create an opportunity for informed interventions and policies at national and local level.

It is also advisable for researchers or policymakers to investigate the relevance, effectiveness efficiency, sustainability and impact of policies, legislation and interventions pertaining to informal trading. A particular focus can potentially be placed on the shortcomings, challenges, lessons

learned and recommendations - from informal traders and governments' viewpoint. Overall, a future research agenda pertaining to informal street traders can, among others, include the human dynamics, capital attainment, value chain analysis, gender perspective, and customer perspective on the positive outcomes and subjective experiences of purchasing from informal street traders.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Interview guide

INTRODUCTION
Date:
Time:
Respondent number:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
1. How long have you been an informal trader?
2. Before you became an informal trader, did you have any formal employment (where you received, e.g. a payslip or other benefits from the employer)?
3. If you answered yes to the previous question, will you please provide me with more information about your formal employment, for example: a) How long did you have that job? b) What happened that you left the formal job?
4. Why did/do you choose informal trading as a profession?
5. What are the key advantages and positive outcomes associated with being an informal trader?
6. What are your goals, especially regarding this informal trading enterprise?
7. Can you please express how you and your informal enterprise were affected by COVID-19 and the lockdown?
8. What other key challenges are you experiencing? (Factors that negatively affect your work and make it difficult to achieve your goals.)
9. On the other hand, what are some of the factors that have a positive influence on your work?
10. What are some of the key actions/strategies that you are applying to improve your enterprise and to remain competitive? Especially during Covid-19 and the lockdown?
11. What can be done to help reduce the challenges that you are experiencing and to achieve the goals that you have for your enterprise?

12. Would you rather prefer a full-time job now?

BUSINESS AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

13. Gender

o Male o Female o Other (please specify)

14. Main product/service (record by observation)

15. Age:

16. What is the highest level of education that you have achieved?

No formal schooling

Some level of primary school but did not complete primary school

Completed primary school/grade 7

Completed primary school, but did not complete high school

Matric/grade 12

Tertiary education (diploma, degree)

17. What is your country of origin?

If from South Africa, in which province were you born?

18. On average, what was the monthly profit generated by this enterprise before COVID? (Profit refers to the “take home money” after costs have been subtracted)

19. On average, what was the monthly profit generated in the last year since lockdown began?

OTHER/ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

THANK YOU

Annexure B: Declaration of language editing

To whom it may concern

Cecile van Zyl
Language editing and translation
Cell: 072 389 3450
Email: Cecile.vanZyl@nwu.ac.za

6 December 2021

Dear Mr / Ms

Re: Language editing of dissertation (Investigating the socio-economic profile of informal street traders in Cape Town's central business district: A COVID-19 perspective)

I hereby declare that I language edited the above-mentioned dissertation by Ms V de Villiers (student number: 22952144).

Please feel free to contact me should you have any enquiries.

Kind regards

Cecile van Zyl

Language practitioner

BA (PU for CHE); BA honours (NWU); MA (NWU)
SATI number: 1002391