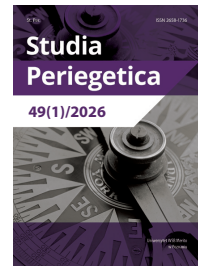


Bama, H.K.N. & Ndaba, Z. (2026). Post-pandemic Resilience Strategies for Cultural Festival Tourism: Insights from the Royal Reed Dance Ceremony in South Africa, *Studia Periegetica*, 49(1), 2152. <https://doi.org/10.58683/sp.2152>
ISSN 2658-1736



HILARY KENNEDY NJI BAMA,^a ZIMASA NDABA^b

Post-pandemic Resilience Strategies for Cultural Festival Tourism: Insights from the Royal Reed Dance Ceremony in South Africa

Abstract. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed structural fragilities in community-based cultural tourism systems. This study explores stakeholder views on socio-cultural and socio-economic effects of the cancellation of the annual Royal Reed Dance ceremony in KwaNongoma, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and proposes resilience strategies for recurring cultural festival contexts. Following a hermeneutic phenomenological design, fourteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with organisers, maidens, residents, and service providers. Data were thematically analysed in NVivo. The analysis reveals that the cancellation disrupted cultural transmission, weakened community identity, and eliminated seasonal livelihood opportunities. The interviewees identified three inter-related resilience pillars for recurring cultural festivals: diversification of event formats and income streams, community co-ownership of planning and benefits, and risk-sensitive planning through health protocols, contingency systems, stakeholder coordination, and transparent communication. The study contributes to research on resilience-oriented event tourism from a developing-country perspective, demonstrating how culturally-embedded festivals can be better prepared for future shocks to protect heritage values and local livelihood systems, offering practical pathways for safeguarding authentic indigenous ceremonies.

Keywords: adaptive capacity, cultural festival tourism, COVID-19, resilience, tourism development

Article history. Submitted 2026-01-23. Accepted 2026-05-04. Published 2026-05-21.

^a Department of Business Management, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of the Free State, South Africa, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9356-9137>, BamaHKN@ufs.ac.za

^b Department of Tourism and Events Management, Faculty of Business and Management Sciences, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6226-2378>, zimasandaba@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Cultural festivals have demonstrated their importance beyond mere entertainment and leisure purposes (Getz & Page, 2019). According to the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), cultural events have the potential to grow and contribute to related sectors like hospitality, tourism, infrastructure, and technical services and to create sustainable jobs for local communities (Rogerson, 2021). In KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), R¹7 million was invested to support events that could attract visitors to the KZN province (Ndaba, 2022). According to Nkosi (2019), KZN is known for hosting several cultural festivals, namely the First Fruits Cultural Festival (*'uMkhosi woSelwa'*), the gathering of Shembe, *'uMkhosi woMama'* and the Royal Reed Dance Ceremony (RRDC). As platforms for heritage expression and local socio-economic participation, these cultural festivals contribute to heritage preservation and local economic development (Finkel & Platt, 2020; Syafrini et al., 2026). Globally, the past three decades have witnessed numerous local governments increasingly adopting cultural tourism as a strategy for local development, recognising its potential to drive both socio-economic and sociocultural progress (Hemmonsbeey et al., 2024; Ndita & Bama, 2024). Consequently, destinations across the globe have shown a growing interest in hosting various types of cultural events (Kourkouridis et al., 2023).

Existing research suggests that cultural festivals serve as dynamic expressions of heritage, strengthening community pride, enhancing tourism appeal, and stimulating economic growth (Bowdin et al., 2006; Global Destination Sustainability Index, 2017; Perić & Vitezić, 2019). Cultural festivals play a crucial role in advancing cultural tourism by attracting interest from both developed and developing economies (Snowball & Antrobus, 2020). In South Africa, cultural festivals have become an integral part of tourism development, blending rich traditions with community participation and economic benefits. A prime example of this is the RRDC, locally known as *'uMkhosi woMhlanga'*, held annually in KwaNongoma, in the KwaZulu-Natal province (Ndita & Bama, 2024). This event highlights the deep sociocultural and socio-economic importance that such festivals hold in the region (Nkosi, 2019).

Events like the RRDC festival illustrate how cultural preservation and tourism promotion intersect (Ahmed & Memish, 2020; Swart & Maralack, 2020). Rooted in Zulu traditions, the RRDC festival highlights the richness and continuity of Zulu heritage (Ndaba, 2022). In addition to its cultural importance, the festival draws thousands of domestic and international visitors each year, serving as an economic

¹ R is the symbol of South Africa's official currency called Rand.

lifeline for the host community (Mohanty et al., 2020; Nkosi, 2019; Rwigema & Celestin, 2020). However, like many other cultural events and tourism initiatives, the RRDC festival faced unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the vulnerability of cultural tourism in times of global crises (Liedemann et al., 2022; Nyikana & Bama, 2023). According to Mandić et al. (2025), the sharp decline in tourism, marked by a staggering 74% drop in international arrivals in 2020 compared to 2019, demonstrated the pandemic's severe impact on both global and local economies. The crisis exposed the fragility of the cultural tourism sector, emphasising the urgent need for resilience and adaptive strategies to ensure the sustainability of such events in the face of future uncertainties (Ntounis et al., 2022; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). Building resilience involves developing strategies that enhance adaptability and recovery capacity, enabling the sector to withstand future disruptions (Ndita & Bama, 2024). Given the unpredictable nature of global crises, much of the academic discussion now revolves around creating tourism strategies that are future-proof and capable of addressing similar challenges (Bama et al., 2022; Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2021; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021).

The unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultural tourism has prompted scholars and industry experts to explore potential strategies that could strengthen the sector against future uncertainties. Their efforts focus on repositioning cultural tourism to generate new competitive advantages and ensure sustainable growth (Bama & Nyikana, 2021; Traskevich & Fontanari, 2023). Recent research suggests that the pandemic's implications should be examined within the framework of systemic crisis and resilience theory (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). It is widely assumed that resilient sectors often emerge stronger from crises, leading to a surge in academic and industry discussions about how tourism stakeholders can innovate and adapt to maintain competitiveness, especially during and after disruptive events like COVID-19 (Bama et al., 2022). Traskevich and Fontanari (2023) argue that beyond simply responding to challenges, stakeholders can proactively leverage public sentiment to drive societal and economic transformation, encouraging innovative and resilient solutions.

Studies examining the pandemic's impact on tourism have increasingly highlighted the importance of recovery, resilience, and adaptation strategies both globally and within South Africa (Bama et al., 2022; Dewi, 2020; Kristiana et al., 2021; Ndita & Bama, 2024). Emerging debates advocate for a shift towards resilience-focused practices tailored specifically to the cultural tourism sector. This study seeks to explore how cultural festivals like the RRDC contribute to cultural tourism resilience and sustainability in the post-pandemic era. Furthermore, it aims to identify how these efforts can align with strategic innovations and future-oriented approaches. There is a noticeable research gap concerning cultural tourism and

festival resilience in the South African context, despite the sector's significant value within the broader tourism industry. While much of the existing literature concentrates on areas such as domestic tourism, sports tourism, educational tourism, and the MICE sector (Abrahams & Bama, 2023; Mzobe & Nyikana, 2024; Ndita & Bama, 2024; Nyikana & Bama, 2023), the role of cultural tourism remains relatively underexplored. Given the long-term need for adaptation and resilience building, the study is a response to the growing recognition for reconsideration of governance arrangements, health protocol preparedness, market diversification, digital complementarity, and community-based risk management. Since research on resilience in tourism is also aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this study seeks to explore how resilient cultural festivals like the RRDC can enhance the sustainability of cultural tourism in South Africa in the longer term.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Underpinning

2.1. Cultural Festivals in South Africa: An Overview

South Africa boasts a rich tapestry of cultural events celebrating its diverse heritage, from music and dance to arts and heritage events, fostering a sense of identity and unity among its people while attracting global attention (Ndaba, 2022; Nkosi, 2019). Notable examples include the Makhandla National Arts Festival, the Mangaung African Cultural Festival (Macufe) and the Cape Town International Jazz Festival (Bama & Abrahams, 2023; Nkosi, 2019; Scholtz et al., 2019; Snowball & Antrobus, 2020). The RRDC is a hallmark cultural festival that draws thousands of participants and spectators annually (Nkosi, 2019). The RRDC serves as a profound manifestation of Zulu cultural heritage, emphasising core values such as purity, community cohesion, and adherence to traditional customs (Ndaba, 2022). Such cultural festivals function as critical platforms for the preservation and expression of intangible heritage, simultaneously offering substantial socio-economic benefits to host communities through the stimulation of tourism and generating economic opportunities. Cultural events of this nature exemplify South Africa's rich cultural tapestry, underscoring the strategic importance of integrating cultural heritage into broader sustainable tourism development frameworks (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). Deeply rooted in tradition, such festivals preserve cultural practices and promote social cohesion while attracting local and international visitors, contributing to the GDP and job creation (Bama & Abrahams, 2023; Drummond et al., 2021; Snowball & Antrobus, 2020). For instance, prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19

pandemic, South African Tourism reported the sector's contribution to the national GDP to be 6.9% (R363.2 billion) in 2019 (SAT, 2021).

2.2. Cultural Festivals as Catalysts for Cultural Tourism

Increasingly, the economic potential of cultural and creative industries (CCIs) has been recognised by countries of the Global South, such as South Africa (Cunningham & Swift, 2019). Cultural festivals serve as pivotal catalysts for cultural tourism, offering immersive experiences associated with tradition, creativity, and economic advancement. In South Africa, these events play a crucial role in showcasing the nation's diverse cultural heritage while attracting domestic and international visitors (Mxunyelwa & Tshetu, 2018). More importantly, cultural festivals serve as effective vehicles of destination branding and catalysts for destination marketing (Hemmonsbey et al., 2024). Studies show that the RRDC exemplifies the synergy between cultural heritage and tourism development, and annually draws thousands of participants and spectators, generating substantial tourism-related economic activity (Bonet & Negrier, 2018; Scholtz et al., 2019; Snowball & Antrobus, 2020). The nature of such cultural events enhances the visibility of indigenous traditions and contributes to their preservation by fostering a sustained demand for authentic cultural experiences. Consequently, by aligning cultural expression with tourism initiatives, festivals such as the RRDC become instrumental in promoting sustainable cultural tourism development, offering communities opportunities to preserve their heritage while deriving significant socio-economic benefits (Agbabiaka et al., 2017; Scholtz et al., 2019).

Festivals play an important role in the cultural and economic development of South Africa (Saayman & Rossouw, 2011; Snowball et al., 2023). They support thousands of livelihoods and local economic development in many locations (Saayman & Rossouw, 2011). The economic impact of cultural festivals is profound, as they stimulate local economies and contribute to job creation (Salvador et al., 2022). Events like the RRDC boost the hospitality and transport sectors and create opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurs to sell crafts, food, and other services (Nkosi, 2019; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). Furthermore, Acha-Anyi and Dlamini (2019) point out that these festivals play a critical role in diversifying South Africa's tourism offerings by positioning the country as a destination for cultural exploration rather than solely leisure travel. Judah and Bui (2025) argue that by fostering community pride and encouraging stakeholder collaboration, cultural festivals enable a unique tourism product that highlights the essence of local identities. This intersection of culture and tourism enriches visitor experiences and reinforces the socio-cultural fabric of the host communities, making cultural festivals indis-

pensable to developing a resilient and inclusive tourism economy (Lopes & Hiray, 2024). Cultural festivals enhance the tourism potential of destinations by showcasing their unique heritage and traditions. These events attract tourists seeking authentic experiences, thus fostering economic benefits and cultural exchange (Getz & Page, 2016). For instance, festivals like the Grahamstown National Arts Festival in South Africa bolster local economies while highlighting the nation's diverse cultural heritage (Iirmdu & Donaldson, 2024; Takeda, 2022). Cultural festivals function as significant attractions that enhance host communities' cultural and economic landscape. They contribute to destination branding, community engagement, and tourism growth (Judah & Bui, 2025; Richards & Palmer, 2010). However, the COVID-19 pandemic decimated the sector severely.

2.3. Impacts of COVID-19 on Cultural Events

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted cultural events worldwide, and South Africa was no exception (Bama & Nyikana, 2021). Travel restrictions and social distancing measures forced the cancellation or postponement of many events. As noted by Abrahams and Bama (2023), this disruption highlighted the vulnerability of the tourism [cultural] sector to global crises and underscored the need for resilience and adaptability in the face of unforeseen challenges. With government-imposed restrictions on gatherings, hallmark festivals such as the RRDC were cancelled, halting decades of uninterrupted tradition. According to Ndita and Bama (2024), these disruptions had far-reaching socio-cultural and economic consequences. Culturally, the inability to host events like the RRDC led to a loss of opportunities for communities to celebrate and preserve their heritage (Bama & Abrahams, 2023; Bob et al., 2019; Bui et al., 2020; Chu, 2025; Holtorf, 2018). Consequently, festival participants, including those like the young Zulu maidens, were deprived of a vital platform to express and reaffirm cultural identity, leading to a diminished sense of belonging and community pride. Additionally, the cancellation of these festivals disrupted intergenerational cultural transmission, threatening the continuity of traditional practices (Mandić et al., 2025; Nyikana & Bama, 2023; Traskevich & Fontanari, 2023). Economically, the impact was equally devastating. Cultural festivals, which are integral to South Africa's tourism industry, contribute significantly to local economies by attracting visitors, generating revenue, and supporting employment in related sectors (Acha-Anyi & Dlamini, 2019). The cancellation of the RRDC and similar events caused a loss of income for local businesses, vendors, and service providers who rely heavily on the influx of tourists during these festivals. The broader community experienced economic hardships, as festivals often serve as a critical economic driver in rural areas like KwaNongoma. The

pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of cultural tourism to global crises, highlighting the need for adaptive strategies to safeguard the socio-cultural and economic benefits these events bring to their host communities (Ndita & Bama, 2024). This underscores the importance of building resilience within the cultural tourism sector to withstand future disruptions. For recurring cultural festivals, this is especially important because resilience depends not only on surviving disruption, but also on institutional learning and strategic reconfiguration over time.

2.4. Resilience Strategies for Cultural Festivals and Events

The multifaceted trajectory of global tourism from the 1950s has witnessed ebbs and flows, characterized by relentless expansion yet punctuated by contractions during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic (Mandić et al., 2025; UNWTO, 2020). In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many cultural festivals embraced innovation to ensure their survival and continued relevance (Ali-Knight et al., 2023). Resilience refers to the capacity to absorb shocks, adapt practices, and transform governance arrangements. The pandemic underscored the need for resilience strategies to ensure the sustainability of cultural events such as the RRDC in KwaZulu-Natal. Furthermore, adaptive measures need to be put in place to address the disruptions caused by the pandemic and safeguard future cultural tourism. One key strategy is the diversification of event formats, including the integration of virtual components (Drummond et al., 2025; Drummond et al., 2021; Judah & Bui, 2025). By leveraging digital platforms, festivals can extend their reach to a broader audience while mitigating the risks associated with physical gatherings. Additionally, decentralising events across multiple smaller venues could reduce crowd densities, ensuring compliance with health protocols while preserving the integrity of cultural experiences. These adaptations enhance resilience and open new opportunities for engagement with global audiences.

Sharma et al. (2021) further note that the development and implementation of resilience strategies at all stages of the value chain could help to bring about a new global economic order with sustainable tourism, societal well-being, climate action and involved local communities not only in the immediate future but also in the long term. Given the necessity for sustainability and resilience in cultural tourism (Richards, 2021), resilience building requires stronger community involvement and stakeholder collaboration (Mandić et al., 2025). Cultural festivals like the RRDC are deeply rooted in local traditions and rely on the active participation of communities. Empowering these communities through education, capacity-building, and financial support ensures they can adapt and innovate during crises (Takeda, 2022). Furthermore, fostering partnerships between the public and private sec-

tors can provide critical resources and expertise to enhance preparedness for future disruptions (Ali-Knight et al., 2023; Bama et al., 2022; Daniels & Tichaawa, 2024). Developing comprehensive contingency plans and ensuring the inclusion of health and safety measures in festival planning are also crucial. These strategies address immediate challenges and establish a foundation for long-term sustainability, enabling cultural events to thrive in a post-pandemic era while maintaining their cultural significance and economic contributions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced tourist attitudes and behaviours, particularly concerning sustainability and crowding, which are critical for cultural tourism development (Drummond et al., 2025; Judah & Bui, 2025). Research indicates that initial concerns regarding sustainability and crowding heightened during the pandemic; these priorities diminished as restrictions eased, revealing a complex relationship between tourist preferences and sustainable practices (Fierro-Rubio et al., 2025; Mandić et al., 2025). Additionally, the resilience of cultural festivals has emerged as a vital component in fostering sustainable tourism, as these events can adapt to new consumer demands while promoting local culture and community engagement (Bama & Abrahams, 2023; Drummond et al., 2021; Fierro-Rubio et al., 2025). Understanding these dynamics is essential for stakeholders aiming to develop strategies that align with the evolving landscape of cultural tourism post-Covid (Fierro-Rubio et al., 2025).

2.5. Theoretical Framework: Resilience Theory

Resilience and adaptive capacity are regarded as key elements of the new approach, enabling the recovery of the cultural festivals sector. Daniels and Tichaawa (2024) note that in the case of COVID-19, resilience involves identifying critical elements to ensure recovery and the investment of all required efforts towards achieving them. As pointed out by Noorashid and Chin (2021) and Bama et al. (2022), recent theoretical frameworks highlight diversification, technological innovation, and community participation as pillars of recovery. Holtorf (2018) defines cultural resilience as the capability of a cultural system (consisting of cultural processes in relevant communities) to absorb adversity, deal with change and continue to develop. Cultural resilience thus implies both continuity and change: disturbances that can be absorbed are not an enemy to be avoided but a partner in the dance of cultural sustainability (Syafri et al., 2026). Resilience theory thereby offers a critical lens for understanding how cultural tourism and festivals can adapt to disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. At its core, resilience theory emphasises the capacity of systems, whether ecological, social, or economic, to absorb shocks, recover, and adapt to changing circumstances while maintaining their core func-

tions (Ali-Knight et al, 2023; Utami, 2020). According to Chu (2025), the resilience framework for cultural tourism requires flexibility, innovation, and community involvement in ensuring the sustainability of cultural events in the face of crises. Resilience of festivals like the RRDC, is therefore vital for cultural preservation and the socio-economic stability of host communities. Applying resilience theory to these events provides insights into strategies for managing vulnerabilities and fostering long-term sustainability.

According to Nyaupane et al. (2008), the broader tourism industry has an inherent adaptive capacity, which makes it capable of self-organising and learning from prior experiences, as well as being able to withstand disturbance, and then returning to its former state or to move on to an improved state (Nyaupane et al., 2008; Prayag, 2020). In the context of the RRDC, resilience theory highlights the need for proactive planning and adaptive management to address the challenges posed by crises like the COVID-19 pandemic (Bama et al., 2022; Chu, 2025; Ndita & Bama, 2024; Traskevich & Fontanari, 2023). This includes diversifying the formats of cultural festivals to incorporate virtual elements, decentralising events to reduce the risks associated with large gatherings, and engaging stakeholders in collaborative decision-making. Furthermore, building resilience involves leveraging the lessons learned during crises to develop robust contingency plans that ensure continuity and minimise future disruptions (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2024). By fostering adaptive capacities, cultural festivals can enhance their ability to recover from shocks while continuing to serve as platforms for cultural expression and economic development. Resilience theory thus provides a foundational framework for reimagining cultural tourism in a way that secures its viability in an uncertain and rapidly changing global landscape.

3. Study Context and Methodology

This study follows an interpretivist paradigm, relying on hermeneutic phenomenology (Fuster Guillen, 2019; Husein, 2018), which seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals within specific contexts. By selecting a purposive sample of respondents, the authors wanted to explore their interpretations of experiencing the impacts and implications of COVID-19 on the RRDC. The map in Fig. 1 shows the regions of the KwaZulu-Natal province.

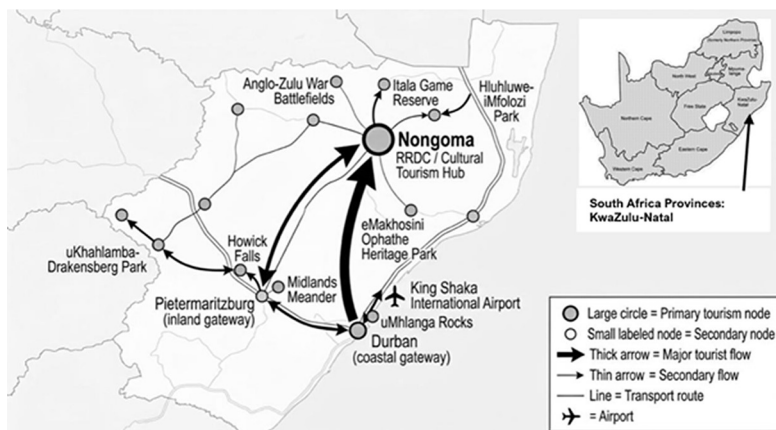


Fig. 1. Mobility corridors associated with the RRDC in the KwaZulu-Natal tourism system

Source: Author

Data for the study were collected between April and July 2021 during semi-structured interviews with 14 stakeholders, including event organisers, residents, and event participants, about their experiences of how the pandemic affected the RRDC. Since mobility at that time was restricted, the interviews were predominantly conducted remotely to adhere to COVID-19 regulations and transcripts were analysed using thematic coding (Ndaba, 2022). Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and focused on various aspects of the RRDC, the impacts of the pandemic and potential strategies for resilience building (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2022). As noted by Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007), data saturation is a key prerequisite for qualitative studies. While 20 stakeholders had been initially selected for interviewing based on the identified objectives, saturation was reached after 14 interviews (Guest et al., 2006; Maree, 2016). All interviews were recorded and supplemented with additional notes taken by the interviewer. Interview transcripts were uploaded into NVivo to facilitate data management, coding, and thematic interpretation (Bama & Ndaba, 2027; Iwu et al., 2023). Interview data were iteratively processed as part of thematic analysis, which revealed major themes supported by selected direct quotations.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Demographics of the respondents

Table 1. Respondents' demographic profiles

Respondent	Year of birth	Level of education	Occupation	Role in RRDC	Attendances at RRDC in the last 5 years before 2020
R001	1976	Diploma*	Speaker of the local municipality	Local organiser	1
R002	1997	Grade 12	University student	Maiden**	3
R003	2002	Grade 12	University student	Maiden	4
R004	1969	PhD	Senior Lecturer	Department of Arts & Culture	2
R005	1988	Diploma	Self-employed	Performer	5
R006	1985	Bachelor	Independent contractor	Journalist	3
R007	1980	Grade 12	Senior Ops. Manager	TV producer	5
R008	1956	PhD	Project manager	Leader of maidens	5
R009	1993	Master	Manager	Maiden	5
R010	1980	BTech	Supervisor	Local Resident	1
R011	1968	Diploma	Tourism Officer	Local Organiser	4
R012	1989	Master	Social Worker	Maiden	5
R013	1997	Grade 12	Undergraduate student	Maiden	5
R014	1982	Bachelor	Self-employed	Service provider	5

*A diploma in South Africa is a 3-year, NQF Level 6 tertiary qualification focusing on practical, industry-specific skills, often offered at universities of technology or colleges. It differs from a 3–4 year Bachelor's degree (NQF Level 7–8), which provides broader theoretical knowledge and qualifies you for postgraduate study (e.g., Honors, Master's

**Virgins that perform traditional rituals during the RRDC.

Source: Authors

4.2. Contextualisation of the Royal Reed Dance Ceremony

In the face of modernisation and globalisation, the survival of culture has become an important issue of contemporary discourse (Chu, 2025). Cultural festivals such as the RRDC have therefore been considered as platforms for the preservation and expression of cultural values. The word cloud in Figure 2 summarises interviewees' reasons for attending the RRDC festival, which provides the context for understanding its relevance of for cultural tourism resilience and the consequences of pandemic-related cancellations.

Zulu unity and purity, and its cancellation disrupted generational transmission of cultural values. In their opinion, the pandemic disrupted local traditional and cultural festivities and deprived participants of opportunities for cultural expression. Following the cancellation of the RRDC, the scale of festivities had to be drastically reduced over a period of two years (2020–21) to comply with regulations prohibiting events of more than 100 participants (Bama & Nyikana, 2021), which had negative consequences.

We go to the Reed Dance year-in-year-out to report on different stories [that are] happening in and around uMkhosi woMhlanga and to showcase the whole tradition. So, for the last two years, we have had nothing much to report because of COVID-19, so the virtual uMkhosi woMhlanga did not have that effect. uMkhosi woMhlanga is all about that live experience. We needed to get pictures of the maidens singing, pictures of ‘uMama’ and of Amabhuto (regiment), ... and that was all not there. I can safely say that we do not have any story to tell about the 2020/21 events. (R006)

One respondent born in the community of KwaNongoma and a supervisor at one of the local guesthouses said:

The RRDC promote the culture of the Zulu nation as the festival is one of the oldest festivals that has been happening for years, and it attracted people from around the country and tourists from all over the world. (R010)

The scale of the event appeals to locals and international tourists alike and the presence of so many people also opens up a number of entrepreneurial and business opportunities. Attendees can share a common experience and cultural values. Thus, the event does not just represent a fleeting and momentary get-together but is influential in guiding and offering the youth motivation for certain life choices and education that will sustain them throughout the year.

According to Bob et al. (2019), festivals and events are a major component of the cultural and creative sector, as they are associated with activities that promote cultural attributes and interests and help to market destinations. For Quinn (2019), festivals and events are a mainstay of urban and rural landscapes, featuring strongly in urban and rural development, regeneration and tourism policies. The RRDC has become a major fixture in the cultural calendar of the KZN, which is why the pandemic was a severe blow to tourism and cultural exchange in the province, as evidenced by the following comment:

The other impact of the cancellation of the RRDC is that we, as the University of KZN,

could not take the international students to go witness this ceremony and to see and learn about the beauty of the Zulu culture. (R006)

According to Zulu tradition, only virgins are permitted to participate in the RRDC (Mail & Guardian, 2010). The event is therefore important for girls wishing to signal their maidenhood and purity by attending and ensuring the success of this festival. One of the maidens described the effect of the cancellation as follows:

The cancellation of the RRDC made me to lose the sense of belonging, lose that spirit, and this is not just me but also my fellow maidens, because at the RRDC we are honoured, and not being able to attend the festival has killed this spirit. (R009)

These views support the findings reported by Bob et al. (2019) and Higgins-Desbiolles (2016), who note festivals can be tools for cultural maintenance and revival, cultural sharing and economic opportunities for indigenous communities. Similarly, Yolal et al. (2016) illustrate the impacts of festivals and events on local economic development and residents' well-being, noting that they also highlight the community, cultural and educational benefits of hosting such festivals and events. Festivals and events such as the RRDC are particularly important in South Africa, where colonial and apartheid structures and systems systematically undermined and marginalised traditional cultural practices and people's ability to explore cultural expressions and genres as well as leverage economic opportunities (Bob et al., 2019). According to Bakar and Rosbi (2022), psycho-social impacts are often aggravated by the sudden closure of businesses, which ultimately leads to job losses, leaving many with little or no economic means for survival.

4.3.2. Socio-Economic Effects of COVID-19 on the RRDC

The growing literature on the impacts of COVID-19 indicates that the pandemic created a global hiatus for festivals, given the requirement for whole countries to stay at home and avoid contact with other people (Ali-Knight et al., 2023; Nyikana & Bama, 2023; Traskevich & Fontanari, 2023). Tourism, both domestic and international, was affected, causing socio-economic downturns. These socio-economic impacts are addressed by one of the respondents:

The Reed Dance does not only bring local tourists, but it brings your international tourists, it brings delegates from other African countries, delegates from overseas, it's a national activity, something which could not be done over the two years of the pandemic. (R014)

When asked about how the cancellations affected the socio-economic value of the RRDC, one respondent said:

While hosting uMkhosi Womhlanga, many people are visiting this province ... this create business opportunities, but the person needs to be business-minded in order to benefit, as the community could sell traditional attire, sell food or rent out their guest-houses. Also, there are some job opportunities where people are becoming marshals, others are securities in the event, and others are cleaners throughout the event. However, the cancellation of the event due to COVID-19 meant that this could not happen, and local businesses suffered as a result. (R001)

Another respondent, who works with the SMMES and cooperatives that are service providers for the festival, noted the following:

The number of SMMES, cooperatives and tourism establishments that get established during the planning of the event each and every year shows that the Reed Dance was growing, meaning that the Reed Dance of 2018 is not like the Reed Dance in 2008. Because of the cancellation, now we see more businesses are closing, and more people are getting unemployed. (R011)

Similar problems are also mentioned in this comment:

With Nongoma being a deep rural area, we [have] got no mines and no other industry that are available in other areas. So, with the cancellation of the Reed Dance [RRDC], a time when people used to be exposed to employment opportunities because they are producing a lot of traditional clothing, this becomes a time when they are unable to showcase and market themselves. This caused a lot of poverty in the local community during that period. (R001)

Given the nature of the RRDC festival, community members were usually able to build and grow sustainable business ventures around the event. Some of the respondents, therefore, mentioned that the event had provided an opportunity and a niche in the market to prepare travel packages, with the main role of taking tourists to experience the Zulu culture during the RRDC. The cancellations thwarted these opportunities, as demonstrated by the following comments:

When I attended the Reed Dance for the first time, I noticed that tourists were not looked after [being catered for] ... I did my research and started the company, and the company has managed to create more sustainable business opportunities for the resi-

dents of KwaNongoma. The company had grown that it has [organised] tours throughout the year and had exclusive rights to take people to the Royal palaces, not only to the Enyokeni Palace, which is the main palace for the Reed Dance, but also other palaces. But with COVID-19, these activities had to be suspended. My main source of livelihood was therefore seriously affected. (R014)

I made sure that I employed local people as opposed to coming with people from another town. So, I sourced employment locally and this brings money to the community and generates socio-economic development because there are also accommodation facilities that get booked. Tour guides get booked because people must go on tours pre- and post- the Reed Dance. It also generates economic boost for local woman that do craft, that's sold in high numbers. ... the nice thing about tourism is that it's not restricted to one thing. For every event there is transport needed, accommodation needed and everything, so it speaks volume in terms of local economic development for Nongoma. However, with the restrictions and the cancellation of the RRDC, these opportunities disappeared overnight. (R014)

The cancellation of the RRDC collapsed the economy because people rely on the event to trade ... Financially, the pandemic was a disaster because everything had to be put on hold. People who owned property in KwaNongoma were even prepared to sell the properties. Also, there are cooperatives that used to bid so that they could cook during the Reed Dance; they also did not get that opportunity. (R001)

The cancellation of the RRDC due to the COVID-19 was devastating in a sense that people could not be employed as they were sitting at home and there was nothing to do.... The cancellation highly impacted the local people in the area of Nongoma because they are highly dependent on the Reed Dance. (R014)

The cancellation of the RRDC was stressful as there were lost opportunities to trade for the SMMES and the level of unemployment was increasing in the county. Nongoma was no exception. (R011)

As one who is responsible of organising the event at the local level, some of the service providers were flocking into my office looking for answers to what in the municipality doing about the cancellation of the festival. uMkhosi Womhlanga bring many people to the area for KwaNongoma, so most for our people get job opportunities some even get time to cater for those people driving to Nongoma and also the tourist uses the local accommodation. (R012)

Because of the restrictions, people cannot move as they would like. Therefore, ... We, as the business, were not getting any bookings during this time of the COVID-19 and we mostly have guests all year around such as government officials, construction workers or just individuals attending funerals, weddings or church services. (R010)

In addition to the loss of income and having to use personal savings to survive the crisis, some business owners had to sell personal assets like vehicles and other property:

I have personally lost income because there were no tourists to take around. I had to find alternative ways to live; it was very bad. I also had to sell my car because I could not maintain it anymore and needed the money. (R009)

Given the importance of the RRCD, its cancellation triggered a collapse of the economy of KwaNongoma, which suffered the loss of many jobs created and business opportunities. The case of the RRCD is another example of the pandemic's impacts on the festival and events sector globally (Bakar & Rosbi, 2022; Roy, 2020).

4.4. Resilience Strategies for the RRDC

Festivals can be resilient, and those experiencing a redevelopment or hiatus can survive substantial change, including a new venue, destination, or even skipping one or two iterations but recovering (Ali-Knight et al., 2023). Given the factors identified above, various tourism stakeholders try to build resilience and make festivals such as the RRDC sustainable even in the case of health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Noorashid & Chin, 2021). The interviewees highlighted the importance of diversification, such as incorporating virtual components and spreading the festival across multiple venues to minimise risk.

In the context of any pandemic, the event organisers could split up the festival into the other palaces in KwaNongoma. In this way more service providers could benefit, and this will ensure that the community of KwaNongoma benefits from this festival ... and the government must hire local service providers, meaning that the government must first hire within the local community before looking for other service providers. (R010)

The best way to keep the spirit alive [in the case of suspension or cancellation] is by organising a series of camps across provinces because the COVID-19 regulation clearly states that no big events must be hosted. So, they could organise camps for KZN maidens, a camp for Gauteng maidens, and a camp for the Eastern Cape maidens etc. As this

will help to keep the spirit alive and for us to continue to come together and celebrate our culture. (R009)

Since the RRDC is hosted in Nongoma, the only community in South Africa with five palaces [royal households], some respondents indicated that festivities could be hosted at different palaces to avoid overcrowding, which was prohibited during the pandemic.

So, what I think could be done is to celebrate maidenhood in the place that you reside in, like for us, I'm quite fortunate that where I am, we did celebrate Umkhosi Ka Nomkhubulwane. So, another community that has maidens could do something like that, and the Department of Arts and Culture could bring someone who will represent the Royal house. So, to get the excitement going for the maidens ... Also, there is one thing I need to point out that by not being motivated we have a lot of maidens who just lose the spirit. (R012)

As Ndita and Bama (2024) note, during the pandemic authorities introduced several measures to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. In addition, to improve the future resilience of the RRDC, some participants proposed the development of emergency plans.

I will mention measures like social distancing, secondly wearing a mask, and sanitising. yes, so far, that is some of the stuff I can mention ... event organisers should create an emergency plan and have a plan for consideration prior to events such as the pandemic ... For instance, they would have said, okay, so if ever there is another pandemic that is contagious... provinces should take turns in coming to the Reed Dance in reduced numbers. That would have been helpful in this situation because even during the pandemic we would have been able to go to the RRDC. (R002)

Others suggested that in the case of partial restrictions, mini versions of the event could be hosted across different provinces throughout the event month, to minimise chances of exposure.

So instead of hosting one uMkhosi woMhlanga [RRDC] in KwaNongoma, if we are still in a pandemic and people's lives are at risk. I would then suggest that each province has its own uMkhosi woMhlanga where iSilo Samabandla onke (king) and the queens will be the ones who a visiting the people. I think this could be a birth of something else and it could be called something else, but which is like a lower hanging fruit of uMkhosi WoMhlanga. So, these mini uMkhosi woMhlanga will be in commemoration of the main uMkhosi woMhlanga. (R006)

The respondents also highlighted the importance of credible health-secure protocols and clear public communication during periods of crisis. Given the negative press and conspiracy theories that accompanied the vaccine rollout programmes, many people either reluctantly received the vaccines or were adamant and rejected them. The interviewees emphasised the need for integrated preparedness mechanisms, including transparent health messaging, crowd-management procedures, sanitisation, masking where necessary, and context-sensitive communication capable of building public confidence in rural communities. In this respect, the empirical concern was less about vaccination alone than about the broader need for trusted health governance and risk communication capable of supporting event continuity under uncertain conditions. In this regard, one of the respondents (R002) stated that:

... So, as much as I do not want to say that I'm anti-vaccine, ... But I feel like if we had more information on the vaccine, more transparency about the vaccine. Maybe I would have been able to come up with a solid answer ... (R002)

Not just vaccination only could solve this thing for COVID-19; this relays on us as people. We need to obey the regulations like wearing the masks, sanitising and doing all those things that can protect them from getting infected. Yes, the vaccination can solve a certain portion, but we also need to be dedicated to obeying the regulations. (R011)

To remain resilient, some community members, especially those in auxiliary industries, which are linked to the festival, such as those supplying traditional attire, crafts, and transportation, were encouraged to find alternative platforms to market their businesses, such as online platforms, in order not to be solely reliant on the local market around the event. Being innovative through technology adoption as a resilience factor was one of the responses to the COVID-19 impact, used by SMMES to ensure that business opportunities continue, while the event organisers used technology to host a virtual celebration.

As can be seen, the stakeholders' responses went beyond immediate crisis-response needs and exemplified longer-term adaptive thinking. During the crisis period, the concern centred on ensuring continuity of operation under emergency restrictions, e.g. reduced gatherings, decentralised celebration formats, and basic health protections. In the longer term, however, stakeholders pointed towards a more durable reconfiguration of festival management based on distributed hosting, stronger community inclusion, digital support mechanisms, and embedded contingency planning. The findings therefore suggest that resilience should be understood not as a single response, but as a phased process of adjustment, learning, and institutional redesign.

The RRDC case confirms that festival resilience is cultural before it is commercial. Exclusive focus on economic recovery will not restore its full significance unless the cultural dimension is protected. Decentralised mini-ceremonies could reduce health risk while sustaining participation. Digital platforms can extend reach but cannot replace embodied experience; they should function as complements. Governance fragmentation emerged as a barrier. A designated lead agency with both heritage and tourism mandates is required. Equally, safety nets for informal actors are essential to prevent erosion of community support.

4.5. Resilience Strategies for Recurring Cultural Events

The RRDC case shows that resilience must be understood as a layered set of adaptive strategies that protect cultural continuity, local livelihoods, and public confidence during periods of disruption. The views expressed during the interviews can be summarized in the form of three mutually reinforcing resilience pillars: diversification, community ownership, and risk-sensitive planning. These pillars consolidate the proposed strategies and align them with broader resilience concerns of enabling cultural festivals to absorb shocks, adapt operationally, and retain their core socio-cultural function.

The proposed strategies are not isolated interventions, but mutually connected resilience pathways. Diversification addresses the operational vulnerability of depending on a single large-scale annual gathering. In the RRDC context, this includes decentralised ceremonies, hybrid participation, and expanded cultural tourism products that can sustain local economic activity beyond the main festival period. Community co-ownership responds to the socio-economic dependence of local actors on the festival by prioritising local service providers, informal traders, cultural custodians, and small enterprises in festival planning and recovery processes. Risk-sensitive planning focuses on the institutionalisation of preparedness through health-secure protocols, contingency planning, transparent communication, and coordinated stakeholder governance. Table 2 summarises the proposed resilience strategies, their core characteristics, and their practical implications for the RRDC and comparable recurring cultural festivals.

Table 2. Proposed resilience strategies for the RRDC and comparable cultural festivals

Resilience pillar	Proposed strategy	Key Characteristics	Practical implications
Diversification	Diversified event formats	Introducing hybrid components, limited livestreaming, recorded cultural segments, and alternative participation channels	Enables broader participation during disruptions while recognising that digital formats should complement, not replace, embodied cultural experience
	Decentralised festival activities	Host smaller ceremonies across multiple palaces, provinces, or local cultural sites, reduce crowd concentration	Sustains ritual participation while reducing health and crowding risks during crises
	Diversified tourism products and income streams	Develop year-round cultural tourism packages, guided palace visits, craft markets, educational tours, and pre- and post-event tourism.	Reduces overdependence on a single annual festival and supports local livelihoods beyond the main event period
Community co-ownership	Strengthening community involvement	Prioritise local service providers, co-operatives, craft producers, performers, accommodation providers, and informal traders	Ensures that resilience planning benefits the host community and protects the local economic value chain.
	Stakeholder collaboration and governance coordination	Build stronger coordination between traditional leadership, municipalities, tourism authorities, cultural departments, private operators, and community representatives	Reduces fragmented decision-making and creates clearer institutional responsibility for crisis preparedness and recovery
	Capacity building and local support	Provide training in event safety, digital marketing, crisis response, tourism product development, and small-business continuity planning.	Enhances adaptive capacity of local actors who depend on the festival for cultural and economic participation
Risk-sensitive planning	Health and safety protocols	Implement crowd control, sanitization, mask-use where required, participant limits, and compliance with public health regulations	Allows festival to continue in modified format when full-scale gatherings are not possible
	Contingency and emergency planning	Develop crisis-response plans, flexible event models, alternative venues, communication procedures, and phased reopening options	Moves the festival from reactive cancellation towards planned adaptation under future disruptions
	Communication and trust-building	Use transparent communication, health awareness campaigns, culturally appropriate messaging, and community-based information channels	Rebuilds confidence among participants, visitors, organisers, and host communities during and after crises.
	Use of technology for promotion and continuity	Use digital platforms for communication, promotion, online marketing of crafts and services, and selective virtual engagement	Supports continuity, market access, and visibility without undermining the cultural authenticity of the ceremony.

Source: Based on opinions collected during the interviews

Importantly, resilience must remain culturally grounded. As such, resilience planning should protect the ritual integrity of the event while creating flexible mechanisms for adaptation during future crises. This means that post-pandemic recovery should not be limited to reopening the festival, but should involve re-organising its governance, delivery formats, community benefits, and risk-management systems in ways that safeguard both heritage value and local livelihoods.

5. Conclusions and Future Research Directions

The cancellation of the RRDC revealed how closely culture, identity and livelihoods are intertwined. Recovery requires more than reopening; it demands redesign of governance, inclusion of informal actors, and preparation for future shocks. The study therefore proposes a resilience framework organised around three core pillars: diversification, community co-ownership, and risk-sensitive planning, which can provide organisers with critical insights about ways of fostering cultural festival management, adaptation strategies for resilience, community engagement, and offering authentic cultural experiences to ensure future cultural festival sustainability. The study demonstrates that recurring cultural festivals in rural tourism contexts require a resilience model that is socially grounded and culturally sensitive. One limitation of the study is the fact it deals with a single community of KZN and a single cultural event. The inclusion of more cultural events from the province or in the country as a whole could help to identify specific contextual challenges that could contribute to a more comprehensive resilience framework.

While there are studies on the impact of the pandemic on the cultural festivals sector, more research is required to understand the development of resilience and adaptive capacity strategies in the sector, especially considering the vulnerability of the tourism industry in general, and the sector in particular. In addition, given that the COVID-19 regulations were lifted in South Africa in June 2022, it would be useful to investigate the present situation of the RRDC and assess its post-COVID growth or decline of the festival, while also establishing the current resilience of the event.

CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

HKNB: conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, funding acquisition, investigation, methodology, project administration, resources, software, supervision, validation, visualization, writing—original draft, writing—review & editing; **ZN:** conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, project administration, resources, writing—original draft.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

References

- Abrahams, E., & Bama, H.K.N. (2023). Study abroad programmes as an edutourism segment for South African universities. *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 51(4spl), 1775–1785. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.514spl18-1173>
- Acha-Anyi, P.N., & Dlamini, N.N. (2019). Festival tourism as an instrument of sustainable livelihood in Eswatini. *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 26(3), 849–860. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.26314-402>
- Agbabiaka, H.I., Omoike, A.A., & Omisore, E.O. (2017). Factors influencing patronage of traditional festivals in Sub-Saharan Africa. *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, 3(4), 363–381. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-07-2017-0038>
- Ahmed, Q.A., & Memish, Z.A. (2020). The cancellation of mass gatherings (MGs)? Decision making in the time of COVID-19. *Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease*, 34, 101631. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmaid.2020.101631>
- Ali-Knight, J., Kerr, G., Stewart, H., & Holmes, K. (2023). Festival hiatus, resilience and innovation during COVID-19: learnings from the Edinburgh festivals. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 14(2), 170–188. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-08-2022-0068>
- Bakar, N.A., & Rosbi, S. (2022). Effect of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) to Airlines Industry. *Journal of Economics and Finance*, 13(2), 35–44. <https://doi.org/10.9790/5933-1302033544>
- Bama, H. K. N., & Abrahams, E. (2023). Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic: challenges and prospects for edutourism demand in South Africa. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 12(3), 883–898.
- Bama, H.K.N. & Ndaba, Z.F. (2027). Cultural festivals as drivers of cultural tourism development in South Africa: stakeholder perspectives from the Royal Reed Dance. *Modern Geografía*, 22(1) 91–114. <https://doi.org/10.15170/MG.2027.22.01.05>
- Bama, H.K.N., & Nyikana, S. (2021). The effects of COVID-19 on future domestic travel intentions in South Africa: a stakeholder perspective. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 10(1), 179–193. <https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720-94>
- Bama H.K.N., Nyathela-Sunday, T., & Makuzva, W. (2022). What innovations would enable the tourism and hospitality industry in Africa to rebuild? *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 14(5), 557–564. <https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-05-2022-0058>
- Bob, U., Swart, K., Gounden, R., Gumede, A., & Nkambule, S. (2019). Socio-economic impacts of festivals and events: A case study of the Mzansi Golden Economy Programme in South Africa. *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 27(4), 1236–1250. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.27410-429>
- Bonet, L., & Negrier, E. (2018) The participative turn in cultural policy: paradigms, models, contexts. *Poetics*, 66, 64–73. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2018.02.006>
- Bowdin, G.A.J, Allen, J., O'Toole, W., Harris, R., & McDonnell, I. (2006). *Events Management*. 2nd ed. Butterworth Heinemann.
- Bui, H.T., Jones, T.E., Weaver, D.B., & Le, A. (2020). The adaptive resilience of living cultural heritage in a tourism destination. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 28(7), 1022–1040. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1717503>
- Chu, G. (2025). Cultural identity and community resilience: The role of ethnic dance in maintaining rural traditions and history. *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry*, 25(3), 558–569. <https://www.maajournal.com/index.php/maa/article/view/1891>
- Creswell, J.W., & Plano-Clark, V.L. (2007). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. SAGE.
- Cunningham, S., & Swift, A. (2019). Creative industries around the world. In S. Cunningham, & T. Flew (eds.), *A research agenda for creative industries* (pp. 146–163). Edward Elgar.

- Daniels, T., & Tichaawa, T. M. (2024). The path to resilience in sport event tourism: South African stakeholder responses to a crisis. *Development Southern Africa*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2024.2350383>
- Dewi, L. (2020). Resilience ecotourism in Papua amid COVID-19 pandemic. *E-Journal of Tourism*, 7(2), 250–264. <https://doi.org/10.24922/eot.v7i2.61831>
- Drummond, J., Snowball, J., Antrobus, G., & Drummond, F. (2021). The Role of Cultural Festivals in Regional Economic Development: A Case Study of Mahika Mahikeng. In K. Scherf (ed.), *Creative Tourism in Smaller Communities Place, Culture, and Local Representation* (pp. 79–107). University of Calgary Press.
- Drummond, F.J., Snowball, J.D., Tarentaal, D., Comunian, R., & Gross, J. (2025). Mapping festival adaptations to COVID-19: A quantitative review. *African Journal of Creative Economy*, 2(1), 16. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajce.v2i1.16>
- Fierro-Rubio, P., Sanz-Blas, S., & Buzova, D. (2025). Reorienting DMO efforts to improve sustainability and reduce the perceived crowding of tourists visiting a destination. *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, 22(1), 111–133. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12208-024-00421-w>
- Finkel, R., & Platt, L. (2020). Cultural festivals and the city. *Geography Compass*, 14(9), e12498. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12498>
- Fuster Guillen, D.E. (2019). Qualitative research: Hermeneutical phenomenological method. *Journal of Educational Psychology-Propositos y Representaciones*, 7(1), 217–229.
- Getz, D., & Page, S.J. (2019). *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Getz, D., & Page, S.J. (2016). Progress and prospects for event tourism research. *Tourism Management*, 52(4), 593–631. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.03.007>
- Global Destination Sustainability Index. (2017). *Sustainable destinations management trends and insights: A path to a brighter future*. Hämtad från.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18, 59–82. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Hemmonsby, J., Abrahams, E., Bama, H.K.N., & Muresherwa, G. (2024). The Socio-economic impact of a major cultural event in Cape Town during and post-pandemic era. *International Conference on Tourism Research*, 7(1), 112–121. <https://doi.org/10.34190/ictcr.7.1.2005>
- Higgins-Desbiolles, F. (2016). Sustaining spirit: A review and analysis of an urban Indigenous Australian cultural festival. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 24(8–9), 1280–1297. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2016.1149184>
- Holtorf, C. (2018). Embracing change: how cultural resilience is increased through cultural heritage. *World Archaeology*, 50(4), 639–650. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.2018.1510340>
- Husein, U.M. (2018). A phenomenological study of Arbaeen foot pilgrimage in Iraq. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 26, 9–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.11.015>
- Iirmdu, T.O., & Donaldson, R. (2024). Tourists' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in Plateau State, Nigeria: An empirical evaluation using chaos theory. *Modern Geografía*, 19(4). <https://doi.org/10.15170/MG.2024.19.04.03>
- Iwu, C.G., Bama, H.K.N., Makoza, F., Ogunlela, O., & Nchu, R.M. (2023). Managing crisis: Perceptions of academics towards remote operations during the outbreak of COVID-19. *Journal of Contemporary Management*, 20(1), 536–559. <https://doi.org/10.35683/jcman1027.207>
- Judah, A.E., & Bui, H.T. (2025). Do cultural festivals contribute to community resilience? Evidence from Nigeria's Calabar Carnival. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2025.2561878>
- Kourkouridis, D., Frangopoulos, Y., & Kapitsinis, N. (2023). Socio-economic effects of trade fairs on host cities from a citizens' perspective: The case of Thessaloniki, Greece. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 14(1), 113–133. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-10-2022-0078>

- Kristiana, Y., Pramono, R., & Brian, R. (2021). Adaptation strategy of tourism industry stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic: A case study in Indonesia. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 8(4), 213–223.
- Lekgau, R.J., & Tichaawa, T.M. (2021). Adaptive strategies employed by the MICE sector in response to COVID-19. *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 38(4), 1203–1210. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.38427-761>
- Liedemann, S.C., Bama, H.K.N., & Muresherwa, G. (2022). Effects of COVID-19 on the event tourism sector: Views of South African business event stakeholders. In *Proceedings of the Social Sciences International Research Conference (SSIRC2022)*. Hosted by the North West University, South Africa and the Open University Mauritius, and held at the Inter-Continental Resort Balaclava Fort, Mauritius.
- Lopes, R., & Hiray, A. (2024). Impacts of cultural events and festivals on cultural tourism. *Journal of Advanced Zoology*, 45(S-4), 174–179. <https://doi.org/10.53555/jaz.v45iS4.4177>
- Mail & Guardian. (2010). *Reed Dance keeps traditions alive*. <https://mg.co.za/article/2010-09-22-reed-dance-keeps-traditions-alive/>
- Mandić, A., Petrić, L., & Pivčević, S. (2025). Harmonizing sustainability and resilience in post-crisis cultural tourism: Stakeholder insights from the split metropolitan area living lab. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 55, 101331. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2024.101331>
- Maree, K. (2016). *First Step in Research*. 2nd ed. Van Schaik.
- Mohanty, P., Hassan, A., & Ekis, E. (2020). Augmented reality for relaunching tourism post-COVID-19: socially distant, virtually connected. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 12(6), 753–760. <https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-07-2020-0073>
- Mxunyelwa, S., & Tshetu, L. (2018). Festivals as a niche for local economic development (LED): A case study of the East London Port Festival (ELPF), Eastern Cape, South Africa. *African Journal of Hospitality Tourism and Leisure*, 7(3), 1–14.
- Mzobe, S.C., & Nyikana, S. (2024). Religious tourism and resilience building: An overview of impacts and recovery in South Africa. *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 56(4), 1524–1532. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.56409-1323>
- Ndaba, Z.F. (2022). *The COVID-19 pandemic and cultural event(s) cancellation in South Africa: views of the Royal Reed Dance in KwaNongoma, KwaZulu-Natal*. Masters Dissertation, Cape Peninsula University of Technology.
- Ndita, A., & Bama, H.K.N. (2024). Resilience and Adaptation Strategies for the Franschhoek Rond and Bont Community-based Tourism Route during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Studia Periegetica*, 45(1), 143–159. <https://doi.org/10.58683/sp.1979>
- Nkosi, G.S. (2019). The role of uMkhosi WoMhlanga (Reed Dance) and Indoni cultural events through the eyes of young women in KwaZulu-Natal: A cultural tourism approach. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 8(2), 1–12.
- Noorashid, N., & Chin, W.L. (2021). Coping with COVID-19: The resilience and transformation of community-based tourism in Brunei Darussalam. *Sustainability*, 13, 8618. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13158618>
- Ntounis, N., Parker, C., Skinner, H., Steadman, C., & Warnaby, G. (2022). Tourism and Hospitality industry resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic: Evidence from England. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 25(1), 46–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2021.1883556>
- Nyaupane, G.P., Poudel, S., & Timothy, D.J. (2008). Assessing the sustainability of tourism systems: A social-ecological approach. *Tourism Review International*, 22(1), 49–66. <https://doi.org/10.3727/154427218X15202734130440>
- Nyikana, S., & Bama, H.K.N. (2023). Domestic tourism as a recovery strategy in the face of COVID-19: Insights from South Africa. *Acta Commercii*, 23(1), a1066. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ac.v23i1.1066>
- Perić, M., & Vitezić, V. (2019). Socio-economic impacts of event failure: the case of a cancelled international cycling race. *Sustainability*, 11(10), 5028. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11185028>

- Prayag, G. (2020). Time for reset. COVID-19 and tourism resilience. *Tourism Review International*, 24(2/3), 179–184. <https://doi.org/10.3727/154427220x15926147793595>
- Quinn, B. (2019). A comment on: Arts festivals, urban tourism and cultural policy. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 11(sup1), s8-s12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2010.512207>
- Richards, G. (2021). *Rethinking Cultural Tourism*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781789905441>
- Richards, G., & Palmer, R. (2010). Managing and organising the eventful city. In *Eventful Cities: Cultural Management and Urban Revitalisation* (pp.171–202). Routledge.
- Rwigema, P.C., & Celestin, R.P. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic to meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) tourism in Rwanda. *The Strategic Journal of Business and Change Management*, 7(3), 395–409. <https://doi.org/10.61426/sjbcm.v7i3.1679>
- Rogerson, J.M. (2021). Tourism business responses to South Africa's COVID-19 pandemic emergency. *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 35(2), 338–347. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.35211-657>
- Rogerson, C.M., & Rogerson, J.M. (2021). African tourism in uncertain times: COVID-19 research progress. *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 38(4), 1026–1032. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.38406-740>
- Rogerson, C.M., & Rogerson, J.M. (2022). The first-round impacts of COVID-19 for rural tourism in South Africa. *Studia Periegetica*, 37, 63–86. <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0015.8579>
- Roy, A. (2020). The pandemic is a portal. *Financial Times*, 3(4), 1–12. <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>
- Saayman, M., & Rossouw, R. (2011). The significance of festivals to regional economies: measuring the economic value of the Grahamstown National Arts Festival in South Africa. *Tourism Economics*, 17(3), 603–624. <https://doi.org/10.5367/te.2011.0049>
- Salvador, E., Castro-Martínez, E., Botella-Nicolás, A.M., & Isusi-Fagoaga, R. (2022). The importance of research on cultural festivals. *International Journal of Arts Management*, 24(2), 4–12.
- Scholtz, M., Viviers, P.A., & Maputsoe, L. (2019). Understanding the residents' social impact perceptions of an African Cultural Festival: The case of Macufe. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 17(2), 166–185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2018.1426592>
- Sharma, G.D., Thomas, A., & Paul, J. (2021). Reviving tourism industry post- COVID-19: A resilience-based framework. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 37, 100786. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2020.100786>
- Snowball, J.D., & Antrobus, G.G. (2020). Festival value in multicultural contexts: City festivals in South Africa. *Tourism Economics*, 27(6), 1256–1275. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354816620932808>
- Snowball, J., Tarentaal, D., Drummond, F., Comunian, R., & Gross, J. (2023). Online festival experiences, eventscapes and cultural value: Insights on the dilemmas faced by two South African festivals during COVID-19. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2023.2273546>
- South African Tourism (SAT). (2021). *Explore a vivid cultural heritage-cultural tourism in South Africa*. <https://www.southafrica.net/gl/en/travel/article/explore-a-vivid-cultural-heritage-cultural-tourism-in-south-africa>
- Swart, K., & Maralack, D. (2020). COVID-19 and the cancellation of the 2020 Two Oceans Marathon, Cape Town, South Africa. *Sport in Society*, 23(11), 1736–1752. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2020.1805900>
- Syafrini, D., Amelia, L., Sasmita, S., Susilawati, N., Permata, B.D., Saputri, F., Yolanda, M.N., & Sari, M.D. (2026). Transforming traditional villages into cultural heritage tourism destinations: Insights from the Minangkabau community in Indonesia. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 13, 102475.

- Takeda, S. (2022). Continuation of Festivals and Community Resilience during COVID-19: The Case of Nagahama Hikiyama Festival in Shiga Prefecture, Japan. *Japanese Journal of Sociology*, 31(1), 56–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijjs.12132>
- Traskevich, A., & Fontanari, M. (2023). Tourism potentials in post-COVID19: The concept of destination resilience for advanced sustainable management in tourism. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 20(1), 12–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2021.1894599>
- UNWTO. (2020). *World tourism barometer*. <https://www.unwto.org/world-tourism-barometer-n18-january-2020>
- Utami, W. (2020). Resilience of cultural landscape heritage study in spatial tourism context. In *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 402(1), 012007. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/402/1/012007>
- Yolal, M., Gursoy, D., Uysal, M., Kim, H.L., & Karacaoğlu, S. (2016). Impacts of festivals and events on residents' well-being. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 61, 1–18. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.annals.2016.07.008>

Strategie odporności w turystyce festiwalu kulturalnych na przykładzie ceremonii Royal Reed Dance w RPA

Streszczenie. Pandemia COVID-19 ujawniła strukturalne słabości lokalnych systemów turystyki kulturalnej. Niniejsze badanie analizuje opinie różnych interesariuszy na temat społeczno-kulturowych i społeczno-ekonomicznych skutków odwołania corocznej ceremonii Royal Reed Dance w KwaNongoma w prowincji KwaZulu-Natal w RPA oraz proponuje strategie mogące poprawić odporność cyklicznych wydarzeń tego typu. W ramach hermeneutyczno-fenomenologicznego podejścia badawczego przeprowadzono czternaście wywiadów z organizatorami, uczestniczkami, mieszkańcami i dostawcami usług na potrzeby ceremonii. Dane poddano analizie tematycznej w programie NVivo. Z analizy wynika, że odwołanie ceremonii zakłóciło transmisję kulturową, osłabiło poczucie tożsamości społecznej i pozbawiło lokalne społeczności sezonowych źródeł dochodu. Respondenci wskazali trzy powiązane ze sobą wymiary odporności istotne dla funkcjonowania cyklicznych festiwali kulturalnych: dywersyfikację formatów wydarzeń i źródeł dochodu, współodpowiedzialność społeczności za planowanie i korzyści oraz planowanie uwzględniające ryzyko poprzez protokoły zdrowotne, systemy awaryjne, koordynację interesariuszy i transparentną komunikację. Badanie stanowi wkład w badania dotyczące odporności w turystyce eventowej z perspektywy krajów rozwijających się, pokazując, jak festiwale osadzone w kulturze lokalnej mogą poprawić swoją gotowość na przyszłe kryzysy, aby chronić swoje dziedzictwo i lokalne źródła dochodów.

Słowa kluczowe: zdolność adaptacyjna, turystyka festiwalowa, COVID-19, odporność, rozwój turystyki



Copyright and license. This article is published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution — NoDerivates 4.0 International (CC BY-ND 4.0) License, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/>