

EVENT ATTENDEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACTS OF A CULTURAL EVENT IN VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE

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Abstract: This study explores the triple bottom line impact of a cultural event hosted in the resort town of Victoria Falls. To accomplish the study aims, and objectives, the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental impacts of hosting carnival events were evaluated. Using a systematic random sampling approach, data were gathered from 307 spectators of the tenth edition of the Victoria Falls Carnival event in a popular tourist destination in Zimbabwe. Relevant excerpts from in-depth interviews with the event organizing team were also used to support quantitative data and emphasize how the event impacts the local community. The study results showed general support for carnival events especially the positive impacts associated with the hosting of these community spectacles. The participants were generally happy with the carnival event and would recommend it to friends and relatives demonstrating potential future success through visitor attraction. The event organizers are keen to improve each edition of the carnival to enhance satisfaction and continuous support. The study highlights the importance of attendees' perceptions in informing event tourism strategies.

Key words: local tourism events, Victoria Falls Carnival, event impacts, event tourism development

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism remains a significant economic sector for many developing countries particularly because of the vast opportunities that emanates from this industry (Gogitidze et al., 2023). For this reason, many countries have channeled efforts to promote different forms of tourism development (Stone et al., 2021; Nyasha et al., 2021; Khoi et al., 2022; Ramkisson, 2023), aimed at tapping into the benefits provided (Yiamjanya et al., 2022). Meanwhile, researchers continue to examine various aspects of this sector to advance knowledge regarding developments in the tourism industry (Abdel-Azim-Ahmed, 2017; Benabdelhadi et al., 2021; Nyasha et al., 2021; Acha-Anyi and Ndolose, 2022; Boulhila et al., 2022). However, within these ongoing debates, the cultural tourism facet, focusing on various type of events has grabbed the attention of scholars in emerging economies (Nyikana, 2017; Machisa et al., 2018b; Moyo et al., 2020; Shereni et al., 2021; Muresherwa et al., 2022a; Liedemann et al., 2022) thus adding to discussions which had global North dominance for ages.

Cultural tourism that involves the production and consumption of various types of events has witnessed the growth of small-scale communities hosting events of international stature. This kind of tourism has been termed event tourism which Getz (2014) views as a field of study as well as an important sector of the global economy. Despite gaining much scholarly attention in the 1980s, the concept of event tourism continues to capture interest from social scientists keen to expand on the already existing knowledge on the subject. Researchers have explored the various aspects of cultural events, including their socio-economic, and cultural impacts on local communities hosting them (Yolal et al., 2016; Yozukmaz et al., 2020; Richards and King, 2022). In addition, several studies have shown that cultural tourism events can generate significant economic benefits for host communities by creating jobs, increasing tourism revenue, and stimulating the local economy (Jani and Mwakyusa, 2021; Yoopetch, 2022; Tichaawa et al., 2022; Ezeuduji, 2023). Moreover, cultural tourism events have also been recognized for their ability to generate positive social impacts whereby they promote community pride (Yoopetch, 2022), create cultural diversity (Kourkouridis et al., 2023), and enhance social cohesion (Doe et al., 2021). These events can create a sense of belonging and have the power to bring people together (Ezeuduji, 2023). As events bring people from different backgrounds and cultures together, it helps promote cross-cultural understanding and tolerance which is key when building communities and states (Mathabathe, 2019). Cultural tourism events can also contribute to the

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preservation and promotion of cultural heritage by showcasing traditional arts, crafts, music, dance, and other cultural expressions (Chen et al., 2020; Gilman, 2020). Such events can help to preserve cultural traditions and practices and create opportunities for local artists and artisans to showcase their skills and at the same time, generate income (Ezeuduji, 2023). Despite the existence of vast literature available examining the impacts associated with cultural tourism events, these events need to be continuously evaluated to determine their contributions particularly to communities hosting them.

Event attendance as spectators or participants, has become one of the ways utilized for people's leisure time (Theodorakis et al., 2015; Vegara-Ferri et al., 2020), becoming a crucial aspect of event tourism since it is through this attendance that the benefits are realized. Regardless of the quality of the event or other aspects, the attendees will always hold their own perceptions regarding the event, and these vary from one attendee to the other (Luo et al., 2022). These variations could be due to several factors such as previous experiences with the event or influenced by attendees' socio-demographic characteristics or even attitude towards the event organizing team (Kim et al., 2020). Therefore, an understanding of these perceptions is crucial as it helps event organizers and other key event stakeholders to identify areas that require improvement for the future editions of the event, thereby helping sustain the event. Despite Victoria Fall hosting different types and sizes of events (business, festivals, sports etc.), an investigation of how attendees to these events perceive the impacts emanating from tourism events has not been pursued. This study therefore attempts to fill this gap in literature and provide empirically supported information reading how the attendees perceives a major annual carnival event in Zimbabwe.

The current study examined event attendees' perceptions regarding the impacts of a cultural event in the resort town of Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. The study is intended to shed light on the importance of cultural events in Zimbabwe, and their impact on the local economy, tourism, and community development. In accomplishing this, the key factors that contribute to the success of events in Zimbabwe are highlighted. By analyzing event attendees' perceptions, the study can assist to identify areas for improvement in the planning, hosting, and management of cultural events in the global South, in particular. The article starts by providing an overview of event tourism and relevant literature that offer a theoretical foundation for understanding the impacts of tourism events. The research design and methodology adopted in completing the study are also elaborated. The study results are also presented and discussed in the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural tourism events refer to events and activities that showcase the cultural heritage of a particular community, aimed at attracting tourists and promoting local culture (Liu, 2014; Jani and Mwakyusa, 2021). These events can take various forms, such as carnivals, festivals, fairs, exhibitions, performances, and cultural tours (Du Cros and McKercher, 2020). Typically, they involve traditional music and dance, food, arts, and crafts, as well as other customs that showcase the history, values, and traditions of certain areas. Cultural tourism events provide an opportunity for visitors to immerse themselves in the local culture and gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the people and visited places (Ezeuduji, 2023). These kinds of events have been instrumental in supporting local economies through the providing job opportunities and generating revenue from tourism (Tichaawa et al., 2022; Kourkouridis et al., 2023). Cultural events therefore remain important elements of the tourism sector and have witnessed great improvements in recent years. Diversification and innovativeness are some of these improvements that have enabled the continuous growth of events.

In tourism literature, there have been increasing research studies on events and tourism events. Getz and Page (2019) note the wider usage of the term 'events tourism' in academia, especially from the late 1980s. However, in the past two decades, 'events tourism' became well-established in academia and as a sub-industry of the tourism sector. Tourism events have thus been in existence throughout human history (examples include rites of passage, funerals, and political meetings), and today they have become central to people's culture (Bowdin et al., 2006; Damirovich et al., 2022). Several factors have led to this phenomenon, including a need to engage in celebrations, increased leisure time, and spending money. Events have been visible in several cultures, planned and hosted at all times (Njerekai, 2016). From the second half of the twentieth to the early twenty-first century, single events have grown into a broad event industry, with several sectors (Šušić and Đorđević, 2011). An initial discussion around the concept of 'event(s) tourism' was spearheaded by Getz (1989). However, before that, the most common concepts around event tourism included special events, mega-events, major events, hallmark events, and specific types of events (Getz, 2008). Now this concept of 'event tourism' encompasses all planned events which follow an integrated approach to development and marketing (Getz, 2008; Hemmonsbey and Tichaawa, 2019; Daniels and Tichaawa, 2021).

Event tourism scholars (e.g., Getz, 2008; Getz and Page, 2016; Wu and Ai, 2016; Todd et al., 2017; Machisa, 2018; Swart and Maralack, 2020; Hemmonsbey and Tichaawa, 2020; Yozukmaz et al., 2020; Daniels and Tichaawa, 2021; Muresherwa et al., 2022a; Richards and King, 2022) have elaborated on event tourism studies with a focus on various types of tourism events. These studies have presented various aspects of event tourism including planning, management, marketing, and promotion. In addition, issues around event impacts, visitor behavior and experiences as well as sustainability were highlighted illustrating the key areas gaining much attention. Cultural event tourism as a sub-category of tourism events has attracted much attention from researchers and academics (Rojek, 2014; Laing, 2018; Echeta and Onuchukwu, 2022). In trying to raise awareness about tourism events, most tourism destinations apply and implement marketing plans, with tourism-related events acting as the hub for tourism flows (Getz, 2008; Getz and Page, 2016). To ensure that tourism events are beneficial to communities, it is important that they are planned and managed with the view of maximizing the triple bottom line (TBL) outcomes for the host communities and other related stakeholders.

TBL impacts of cultural tourism events

Many tourism destinations are putting resources and effort into organizing events of various types and sizes so that they

can benefit from them. Events therefore play a major role in becoming tourist offerings, which consequently helps increase travel interest to participate in the event (Panfiluk, 2015). The impact of tourism events irrespective of their type and size on the host destination can be huge and diverse. Many studies have been conducted on the impact of tourism events (e.g., Machisa, 2018; Pirnar et al., 2019; Wu and Ai, 2016), and most suggest that events result in three types of impacts; economic, socio-cultural, and environmental (Andersson and Lundberg, 2013; Gibson et al., 2012; Liedemann et al., 2022). These are generally viewed from two angles, positive and negative. Examples of economic impacts include international branding (Wee et al., 2017), employment creation (Bob et al., 2019), and contributions to local taxes (Houhou and Rahal, 2020) among others. The social impacts include aspects such as raising awareness and social activity (Benabdelhadi et al., 2021), enhancing local ties (Mair et al., 2021), and sustainable preservation of local resources and facilities (Getz, 2013; Liu et al., 2019). Getz further (2013) notes that, when properly managed, events create a positive image of the region. On the environmental part, David (2009) asserts that events have both direct and indirect links with the environment. Some of the negative environmental consequences of event tourism include contributing to pollution, littering, depletion of natural resources, and traffic congestion (Wee et al., 2017; Machisa et al., 2018a). Since the attendance of events involve locational changes where individuals travel to where tourist events are hosted, it may result in the movement and transmission of infectious diseases. These diseases may include the Ebola virus, Zika virus, SARS, Swine Flu, and Covid-19 (Coronavirus). The global South, which has witnessed negative stereotypes and several challenges, could use cultural events to project a positive message about the achievements made. These positive messages could in the end generate interest in visiting places that showcase their cultural artefacts in unique ways. Considering this, it is thus important for organizers of cultural tourism events to ensure that the event is favorable to the environment through the adoption of sustainable planning and development principles (David, 2009; Muresherwa et al., 2022a).

When tourism events are hosted at a destination, several stakeholders are affected in different ways. Stakeholders are those individuals with a stake and interest in the planning, hosting, and management of tourism events (Todd et al., 2017). The impact felt by the hosting community is different from those felt by participants, local businesses, sponsors, and organizers. In most cases, the developmental expectations, particularly the benefits associated with planning and hosting, and managing tourism events influence destinations' endeavors to organize tourism events (Elendu, 2013). It is therefore important for destination planners to first analyze potential impacts (benefits vs costs, positive and negative impacts) before organizing any event. Failure to do this is normally associated with unsustainable tourism development (Hinch and Higham, 2009; Machisa et al., 2018b). Table 1 provides a general indication of the impacts, both positive and negative, along the TBL perspective of the tourism events. Several studies have reported the various impacts that tourism events of any size have on the communities and destinations where they are hosted (Ntloko and Swart, 2008; Daniels and Swart, 2012; Tichaawa and Bama, 2012; Moisesescu et al., 2019; Cortese et al., 2019; Jani and Mwakyusa, 2021). The potential impacts of tourism events have been mainly categorized into three groups, as highlighted previously; with a generic tag, TBL impacts (Hede, 2007; Cortese et al., 2019; Jani and Mwakyusa, 2021).

Table 1. Impacts of tourism events (Source: adapted from Ntloko and Swart (2008), Banjo (2011), Daniels and Swart (2012), Tichaawa and Bama (2012), Hermann et al. (2013), Bason et al. (2015), Muresherwa et al. (2017) and Moisesescu et al. (2019))

Sphere	Positive Impacts	Negative impacts
Socio-cultural	Production of ideas; induce innovativeness; local skills development; urban revival; Enhances the quality of life in the community - urban regeneration; Cultural exchange – visitors and host communities (residents); Fosters community unity thus leading to a perception of positivity; Preservation of local culture – showcasing to visitors; Establishment of networks within the communities and outside of the community; enhances community spirit	Loss of permanent visitors; Creation of temporary tourism; Increased levels of criminal and delinquent activities; disruption of daily lives (road closure etc); Noise, overcrowding, and traffic congestion; rowdy, poor/undesired behavior, and hooliganism; prostitution; drug abuse; Vandalism and property damage; Only some people benefit from the event; Pressure on and over-usage of local services and infrastructure
Economic	Improvement of welfare through increased employment; Promotion of tourism; Skills development; Cash injections for local businesses; Increased public spending for sport; Development of companies and organizations directly or indirectly serving the event	Creation of 'temporary' employment; Increased prices due to increased demand; Waste of taxpayer's money; Increased cost of living; Many economic benefits for a few with few benefits for the masses
Environmental	Maintenance and improvement of existing infrastructure; Greening initiatives; Tourism infrastructure development, conservation	Litter; Overcrowding and parking problems; Damages to the natural environment

Theoretical framework

The concept of TBL was originally invented by Elkington (1981, 1999) for businesses especially on their capability to either create or destroy value in the three domains. The concept of TBL has been applied in various studies that assess the impacts of tourism activities and events (Hede, 2007; Abdel-Azim-Ahmed, 2017; Ziakas, 2020). Previous research studies investigating the impact of tourism activity and cultural events have taken a narrow approach that examines each element in isolation (Ahmad et al., 2016). Tourism studies especially on impact assessment have always been undertaken from the perspective and discipline of investigators (Fredline et al., 2005). For instance, economists have assessed the economic impact of events (Dwyer et al., 2016; Allen et al., 2022), while psychologists, sociologists, and geographers have investigated the social impacts (Viviers and Slabbert, 2012) and environmental scientists and geographers have also investigated the environmental impacts of events (Ahmad et al., 2016; Collins and Cooper, 2017;

Van Rheenen, 2017; Kurgun and Ozseker, 2020). This approach has been lambasted by several researchers who view the economy, society, and environment as hierarchically structured requiring a holistic approach that embraces all elements (Fredline et al., 2005; Ahmad et al., 2016). Despite this, the TBL approach remains relevant especially when analyzing the impacts of any tourism development initiative as it provides an understanding of both the positive and negative aspects related to development. Knowledge about the TBL impact is useful to various event tourism stakeholders as it helps inform development-related decisions.

The Victoria Falls Carnival – An overview

The context of the study was the tenth edition of the Victoria Falls Carnival event held between the 29th of April and the 1st of May 2022 in the Zimbabwean tourism capital of Victoria Falls. Since its inception in 2012, this event has been running annually without any interruption until 2020 when the globe was confronted by the Covid-19 pandemic. For two years (2020 and 2021), the carnival event could not proceed as nations battled to control the spread of the pandemic. Despite the impact of Covid-19 on the events industry, the Victoria Falls Carnival remains a major three-day music festival in Africa. The event features music celebrations and parties hosted by both local and international musicians (Banga, 2017; Muresherwa et al., 2022a). Historically, the Carnival was one of the largest and most well-known New Year's celebrations in Africa. However, the dates of the event were moved away from New Year's in large part because the organizers felt that the event celebrates Africa's diverse culture, food, music, and arts, thus justifying its stand-alone dates (We Are Victoria Falls, 2020). In addition, moving the dates from New Year's celebrations to April/May was carefully thought to help draw visitors to the town during the low tourist season thereby extending the tourist season (Bright, 2022; Richards and King, 2022).

Methods, study population, and analysis

In trying to achieve the study objectives, a mixed method, making use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches were adopted. The target population for the study was the event attendees (spectators and participants) of the tenth edition of the Victoria Falls Carnival in Zimbabwe as well as the event organizing team. According to the event organizers of this event, to ensure that the Covid-19 protocols were observed, 6,000 people were targeted to attend the event (Bright, 2022). Following Isaac and Michael (1981)'s recommendation on sample size, with a study population of 6000 attendees, a representative sample of 382 would be ideal. A survey instrument was designed and distributed to the participants by the researchers and a team of trained field workers. All ethical considerations were taken into account. The variables relevant to the study were agreed upon by the researchers and these were derived from scholarly sources (See e.g., Ntloko and Swart, 2008; Muresherwa et al., 2017; Moisescu et al., 2019). The study questionnaire was informed by the TBL impact variables as noted in literature. The survey instrument had three sections which all contained close-ended questions, while the TBL impact statements were on a five-point Likert scale. After excluding unusable surveys, three hundred and seven (307) were captured and used in this study. These surveys were collected following a spatially based systematic sampling method used to sample the participants. Despite the total number of usable surveys falling under the targeted 382, Pallant (2013) argues that samples above 300 are acceptable.

Table 2. Interviewee profile (Source: Author's construction)

Participant number	Role(s) in events tourism	Gender	Duration in the current position	Highest qualification
P1	Festival Director (CEO)	Male	20 years	PGDip
P2	Events director/organiser (Productions Manager)	Male	>30 years	PG Degree
P3	ZTA – COO, research and planning head, diplomatic assignments, tourism attaché	Male	13 years	Master's and MBA
P4	ZTA – Assistant Manager - Events & Festivals 'experiential marketer'	Female	15 years	Master's
P5	Managing Director – National Convention Bureau	Female	9 years	Master's

To further support the findings from the quantitative data, relevant extracts highlighting the emerging themes from five in-depth virtual interviews with the event organizing team were used. This team included those involved in the planning/organizing, hosting and management of the Victoria Falls Carnival event including the Festival Director and Productions Manager, Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) representatives and National Convention Bureau representative. For reporting purposes, the interviewees were assigned an identifying number to assist link the responses to the participating interviewees (Festival Director – P1; Productions Manager – P2; ZTA Chief Operating Officer – P3; ZTA Festivals Manager – P4 and National Convention Bureau Managing Director – P5). The interview questions used were designed to reveal what the study participants thought was the TBL impact of the Victoria Falls Carnival event. Table 2 shows the interviewees' profile.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the results of the data analysis. First, the outputs generated from SPSS regarding the demographic characteristics of the study participants are reported. This is followed by a presentation of the socio-economic and environmental impacts of the carnival event. Finally, the aspects around satisfaction and future support are presented in this section.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the study sample

The researchers found it imperative to present the participants' profiles of those who partook in this study. According to

Muresherwa et al. (2022b:4), understanding the profile of a study's participants assists in giving "context that could give meaning to the interpretation of the study findings." As a result, the socio-demographic profiles of the overall study sample involving event attendees and spectators are presented. Six socio-demographic characteristics questions related to participants' age, gender, level of education, monthly income, occupation, and marital status are presented.

As illustrated in Table 3, more females (55.0%) than men (45.0%) attended the event. This finding was not surprising noting that previous studies (see e.g., Tichaawa and Swart, 2010; Tichaawa, 2013; Nyikana et al., 2014; Tichaawa and Bob, 2015) showed more women denoting that the market for events tourism is moving away from male-dominance and embracing more women. The average age of the study participants was 32.2 years, with more attendance by young to middle-aged spectators (20 – 40 years – 69.8%). Recent studies (see e.g., Moyo et al., 2020; Ozturk et al., 2021; Shereni et al., 2021) have also reported a trend of events attracting a relatively young population. The study results showed just above 50.0% of the study participants (50.2%) declaring that they were single while 38.4% were married. Given that the event attracted a younger attendees cohort, it would be expected to find a higher proportion of single attendees and align to study results reported by Sobitan and Vlachos (2020). Regarding participants' employment status, more than half (56.0%) indicated that they were employed on a full-time basis. The Victoria Falls Carnival also attracted mostly spectators who held a tertiary qualification (certificate/diploma and degrees) and this constituted an overwhelming majority (82.1%). The finding regarding a higher proportion of the participants holding at least a tertiary qualification was not surprising noting that most of the sampled events were attended mostly by citizens of Zimbabwe (83.3%), a nation that boasts having a "highly educated population" (Pasara et al., 2020:2). The average monthly net income (after deduction of taxes) in United States Dollars (USD\$) for the study participants was USD\$826.37 (based on those who disclosed monthly salary).

Table 3. Description of the respondents' demographic characteristics
(in %, n=307) (Source: Authors' construction - Survey Data 2022)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	138	45.0
	Female	169	55.0
Age <i>Average age = 32.3</i>	18 -20	41	13.4
	21 - 30	107	34.9
	31 - 40	107	34.9
	41 – 50	34	11.1
	51 - 60	11	3.6
	61 - 70	7	2.3
Marital status	Single	154	50.2
	Married	118	38.4
	Divorced	2	0.7
	Separated	26	8.5
	Widowed	7	2.3
Employment status/Occupation	Unemployed	32	10.4
	Employed (part-time)	35	11.4
	Employed (full-time)	172	56.0
	Student/Learner	59	19.2
	Retired	9	2.9
Highest level of education	No formal education	4	1.3
	Primary completed	6	2.0
	Secondary completed	45	14.7
	Certificate/diploma	46	15.0
	Undergraduate degree	150	48.9
Postgraduate degree	56	18.2	
Monthly net income (after deduction of taxes) in US\$ <i>Mean: USD\$826.37 based on those who disclosed monthly salary</i>	None	89	29.0
	\$1–100	14	4.6
	\$101-200	26	8.5
	\$201–500	62	20.2
	\$501–1000	34	11.1
	\$1001 - 2500	22	7.2
	\$ 2501–5000	13	4.2
	\$5001–10000	1	0.3
Confidential	46	15.0	

An overwhelming majority (87.9%) of the study participants were event spectators while the remaining 12.1% were participating in different event activities as either artists or workers. The study also showed that most of the study participants were overnight visitors or tourists (56.0%) while those coming from the local community, where the event was hosted constituted 23.9% and these were identified as local residents.

The remaining 11.1% were study participants classified as day visitors, coming from nearby towns for the event and traveling back to wherever they were from. The tenth edition of the Victoria Falls Carnival event was mostly attended by study participants who had attended the previous carnival events (86.0%) with the remaining 14.0% as first-timers to the event. These event attendees were mostly in the friends and family category (74.2%).

The impact of the Victoria Falls Carnival event

Socio-cultural impacts

The socio-cultural impacts of event tourism are the ways in which the event tourism sector contributes to changes in moral conduct, individual behavior, collective lifestyles, value systems, family structure and relationships, safety levels, traditional ceremonies, and community organizations (Jovičić, 2011). Table 4 reveals the results that were obtained from the participants regarding their views of the socio-cultural impact associated with the different event categories.

The first statement (SC1) relating to destination profiling, 'Zimbabwean culture is profiled by hosting these types of events' saw a significant majority of the participants (99.4%) generally agreeing (mean=4.86 and Std.Dev=.363). This finding shows that the event attendees believe that through event hosting, destination profiling could be achieved. The notion that an event has the power to significantly influence the destination image (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2007) thus suggests that there could be a convergence of the destination and event image, each correlated with the other. Meanwhile, the hosting of recurring events could contribute to the formulation of a destination image profile that has the power and potential to create marketing and co-branding benefits. A larger proportion of the study participants agreed with the statement 'this event will be a major boost for national/ community pride' (SC2) (mean=4.78 and Std.Dev=.481).

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation of variables - The impact of the Vic Falls Carnival ($n=307$)
(Source: Authors' construction - Survey Data 2022)

Triple Bottom Line (TBL) impact statements	Mean	Std. Dev
Social impacts (SC)	4.47	
SC1: Zimbabwean culture is profiled by hosting these types of events (determined by event type)	4.86	.363
SC2: This event will be a major boost for national/ community pride	4.78	.481
SC3: Entertainment opportunities related to the event will be provided for residents	4.71	.541
SC4: Training opportunities have been provided to residents because of this event (e.g., volunteerism, training, and skills development, etc.)	4.64	.507
SC5: Events help foster social cohesion among the local community members	4.70	.621
SC6: Events disrupt the local communities, which could lead to the displacement of potential tourists	3.10	1.527
Economic impacts (EC)	4.58	
EC1: This event leads to increased spending in the local area and increases economic benefits for local businesses	4.70	.542
EC2: The hosting of this event ensures employment opportunities for local community members	4.58	.664
EC3: Events encourage investment in infrastructure development and expansion for the local communities	4.47	.525
EC4: The hosting of events helps attract tourists to the local area	4.54	.555
EC5: Because of event hosting, foreign exchange earnings and regional development for the community can be achieved	4.50	.532
EC6: Events help to increase the markets for local products in the community and other areas	4.71	.481
Environmental impacts (EV)	3.68	
EV1: Events provide an incentive to keep public spaces neat and tidy	4.78	.529
EV2: This event creates opportunities for environmental education and awareness	4.76	.513
EV3: The event resulted in excessive littering	1.51	.951
EV4: The event created excessive noise	2.68	1.489
EV5: The event supports the protection and conservation of the environment	4.69	.679
Note: Five-point Likert-type scale was used (1-strongly disagree, 3-neutral, and 5-strongly agree)		

Van Nierkerk (2016) highlights that tourism events in reference to festivals, positively impact communities by bringing in relaxation and entertainment opportunities for both attendees and community members at the destination. Further highlighting the importance of events in enhancing entertainment opportunities for both residents and visitors, the study participants generally agreed (mean=4.71 and Std.Dev=.541) that 'entertainment opportunities related to the event will be provided for local residents' (SC3). This finding, while conforming to Van Nierkerk (2016)'s postulations, must be contextualized. The Victoria Falls Carnival event is characterized by several performances (arts and music) and thus would be expected to impress the study participants and resulting in such a response. The intangible feel-good effect of the event could thus be utilized by event organizers and key stakeholders to enhance social cohesion.

With events coming to destinations, additional staff may be required to work in several parts of the event, and this could include volunteers, marshals, ticketing staff, and other roles (Mair, 2009). These individuals could require some training which would eventually lead to skills development. The fourth statement (SC4) which relates to training opportunities because of event tourism development was asked 'training opportunities have been provided to residents because of this event (e.g., volunteerism, training, and skills development, etc.)'. The study results showed a general agreement (mean=4.64 and Std.Dev=.507) with the statement denoting that indeed events offer training opportunities, a finding also reported by Swart and Bob (2007). The study participants were also requested to indicate a level of agreement with the statement relating to event impact on social cohesion (SC5), 'events help foster social cohesion among the local community members.' The study results showed almost all the participants (96.4%) in agreement with the statement (mean=4.70 and Std.Dev=.621) thereby further endorsing earlier studies that found that events are key for enhancing social cohesion (Pyke and Ong, 2019; Asero and Tomaselli, 2021; Daniels and Tichaawa, 2021). Regarding the statement that 'events disrupt the local communities, which could lead to the displacement of potential tourists', the study results showed an equal distribution between agreement (43.3%) and disagreement proportions (43.3%) while 13.4% assumed a neutral position. The mean score for statement SC6 was 3.10 while the Std.Dev was 1.527 denoting agreement and disagreement levels.

Despite some studies (e.g., Chen, 2011) revealing that tourism events disrupt the community's daily routine, the current study showed an equal proportion of participants agreeing and disagreeing about community disruption emanating from tourism events. It is however important that this finding may need to be interpreted with the context in mind.

Economic impacts

The findings in relation to event spectators' perceptions regarding the economic impacts of the carnival event in Victoria Falls are presented in Table 4. The first economic impact statement (EC1) was related to the ability of tourism events to lead to increased spending in the local area and increase economic benefits for local businesses. Almost all (99.0%) of the study participants generally agreed with the statement and revealed a mean and standard deviation of 4.70 and .542 respectively. This conception had been reported in earlier studies such as that of Duarte et al. (2018) who note the value of event tourism in enhancing local economies. Regarding statement EC2 that entails job opportunities, 'the hosting of this event ensures employment opportunities to local community members' the study results showed a large proportion of the study participants agreeing (mean=4.58 and Std.Dev=.664) with the statement. Recent studies such as that of Allen et al. (2022) maintain that the hosting of events results in jobs being created further endorsing the current study findings. In addition, when the study participants rated the statement 'events encourage investment in infrastructure development and expansion for the local communities' (EC3), the results were encouraging as most saw the value of events in bringing infrastructure to the area (mean=4.47 and Std.Dev=.525). This finding regarding infrastructural development has been reported in several studies that discussed the economic impact of tourism events (See e.g., Stankova and Vassenska, 2015; Yolal et al., 2016; Nyikana, 2017).

Destinations usually pursue several objectives and among these, include hosting events of international stature, which have the power to attract visitors to help stimulate tourism (Atkinson, 2016). Depending on their category and type, events are generally meant to appeal to different people (locals and visitors). Within this perspective, the fifth statement, 'the hosting of events help attract tourists to the local area' (EC4) was asked as it related to the event attractiveness. The study results showed a large proportion (mean=4.54 and Std.Dev=.555) of the study participants agreeing with the statement. However, to keep attracting more visitors or a bigger audience, destination managers and event organizers should focus on proper marketing of the event (Atkinson, 2016). Tichaawa (2013) notes that when more visitors are attracted to destinations to attend events, more benefits such as job opportunities can be realized. For most tourism destinations, tourism and events contribute to foreign exchange earnings (Adu-Ampong, 2019; Doe et al., 2021). With this in mind, the study participants were asked to rate the statement 'because of event hosting, foreign exchange earnings and regional development for the community can be achieved' (EC5) and results showed revealed a general agreement with the statement (mean=4.50 and Std.Dev=.532). Furthermore, a larger proportion of the study agreed that 'events help to increase the markets for the local products in the community and other areas' (EC6) with a mean score of 4.71 and Std.Dev of .481.

The economic impact of events can also be assessed by examining spectators' spending while attending tourism events. Table 5 presents the expenditures of each of the attendees that pertain to seven categories which included (i) food & drinks, (ii) event merchandise or event-related items, (iii) transportation – within the country where the events were hosted, (iv) accommodation – only for overnight visitors, (v) souvenir – arts and craft purchases (vi) other- entertainment or visits to tourist attractions and (vii) overall total for all the expenditure. Concerning visitor spending on various categories or items, the study results showed an average overall spent of USD\$247.87. The total spent on all the categories nearly reached US\$76,096.00. Examining the spending categories more closely, food and beverages spent amounted to a total of USD\$5,266.00 which ranged from USD\$2.00 to USD\$500.00 and yielded an average of USD\$32.71. As expected, the category with the highest spent was accommodation with a total of USD\$23,432.00 with an average of USD\$334.74.

Table 5. Spent amounts on items for the entire period of the event (Source: Authors' construction - Survey Data 2022)

Item	Minimum spent in US\$	Maximum spent in US\$	Average spent (US\$)	Total amounts disclosed by all participants Amount in US\$
Food and drinks	2	500	32.71	5266
Event Merchandise	5	150	37.44	936
Shopping	2	200	90.11	1622
Transportation (e.g., travel in Zimbabwe)	2	1500	81.45	7575
Accommodation (only for non-locals)	20	1480	334.74	23432
Souvenir purchase (e.g., arts and craft)	5	2500	162.81	4233
Other (entertainment, visits to tourist attractions, etc.)	3	800	116.34	8493
Overall total estimate	US\$2.00	US\$4,800.00	US\$247.87	US\$76,096.00

Reflecting on the themes that emanated from the interview with the Victoria Falls Carnival director regarding the economic impact of the event, it was apparent that the carnival helps address seasonality issues of tourism. Events help to increase accommodation occupancy, particularly through the low season. During the last event in 2019, it was quite difficult 'to get a bed in town [Victoria Falls area] as there was 100% occupancy.' In trying to allow more tourists to come to Victoria Falls during the low season, the dates have been moved from the high season (New year) to April and early May. In this regard the Festival Director (P1) and ZTA Events Experiential Marketer (P4) mentioned:

"We've moved the date to a date where it's low season ...you chat to all the hotels, you chat to everyone, and ... the last 20 years you can take the stats of the occupancy around the date we did Vic Falls carnival, now its end of April to early

May. Occupancy was at around 20%. This year [2022] the whole town was full. We brought 1000s of people into the town, 1000s of people eating at the restaurants, all the hotels were full, all the backpackers were full, people were doing activities, all the sunset cruises were full ... it's a massive economic impact on the locals ...” [P1, Festival Director].

“... we use these [events i.e., Vic Falls Carnival] as a catalyst for attracting tourists to destination during times when we are in low season. We used to have this challenge mainly in Victoria Falls, which then brought about the need for Victoria Falls carnival. But then you find that Victoria Falls is now overcrowded, has become overcrowded during that time of the year ...” [P4, ZTA – Assistant Manager - Events & Festivals].

The theme regarding events' power to 'enhance local economies' was reported by all the event organizing team. Highlighting this theme, the study participants indicated “... *they create jobs for the local communities*” [P5, Managing Director, NCB] which was expressed differently, however revealing 'job or employment opportunities' as a positive outcome from events hosting. There was also consensus amongst the study participants that events 'attract investment' as highlighted by P5 “... *out of those people that come in for conferences, some of them end up being investors.*”

In addition to benefiting the accommodation and hospitality sector, the travel sector also benefited from the Victoria Falls Carnival event. The Festival Director (P1) added that *'every single flight was taken ... there was not one seat available on the flight ...'* illustrating the power of tourism events in driving different sectors of the economy. The carnival organizers are also closely working with the local community and striving to ensure that locals benefit in different ways for example *'through conservation, education, and employment for the local community.'* It was also indicated that the organizers of this event have partnered with local community members to bring the event into their area and thereby *'providing more jobs ..., we are using the locals for security, barmen or bar staffs ... and the smaller traders are getting more extra work'* which are all some of the positive impacts emanating from the planning, hosting, and management of the Victoria Falls Carnival event.

Environmental impacts

The respondents were asked to rate the statement 'events provide an incentive to keep public spaces neat and tidy' (EV1) and the results showed a general agreement with a mean and Std.Dev score of 4.78 and .529 respectively. This finding was anticipated noting that these days, most event stakeholders are pursuing sustainable developmental goals which amongst its tenants include keeping places clean and tidy. Regarding the statement that 'this event creates opportunities for environmental education and awareness' (EV2) most participants generally agreed (mean=4.76 and Std.Dev=.513). Another positive environmental impact statement that was perceived positively by the study participants was 'the event supports the protection and conservation of the environment' (EV5). Statement EV5 had a mean and Std.Dev scores of 4.69 and .679 respectively denoting a strong agreement with the notion that events help support the protection and conservation of the environment. The two negative environmental impact statements (EV3 and EV4) have widely been covered in literature and continue to trouble event organizers and destination managers (Collins and Cooper, 2017; Bob et al., 2019; Yozukmaz et al., 2020). With statement EV3 which relates to events contributing to excessive littering, a larger proportion (86.9%) of the study participants disagreed while a smaller 4.9% agreed (mean=1.51 and Std.Dev=.951). While some studies have shown that littering is a big concern that comes with event hosting, the current study showed that this is not a major problem as had been reported in earlier research (Perić, 2018; Mchunu et al., 2021). Concerning higher noise levels caused by the event (EV4), most of the study participants disagreed (48.6%) whereas some (35.2%) thought that the event resulted in excessive noise in the local area while the remaining 16.2% assumed a neutral position. The mean and Std.Dev on statement EV4 was 2.68 and 1.489 respectively. This finding regarding the disruptive community aspects such as noise at times is unavoidable. However, despite this, the organizers of the Victoria Falls Carnival strive to limit noise levels by doing several activities. This can articulated in the following quote from the Festival Director who had this to say:

“... on the noise levels, I think when you're doing a music event ... like in the low season ... everyone that is coming into the town is expecting this and it's a celebration and unfortunately there will always be noise ... we've got everything sorted out on the river out at the Elephant Hills, which is not in the suburbs anymore. We moved it from the school. The school used to be right in the urban area there, so we've really made a big step by moving everything out as far as we are now. And I think it had a big impact on the local community. So, I mean, you don't hear the noise in the urban community or area. So that [noise] have been alleviated.” [P1, Festival Director].

The above shows that event organizers are considerate of the communities they operate in and at times alter their operations as ways to minimize the impact on locals. Traffic congestion is also a characteristic of most events which would require a multi-stakeholder effort in addressing this. The event director thinks that *'people should not be driving cars but, use buses which could pick up people every ten minutes'* to help decongest the roads and help resolve undesirable behavior such as *'drinking and driving.'* Members of the event organizing team such as P3, P4 and P5 also raised concerns regarding congested roads and were also in support of ways to decongest the roads such as 'promote public transport usage' which Mair and Smith (2021) report as a behavior that could help enhance event experience for both the host and visitors.

The study results showed the majority (93.26%) of the respondents rating the event 'good' to 'excellent' illustrating that the events delivered satisfaction. In general, the study participants were pleased with the 10th edition of the Victoria Falls Carnival event and thus rated it positively denoting satisfaction with the event. With high satisfaction levels with the event, it was expected that most of the study participants would consider attending the future edition of the event (94.8%) with almost all the study participants (99.6%) declaring that they would advise friends, relatives, or colleagues to attend the event in the future. It is thus imperative for the event organizers to keep delivering unique experiences and ensure that the attendees would consider attending the future edition of the events. In addition, event organizers should continue to direct energy and focus on the delivery of events that resonates with quality.

CONCLUSION

The current study is considered important as it sheds light on the transformative power of events tourism especially in promoting and preserving the rich cultural heritage of Zimbabwe. Noting that Zimbabwe boasts a diverse collection of ancient archaeological sites, cultural traditions, and brilliant creative artistic displays and expressions, makes the country an ideal destination for cultural tourism. Moreover, the current study goes beyond the conventional boundaries by considering the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on event tourism, thus offering unique insights into the recovery and resilience-building strategies. The qualitative data collected for the study, coupled with quantitative approach, help strengthen the significance of the study's contribution, while its wider implications make it relevant not only for Zimbabwe but also for cultural tourism in Africa and the global South in general.

By examining the impact of event tourism, the researchers uncovered the TBL impact of a major carnival event in the resort town of Victoria Falls. The study revealed a generally positive perception towards the impacts of tourism events implying support for the event. The negative aspects usually associated with hosting events such as littering, high noise levels, and disruption of local communities were perceived negatively though most participants did not see this event bringing undesirable impacts. The organizers of this event strive to ensure that the event continues sustainably and most importantly presents vast opportunities to the host community.

Since the event has the support of spectators, especially since the event participants indicated that they would attend future editions of the event and recommend it to others, this is of interest to the organizers as it could denote future success and assist in planning. In addition, since the event is perceived positively, and has high spectator satisfaction levels, stakeholders such as local authorities and event organizers could use this information to keep improving the event and exceed expectations since this usually helps boost satisfaction from the event (Fytopoulou et al., 2021).

Noting that the data collection process was undertaken when the government of Zimbabwe and other jurisdictions were relaxing Covid-19 rules and regulations, people's perceptions could have changed over time as 'normal activities' resume. Considering this, it could be interesting to advance and replicate the study and see if there could be some differences in the results obtained. In addition, since individuals' perceptions can change over time and mainly because of some of the following factors global crises, financial crises, political stability/ instability, government policy, terror activities, climate change, and country achievements, follow-up studies could reveal some interesting facts which could shape a better understanding of event tourism impacts. Moreso, since host residents or locals are the ones who are mostly exposed to both pre-and post-event impacts (Yolal et al., 2016), future studies could explore how residents within an event-hosting region perceive the socio-economic and environmental impact of events in their area.

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