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The Kwa Mai Mai Effect: An Analysis of Food Tourism Discourse by Locals in Johannesburg, South Africa

Nande SULELO
IIE School of Hospitality and Service Management, South Africa
Email, nsulelo@iiehsm.com

Abstract

Downtown Johannesburg has seen the emergence of a traditional market as a local food destination. The fascination with the market's food offerings has yet to abate despite no organised entertainment or activity outside the food. Thirty short videos accessed from TikTok were studied to ascertain the use of language in expressing power and ideology within Kwa Mai Mai market reviews. Through a comprehensive Critical Discourse Analysis, this study investigated how the social media platform was used to frame an inner-city Johannesburg traditional market as a food destination for local visitors motivated by the desire to participate in digital discourse. A close reading of the videos indicated the ideological convictions embedded in the reviews and reflections. The videos evidenced a reproduction of social stances by the content creators without an interrogation of the social context in which the market exists, whilst some social norms were challenged, indicating the fluidity of power within social contexts. Lastly, street food vending at the market evidenced the persistence of traditional food in urban food systems. This research contributes to a small body of tourism research in Africa using qualitative approaches and offers insights into local food tourism in Johannesburg.

Keywords Kwa Mai Mai, food tourism, street food, local tourism, urban food systems

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Introduction

Inner city Johannesburg is burdened by 'high crime rates, lack of services and dilapidated infrastructure' which have persisted from the 1980s to date (Hoogendoorn & Giddy, 2017: 318). Despite sporadic attempts at the regeneration of the city, such as the *Maboneng* precinct, *Arts on Main* and the repurposing the old Johannesburg prison into Constitutional Hill, social challenges persist; crippling the overall impact of many facets of urban life in these spaces (Hoogendoorn & Giddy 2017; Frenzel 2014). In 2014, Njaya estimated food tourism to be worth 38% of Africa's gross domestic product, and street vending – which is responsible for 12 – 14 % of urban employment in sub-Saharan Africa - is crucial to underst&ing urban regeneration efforts and presents a significant economic crutch for this region (Recchi, 2020). Although literature on tourism within the Johannesburg context exists, it is concentrated on the city's dilapidation and slum tourism (Frenzel 2014; Hoogendoorn & Giddy 2017; Malleka et al., 2022), leaving a gap in understanding urban food systems, street food and local food tourism within the city. There is a need to understand the social context of street food in urban and peri-urban spaces to provide insights into the regenerative potential of such locations. Such insights are important for a country like South Africa that is still reengineering social cohesion and social justice. Thus, engagement with discourse is useful for studying conceptions of various social strata, particularly in contexts with direct material impact on vulnerable communities. It is against this backdrop that this study examines how power, dominance, ideology and social inequality "are expressed, enacted, legitimated and reproduced" (Allagbe & Amoussou, 2018: 16) in TikTok reviews of Kwa Mai Mai market. This study contributes to the generation of research about local tourist attractions from and within the margins (Orea-Giner & Fusté-Forné, 2024). Through Critical Discourse Analysis, this research examines how the vendors and the market are framed through language and visual articulation in the videos of content creators who have visited the market. Secondly, the study investigates the ideologies about Kwa Mai Mai Market as evident in the language of the TikTok reviews. Lastly, this research examines the contexts in which power is exercised or attributed to others at the market.

Contextual background of Kwa Mai Mai market

The market is situated east of Johannesburg's inner city and is one of the oldest of its kind in the country. First established in an old mining compound in the early 1920s (and later moved to a new location in the 1940s after a fire), it accommodated job-seeking male immigrants from the apartheid homelands (Carr, 2015; Sithole 2023; Mnguni, 2024). Additionally, the market also housed small-scale economic activities driven by the need to survive in the city. It attracted informal trading by traditional healers, carpenters, herbalists, and traditional sandal makers (Carr, 2015). The healers dominated the activities at the compound and consequently earned the market the corresponding monicker '*ezinyangeni*' (place of healers). Historically, the market represents the resilience, resistance and resourcefulness of migrants in a challenging urban environment (Sithole 2023). The modern-day market has not veered far from its history and has become a significant part of Johannesburg's food tourism landscape (Bambelele, 2023). It is still home to traders and traditional healers, and there still exists a residential part where "children play blissfully as they would in what is traditionally considered a home, men and women laughing, singing, dancing and hard at work at every corner of the market" (Mnguni, 2024). Primarily, the market services its residents and the nearby taxi

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ranks, with the weekends dominated by tourists (Mnguni, 2024). Visitors can expect street food, clothing, traditional regalia, custom-made furniture, livestock trading and occasional performances by Zulu traditional artists. Several food stalls occupy the market – a handful are modern food trailers, whereas the majority are semi-permanent structures made of corrugated iron sheets and wood; each fitted with a makeshift grilling station and an open-air set-up of tables and chairs for customers. The market offers a casual service style, based on the *shisa nyama* (literal translation: burn meat) concept prevalent throughout the country, which involves customers selecting from a variety of available meats and waiting whilst service personnel grill for them (du Rand & Fisher, 2020). Additional services may be offered to the customers, including entertainment, as is the case at Kwa Mai Mai, where some stalls have musical entertainment from large speakers positioned for the crowd, and visitors also play music from their cars. Furthermore, street hawkers pass through to sell miscellaneous products such as painkillers, on-the-go cocktails, ice and cups, perfumes, phone covers, and snacks.

Literature review

Different scholars address various aspects of the food tourism discourse, including the value of food in tourism (Henderson, 2009); the advantages of food tourism for local communities (Giampiccoli & Kalis, 2012; Çalişkan & Yilmaz, 2016); and food tourism and local economic development (Dougherty et al., 2013; Dlomo & Rogerson 2020; Ndlovu 2023). Many other debates about food tourism that are beyond the scope of the current study are available. The World Food Travel Association describe food tourism as "the act of travelling for a taste of place to get a sense of place" (Fisher & du Rand, 2024: 134). Ellis et al. (2018) explain that scholars often use 'culinary tourism', 'food tourism' and 'gastronomy tourism' interchangeably, though there are differences in the focus of each. They note that culinary tourism relies on food as a vehicle through which tourists experience the culture, whereas food tourism emphasizes the tourist's eagerness to sample local foods, and gastronomy tourism is concerned with "the place of food in the culture of the host" (pg. 253). Many more scholars transpose these descriptions across these three categories, and Çalişkan & Yilmaz (2016) offer a detailed account of this. A more relatable definition is provided by Hall & Sharples (2003), noting that food tourism must include a deliberate visit to food production locations for the primary purpose of engaging with the food offerings and/ or experiencing the location's unique food culture. This description is aligned with Ellis et al, as both position the tourist as keen to try local foods, and it covers enough ground to include key notions relevant to this study, such as food as experience, local culture and travelling for food.

The concept of local food tourism

Perspectives from local tourists are crucial and yet limited in the African context, although there has been growing interest recently (Haarhoff 2018; Mnguni & Giampiccoli 2019; Maziriri et al., 2021). Fisher & du Rand (2024) explore the appreciation and use of local food in fine dining to represent South Africa's food heritage. Through the recreation and modernisation of traditional dishes and innovative practices, chefs in high-end establishments reimagine local dishes to create a lasting memory of the experience. Mnguni & Giampiccoli, (2019; 2022) provide plausible arguments for recognising local food as vital for the sustenance of local communities. Further literature notes the significance of local food tourism in supporting locals economically, socially and environmentally (Njaya 2014; Maziriri et al., 2021; Mnguni & Giampicolli 2019; Ndlovu 2023). Food also has a developmental role, particularly in rural and marginalised communities (Çalişkan & Yilmaz 2016). Food can connect tourists with local cuisine and culture, support local food systems and sustain local tourism (Ellis et al. 2018; Kovalenko, et al 2023; Ndlovu 2023), and through food, tourists can "watch, engage with, and learn about the cultures and locations of other people." (Ndlovu, pg. 1807). Food can also be a central memory of a tourist's experience of a place and allows for an authentic connection with both people and place (Ellis et al. 2018; Ndlovu & Ojong, 2018). Moreover, using local ingredients or indigenous food preparation methods rescues local food from the perception of being "food for the poor" (Mnguni & Giampicolli 2019: 4), provides employment opportunities, and strengthens a community's identity whilst also preserving local food heritage (Ndlovu 2023). Ndlovu (2023) outlines criteria that food tourism locations must meet to be viable as food tourism attractions. These include the physical attractiveness of the location, sufficient infrastructure, safety and accessibility. Dougherty et al. (2013) add that proximity to urban areas is one of the key competitive advantages in food tourism. Meeting the criteria above is not easy for street markets, as the trade itself in Africa often results from existing on the margins of development. Although the literature provides insights into understanding the potential of food tourism for the betterment of local communities, the focus is overwhelmingly on the emancipatory potential of street food, which relies on agency from the communities. There is a need to understand the underlying social structures that have resulted in social inequality, and the reasons for the persistent underdevelopment of specific communities, so that this knowledge can support the emancipatory potential already identified.

Urban street food as a sustainable community practice

Edwards (2016) notes a universal food shortage in the cities. Vignola & Oosterveer (2022) estimate that the significance of street food will rise proportionally to the increasing population in urban and peri-urban spaces. Edwards (2016) further adds that for city dwellers, cost, access, and food quality are often of most significance in making food choices. Consequently, street food as an affordable alternative has become integral to urban food systems. Edeme & Nkalu (2018) note that street food can be prepared and transported from either the vendor's home or "cottage-scale factories". Alternatively, the food is prepared at the stall where it is sold and may be consumed "at home, on location or at the workplace" Vignola & Oosterveer (2022: 1). In the Global South, street food also embodies social, cultural, economic and environmental facets in addition to offering sustenance to the urban poor (Vignola & Oosterveer, 2022). Street food is a critical component of social development and has

a considerable impact on poor urban communities, particularly among vulnerable groups like women, in-migrants and those with low levels of education (Njaya, 2014; Recchi, 2020). Furthermore, Vignola & Oosterveer (2022) argue that the legitimation of street food as "an integral part of urban food systems is needed to effectively contribute to food security and environmental sustainability" (pg. 2) because local foods are important in supporting and promoting sustainable tourism (Henderson, 2003). Giampiccoli & Kalis (2012) highlight that indigenous cultures are interested in the recognition of their foods outside the limited context of community service, but as part of tourism and sustainability debates.

Critical discourse theory in tourism

Qian et al. (2018) identify Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as crucial in contextualising tourism studies. Tsegaw (2024) emphasises that research in the tourism and hospitality sector in Africa is concentrated on positivist methodologies. Consequently, the CDA is a worthy alternative and offers a lens to examine "power relationships and (to) demonstrate inequalities embedded in society" (Allagbe &Ammoussou 2018: 12). This framework is characterised by its focus on social power dynamics and the resultant power imbalances (Feighery 2006; Fairclough 2013; Allagbe & Ammoussou 2018). According to Wodak (2001), CDA is primarily concerned with ventilating the use of language to 'express', 'signal', 'constitute', and 'legitimise' dominance in social discourse, and so must evidence three key social concepts: power, history, and ideology. Thus, a critical study aims to contribute towards understanding how power is communicated in discourse and then offer alternatives to the dominance of one group by another. To offer effective alternatives, a CDA exposition must deconstruct the socio-political context in which the text exists. This critical approach not only challenges reductionism within African food tourism research but also ventilates power dynamics within street food discourse.

Methodology

Cohen et al. (2018) state that there is no single correct way of analysing qualitative data and that the analysis of qualitative data is a process that cannot be strictly formulated. It is the researcher's responsibility to employ strategies of data collection and analysis that are fit for the purpose, including being transparent about their process to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Additionally, the data analysis and interpretation often occur concurrently, as it is the nature of qualitative research to be iterative. Thus, the design of a qualitative study must be indicative of careful reflection. The videos under study were sourced from the social media platform *TikTok*, wherein over ten thousand content pieces are associated with the Kwa Mai Mai theme through hashtags. Strategic sampling methods are required to sort through copious amounts of data available on social media, and this study relied on simple random sampling to scale down to a workable sample size. Videos were generated through a search of 'Kwa Mai Mai' '#KwaMaiMai' '#MaiMai'. Inclusion criteria comprised of:

a) Videos with any of the variations of the hashtags: #KwaMaiMai, #MaiMai'
b) Videos with an overview of the visit or a review of the market
c) Videos posted between 2020 - 2024
d) Videos at least 10 seconds or longer

Exclusion criteria comprised of:
a) Videos with children
b) Videos with the hashtags but no content about the market
c) Videos that focused solely on the food and not the market in its entirety
d) More videos from the same content creators (where a user posted about different days visiting the market).
e) Videos where the download feature was disabled

Thirty videos were selected, comprising the following: 16: original audio; 9: reused soundbite; 2: music only; and 3: music and written captions. Metadata from the videos, including comments from other users, the total number of views and the date of publication, was excluded to keep within the scope of the study and focus solely on the content creator's intended communication to the virtual audience and how they articulate their experience of the market.

The analysis process was undertaken as follows:

a) *Manual transcription*: Microsoft Excel was used for transcription, enumerating and labelling videos in the order of processing. Thus, there were videos 1 – 30.
b) *Translation and verification:* English, IsiZulu, Sesotho, Sepedi and IsiXhosa were used in the videos with varying degrees of code-switching and code-mixing. Other clips included emoticons on screen, whose sentiments were also transcribed. Additionally, English colloquialisms, when used, were simplified. Translations were undertaken by the author, who is a qualified African linguistics practitioner. Additionally, native speakers of IsiZulu, SeSotho and Sepedi were enlisted to verify the accuracy of the translations. This process was conducted informally, where they were asked to watch the videos and relay the content creator's sentiments, and the interpretations were compared against the initial translations and adjustments were made where necessary. The author is a native speaker of isiXhosa and English and thus needed no additional verification for the videos using these languages.
c) *Coding*: A combination of deductive and inductive coding was used. Firstly, generic nodes were listed under these themes: language, intertextuality, framing, power and visual focus. Then, new codes were added to represent the

patterns that emanated organically. Establishing shots, framing of the space and the novelty in food preparation were organically generated through this inductive process. The combination of deductive and inductive coding ensured that the study stayed within its principal focus, whilst also paying attention to emerging information.

d) *Data analysis:* The close reading of the data prioritised the following:
   i. Extracting meanings from descriptions of people and place.
   ii. Close reading of metaphors and references used.
   iii. Key issues emanating from the use of language.
   iv. Repetitions of terms and phrases within one video and the sample.
   v. The positioning of the self in relation to people and place.

e) *Interpretation*: The results were critically assessed, focusing on the underlying nuances of the text. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) note, a text is never neutral and often betrays its ideological underpinnings.

f) *Constructing themes*: Results were collated into cohesive themes that satisfy the research problem.

g) *Data Validation*: The researcher, fully aware of the multiplicity of language and the complexities of social media research, endeavoured to manage the data responsibly. This included the wariness of inherent personal biases that include the appreciation of social media as an important social context wherein valuable insights into human interactions may be attained, and the methodological bias of sampling only from *TikTok*, a platform mainly popular amongst young people (Miltsov, 2022). Consequently, the researcher employed reflexive measures such as seeking feedback from colleagues who have been exposed to Kwa Mai Mai and compared that feedback against the researcher's conceptions. Furthermore, the researcher sought to immerse herself in the context of the study by visiting the market to better understand the scene. Audiovisual evidence was collected, and notes were taken for further reference. The immersion in the physical space was useful for a personal understanding of the nuances described in the videos and provided a valuable source for triangulation. Anney (2014) notes that self-immersion improves the researcher's understanding of the context of the study and "minimises the distortions of information", which in this case may be due to social media motivations and constraints (pg. 276).

An analysis of reviews on social media is based on curated perspectives from an unstimulated sample whose motivations are unknown. The possibility of trending is a powerful motivator for content creators to 'play the field,' without intervention from the researcher. However, there is still great value in excavating social discourse to understand human motivations, agendas and behaviour within various social contexts, and a rigorous methodological design still yields worthy results. Participant consent in social media research remains a challenge for researchers, and scholars agree that the researcher bears the responsibility of protecting participants from harm. Consequently, demographic and personal information was excluded from the data capturing, with only the user handles and the date the video was posted being captured for accurate labelling. Furthermore, where the video download feature was disabled, alternative videos were sought to respect the user's wishes for control of their content. Lastly, to ensure the content creators remain unidentifiable, the videos have been excluded from the references in this study because listing them would necessitate the inclusion of both user handles and direct links to their videos.

Results and discussion

Framing the market and its people: the space and the vendors

The market is depicted in the videos as crude, cheap, peculiar, characteristically overcrowded, and friendly and welcoming, with a possibility for violence. The space is succinctly encapsulated in sentiments shared in the audio clip used in Videos 3/18/ 24/ 25/ 29, where the voice-over notes a desire to also '*go and eat (from) those wardrobe doors and be served by those ladies with red mud* (ochre) *painted on their faces and leave smelling of smoke'*. Kwa Mai Mai's rudimentary trait is owed to its makeshift stalls and the associated temporariness of such a setup. Additionally, some services, such as alcoholic beverages, may be sourced elsewhere or are sometimes provided by hawkers not based in the market. Another indicator of the market's simplicity is its serveware – popularised by a 2021 video (Video 28) which captured what many other videos later referenced – the use of old 'swollen piece(s) of wardrobe' as a platter. These platters have become somewhat of an attraction, with many visitors anticipating this exciting moment when their meat is served. Many others reference the infamous platter either verbally in the voiceovers or visually through a clip showing their food. However, there is no conception of the platters as a sustainable practice, as the pieces can be reused, unlike fast food packaging. Using platters instead of individual plating is also typical of rural practice, where meat is served on wooden or grass-woven platters to be enjoyed in groups, and this referencing of traditional norms is lost on the content creators who perceive this to be one of the market's eccentricities. Another peculiarity about the market is that '*at Mai Mai they braai* (grill*) their meat with fire*' (Video 6)'. Flame-grilling seemed to be particularly novel to the commentator, although this is a tradition in many parts of the country (and the world). There is also a sense of naivety about the place, which is expressed through recounting that '*there isn't like this whole measuring* (weighing) *with the scale* (video 7); '*every piece of meat is 20 bucks*' (Video 6). This insinuates that the vendors should be applying norms from other food settings where different meat products are strictly weighed and priced differently. There is an assumption that with such practice, the buyer gets exactly what they paid for, whereas the seller does not lose out. An important factor in street food is the cleanliness and overall hygiene. This is represented in the videos by lauding the market for providing warm water for visitors to wash their hands. Another reviewer specifically noted that they were '*quite impressed by how clean it was'* (Video 4), indicating an expectation of a low standard of hygiene. As noted earlier in the paper, the Johannesburg inner city context is associated with crime. Video 13 invokes this, stating a concern for their phone whilst filming. Video 6 addresses this differently

by associating the space with violence - '*there were two fights that broke out when I got there… but still I stayed*', they note. The overall picture of an overcrowded urban space with loose regard for the law is used by other scholars to describe South Africa's taxi ranks (Fobosi 2013; Rink 2018; Mathabathe 2020). Not only is this market '*under a bridge*' (Video 22), but it is also without security measures and could very well be a taxi rank, as Video 19 notes, '*I was really shocked and asking myself if we were at a taxi rank'*. These conceptions of the space are indicative of the creators' understanding of safety in the inner city.

It seemed important to the content creators for their audiences to know that they were only visiting the market and were not residents of the area. Video 15 opens the video with a declaration, "*You guys want me to go to Kwa Mai Mai*", and many others note that it was their first time visiting the market. Videos 8, 14, 23, 24 and 25 showcase establishing shots from their cars driving towards the inner city. This is important in extricating the content creators from the space and distinguishing between the self and 'the other', the visitor and the locals. The overall representation of the vendors is that of nameless, faceless and homogenised women. They are specifically identified to be women - '*omama'* (women/ mothers). There was barely any other mention of other vendors, except for Video 7, where a local male artisan is showcased creating traditional wear. Overall, minimal attention was paid to the vendors in the videos, barring Videos 4, 6 and 21. In the rest of the videos, the vendors make cameos – presumably to fulfil supporting roles, not unlike props in film or on stage, used to convince the audience of the authenticity of the material presented. They are 'looked at' through camera lenses with no direct engagement, and their processes are recorded for social media content they may never view. They form part of the market's eccentricity, as an additional attraction to be viewed and photographed by the visitors who have the money they need. There is an extrication of the vendors from the urban context, and they are viewed as an anomaly. The soundbite used in Videos 3, 6, 18, 24, and 29 references them as having applied '*mud on their faces'*, an act not suited for a modern existence in the city. This positions them not only as outsiders within this space but also classifies them as 'the other' who is observed by the tourist's curious eye that is meticulously noting their peculiar ways. It is only in Video 6 that the 'mud' is suspected to be essential to protecting the vendors from constant exposure to fire. Traditionally, red ochre in rural South Africa is used for sun protection. Furthermore, in Video 6, the content creator is surprised by the strength of women, noting that *'those ladies came together and moered* (beat up) *these two guys I don't know how they did it, but they did it; they're quite strong*'. It is not clear how many women were involved, but they are lauded for fighting off two men, indicating the expectation of women to be weak and vulnerable to men. This sentiment of the women's strength also invokes the concept of '*wathint'abafazi wathint'imboko*' (you strike a woman; you strike a rock). Although the association of womanhood with strength may seem empowering, this is not necessarily the case within the Black South African context in which these vendors exist. The strength invoked by this notion of women being as strong as a rock is that of resilience, strife and survival – a notion of 'strong Black women' firmly opposed by feminist scholars like bell hooks (1993) and Pumla Gqola (2017). In particular, this strength is not associated with power but rather a desperate fight for survival. It is only Videos 7 and 21 where the vendors are named – an act that needs no further restatement on its impact on humanising an individual. The documentation of the artisan in Video 7 grants the artisan importance in a video about their location, and the impromptu interview in Video 21 imparts agency to the vendor to represent themselves and receive promotion on a platform where with many more would-be visitors. However, the interaction in Video 21 is uncomfortable for the vendor, who is visibly shy and speaks in a low tone but seems to acquiesce because of the perceived benefit from the promotion online. Although not directed at the vendors, the voice-over clip reused in Videos 1 and 2 speaks to the mannerisms of the vendors. The audio states:

> At Mai Mai you eat from wardrobe doors, but at Wimpy one mistake "I want to see the manager, this food blah blah blah...the plate.. blah blah blah, the glass is not clean...blah blah blah" No, you guys are annoying.' (Videos 1 and V2).

The extract above argues that power in the market does not rest with the customer. The philosophy of "the customer is always right" is challenged, including the visitors' conviction to enforce it. Essentially, the commentator notes that the customer concedes their rights at the market, whereas at a fast-food establishment, they would most likely exert their rights. What the commentator fails to acknowledge is that this is the case in all street food contexts where service expectations vary, and visitors are often willing to forgo established dining norms when they engage with street food contexts. The argument made in the soundbite is that customers do not willingly relinquish their power at the market but are rather stripped of their power by a threatening environment. In this sense, power is accepted to be fluid, and one's agency is dependent on their location. The videos paint a picture of a market run by women with 'mud' on their faces who have no regard for traditional consumer rights, and whose practices are not typical in urban contexts.

Cultural significance of local foods

The language used to discuss the food revealed social norms and beliefs held by the content creators. Particularly, the differentiation between *pap* and *phuthu* (both made with maize, water and salt but with different final textures) revealed not only a preference but also the cultural context of some creators. In Video 20, the content creator notes that they satisfied their curiosity and 'tried *uphuthu*'; however, '*putting it together was a mission because this thing is fluffy'*. The novelty in their experience was the different texture between their usual pap and the fluffier version. However, another content creator lamented that *uphuthu* was not filling and added '… *maybe we should've got pap instead*' (Video 6). Both are made from the same ingredients; the only difference is the stirring method and frequency, which results in either a loose, fluffy *phuthu* or a stiffer version known as *pap*. The latter is dense and heavy and is affectionately and accurately called 'stiff pap' in some locales because of its final texture. Ultimately, *pap* is the South African equivalent to East Africa's *ugali* or Zimbabwe's *sadza*. Traditionally, the Nguni people of South Africa enjoy *uphuthu* with fermented milk (*amasi*) as a cooling meal typically served

in hotter temperatures. In contrast, the *pap* is usually reserved for savoury meals. Thus, it is expected that some visitors, although accustomed to *uphuthu*, may have never had it with meat, bringing novelty to this experience. However, the Zulu people are accustomed to enjoying *uphuthu* with traditional meat dishes, and this is another example of local food heritage in urban Johannesburg that is missed in the discourse. Ruth Wodak (2001) notes that "texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance" (p. 11). This is best evidenced in Video 6, where the holistic review of the market is approbative, but the language betrays the content creator and reveals what may be interpreted as bearing negative connotations. The creator is dismissive when discussing grilled cow intestines, noting '*they also braai like cow intestines for some reason…we didn't buy that'*. The grilled intestines are framed as 'yucky' rather than 'yummy' (Njaya, 2014), a concept describing tourists' views on foreign foods. Many visitors had 'memorable local food experiences' worthy of recapping and reporting to their audiences (Badu-Baiden, Correia and Kim, 2022). In all the videos, there is an impetus to visit the market, even if once, for the experience. Whether mindfully or otherwise, the place is bestowed with significance, particularly because of the local food available there. Importantly, Meladze in Mnguni and Giampiccoli (2019) declare that:

> an important trend is "the connection of local products consumption to their place of origin – the idea that a specific food or wine can be fully enjoyed and 'understood' only if it is prepared on the territory of its origin, by people from that community, using local ingredients" (p. 5)

This is the core idea shared in the audio used in Videos 3, 18, 24, 25 and 29. The notion of enjoying an essentially South African meal, specifically from Kwa Mai Mai is based on the belief that the market comes with an experience that can only be achieved through immersion.

Conclusion and recommendations

Overall, the reviews seem to maintain the status quo in various ways. The notions of dominance and elitism are evident in the language used and depicted in some of the videos. There is a sense of individualism and an extrication of the self from the context of the market, which is framed as inferior, freeing the content creators from any obligation towards the market and its communities. There is evidence of othering both the space and the vendors, and a prioritisation of the benefit and enjoyment of the individual. The reviewers abdicate their agency in contributing to the market's development, improvement or sustainability. The relationship is limited to the transactional buyer and seller relationship, which is underscored through language and visual depiction of themselves as visitors. This is concerning for local tourists whose lives are intrinsically linked to the various communities within their nation. Each reviewer outlines some personal benefits derived from visiting the market, including the low prices, but there is no clear articulation of how the community benefits from them, besides the contribution to the day's revenue. The price of the food is lauded in the videos without an interrogation of the supply chain and any standards that have been forgone to keep the prices low. The is also no concern for the benefits to the vendors. Moreover, operational activities such as the use of wood and the choice of serveware are seen as the market's oddity and not linked to either traditional practices or a lack of services in the urban context. The market's makeshift setup signifies a nomadic existence and is perhaps not afforded critical engagement by the content creators because of this. However, a social justice lens would require the market to be critically evaluated as a permanent urban alternative community, an alternative urban food system and as a transient urban space supporting marginalised urban communities. There seems to be apathy towards social dynamics outside the creators' immediate personal contexts of entertainment, safety and tourism. The market is conceived as a spectacle, and there is no evident agitation on behalf of the communities that work and live there. Although the novel food or methods were not perceived as outright yucky and foreign, there was also no association with their traditional roots. Those who tried new foods did not situate these new dishes within an urban context, aiming to offer traditional food options for the urban in-migrants or tourists. Despite many of the content creators commenting on the appearance of the market, none addressed the social structures that sustain the market's level of devolution. As the market is nestled in downtown Johannesburg, marred with waste and often bearing outlines of urine, it may not always be environmentally sustainable and can further exacerbate urban pollution (Vignola & Oosterveer, 2022). Notwithstanding, the tourist potential of these spaces can be further cultivated to expand their reach to visitors who would otherwise be wary of the inner-city purlieu's hygiene (Njaya 2014). This is especially important as street food offers affordable food for urban communities and tourists. Edwards (2016) underscored the link between sustainable food provision and urban citizenship as a necessity in inner cities where overpopulation and infrastructural deficiencies abound. Future research should explore the relationship between social media and food tourism in South Africa. Furthermore, a detailed exposition of sustainable practices within urban food systems, such as street food markets, also warrants attention. Lastly, Michel Foucault's (1978) notion that where there is power, there is resistance should stimulate future research focusing on the agency and entrepreneurial ingenuity of street food market vendors.

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