



# The evolution of accommodation services in a coastal resort town: Hermanus, South Africa

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## Abstract

Small town tourism is attracting a growing international as well as South African scholarship. This paper addresses one thus far neglected theme of research about tourism in small towns, namely the historical development of the accommodation services economy. The objective in this paper is to analyse the evolution of accommodation services in one small tourist town in South Africa. The focus is upon seaside resort tourism and the case of Hermanus which is situated in South Africa's Western Cape Province. Two sections of discussion are given. The first offers an overview of tourism development in this small town and the changing character of the tourism economy from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present-day. The second reviews the historical development of the accommodation services sector in this popular leisure tourism destination. The research uses archival sources and applies a chronological approach. Overall, the analysis is a contribution both to the limited extant scholarship that seeks to understand historical issues about the tourism economy in South Africa and specifically the evolution of accommodation services in the country's small towns. In addition, it represents a modest South African contribution to international research on seaside coastal resort development which is presently dominated by contributions that looks at coastal tourism in Europe and most especially the case of the United Kingdom.

**Keywords:** Historical tourism; resort development; Hermanus; accommodation services

## Introduction

International research around tourism in small towns continues to attract much scholarly attention. A scan of recent literature reveals a wide range of research topics that are garnering academic scrutiny around small town tourism. The economic and social impacts of tourism in small towns continue to be a significant research focus (Tsundoda & Mendlinger, 2009). Of critical importance in terms of economic impacts are issues of leakage and of seeking to maximise local linkages in destinations in order to retain revenue from tourism (Rylance & Spenceley, 2017). The role of innovation for small town destination development is shown as critical by several investigations (Brouder, 2013; Vera et al., 2019).

Tourism development in small towns often is associated with niche tourism products and there are a number of recent scholarly studies on this particular theme. For example, in Portugal Dinis & Krakover (2016) explore the contribution of niche products to the development of sustainable tourism in small peripheral localities. Heritage tourism also attracts much writing. In the case of Romania Lincu et al. (2018) argue for the importance of the conservation of built heritage in the context of tourism development at Salacea, which is styled the 'village of 1000 cellars'. In Northern Portugal the heritage focus at Belmonte is upon the town's unique Jewish history which is being developed in the framework of a 'museum park' (Dinis & Krakover, 2016). Small towns in India provide the focus for work by Munjal & Munjal (2017-8) and Munjal (2019). These studies interrogate the potential for enhancing heritage tourism in the country's small towns through leveraging their local cultural heritage as well as its traditional knowledge



and skills. In South Island of New Zealand Carpenter (2018) documents the heritage attraction of the Cardrona Hotel, which is an architectural relic of the 1860s gold rush era in Otago. Another form of leveraging of heritage tourism for small town tourism development is recorded in the case of Morden in Manitoba which is the focus of the Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre (Ramsey & Malcolm, 2018). Further forms of niche tourism under scrutiny in recent small town tourism literature relate to culinary tourism (Hadromi & Murdani, 2019), festival tourism (Kozorog, 2011), film tourism (Chin & Liu, 2018) and geotourism (Gorska-Zabielska & Zabileski, 2017).

In the context of South Africa Donaldson (2007) argues that tourism in small towns was a little researched issue until the early 2000s. Since 2000 there has occurred a burst of scholarly writings on a number of different themes with the book by Donaldson (2018) the most significant individual contribution. The expansion in South African writings is inseparable from the nexus of tourism and small town local economic development. Tourism-led local development as a focus for economic regeneration and the making of post-productivist landscapes has captured the imagination and attention of several scholars with popular recent research foci in alignment with international writings (eg. Gibb & Nel, 2007; Nel & Rogerson, 2007; Halseth & Meikeljohn, 2009; Butler & Rogerson, 2016; Campbell, 2016; Irvine et al., 2016 Nel & Rogerson, 2016; Mekuto & Tseane-Gumbi, 2017).

The impacts of niche tourism development in small towns and the prospects for developing small, medium and micro-enterprise in tourism also are examined in research studies on particular small town localities (eg. Booyens & Visser, 2010; Mxunyelwa & Henama, 2019). Under scrutiny have been a range of niche forms of tourism including adventure, agritourism, astro-tourism, avitourism, beer tourism, book tourism, coastal tourism, fishing tourism, geotourism, heritage tourism, wedding tourism, wellness tourism and, various issues about festivals as well as nature-based tourism (see eg. Spenceley & Goodwin, 2007; Du Preez & Lee, 2010; Ingle, 2010; Donaldson & Marais, 2012; Van Wyk, 2013; McKay, 2014; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2014a, 2014b; Van der Merwe, 2014; Rogerson & Collins, 2015; Rogerson & Harmer, 2015; Rogerson & Wolfaardt, 2015; Chingombe & Taru, 2018; Donaldson, 2018; Goliath et al., 2018; Scholtz, 2019).

This paper addresses one so far neglected theme of research about tourism in small towns, namely the historical development of the accommodation services economy. As Walton (2016a) stresses the business of commercial hospitality both in large cities as well as small towns has its roots in supplying travellers, through the market, with the basic human needs of food, drink, shelter and rest. In small town USA this historical issue is glimpsed in works by Fyfe & Holdsworth (2009) and Fyfe et al. (2009).

Elsewhere the paucity of writings on small towns is in part explained by the overall historical scholarship which is available on accommodation services. For the hotel sector among the most important international works on the history of accommodation services are those by King (1957), Baum & Mezias (1992), Bowie (2016, 2018), James (2018), James et al. (2017) and Tellon (2016). The slim available literature is emphasized by the comment made in 2019 by Weeks (2019) when writing in the context of Australia about “the foggy history of hotels”.

In South Africa there are a scatter of investigations which unpack aspects of the historical development of accommodation services. These include Pandy & Rogerson (2013) on time-share accommodation as well as certain studies of the historical evolution of the hotel industry in South Africa as a whole and about Johannesburg in particular (C.M. Rogerson, 2011; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2018; J.M. Rogerson, 2018, 2020). In relation to the historical development of accommodation services in small town South Africa the extant academic research comprises two studies. J.M. Rogerson (2013a) examines the changing forms of accommodation provision and shifting geographies of accommodation services in Free State.

Sixaba and Rogerson (2019) reveal the activities of the early Black hoteliers in South Africa which were in small towns of the Eastern Cape. Against the above backcloth, the aim in this



paper is to analyse the evolution of accommodation services in one small tourist town in South Africa. The focus is upon seaside resort tourism and on the case of Hermanus which is situated in South Africa's Western Cape Province. Two sections of discussion are presented. The first section provides an overview of tourism development in this small town and of the changing character of the tourism economy from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present-day. The second section turns to review the historical development of the accommodation services sector in this popular leisure tourism destination.

The research uses archival sources and applies a chronological approach. Source material for this paper derives from the historical collections at the National Library in Cape Town and from the local Hermanus Heritage Society.

The article should be understood as a contribution both to the limited extant scholarship that seeks to investigate historical issues about the tourism in South Africa and specifically about the evolution of accommodation services in the country's small towns. In addition, it represents a modest South African contribution to international research on seaside coastal resort development which is dominated at present by scholarship that looks at coastal tourism in Europe and especially the United Kingdom (Walton, 1978, 1981, 1983, 2000, 2002, 2016b; Brodie, 2019).

### **Hermanus as a Tourism Resort: A Brief History**

In the early 1900s Hermanus was "an insignificant fishing village" (Hunt 2017: 39). The transition to tourism began slowly and initially was associated with the arrival of a few business travellers to the area. The town's excellent climate accompanied by the construction of a sanatorium in 1897 caused a steady flow of health tourists. With improved access to the town by a rail link from Cape Town to Bot River the potential for a flow of leisure seekers was enhanced. Tourism promotion of the town was part of wider initiatives of South African Railways. By 1920 Hermanus had made its mark as an emerging tourism destination and was described as "the bright star of the Riviera of South Africa" (Cape Times, 1920: 119).

The Illustrated South African Hotel Guide for that year recorded that: "The attractions of Hermanus are its magnificent scenery and exceptional fishing, with all the allurements of a season resort" (Cape Times, 1920: 119). Furthermore it was announced that the town "is challenging, and seriously challenging, some of the famous seaside resorts of the (Cape) Peninsula" (Cape Times, 1920: 121).



**SOUTH AFRICAN RAILWAYS AND HARBOURS.**

**1924-1925**

**SUMMER SEASON**

**(1) GENERAL EXCURSIONS**

From 1st DECEMBER, 1924, to 8th JANUARY, 1925, at SINGLE FARE FOR THE RETURN JOURNEY between

ALL SOUTH AFRICAN RAILWAY STATIONS and in Through Bookings with the R.R. and B. & M.R. (First and Second Class only) N.C.G.R., and C.P.L.S.R. and in Local Bookings over the R.R. and B. & M.R., including the Matjiesfontein Railways Section, from 15th DECEMBER, 1924, to 8th JANUARY, 1925, at Single Fare for the Return Journey for First and Second Classes and Single Fare and One-Half for Third Class.

**(2) SEASONAL EXCURSIONS TO SEASIDE RESORTS**

At Single Fare for the Return Journey—MINIMUM FARES: #1 FIRST CLASS, #1 7s.  
SECOND CLASS.

TO CAPE TOWN, CAPE-TOWN-SIMONSTOWN SECTION, STRAND, BOT RIVER (FROM HERMANUS), AND SALDANHA (FROM MOEDIES OR SALDANHA BAY).

From Transvaal Orange Free State, Cape, and South-West Africa Stations on certain days each week during OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, 1924 (daily during period mentioned in 1), and JANUARY, FEBRUARY, and MARCH, 1925.

TO EAST LONDON, PORT ELIZABETH, FORT ALFRED, JEFFREYS BAY, UMTATA (for PORT ST. JOHNS), and GEORGE (for KIYSHA and WILDERNESS)—MOSSEL BAY SECTION.

From Transvaal, Orange Free State, Cape, and South-West Africa Stations on certain days each week during NOVEMBER, 1924 (daily during the period mentioned in 1), and January and February, 1925.

TO SWAKOPMUND from Stations in South-West Africa on certain days each week during JANUARY and FEBRUARY, 1925.

**(3) INCLUSIVE LAND AND SEA EXCURSIONS**

FROM CERTAIN INLAND AREAS: 1st DECEMBER, 1924, to 8th JANUARY, 1925.  
Full Particulars obtainable at Stations and at the Agencies of Messrs. Cook & Son.

W. W. HOY,  
General Manager.

Johannesburg, August 1924.

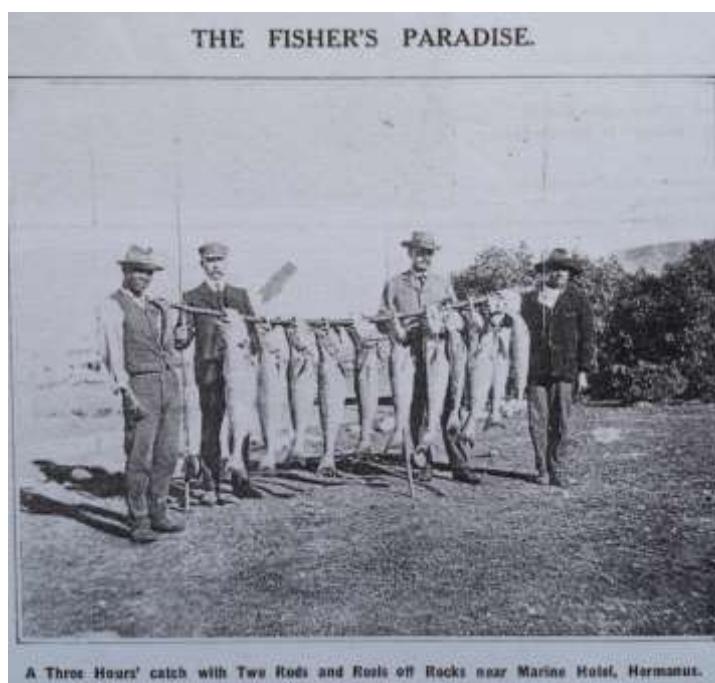
**Figure 1.** South African Railways Promotion of Special Rail Fares to Hermanus.

From a quiet backwater Hermanus was attracting growing attention for its tourist product base. The guide enthused as follows: "Its future lies clear before it, because it has mountain, rock, sea and sand, and behind all the rich agricultural lands of the South-West. When there has been a storm at sea the breakers are wonderful; there are caverns or caves that challenge description, and there is always peace and quietness, with ever the lolling throb of the great Atlantic breakers on the rocks" (Cape Times, 1920: 121). Tourism was boosted by the promotional activities of South African Railways, including seasonal rail fare specials for visitors from South Africa's economic heartland (Fig. 1). At this time access to Hermanus could be secured through from Cape Town with a transfer from Bot River as there was no train connection to Hermanus itself. Close to Hermanus, 4 miles distant, is the 'river' township of Onrust. In 1922 it was declared that: "It is some years now since the Beauty and Healthiness of the Coast known as ONRUST-HERMANUS-RIVIERA was realised by Camping, Holiday and Fishing parties. The fame of the Coast soon spread and today it is spoken of in all parts of the world" (The Onrust River Syndicate, 1922).

New publicity material issued by the South African Railways in the 1930s targeted to attract visitors from outside South Africa described Hermanus as a "holiday resort and centre of world-wide fame for its sea fishing" and "admirably served by excellent hotels" (Carlyle-Gall, 1937: 16). Considerable attention is given to the town's prowess for sea-angling.

Fish, big and small, are present in great numbers here at all seasons of the year. That patience which is proverbially the *sine qua non* of the "compleat" angler is therefore never taxed at Hermanus which in some places has been known to make men call on the fishmonger on the way home. If you are merely a tyro, you will despite your inexperience, find sport-a-plenty and experts ever ready with friendly advice; but should your object be to add a few more records to your list, then there is no place on the South African coast where you are more likely to effect these hopes (Carlyle-Gall, 1937: 26-27).

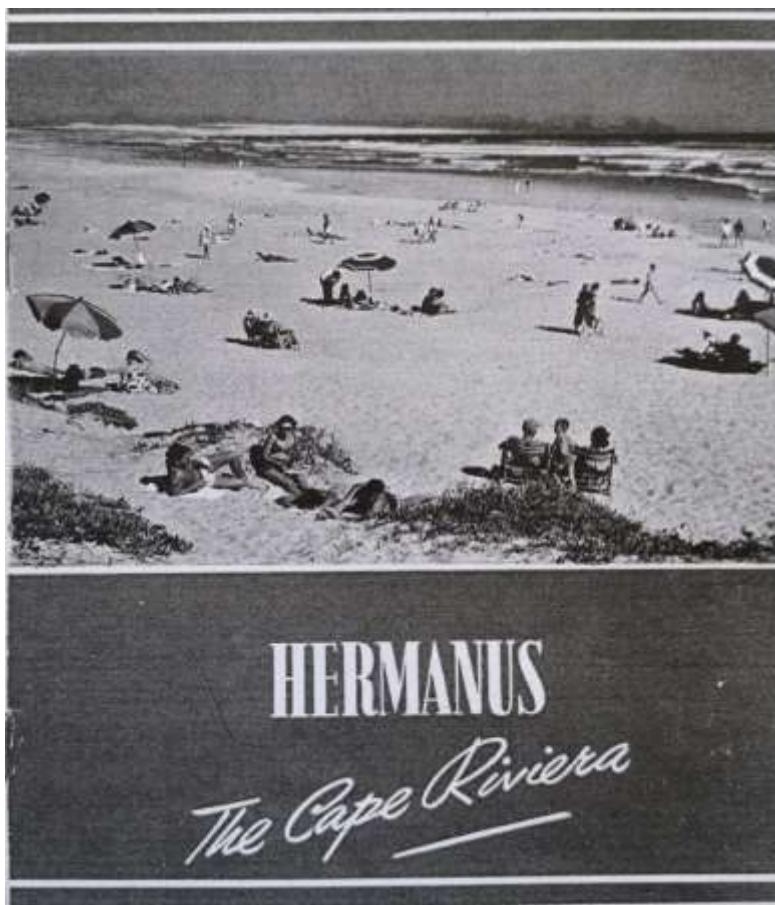
In addition, admiration was expressed about the area's natural scenic beauty with the commentary suggesting that "the modern holiday maker might well apply the old-time simile to the entire Hermanus region", namely "a haven between heaven and earth" (Carlyle-Gall, 1937: 27).



**Figure 2.** The Sea- Angling Attractions of Hermanus

During the early years of apartheid the focus on Hermanus tourism marketing continued upon its claim as Riviera of the Cape (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1949). Sea angling, the attractions of sea and beaches, local fynbos and golfing possibilities were all prominent in publicity material. Special focus continued upon the town's compelling base for sea-angling: "As a rock-angling centre, Hermanus has a reputation that extends far beyond the Union's shores, and has indeed been rated as one of the four finest fishing resorts in the world" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1949). The towns sporting attractions also were highlighted in particular the opportunities surrounding "Golf beside the sea goes with a real swing, and little can be more recreative than sending a wood down the bowling green within the sound of the breakers" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1949).

Further sports possibilities also were raised: "tennis and horse-riding add to the bill of sporting fare" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1949). A family-oriented seaside resort with a diverse range of offerings for the (exclusively white) domestic traveller: "All members of the family are assured of a delightful time at any season of the year, for Hermanus is whatever one wishes to make it...a haven for those who desire complete rest...a playground for those who find relaxation in outdoor sports" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1949). In addition, the guide underscores the area's natural surroundings: "The attractive scenery of Hermanus starts at the resort's very doorstep, and the environs area natural, reserve for the artist, picture-hunter, hiker and mountaineer" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1949). In 1952 local guides asserted that "Hermanus has grown into one of the leading Seaside resorts of South Africa" and it "enjoys a delightfully equitable climate throughout the year". By the early 1950s Hermanus was consolidating its status as a popular destination for domestic tourists as well as overseas visitors to South Africa (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). According to one observer the town's healthy climate, environment, wild flowers in profusion and marine attractions "drew the wealthiest classes on holidays (Lee, 2019: 138).



**Figure 3.** Promotional Material For Hermanus in 1950s.

By 1956 local publicity was promoting Hermanus for its “Health-clad mountains, Deep-blue seas, Radiant skies Sun-Kissed Beaches, Zephyr breezes” (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1965: 3). Overall “these are some of nature’s ingredients that have made Hermanus famous throughout the length and breadth of the African continent and in countries overseas” (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1956: 3). It was argued that “the visitor will find hotel, sporting and recreational facilities in the good taste that reflect the beauty and charm of their surroundings to make Hermanus the Unique resort of the South”. Finally, it was reiterated that “for health, there is no place like Hermanus” (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1956: 3). In terms of visitor attractions beyond its natural beauty and beaches the guide accords much focus to the town’s harbour. In the language of tourist publicity: “Always an aesthetic adventure, the harbour takes on a dream-like beauty under a full moon when the sea turns to liquid gold and the surrounding mountains stand silhouetted against a pale evening sky” (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1956: 5).

Further, during the day “the old harbour is a favourite haunt of visitors, intent on watching the picturesque fishermen leisurely hauling in their well-stocked boats, to the accompaniment of cries of delight from happy children” (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1956: 3). At its core Hermanus was a leisure destination for families to enjoy (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). The view was expressed that the town offered a perfect combination of sea, sand and sun and that for most visitors “a Hermanus holiday means lazing on wide, clean beaches under a friendly sun and acquiring a handsome sun-tan” (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1956: 11).

At the close of the 1950s Hermanus was seeking to establish itself as an all year around resort and in particular- once again - stressing the town’s healthy climate. A 1959 publicity pamphlet remarked as follows: “Not a Doctor in South Africa would refrain from encouraging his patients to recuperate at Hermanus’. There’s no truer statement. The fresh sea breezes throughout the year make the ‘champagne air’ an invigorating tonic which soon develops an appetite that



the Hotels take pride in serving" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1959). Promotional material into the 1960s continued to stress the town's sea, sun and sand attractions as well as the fact that local angling is "regarded as a fisherman's dream come true" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1961). For Albertyn (1961: 1) the town was simply styled "the mecca of anglers".

A major turning point for the Hermanus tourism economy occurred at the close of the 1980s with the return to Walker Bay of the Southern Right Whales. This good fortune contributed to an enormous boost to the town's product base as marine tourism became of central importance. Hunt (2017: 60) argues that even as early as 1992 "Hermanus laid claim to the title of whale capital of the world". Whale watching, viewing of dolphins and sea kayaking now allowed Hermanus to become a leading ecotourism destination.

Further additions to the town's tourism product base were the area's wine farms, fine food and wine dining, several adventure tourism activities and the hosting of a number of festivals, the most significant being the annual Hermanus Whale festival. This reinvention of the town's tourism economy occurred at the time of South Africa's democratic transition and such that Hermanus was a major beneficiary of the boom in international tourism to South Africa post-1994. Beyond 2000 the town has strengthened further as a leisure resort for domestic and increasingly for international tourists (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019). It is estimated that leisure travel constituted nearly 60 percent of all tourist trips to Hermanus by the 2000s which makes it one of the most tourism-dependent small towns in the whole of South Africa (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019).

### **The Changing Accommodation Services Economy of Hermanus**

According to Hunt (2017: 38) the first commercial accommodation services offered to visitors to what was initially called Hermanuspietersfontein, was rooms that could be rented out at stone cottages on the seafront. The first hotel – the Victoria Hotel – opened its doors in 1897 and was a product of a pioneer Scottish entrepreneur who had a fishing business in the town. With the growth in demand for accommodation following the discovery of the town by pleasure seekers further new hotel developments occurred. By 1920 The Illustrated Guide to South African Hotels listed in addition to the sanatorium a further five hotels that had opened namely the Riviera Hotel, Marine Hotel, Royal Hotel, Central Hotel and Rosken Hotel.

It is observed that the largest of these hotels were advertising themselves for prospective visitors, some such as the Marine Hotel as "the fisher's paradise". Indeed, Hunt (2017: 40) records that in the 1920s "the Marine Hotel, with its marvellous ballroom, became the glamorous destination of many affluent and titled visitors both from the United Kingdom and Europe who referred to the town as 'the Riviera of the South'. The Marine Hotel, at the time the most fashionable address in Hermanus, was built in 1902 with the Riviera Hotel opening in 1904. For the visiting 'rich and famous' this was "a time when the protocol for hotel guests commanded full evening dress" (Hunt, 2017: 40). From Figs 4 and 5 it is evident that health, relaxation and holiday fun in comfortable surrounds were the business foundations for Hotel Riviera and the Marine Hotel. Another construction was of the Bay View Hotel at Poole's Bay, which was established in 1921.

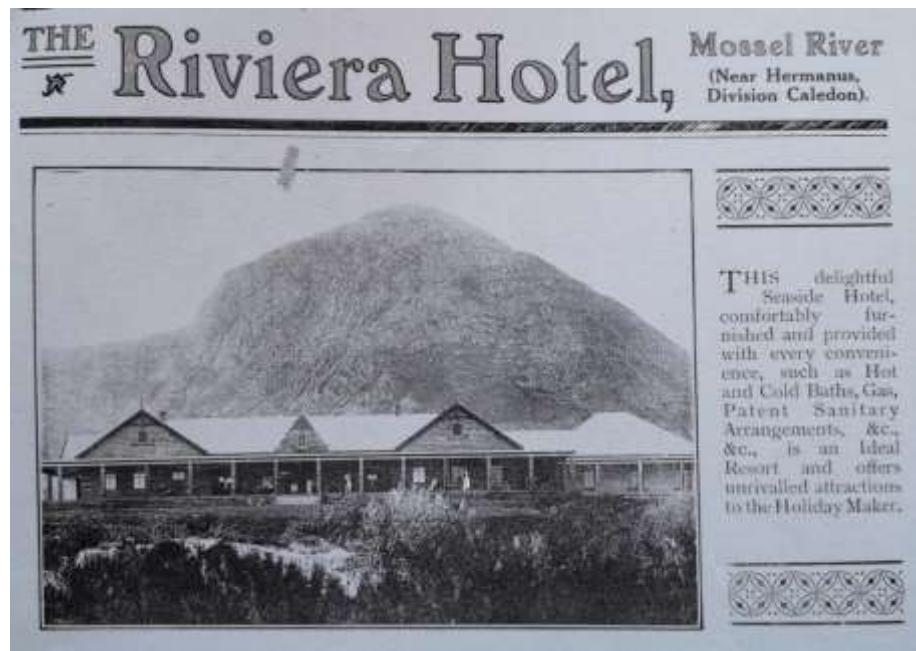


Figure 4. Marketing The Riviera Hotel in the 1920s.

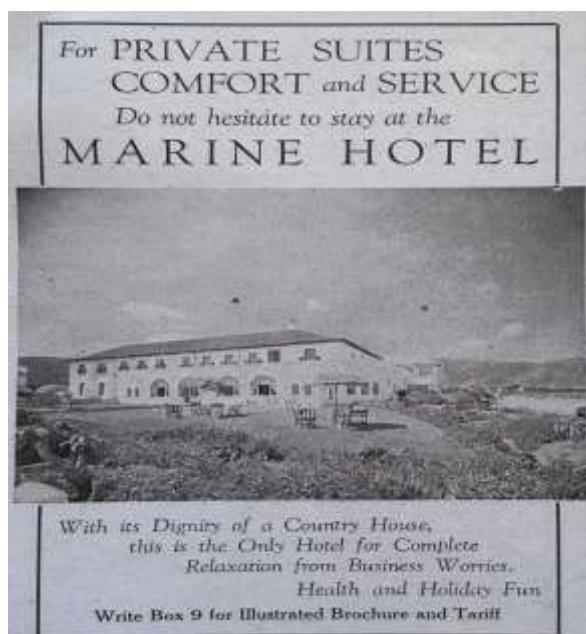


Figure 5.The Marine Hotel, Hermanus, 1920s

The continued expansion of tourism in the town encouraged further growth of accommodation services. The former sanatorium was converted to become the Hotel Windsor in 1931 and was marketing itself to visitors that for comfort and on the sea front "You cannot stay at a Brighter Place" (Hotel Windsor, 1931: 1). Indeed, visitors were to "enjoy the invigorating sea air from their bedrooms, most of which have French doors leading on to the balcony" (Hotel Windsor, 1931: 5). In addition it was noted that the hotel's "new Dining Hall is spacious and airy; can seat over 180 guests in comfort, and looks out on to the seafront" and with "a separate dining room for children" (Hotel Windsor, 1931: 5). For 1936 the Illustrated Guide to Hotels and Boarding Houses produced by South African Railways and Harbours lists 10 hotels and for the first time provides a listing of several boarding house establishments in the town. The group of boarding houses offered much cheaper accommodation to that of the town's leading hotels. For example, the Esplanade boarding house charged 8s.0d per day as compared to the Marine Hotel which was more than 50 percent higher at 12s 6d per day (South African

Railways and Harbours, 1936). Further new establishments appeared between 1936 and 1940 as shown by the 1940 guide issued by South African Railways and Harbours (1940). Indeed, the burst of hotel openings and consolidation of the hotel economy in this seaside resort leads this historical period to be viewed by Hunt (2017: 41) as the “hotel heyday”. Fig. 6 shows the marketing of the Windsor Hotel which seeks to retain linkages with the town’s fame for sea-angling.

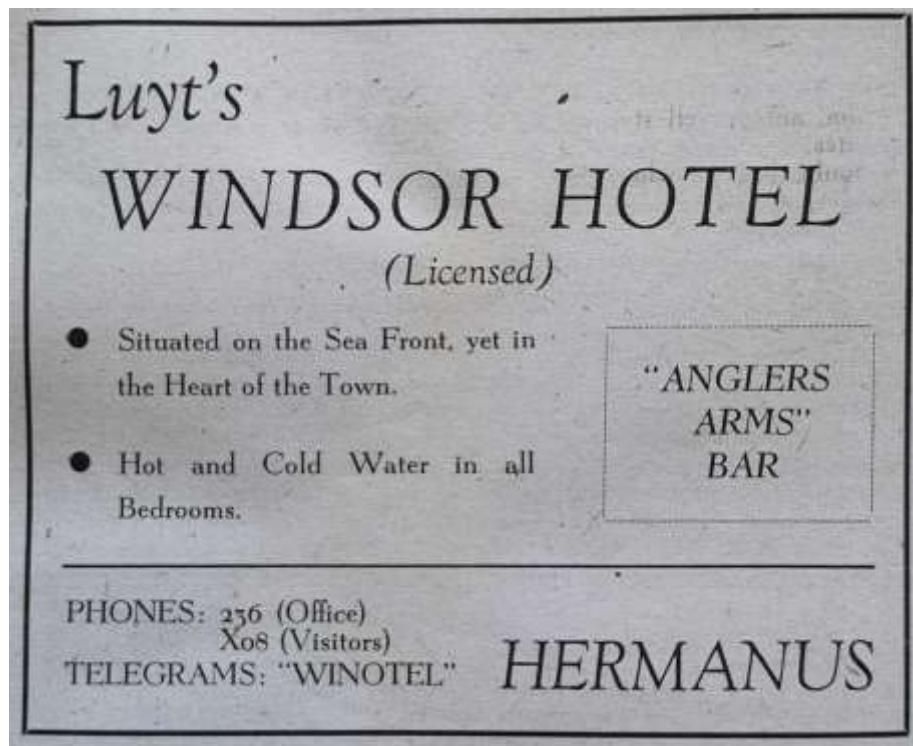


Figure 6. Advertising The Seafront Windsor Hotel c. 1930s

The period of the Second World War (1939-1945) witnessed some changes in ownership of the leading Hermanus hotels. According to Lee (2014, 2019) particularly influential were the activities of the Luyt family with ownership of both the Riviera and Marine Hotels. After 1948 the hotel industry of South Africa began to be impacted by apartheid legislation such as the Group Areas Act and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act. In the country's major cities the apartheid legislation resulted in the creation of separate 'non-White' hotels to cater for the growing mobilities of 'non-White' South Africans. Such issues and apartheid legislation must have had minimal impact upon the hotel business of Hermanus with its exclusivity and white clientele. The town's top hotels continue to host the rich and famous including the controversial artist Tretchikoff at the Marine Hotel both in 1950 and 1951. The 1952 publicity guide to the town contains advertisements from the following nine hotels: Bay View, Nilssons, the Marine, the Royal, the Astoria (the former Victoria Hotel), Onrust Hotel, Fairview, the Windsor and Luyt's Hotel Birkenhead (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1949). The latter was described as "the newest hotel in Hermanus", "situated on the SEA FRONT", and with "spacious lounges, dining-room, hot and cold water and built-in cupboards in all bedrooms" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1952: 26).

Beyond the hotel sector the diversification of accommodation offerings was evidenced by advertising also that was made for guest houses such as "The Swans" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1952). Arguably, the hotel economy of Hermanus enjoyed a strong reputation. One 1956 guide to Hermanus remarks that the town has "Modern hotels designed for the



discriminating, are an open invitation to gracious and even pampered living" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1956: 3). It was further stated that the accommodation services economy as a whole was well-regarded in respect of offering an array of service options from luxury to budget. The publicity material emphasized that "Hermanus is famous for the excellence and variety of its dozen hotels and other holiday establishments. Whether your inclination runs to luxury living with accommodation, food and service equal to the best Continental resorts, or if you are budget-wise and looking for a holiday bargain, Hermanus will never disappoint" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1956: 7). The low cost options included also informal seaside cottages and camping; indeed "if a camping holiday is what you want, Hermanus provides facilities at the attractive lagoon, three miles from the centre of town" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1956: 9).

By the late 1950s it is apparent that business tourism and conferences was a significant focus of the hotel economy (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). Local publicity claimed the "atmosphere, climate and easy accessibility of Hermanus are quickly being appreciated by professional, commercial, industrial and administrative bodies" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1959). It was stated "Hermanus is the accepted centre for Conferences and up to four or five hundred delegates can be adequately accommodated in first class hotels with ample facilities for meetings, functions and banquets" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1959). This said, the core market for the town's proclaimed "fine hotels" was that of domestic visitors but with an expanding market also for international tourism. For the latter, who frequented mainly the town's upmarket establishments it was proclaimed as follows: "Hermanus offers the comfort, the cuisine and service to which they (overseas visitors) are accustomed in the gracious cities of Europe" (Hermanus Publicity Association, 1959). The 1950s and 1960s saw the beginnings of a churning in the accommodation service economy of this small town.

A number of hotels were gutted by fire; others were demolished for redevelopment purposes. With the introduction of South Africa's first grading scheme for classifying hotels in the late 1960s it is observed that by 1972 eight hotel establishments in this small town were registered and had qualified for star gradings. The best establishments in town – including the Marine, Birkenhead and Riviera – were graded by the Hotel Board as two star establishments (Hotel Board, South Africa 1972). This was described as a "very good" hotel "having private bathrooms or showers for at least 50 percent of the bedrooms; bedroom heating on request; a minimum of 1 communal bathroom and toilet to 7 beds in ordinary bedrooms; a full time head cook; a 16 hour floor service of light refreshment; 14 hour reception duty" (Hotel Board, South Africa 1972: 11).

With democratic transition and a rebirthing of tourism in Hermanus with its whale watching attractions there occurred a greater segmentation of accommodation services and diversification of accommodation options. This trajectory in accommodation services in the town was a mirror of national trends occurring in the provision of hospitality services particularly in the 1990s decade (Rogerson, 2013b, 2013c). The town's accommodation services options diversified markedly to include bed and breakfast establishments, guest houses and self-catering facilities including for camping and caravanning. In addition for the youth segment of international travellers that flocked to democratic South Africa there was the opening of a backpacker hostel. Of note, however, is that unlike in many small towns in the Free State where hotels were closed down and accommodation services re-oriented around small-scale forms of establishments such as B & Bs in Hermanus the local hotel economy has retained its strength and competitive attractiveness for both domestic and especially international visitors. An upgrading occurred in the quality of local hotels to make the accommodation service sector competitive by international standards and thus able to attract growing flows of overseas visitors to the town, most especially from Europe.

In 2018 an audit was undertaken of the accommodation service sector of Hermanus (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019). It disclosed that in Hermanus there are eight hotels and over 150 small bed and breakfasts, guest houses and lodges. The two leading establishments are



boutique hotels and part of different small portfolio collections in the Western Cape. It was observed that all the graded independent guest houses and bed/breakfast operations were situated geographically in the predominantly white residential areas of this small town. Although one bed and breakfast establishment had operated briefly in the township of Zwelihle at the time of the research audit it had closed down. Another part of the diversification and segmentation of the commercial accommodation services economy was the appearance of Airbnb operations. The count undertaken in November 2018 revealed 292 advertised listings in Hermanus of houses, garden flats or cottages as Airbnb operations.

## Conclusion

To borrow a phrase from the renowned tourist historian John Walton (2009) the international study of accommodation services has been predominantly 'present-minded'. This is especially so in respect of investigating the evolution and state of accommodation services in small towns. This paper has tried to address this knowledge gap by examining the changing tourism and accommodation service economy in the seaside resort of Hermanus, South Africa. It reveals the early appearance and strengthening of a hotel service economy in the town which was primarily the result of the activities of local entrepreneurs (Lee, 2019). In addition to hotels the town early offered low cost accommodation options particularly in terms of camping. Under apartheid the tourism and accommodation service economy consolidated around the needs of mainly a domestic tourist market and signs appeared of a diversification and expansion of small-scale establishments.

The greatest changes in the local accommodation service economy have occurred since the 1990s with the boom in local tourism occasioned by the return of the whales and democratic transition. Upgrading of the hotel economy has occurred as well as segmentation which is reflected in the transition of certain establishments to become classed as boutique hotels. In addition, a major diversification is observed in accommodation service options with the appearance of low-budget backpacker hostels as well as more upmarket self-catering and guest house establishments. Airbnb is the latest innovation to impact the changing accommodation economy of this small South African town. Overall, longitudinal research can contribute fresh insights into South Africa's shifting landscape of accommodation services.

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