

The Socio-Economic Impact of a Major Cultural Event in Cape Town During and Post-Pandemic Era

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Abstract: This study sought to consider the socio-economic impacts of the Cape Town Carnival, given the significant impacts impinged on the event's exponential socio-economic potential in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the period 2020 and 2021, the event was suspended as the world grappled with mobility-restricting and other pandemic-related regulations, which grounded almost all social and economic activities. Through strategic planning and innovative efforts by the event's organisers to curtail the pandemic's impact, a reimagined format was conceptualised in 2022, while a post-pandemic version returned in 2023, explorations of which form the focus for the current study. Relying on CTC pre-pandemic socio-economic impact studies, pandemic, and post-pandemic era empirical investigations of 800 spectators provided data for socioeconomic impact exploration. SPSS version 29 software was utilised in the analysis and exploration of variable relationships in the collected data. The findings of the study suggest that spectators displayed positive perceptions of the socio-economic benefits of the CTC relating to job creation, tourism revenue generation, and community empowerment. The negative impact of the pandemic on the CTC's ability to deliver these benefits was acknowledged. The study highlights the importance of mitigating the negative effects that come with unprecedented events such as COVID-19 through the development of resilience strategies including adaptation, diversification of revenue streams, development of new partnerships, and investment in community engagement opportunities. The study recommends the need for a qualitative inquiry exploring stakeholder insights with key stakeholder groups to assimilate socio-economic objectives for the event for comparative purposes. Additionally, a deeper investigation into specific sectors, such as accommodation, catering, and local businesses is recommended for a more holistic view on the socio-economic impacts while a participant survey is suggested to determine the aspects of job creation and innovation, as envisioned by the objectives of the CTC.

Keywords: Cape Town Carnival, Socio-Economic Impacts, Cultural Event, Event Tourism, During-And Post-Pandemic

1. Introduction and Background

The Cape Town Carnival (CTC) is among the most sought-after and attended annual cultural festivals that celebrate the transformative power of celebratory creativity and the African identity in South Africa (CTC, 2019a). The event draws thousands of participants annually and is acknowledged for its positive socio-economic impacts on job creation, tourism revenue generation, social cohesion, community development and empowerment (Bob et al., 2019; Doe et al., 2022; Drummond & Snowball, 2019; Machisa et al., 2018; Muresherwa et al., 2023). Despite the event's exponential growth over the years, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the CTC, both in terms of its scale and its socio-economic impact. During the years 2020 and 2021, the event was suspended given the mobility restrictions and other pandemic-related regulations, which brought social and economic activities to a standstill globally (Hemmonsbey, 2023). However, through the event organisers' strategic planning and efforts towards curtailing the pandemic's impact on the event, a reimagined event format was conceptualised in 2022 while a post-pandemic version returned in 2023.

The current study explores the perspectives of spectators on the socio-economic impacts of the CTC during COVID-19 with the reimagined format, and post-pandemic version in 2023. The study re-emphasises the importance of events for socio-economic benefits for the host community by determining specific aspects linked to the social and economic behaviour of event spectators. The paper starts by presenting relevant literature that could give a theoretical and conceptual basis for understanding event impacts. This literature review provides an

overview of key studies that have explored the socio-economic implications of cultural events, with a specific focus on assessing a major cultural event in Cape Town.

2. Literature Review

The socio-economic impact of cultural events has been a subject of considerable scholarly interest for decades (Bob et al., 2019; Kim & Uysal, 2003; Muresherwa et al., 2023). Globally, increasing attention is acknowledged from several destinations in organising different types and scales of events (Kourkouridis et al., 2023). Destinations have noted the socio-economic potential presented by events, and as such have seen the importance of supporting bidding (in the case of the large-scale ones) and hosting, resulting in the formulation of targeted event development strategies such as stimulation of economic growth, enhancing social vibrancy and fostering community development (Aburumman, 2020; Mair & Weber, 2019). The nexus between cultural events and tourism is a central theme in the literature, with Getz (2014) and Getz (2022) discussing the role of cultural events in contributing to the tourism experience, emphasising the potential of cultural events to position places as desirable destinations for both domestic and international tourists.

Cultural events and socio-economic impact

Numerous studies highlight the potential of cultural events to stimulate economic growth in host cities (Muresherwa et al., 2023; Sadd & Musikavanhu, 2018; Ukwai et al., 2012). Such studies emphasised the value of cultural spectacles including contributing to increased local spending, job creation, and business development. The findings in the above studies underscore the economic opportunities associated with hosting major cultural events. The social impact of cultural events on local communities has been a recurring theme in research. The role of community engagement in cultural events, emphasizing how participatory approaches can enhance social cohesion and foster a sense of local identity has also been examined (Brennan, 2020; Brownnett, 2018; Tanrikul, 2023). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for evaluating the broader societal implications of hosting cultural events. For instance, annually, the CTC seeks to provide opportunities for community participation, solidifying networks, enhance social cohesion, and promote tourism, and job creation (CTC, 2019a).

From its inception in 2010, the CTC has witnessed increased growth in attendance- from 11,000 to more than 55,000 spectators (CTC, 2019b). The event has loyal repeat visitors and continues to appeal to first-time attendees. The economic impact of the 2017, 2018, and 2019 CTC on the economy of Cape Town reflected a growth from R41.14 million, R58.85 million, and R70.18 million respectively, excluding local sponsorship (CTC, 2018, 2019b). The 'Net spend' by visitors to the event for the years 2017 and 2018 showed a sharp rise from R13.8 million to R38.5 million, thus demonstrating the event's positive impact on the City's economy (CTC, 2018, 2019b). Opportunities for visitors to interact with several local suppliers (vendors, restaurants, tour operators, accommodation) continue to be created with each hosting of the CTC. The event's positive impact on the community is also showcased by opportunities for locals to participate in arts and culture, creating jobs, nurturing skills, building networks, and giving voice and visibility to a variety of communities (CTC, 2018).

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning

The current study was guided by the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) as it serves as an inclusive and holistic model of community capitals (tangible and intangible) and helps understand the relationships across capitals (Kline et al., 2019). This framework also works as an invaluable lens well suited to assess community-based tourism projects, especially in their early stages (Rossetti & Quinn, 2021). Flora and Flora (2013) see this theory as useful when assessing and understanding the various forms of capital communities, which also serve as event hubs. The framework identifies various types of capital that contribute to the well-being and sustainability of communities, which include, natural, cultural, human, social, financial, physical, and environmental (Flora & Flora, 2013; Flora et al., 2005). These seven capitals are further described by Thompson and Barrera (2019:1159) as follows:

- (i) Natural – it examines the impact of cultural events on the natural environment by considering how events affect local biodiversity, and the environmental sustainability of the community. This can also be termed environmental capital.
- (ii) Cultural – It puts focus on the impact of cultural events on the cultural identity and heritage of the community. Aspects around the preservation and promotion of local traditions, arts, and cultural expressions through events are examined.

- (iii) Human – these deal with the development of skills, knowledge, and education within the community resulting from participation in or exposure to cultural events (e.g., educational programs associated with the event).
- (iv) Social - it examines how a cultural event can foster social cohesion and community engagement by measuring local participation through volunteering and attending the event.
- (v) Financial – assessment of the economic impact of a cultural event by measuring direct revenue generated through ticket sales, merchandise sales, and tourism spending, employment opportunities, and income distribution from the event.
- (vi) Physical – evaluation of the impact of a cultural event on infrastructure development by examining the construction of new public spaces, transportation improvements, and cultural facilities.
- (vii) Political– It considers how cultural events may influence community governance, policy development, and decision-making processes.

The CCF can be applied to studies on event spectators, and it can provide a comprehensive lens to understand the impacts of cultural events on the community, including those attending the events. By applying the CCF to the analysis of cultural events, researchers and policymakers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted impacts of these events on communities. They can identify the specific forms of capital that are most affected by cultural events, assess the positive and negative impacts, and develop strategies to maximize the benefits and mitigate the potential drawbacks. The knowledge gained through the application of this CCF could be better utilised to inform decision-making, especially concerning community development initiatives including the planning, hosting and management of cultural events.

The presented literature has shown that cultural events are widely recognized as having significant economic and socio-cultural impacts on the host society and destination (Aideed, 2021; Amalu et al., 2021; Liu, 2014). These events are renowned for generating income, employment, tourism, and cultural diversity, as well as enhancing the quality of life, social inclusion, and intercultural dialogue of the local communities (Doe et al., 2022; Hassan & Quader, 2022; Mohanty & Samal, 2023). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges and disruptions to the cultural sector, affecting the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural events. The pandemic has also exposed and exacerbated the existing inequalities, vulnerabilities, and discriminations that affect the cultural actors and audiences, especially the marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

3. Methodology

A positivist paradigm is adopted by this study, which favours quantitative research methods and statistical analysis that are often employed to identify patterns and relationships. According to Park et al., (2020), the positivist paradigm explores a social reality that assumes human behaviour can be understood by using objective and observable facts. This quantitative study has thus adopted survey questionnaires as the basis for collecting empirical data from event spectators at the 2022 and 2023 CTC to elicit responses to specific questions to understand specific phenomena. A case study research design is subsequently adopted as the study focused on collecting data in a single event context (Zainal, 2007).

The 2022 re-imagined version of the CTC was hosted in five different venue hubs. Each venue hub had a capacity ranging between 2500 and 4500 people. The maximum number of people that these hubs accommodated was between 10,000 and 22,500 people in total. Using the sample size calculator, which includes the 95% confidence level, a representative sample size should be $n=400$ (Raosoft, Inc., 2004). The study has however achieved 400 usable surveys from the data collected. The 2023 version of the event, being the street parade, saw approximately 25,000 event attendees. Using the same sample size indicator, the sample size was $n=400$. Thus, the study's participants totalled ($n=800$). A non-probability sampling technique was appropriate with a convenience sampling approach applied as advocated by Charmaz (2014) so that participants are selected based on their easy accessibility to the researcher. Convenience sampling is limited as it does not represent the entire population and can therefore not be generalised to a broader population (Emerson, 2021), however, the study did not seek generalisation, but rather specific information into a unique case study- i.e., the CTC.

3.1 Data collection and analysis

A structured, face-to-face survey instrument was used for data collection to elicit results on the socio-economic impacts of the CTC amongst event spectators during the 2022 and 2023 versions of the event. This was deemed the most appropriate instrument as it allowed the fieldworkers to verify the informed consent and the

confidentiality of the respondents, to explain and clarify the meanings of certain questions, as well as to explain the overall study’s importance (Plowright, 2011). Closed-ended questions were asked for respondents to indicate their demographic and socio-economic status. While the questions in the survey were centred around the study’s aims and objectives, the survey was piloted before both events as advocated by Boparai et al., (2018). This was to validate the instrument and to ensure all questions were easily understood amongst the participants.

Quantitative data analysis involves the interpretation of numerical data using statistical methods, which includes, inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modelling the data to highlight useful information, suggest conclusions, and support decision-making (Pandey & Pandey, 2021; Welman et al., 2005). This quantitative study used a software package (i.e., the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) (Version 29), to conclude this stage of the analysis. This software permitted the researchers to interpret the data by analysing the results in the context of the research question. It also summarised the data through visual presentation, such as frequency tables, and other graphic presentations, which are presented in the subsequent section.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology prior to data collection. All ethical protocols, such as confidentiality and the protection of the participant’s identity, were observed during the data collection phase. The event spectators were made aware of such protocols and informed consent was derived from the agreement to participate in the study.

4. Findings and Discussions

A profile of the CTC event spectators

Results on the spectator profiles from the CTC event, both during and post-pandemic do not show critical distinctions, which indicates that the event is consistent in its appeal and its audiences. Comparative demographic data in Table 1 illustrate a young adult audience, with a ‘professional’ occupation, with an average age of between 21- and 40 years old. There is, however, a growing, more mature audience looming of between 41- and 50- years old, which may be leveraged as a valuable market through the CTC. The demographic results further reveal an almost equal number of male and female attendance for both years, albeit the post-pandemic data reveal a slight increase in female attendance. Indicating the diversity of the Western Cape, and the broader South Africa. The racial classifications of the spectators show that, the ‘coloured’ demographic represents the majority of spectators, with ‘black/African’ second, and ‘white’ being the third largest representation at the event. Geographically, the event naturally showed a large local spectator following of the ‘Western Cape Province’ being (75.5%) in 2022 and slightly less, yet significant in 2023, by (70.5%). While ‘Gauteng’ was featured as the second most representing province in South Africa at the event, the data displays an increase from 2022 (6.5%) to 2023 (10.4%). The Eastern Cape remains the third most represented province featuring 4.3% and 3.8% for 2022 and 2023 respectively.

Table 1: Demographic information of respondents (n=800)

2022 [n=400]	Variables	2023 [n=400]
Age		
9.0%	18-20 years	4.0%
20.8%	21-30 years	36.3%
31.8%	31-40 years	28.5%
21.0%	41-50 years	18.0%
13.0%	51-60 years	9.5%
3.5%	61-70 years	2.5%
1.0%	> 70 years Specify	1.3%
Gender		
48.0%	Female	57.3%
52.0%	Male	42.8%
Historical racial category		
26.0%	Black/African	23.2%

2022 [n=400]	Variables	2023 [n=400]
Age		
48.5%	Coloured	54.1%
3.2%	Foreigner	2.9%
2.5%	Indian	3.6%
19.8%	White	16.2%
Place of origin		
4.3%	Eastern Cape	3.8%
2.3%	Free State	2.5%
6.5%	Gauteng	10.4%
2.3%	KwaZulu-Natal	3.5%
2.0%	Limpopo	1.8%
1.8%	Mpumalanga	1.5%
0.3%	North West	2.0%
2.0%	Northern Cape	1.0%
3.0%	Outside SA	3.0%
75.5%	Western Cape	70.5%
Occupation		
2.0%	Artisan/Technician	2.0%
8.3%	Businessperson	10.5%
1.0%	Home Executive	1.0%
-	Other	2.8%
28.7%	Professional	25.5%
5.0%	Retired	5.3%
6.0%	Sales/Marketing	5.5%
14.2%	Self-employed	13.3%
9.5%	Skilled	10.8%
19.0%	Student/Learner	14.8%
5.5%	Unemployed	8.5%
0.8%	Unskilled	0.3%

Source: Survey data (2022 & 2023)

4.1 Main reasons for attending the CTC

Event spectators were asked what the main reasons for attending the CTC event were as each year presented unique expectations for spectators. For 2022, it was the reimagined event in its unique enclosed hosting venue space, while observing COVID-19 safety measures. In 2023, it was the resumption of the known street parade format post-COVID-19. From the backdrop of Bianco and White (2019) who suggest that cultural events should augment community engagement while emphasising enhanced social cohesion and fostering a sense of local identity, the results from both years during and post-pandemic strongly reinforce these social aspects of the CTC for the local community. As such, Figure 1 shows that ‘fun to experience’ was the lead motivation for attendance, with an almost equal number indicating 2022 (28.0%) and 2023 (32.9%). Closely following the main reasons for attendance, and reflecting group socialisation through the event, are owing to ‘invitations by friends and family’, with results showing, 28.9% in 2022 and 22.1% in 2023. Notably, the ‘cultural experiences’ that are boasted through the CTC, especially post-pandemic with (24.9%) demonstrate key motives of developing cultural identity and heritage as posited by Thompson and Barrera (2019).

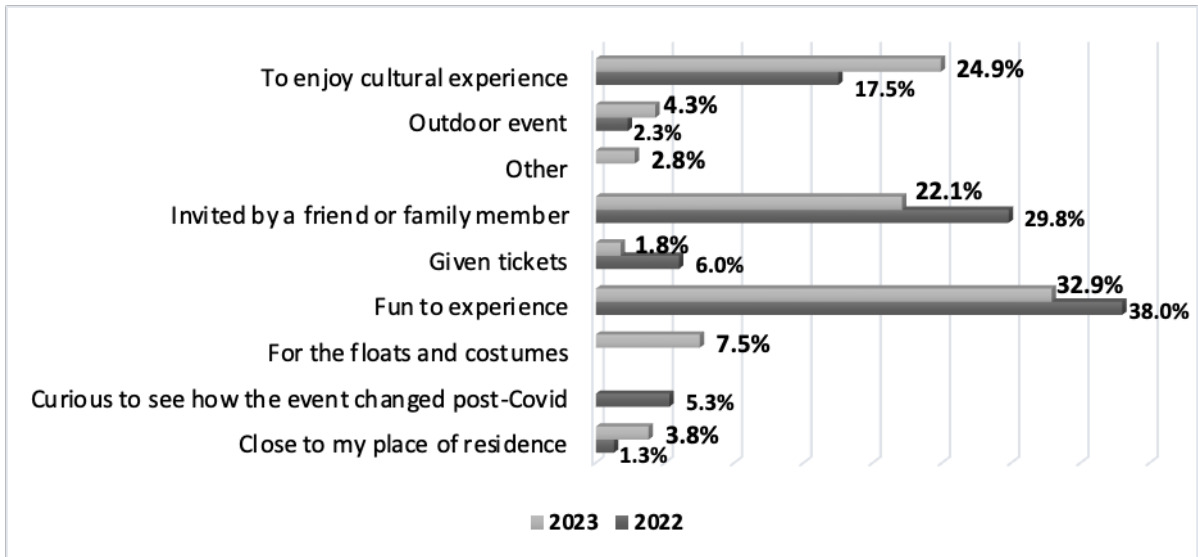


Figure 1: Primary reason for attending the CTC (n=800)

Source: Survey data (2022 & 2023)

4.2 Event Satisfaction and Loyalty

Figure 2 illustrates there is a significant number of repeat visitations to the event. Of the repeat visitors, close to 50.0% of the spectators indicated visiting at least 2-3 times in 2023, a sharp increase from the previous year (2022), where almost 30% had been at the event 2-3 times. This finding suggests visitor satisfaction with the event as well as a degree of loyalty to the event. Importantly, despite the alternate event hosting and first-time paid ticketing during 2022, these results show that even though people are prepared to pay a small fee for a ticketed event, making the event free would allow a wider audience access. Kruger, Saayman and Ellis (2010) are however of the view that, although repeat visitors are loyal and will stay longer in the host destinations as well as spend more money on the event production, first-time visitor groups are equally important for the long-term sustainability of the festival. Concerning first-time spectator attendance, the 2022 results indicate a significant number of spectators indicating first-time attendance (18.6%). This could be attributed to the curiosity regarding the re-imagined CTC during the pandemic or perhaps alluded to people having missed socially interacting at events due to COVID-19 restrictions. Post-pandemic results show first-time visitation to the CTC at (11.5%). While this result is moderate compared to 2022, it is important to note these (new) audiences, to augment socio-economic impacts and entice future and return visitation.

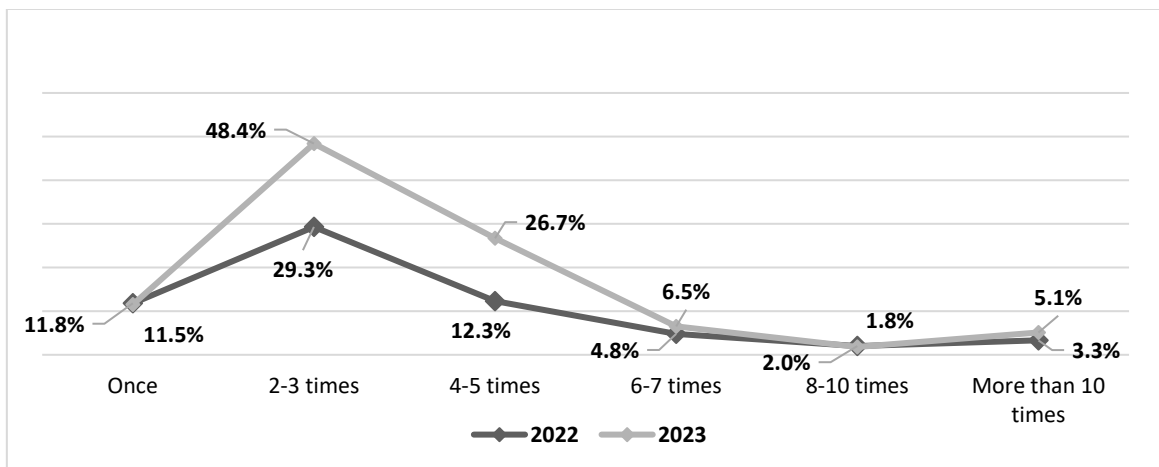


Figure 2: Repeat visitations to CTC (n=800)

Source: Survey data (2022 & 2023)

4.3 Socio-cultural Impact of the 2022 and 2023 CTC Event

In determining the socio-economic impact of the CTC, the study participants were requested to indicate their level of agreement with several aspects of the event, particularly the socio-cultural impacts. The statements were formulated based on relevant literature (See e.g., Bob et al., 2019; Doe et al., 2022; Fredline & Faulkner, 2002; Kim & Uysal, 2003; Machisa et al., 2018) and adapted to suit the study purpose. The degree of agreement or disagreement to predetermined statements was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree (SD) to 5=Strongly Agree (SA), with a 3=Neutral (N) for those who neither agreed nor disagreed. Table 2 shows the mean score and standard deviation (Std. Dev) results for the statements.

Table 2: Level of agreement with aspects of the events (n=800)

The event and impact statements	2022		2023	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
I will recommend visiting the CTC to my friends and family	4.65	.628	4.79	.573
The performances of the Carnival were exciting and fun	4.53	.718	4.74	.571
The event provides opportunities for tourism	4.53	.682	4.77	.559
The event provides an opportunity to meet new people (i.e., someone that you would not ordinarily have met)	4.43	.694	4.56	.778
The event increases entertainment opportunities	4.38	.730	4.75	.572
The event increases the visibility of the diverse communities of Cape Town	4.33	.773	4.68	.626
The diversity of South Africa is well represented at the event	4.28	.829	4.62	.736
The event increases the visibility of Cape Town through media	4.36	.708	4.66	.689
The event made you feel a sense of belonging to a community/ social group	4.21	.888	4.51	.850
The set-up of the performances in different hubs was well-designed/planned	4.29	.889	<i>Street parade</i>	
Key: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree				

Source: Survey data (2022 & 2023)

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all of the statements, indicating that the CTC is a popular and well-regarded event. The statement with the highest level of agreement was "I will recommend visiting the CTC to my friends and family" (mean = 4.65 in 2022 and 4.79 in 2023). This suggests that the CTC is a positive experience that people are eager to share with others. Despite the higher agreement scores, there is always room for improvement in terms of the organization and diversity of the event, as well as its ability to foster a sense of community belonging. However, it is important to note that these statements still received a mean rating of over 4, indicating that almost all the respondents were generally satisfied with the various aspects of the event.

4.4 The Economic Impact of the 2022 and 2023 CTC Event

Table 3 shows the percentages of participants who spent on accommodation, food and beverages (F&B), at local restaurants and local businesses around the CTC hubs and street procession. Regarding accommodation, the results show that in 2022, and 2023, only 26.5% and 20.0% of respondents booked accommodation respectively. The average duration of stay was 3.8 nights in 2022 and 3.98 nights in 2023. In 2022 the results showed a larger number of respondents (82.3%) spending on F&B, than in 2023 where there was a slight decline of visitors who spend money on the F&B (74.1%). Local restaurants around CTC hubs saw 65.0% of respondents spending in them (2022) whereas in the following year, 61.6% of the respondent's spent money in restaurants. The study results for 2022 also reveal that local businesses in the event locations had 58.8% of respondents spending in them whereas the 2023 data had 38.8% of respondents spending money in local businesses. Overall, the results suggest that the CTC has a positive economic impact on the local economy, a reinforcement of earlier studies (See e.g., Muresherwa et al., 2017; Machisa et al., 2018; Hemmonsbeey, 2023).

Table 3: Economic impact (n=800)

2022	Variables	2023
Booked accommodation		
26.5%	Yes	20.0%
73.5%	No	80.0%
2022 - Range for stays: 1 – 21 nights; Average duration of stays (nights): 3.8 nights		
2023 - Range for stays: 1 – 14 days; Average duration of stays (nights): 3.98 nights		
Spent money on food & beverages		
82.3%	Yes	74.1%
17.8%	No	25.8%
Local restaurants around CTC hubs		
65.0%	Yes	61.6%
35.0%	No	38.4%
Spent money in local businesses		
58.8%	Yes	38.8%
41.3%	No	61.2%

Source: Survey data (2022 & 2023)

The decline in the percentage of respondents who booked accommodation during both years could be because the primary spectator audience resides in the Western Cape Province and therefore travelled to the event. Their travelling could also contribute to the local economy. The decline in other spending such as F&B and local businesses, post-pandemic, compared to during, may be contributing to the rising cost of living or the global economic slowdown. However, the average duration of stays increased slightly in 2023, suggesting that visitors are still interested in staying in Cape Town for multiple days to enjoy other secondary attractions, which according to Hemmonsby and Tichaawa (2018) are key imperatives for promoting destination/ tourism brand exposure.

5. Implications and Conclusions

Cultural events and their socio-economic impacts have formed a bedrock for academic inquiry for a considerable period. The outcomes of the study on the CTC highlighted that events of this nature have the potential to engender positive socio-economic spinoffs for the host destination (Machisa et al., 2018). Consistent with current literature, the CTC promotes social elements of 'fun,' shared experiences with family and friends, and relatedly promoting a sense of community/belonging (social cohesion). Moreover, the event advances diversity and diverse experiences. Both the 2022 and 2023 versions of the CTC positively attracted new and returning visitors, which not only expresses visitor satisfaction and loyalty- through repeat visits but also presents the event organisers with opportunities for leveraging the event's product to appeal to new audiences. Essentially, this leads to event feasibility and sustainability, as posited by Kruger et al., (2010). The results of visitor spending imply notable economic impacts for the event and host destination. Moreover, the lengthening of visitor stays suggests a further injection into the destination's products and services. City brand stakeholders can therefore strategically use the event as a key pull factor for tourism beyond the event hosting phase. However, careful consideration should be given to the current cost of living when appealing to spectators. Overall, the socio-economic impacts did not reflect major differences during the pandemic and post-pandemic phases.

6. Recommendations

The current study investigated the socio-economic impacts of an annual festival in Cape Town. This was achieved through a quantitative inquiry to elicit the perspectives of event spectators during the 2022 and 2023 CTC. While the study's results illustrate direct impacts for the event and host destination, it is limited to these quantitative results. Therefore, exploring stakeholder insights through qualitative research with key stakeholder groups to assimilate socio-economic objectives for the event and thus compare current data is recommended. In this regard, a deeper investigation into specific sectors, i.e., accommodation, catering, and local businesses is needed for a more holistic view of economic impacts through the CTC. Moreover, a participant survey is useful to determine the aspects of job creation and innovation, which is envisioned by the objectives of the CTC.

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