



Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

**EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON THE EVENT TOURISM SECTOR: VIEWS OF SOUTH
AFRICAN BUSINESS EVENTS STAKEHOLDERS**

by

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I, Shanté Carly Liedemann, declare that the contents of this dissertation/thesis represent my own unaided work and that the dissertation has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. While this work has not been submitted as part of a degree at another institution, it has informed the production of the following article:

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ABSTRACT

The current study explores both the practical and feasible strategies aimed at alleviating the identified effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector in South Africa. Pandemic-induced health and safety, as well as mobility-restricting regulations, grounded the business events sector and presented unprecedented challenges. The gradual easing of restrictions and reopening of the business events sector has witnessed a realignment of approaches to hosting events. This has necessitated the need to understand the new context, devise recovery and resilience strategies, and re-imagining business events in the post-COVID-19 era. The study adopted a qualitative research approach whereby 14 South African key resource persons from business events organisations, event organisers, and event managers were purposively selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. The data were transcribed and subjected to ATLAS.ti software, where the emerging themes were analysed and compared between participants. Business events stakeholders highlighted business closures, job losses, reliance on relief funding, cancellations and postponements leading to unanticipated costs, as initial effects of the induced regulations. Others, however, had to restructure how events were planned, managed, and consumed by moving to virtual and hybrid options. Technology played a critical role in such circumstances. The study also revealed that collaboration and mutually beneficial synergies amongst business event stakeholders were viable strategies to remain relevant in challenging environments. The study highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration and the need for resilience-building strategies. The ability to adapt quickly to the changing environmental conditions, such as embracing technological innovations in event production, management, and consumption, highlighted the need for long-term strategy responses intended to move the sector from mitigation to resilience-focused options.

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DEDICATION

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Terms/Abbreviations	Definition/Explanation
CoCT	City of Cape Town
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
DEAT	Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
EMBOK	Event Management Body of Knowledge
ICCA	The International Congress and Conventions Association
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAT	South African Tourism
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRD	Social Relief of Distress
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WTO	World Tourism Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak which originated in Wuhan China in 2019 spread drastically throughout the world (Karabulut et al., 2020). This outbreak was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation due to the vast increase in contamination and mortality rates (Karabulut et al., 2020). This has led to the South African government implementing the necessary steps to curb the spread of the virus, namely, travel restrictions, closure of schools and a nationwide lockdown to name but a few (Karabulut et al., 2020). As a result of the pandemic, most businesses have been affected, and still more are to be affected, specifically the tourism and events sector due to the travel prohibitions, border closure and public gathering restrictions (World Health Organization, 2020). The future of South Africa's business events sector revival remains exceedingly tentative, as the coronavirus (COVID-19) is still severely affecting the sector (World Health Organization, 2020). The events industry has become recognised as an essential and considerably large fragment of tourism growth and marketing strategies for destinations (Tassiopoulos, 2010:5). Bowdin et al. (2011:7) added to this by stating that events have also become important as governments of various countries support and encourage events as part of a tactic for economic expansion and nation-building.

Events have played and continue to play a substantial part in numerous nations' cultures, fulfilling social and cultural requirements and often attracting the attention of tourists from various countries (Machisa et al., 2018; Raj et al., 2009:2). This is particularly evident when tourists are attracted to a country, region or destination with the specific aim of consuming event-specific goods, thus creating a rise in tourism (Machisa et al., 2018; Muresherwa et al., 2017; Raj et al., 2009:2). Taking into consideration possible long-term repercussions of the outbreak, many countries are developing procedures that will shape a resilient tourism sector in the post-COVID-19 world (OECD, 2020). This involves reconsidering the ultimate future of tourism and the various ways in which the sector operates, particularly being a step above the digital curve and in support of creating a low carbon footprint (OECD, 2020). The South African government has taken remarkable and instant action in order to re-establish the sector, while also striving to protect various occupations and companies (OECD, 2020).

1.2. Statement of the research problem

The tourism and business events sector is one of the sectors which suffered the most due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the forecast for recovery is particularly indeterminate. In the year 2020, a decline of 80% was estimated in the international tourism sector where national tourism is the driving force for the short-term reclamation (WTTC, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic caused flight restrictions, the movement of people was restricted, and many countries were in

lockdown, and a large number of people were retrenched in almost all sectors. Within the business events sector, loss of revenue occurred and losses with regards to cancelling of service provider contracts or contract amendments were made (Swart & Maralack, 2020). Apart from this, the events business sector was greatly affected as many businesses halted operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in multiple negative aspects including leaving the business events sector in a very vulnerable state (Li et al., 2020:1).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2020), it is estimated that approximately 60% of occupations within the tourism industry are in jeopardy throughout the world, with a probable loss of 197.5 million jobs. It is evident that some degree of research has been conducted to determine the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector throughout the world. The previous research conducted and referred to in this study includes that conducted by Swart and Maralack (2020), Rogerson and Rogerson (2020), OECD (2020) and Li et al. (2020) to name but a few. To the researcher's knowledge, limited studies have been conducted examining the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business event sector, specifically in South Africa thus, emphasizing the importance of this particular study. Several studies have been undertaken with few being focused on the business event sector. This study aided in providing answers and offering relevant solutions to these research gaps. The study was necessitated by research gaps and the fact that the pandemic has affected and will continue to affect the business event sector even more than previously mentioned. The problem statement refers to a particular lack of information surrounding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business event sector and how businesses can recover from the pandemic. Thus, there is a need to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the events sector owing to the restrictions on international travel and specifically for South Africa, the adaptation of strict national lockdown that was characterized by a shutdown on all events in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus.

1.3. Significance of the study

The findings of this study could contribute to the business event sector and to tertiary educational institutions (Evans et al., 2020). It is envisaged that this study will make a significant contribution to existing knowledge, practices and policies by highlighting ways in which the business event sector can still continue to operate amid a global pandemic (Evans et al., 2020). There are multiple stakeholders that will find this study to be important and beneficial, this includes the event organisers, the tourism and business event sector, policymakers and academics (Mann, 2020). The current study showcased problem areas and possible solutions derived from the personal experiences of various event stakeholders and events within South Africa (Mann, 2020). By conducting this study and identifying the effects of COVID-19 in South Africa, the business event sector can benefit from the findings. The findings can be used to develop alternative methods to operate throughout a pandemic without

having to experience complete financial strain, job losses or having to shut down a business (Evans et al., 2020). Therefore, the findings of this study can contribute significantly to the current tourism literature available. With the knowledge gained from the findings of this particular study, researchers and academics alike can understand what the effects of COVID-19 are on the business events sector in South Africa.

Through this research, researchers better understand how to lighten the impact of COVID-19 and find ways in which to continue to operate during a pandemic and avoid negative effects such as closing down the business, job losses or bankruptcy. The findings of this study can be utilised to guide academics with similar studies to be conducted in the future. Additionally, students studying event or tourism management can also benefit from the findings of this study in their future work endeavours. Policymakers can benefit from this study as it will inform policy decisions indicating how the sector can be sustained. Individuals and event business owners can adopt successful practices and methods that have already been developed by other businesses during the pandemic. The anticipated outcomes of the study in relation to theory, practice, policy, and personal learning were to understand and manage the effects of COVID-19 on South Africa's business event sector from a multi-stakeholder perspective. This research is of great importance as it seeks to assist the future of tourism by highlighting and determining new ways of successful operation within the business events sector that do not compromise or negatively affect employment rates and income.

1.4. Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the study was to explore the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Africa's business events sector. In order to achieve this aim, the following research objectives are applicable:

Objective 1: To explore the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector in South Africa.

Objective 2: To propose strategies for the recovery of the business events sector from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

Objective 3: To suggest measures that could be implemented in future in dealing with crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector in South Africa.

1.5. Research questions

To address the research aim, the following research questions were developed:

Question 1: What are the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector in South Africa?

Question 2: What strategies can be implemented for recovery of the business events sector from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

Question 3: What measures could be implemented in future in dealing with crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector in South Africa.

1.6. Brief background

In December 2019, a new and contagious coronavirus (COVID-19) hit Wuhan, China (Bama et al, 2022). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 can be compared to the virus that arose in 2003, namely the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), an airborne disease that is extremely infectious among people (WHO, 2020). Towards the end of January, the Chinese government made the information about the virus public which led to severe precautionary actions being put into place and included isolations and momentary business closures (Gale, 2021). The outbreak rapidly advanced into a communal health crisis which led to the WHO declaring the outbreak as a record global pandemic (Gale, 2022). By March 2020, the virus had spread to other countries and greater restrictions were implemented surrounding human movement significantly endangering tourism due to its dependence on human mobility (WHO, 2020).

Along with the tourism industry, the events industry was greatly affected by COVID-19, more specifically business events as travel was also prohibited. This meant that tourists who travelled for event-specific reasons including business events could no longer travel due to border closures and the enforced lockdowns. A business event is a public or private gathering of no less than 50 individuals which is held at a specific venue whereby individuals communicate various messages which are educational, or business-related (BECA, 2020). Rouse (2020) stated that business events integrate business logic into the taxonomy of events. It is noted that some research has been conducted in determining the effects of a pandemic on the business events sector (Raj et al., 2009 Karabulut et al., 2020; Kock et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020; Swart & Maralack, 2020)

1.7. Definition of key concepts

Within this section, the keywords used throughout the study are explained and a clear clarification provided.

1.7.1 Event management

Event management is the overall creation and development of events which include but are not limited to conferences, conventions, concerts, trade shows, festivals, and ceremonies (Small Business, 2019). Event management is a specialised field that is dedicated to understanding and refining the organisation and controlling of planned events (Getz & Page, 2016:595). According to Tassiopoulos (2000:40), the purpose of event management is

ultimately the controlling and management of various aspects which include the event resources, people management, time management, finances as well as performance necessities, event planning, marketing, risk management, coordination and execution to name but a few.

1.7.2 Tourism

According to Walton (2020), tourism is the trade of supplying amenities to individuals travelling in pursuit of business or recreational activities. The activities include but are not limited to various services such as transportation, housing facilities, relaxation and entertainment (Walton, 2020). Tourism is a communal, societal and profitable occurrence which involves individuals travelling to various destinations (UNWTO, 2020).

1.7.3 Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (NICD, 2020). The virus was identified on 31 December 2019 amid a mass eruption of respiratory cases by the World Health Organisation which originated in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China, since then COVID-19 became a global pandemic (NICD, 2020). COVID-19 is a highly infectious illness and spreads predominantly through condensation of saliva or discharge from the mouth or nasal area (World Health Organisation, 2020). It is known that Coronaviruses consist of a variety of illnesses which can likely cause diseases in both animals and humans (South African Government, 2020). There are multiple coronaviruses which are known to cause respiratory illnesses in humans including the common cold and also illnesses such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) (South African Government, 2020).

1.7.4 Business events

According to Rouse (2020), business events is the exercise of integrating business logic into the classification of events, the management of events and communication surrounding the conceptualisation of events. Thus, business events have a great need for interaction and collaboration between business stakeholders (Rouse, 2020). Business events can also be described as any public or private meeting which is held at a set venue, comprising no less than 50 individuals that have shared interests (BECA, 2020). Examples of business events include but are not limited to conferences, conventions, legislatures, advertising events, meetings, trade shows, brand or merchandise launches and exhibitions (BECA, 2020). Business events are intended to act as a medium to communicate specific messages, for educational purposes, to endorse a brand or products, or to generate resources to name but a few (BECA, 2020).

1.8. Research paradigm, methods and methodologies

The research methodology section consists of a comprehensive presentation of the research elements which is outlined in Chapter Three in a chronological order and include the questions, research philosophy, research paradigm, research design, research methods, study area, sampling procedures, data collection methods and techniques, data coding and analysis, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.

1.9. Ethical consideration

Ethical considerations are standards for conduct that differentiate between what is right and wrong and help to establish the variation between tolerable and intolerable behaviour on the part of the researcher (Resnik et al., 2015). There are various aspects laid out that research should comply with, in order to ensure that it is conducted ethically such as respect for intellectual property, confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and voluntary participation to name but a few. Thus, throughout conducting this research, the researcher remained aware and applied the following ethical concerns:

- No persons under the age of 18 were allowed to take part in the survey unless parent/ guardian consent was provided.
- The research complied with all ethical requirements as set out by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).
- Before any data was collected, ethical clearance was sought from the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences Ethics Committee and was granted with Reference number 2021_FBMSREC_003, (See Appendix A).
- Information given by participants was kept at an adequate level of confidentiality.
- The researcher protected the confidentiality and anonymity of all the respondents in the research.
- The research study was performed with integrity.
- The research was conducted in a legal manner following all aspects of the law.
- Research respondents were not harmed in any way.
- Respect for the dignity of research participants was prioritised.
- Full written consent was obtained from all respondents prior to completing the interviews and /or questionnaires.
- Dishonesty or embellishment regarding the aims and objectives of the research was circumvented.

1.10. Outline of the dissertation

Within this section, each chapter will be outlined in detail regarding what the specific chapters will entail.

1.10.1 Chapter One: Introduction

The introduction of the research proposes the study to the readers and states what the research proposal consists of. In Chapter One the title, introduction to the study, problem statement, significance of the study, aims and objectives of the study, clarification of basic terms, definitions of key concepts, dissertation outline and summary will be discussed.

1.10.2 Chapter Two: Literature review

Within this chapter, a theoretical analysis will be conducted regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the business event sector and the operation of events amidst a pandemic, specifically in South Africa. Apart from this, literature on how pandemics affect tourism, the impact of COVID-19 on this industry and the travel behaviour of tourists will also be analysed and discussed.

1.10.3 Chapter Three: Research design and methodology

In the methodology chapter, every aspect of the research applied will thoroughly be discussed. These aspects include the literature study which describes the various sources used for the collection of data, the sampling and method of data collection, the development of the questions that will be asked during the interview and the data analysis. The ethical considerations related to this study will also be discussed as well as the reliability and validity of this study.

1.10.4 Chapter Four: Findings

In this chapter, the results and findings of the respondents attained from the interviews and completed questionnaires will be discussed and graphically presented. These findings will include the impacts of COVID-19 on the business event's sector in South Africa and the various suitable solutions to the issues at hand that could benefit multiple stakeholders.

1.10.5 Chapter Five: Recommendation and conclusion

In Chapter Five, the recommendations and conclusion will be discussed based on the findings of this study, and the insights gained while researching the impact of COVID-19 with regards to the business event's sector in South Africa will also be highlighted. The limitations of the study will also be discussed, an indication of whether the objectives of the study were achieved

or not will be highlighted, and recommendations for the sector amidst a pandemic will be made as well as recommendations for future research provided.

1.11. Chapter Summary

The current chapter has introduced the study by highlighting the research gap, aim, significance and all aspects which would make the reader understand what the study is about. It also aimed at finding practical and feasible strategies aimed at alleviating the identified effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector in South Africa. The following chapter presents the literature as well as the study's theoretical framework.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the following chapter, literature pertinent to events and tourism is discussed. This literature takes an in-depth look at the various stakeholders in the event and tourism sector and expands on the impact of COVID-19 on the business events and tourism sector which set the foundation for this study. In addition, this chapter presents the importance of events and the conceptual framework. The characteristics of an event are also discussed as well as the event sustainability and the growth of business events.

The business events sector is a progressively growing industry throughout the world (Jones, 2012:107). Through hosting events, numerous countries and destinations can increase tourism as events contribute considerably to the economy (Tassiopoulos, 2010:4). There are many benefits that are associated with the hosting of business events, thus emphasising the importance of effective event management in an effort to grasp the positive impacts from these benefits (Pettinger, 2017). Due to the magnitude of the growth and benefits of business events, competition is also increasing (Pettinger, 2017). Thus, it is vital for event managers to know who their market is and what motivates the attendees to attend these business events (Pettinger, 2017; Liedemann et al., 2022; Muresherwa et al., 2023). However, knowledge about the market and motivation for attending business trips can be affected by the pressure exerted by external forces. The external forces include the following: political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal aspects.

Bama and Nyikana (2021) contend that South Africa's tourism industry has been touted as one of the most important contributors to the country's economy. In addition, the country has previously adopted an aggressive positioning in the marketing of its tourism as a tool for socio-economic development, job creation, and uplifting of communities' standards of living while engendering environmental protection (Bama, 2021; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). Among the various sub-sectors within the country's tourism ecosystem is the business events subsector, inclusive of meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (MICE) subsectors. Goodrich (2022) asserts that business event tourism was estimated to have contributed \$7.9 billion to the South African economy pre-COVID-19, while the MICE industry attracted roughly one million delegates annually at business events locally, supporting more than 250,000 direct and indirect jobs. Identified as a pandemic of international proportions in 2020 by the WHO, COVID-19 has subsequently been recognised as one of the most impactful crises in contemporary times (Bama et al., 2022; Ho & Sia, 2020; Magangqaza et al., 2022). South Africa joined the global community in implementing regulations aimed at curbing the spread of the virus and flattening the curve of infections through measures such as border closures, travel bans, and

lockdowns, which resulted in the suspension of non-essential business activities inclusive of business events' tourism activities (Bartis et al., 2021). This was notable in the context that traditionally, the sector is known to play a catalytic role in promoting a range of support services whilst at the same time bringing together an array of tourists (Bartis et al., 2021).

Implemented in March 2020, the State of Disaster endured for over 750 days and caused a considerable impact on the country's economy by imposing harsh restrictions on travel, gatherings, business operations and triggering mass job losses and business closures in the process (Goodrich, 2022). As reported by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), international tourism dropped by 73% and the subsequent collapse of international travel resulted in substantial losses in export revenue (amounting to US\$ 1.1 trillion) in 2020 (UNWTO, 2021). Though recent scholarly enquiry has investigated and examined the impact of COVID-19 on the business events subsector (Ho & Sia, 2020; Rwigema, 2020), few have adequately addressed the extent of the impact and the resilience strategy requirements of the subsector from a South African perspective. Therefore, in this chapter, the literature will be reviewed based on research conducted on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Africa's business events sector from a multi-stakeholder perspective.

The impact caused by the pandemic cannot be underestimated as it crippled the once flourishing industry. This study therefore explored strategies aimed at alleviating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector in South Africa. The next section presents an overview of business events tourism and the impact of COVID-19 on the subsector broadly, in the form of a literature review. This is accompanied by an explanation of the research methodology adopted for the study and the ensuing results and discussion. A concluding section wraps up the presentation with the implications of the study and recommendations, as well as suggestions on future research direction.

Scholarly articles on pandemics and their impacts on the tourism and events industry, more specifically the business events sector are discussed and the considerations reported and examined. More specifically, the following is discussed in detail: the background to events, South Africa's business events sector (MICE), overview of the business events sector in the pre-COVID-19 context, the management of events post-lockdown and throughout an active pandemic; and the effects of COVID-19 on business events in South Africa.

2.2 Background to events

Organised events of all sorts have been a fundamental segment of cultivation for many years, from banquets, religious commemorations and sporting events to political assemblies (Penn Museum, 2018). How did events come to be? One could argue that people are of a social nature, however, that does not justify the economic and cultural significance that is associated with organised events, the forming of related careers, or creating special event venues (Sofield

and Li, 1998). Events are a crucial and necessary experience for individuals from any part of the world, embedded in culture and assisting with defining human progression (Sofield and Li, 1998).

The medieval period (5th -15th century) held the first record of events to date where individuals showed off how wealthy they were by hosting events (Penn Museum, 2018). These events range from small events such as family gatherings and weddings to colossal events like the king's crowning ceremony, battle formations and gladiatorial combats (Penn Museum, 2018). In Olympia, Greece, 776 BC the very first Olympic game was held surrounded by representatives of city-states of ancient Greece and was held in honour of Zeus, the most imperative Greek god (Jago & Shaw, 1998; Trigg, 1995). On 15 January 1559, Queen Elizabeth I's coronation ceremony was one of the biggest events ever and lasted for seven days (Shone & Parry, 2010:10-12).

The event management industry has evolved tremendously for enjoyment, socialising and learning (Bowdin et al., 2011). Multiple individuals, companies and destinations use events in order to reach a particular objective therefore events prove to be a prosperous business venture (Bowdin et al., 2011). Today the events industry is thriving and growing, and events are flourishing and taking a big role within the events industry which results in international event attendees flocking to South Africa to attend various events (Bowdin et al., 2011).

2.3 South Africa's business events sector (MICE)

As previously stated the acronym "MICE" stands for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions. The core focus of hosting business events is to gather professionals in order to create networking opportunities and to develop innovative and novel ideas with a specific industry in mind. Business events form an enormous fragment of global business travel as most industries have recurring or annual events (Hahn, 2021). The MICE industry is known as a service industry which integrates travel, trade, finance and transportation. Thus, the MICE industry is a fundamental driving force for tourism destination development and is a crucial component in generating income and creating employment opportunities (Hahn, 2021). Commonly, the MICE industry includes mostly business events whereas leisure events such as festivals and musical shows are categorised in a different group. However, in an effort to produce an unforgettable experience and better engage event attendees, numerous business events now include leisure components within an event (Hahn, 2021).

2.3.1 MICE

MICE stands for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions. MICE is commonly known as the business events sector and is typified mainly through the line of work and the philosophy of the business (Allen et al,2008:16). An obvious characteristic of business events is that it attracts business event delegates and other tourists to a specific destination

and at the same time fuels economic development and produces substantial publicity for the event destination (Allen et al., 2008:17).

2.3.2 Meetings

A meeting can be defined as a formal gathering of two or more individuals or companies for a specific reason or topic of discussion. A meeting commonly takes place over the duration of a day or two and is typically held at venues such as a hotel conference venue, conference rooms and an office workspace. The purpose of a meeting is to gather various individuals or business delegates with the purpose of conveying particular information or to come to a conclusion regarding a particular subject matter. Meetings do not usually have an entertainment aspect and the catering is kept simple (Collins Dictionary, 2020).

2.3.3 Incentives

An incentive is considered to be the best part of the MICE division. This consists of travel rewards that a company grants employees as a result of exceptional work performance. The purpose of an incentive is to thank individuals for hard work and it also produces benefits such as an increase in employee loyalty and boosts morale within a company. An incentive differs from each company, thus some incentives could be an activity close to home in order to encourage teamwork and better a culture within a workspace while other incentives could include a few days at a resort which is in a town away from home.

2.3.4 Conferences

Corporate events are considered a successful instrument for external marketing due to the fact that clients and partners of a company are always included in these types of events (Khmelkov, 2017). Examples of corporate events include conferences, seminars and product launch events to name but a few (Khmelkov, 2017; Our Community Place, 2019). A conference generally lasts for two or more days and varies in size, yet a conference typically has more people in attendance than meetings. During a conference activity such as panels, presentations, discussions, speeches and workshops occur (Khmelkov, 2017; Our Community Place, 2019). The objective for hosting conferences differ, however it is typically intended to discourse and solve challenges within a company. A conference acts as a platform for delegates to discuss new ideas is a great environment to network in, team-building activities is also a common occurrence at conferences (Khmelkov, 2017).

2.3.5 Exhibitions

An exhibition is an occasion that brings multiple individuals together at a specific venue in order to view, purchase or trade products, services or other resources to a particular commerce or the overall public (Silvers, 2009). Exhibitions are not limited to the display of products; however, it is an event where people learn and customer interaction takes place, and the exchange of information occurs (Tassiopoulos, 2010:428). Exhibitions are often

referred to as trade shows and are typically extremely large events that gather many attendees and exhibitors from across the globe. It is stereotypical for an exhibition to last for a few days up to a week and commonly an event that is exceedingly industry-specific with a distinctive target market (Tassiopoulos, 2010:428). Exhibitors go to trade shows to present and promote their product or service, drive business, and liaise with existing and potential partners. Industry professionals go to network, find clients or jobs, and discover new ways to solve problems (Silvers, 2009).

Activities that generally occur at exhibitions can include networking events, awards show which honour employees and/or industry leaders and also new business pitches (Silvers, 2009). According to Foley et al. (2010:3) business events have substantiated a momentous cause of financial benefits. In addition, Foley et al. (2010:3) added that these benefits refer to the number of visitors, their daily expenses, the overnight stays at various accommodations and multiple other financial contributors by these individuals to the business events.

MICE or business events denote a specific sort of tourism which is planned long before the event occurs (Katunga, 2014). These events usually entail a large group of business delegates who gather for a specific reason (Katunga, 2014). According to Katunga (2014), business events are well-planned events and are hosted for a particular purpose, at a preselected venue, by an establishment which attracts at least 15 event delegates.

The South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) indicated that, "In its promotion of South Africa as a destination of choice, the focus has shifted from destination tourism to events and business tourism in order to expand the existing product base" (DEAT, 2009:115). Through business events, business travellers are drawn to a destination which they might not have necessarily considered visiting if it were not for the business event that they were to attend (DEAT, 2009:115). This acts as a positive for South Africa as a destination as it might improve seasonal tourism since the business travellers may return for leisure purposes (DEAT, 2011:39). With the provision of business events, South Africa has become a strong and feasible option for business events (Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell, 2011:17).

With the assistance of the South African National Conventions Bureau (SANCB), business events are being helped with planning processes and being supported with bidding alongside other destinations (DEAT, 2011:39). A noteworthy strategy was also developed in support of business events (DEAT, 2011:39). It was stated by the former South African Tourism Minister (Marthinus van Schalkwyk) that only one year after forming the SANCB that approximately 87 bookings were secured and were to be hosted by local accommodation which contributed over R2.6 billion (Hedley, 2013).

Mhlanga (2014) proposes that tourists who attend MICE activities are actually business tourists. A characteristic of business tourists includes spending a significant amount of money as opposed to leisure tourists (Mhlanga, 2014). This is supported by Foley, Schlenker, Edwards and Hayllar, (2010:4) according to whom, business tourists spending amount is greater as their duration of stay is often longer, in comparison to leisure tourists which is why delegates to business events is said to be the most desirable tourist (BECA, 2010).

2.4 Business tourism

According to Davidson (1994:1), individuals who travel for any reason which is related to work are regarded as business tourists. As stated by the International Congress and Conventions Association (ICCA) business tourism can be defined as "the provision of facilities and services to the millions of delegates who annually attend meetings, congresses, exhibitions, business events, incentive travel, and corporate hospitality" (Keup, Artal-Tur, Belosluttseva & Garcia Sanchez, 2015:292).

2.4.1 Business tourist

A business tourist is a traveller whose sole reason for a tourism excursion relates to the business event they are attending (International Recommendation for Tourism Statistics (IRTS), 2008:15). Business tourists travel with the purpose of attending a particular business event and during their free time, tour the event destination (International Recommendation for Tourism Statistics (IRTS), 2008:15).

2.5 Overview of the events sector in the pre-covid 19 context

Throughout the past few years, before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry experienced considerable growth and became a significant economic development instrument for countries all across the globe (Esu et al., 2011:333). Tourism largely contributed to the South African economy, which is evident when analysing the South African Tourism Satellite Account report. This report provides crucial information surrounding tourism, such as the spending habits, job creation and the impact of tourism on the country's gross domestic product (GDP), and the results are promising.

In the year 2012, the tourism GDP contributed R93.5 billion and within the following year it contributed R103.6 billion (Statistics South Africa [SSA], 2015). This led to the South African government acknowledging the significance of the tourism industry for the ability that it had to build and expand the economy with creating job opportunities for the locals (Statistics South Africa [SSA], 2015) The tourism industry, along with the events industry are indivisible due to the fact that both industries make a great contribution to the growth of the economy and in essence, South Africa acknowledged the value of cultivating the business events sector with

the objective of increasing the tourist contribution to South Africa's GDP (South African Tourism [SA Tourism], 2017).

In the year 2017, the tourism industry contributed roughly around 3% to the GDP and created approximately 700 000 employment opportunities (SA Tourism, 2017). According to SA Tourism (2017), the indirect impact of tourism in South Africa is much elevated at around 9% of the GDP. Event tourism is regarded as a world-wide phenomenon with enormous potential for development (Esu et al., 2011:334).

According to Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris and McDonnell (2011:1), the events industry has enhanced into a principal fragment of global culture in an unparalleled way.

2.6 The growth of the events industry

With the global outbreak of COVID-19, various containment measures were prompted and had a worldwide economic impact (Boone, 2020). The tourism industry was without a doubt one of the industries that were the most affected by the pandemic on a worldwide scale due to its intrinsic characteristics (Boone, 2020). According to Getz and Page (2016), the links between the events and tourism industry are closely related and have experienced rapid growth since the year 2008. The events and tourism industry has attained a remarkable financial, social and cultural significance which is a direct outcome of the progression and growth of both industries (Getz & Page, 2016).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, an enormous number of events were held worldwide on a daily basis which brought together great masses of participants, these participants consisted of both national and international tourists. They made use of numerous means of transport such as air, railway and road transport. Multiple tourist services were also utilised including the use of various accommodation establishments and restaurants amongst others (Getz & Page, 2016). Tourism and events are a comprehensive phenomenon that has presented extensive development throughout the past few years and has become a significant financial development instrument for developed and developing countries (Esu et al., 2011:333). The tourism and events industry still plays a vital part in the economy of South Africa. When analysing the most recent South African Tourism Satellite Account report, which outlines the contribution of the tourism and events industry with regard to spending, job creation and the effect on South Africa's gross domestic product (GDP), the statistics are highly promising.

According to Statistics South Africa [SSA] (2015), in the year 2012 the tourism direct GDP contributed R93.5 billion and in the year 2013, R103.6 billion was recorded. The South African government acknowledged the significance of the tourism and events industry and its potential to redesign and cultivate the economy by creating job opportunities for many South African citizens. This is confirmed by the government exertion which steered to making a separate

National Department of Tourism whose obligation is to “facilitate conditions conducive to sustainable tourism growth and development for South Africa” (South Africa. National Department of Tourism [SA NDT], n.d.).

The tourism and events industry are closely connected since both industries contribute greatly to the economic increase of a country thus, South Africa realises the significance of developing the business events sector in an effort to upsurge the financial support of the sector to the GDP of the country (South African Tourism [SA Tourism], 2017).

As reported by Statistics South Africa, the growth of tourism and events were very profitable, in 2019 more than 15,8 million foreign arrivals were recorded in South Africa. However, in 2020 a shocking number of just under 5 million arrivals were noted which indicated a drop of 71% (SA Stats, 2020). Undoubtedly the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the tourism and events industry extremely hard all across the globe and within South Africa, which was primarily a result of the lockdown and travel bans which were enforced (SA Stats, 2020).

Within South Africa, a figure of R130,1 billion was recorded in 2018 as the direct contribution of the tourism sector to the GDP an established approximation of 3% direct contribution to the GDP (StatsSA, 2020). The tourism industry made up roughly 4,5% of the entire employment in South Africa in the year 2018 (StatsSA, 2020). It was reported that in 2020, the capacity of tourists was reduced by 72,6% from 10,2 million tourists in 2019 to approximately 2,8 million tourists in 2020 (Stats SA, 2020).

The distribution of tourists by region of residence shows that 74,8% of the tourists who arrived in South Africa in 2020 were residents of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries and 1,5% were from ‘other’ African countries. These two sub-regions constituted a total of 76,3% tourists from Africa. Residents of overseas countries made up 23.6% of the tourists.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the South African tourism industry. On the 16th of March 2020, President Ramaphosa announced measures to combat the spread of COVID -19 in South Africa. These measures were in line with reducing and monitoring inward as well as departing travellers. In addition, a travel ban on selected foreign nationals from high-risk countries into SA was communicated on 18 March 2020. Out of the 53 land ports, 35 were shut down, as well as 2 of the 8 seaports. The Level 5 (hard) lockdown introduced by President Ramaphosa on the 26th of March 2020 resulted in tourism numbers dropping drastically for both incoming and outgoing travellers. In light of this, South Africa did not receive visitors for a period of six months from April to September 2020. In 2020, tourists from the United Kingdom topped the overseas visitor list. When comparing the 2020 volumes

with the 2019 volumes, the number of tourists decreased in all ten leading overseas countries. Australia had the largest percentage decrease of visitors to SA (81,4%).

Overall, holidays continued to be the main reason for visits to South Africa. A large majority (96,0%) of tourists came for holidays whilst businesspersons, students and medical treatment constituted 3,1%, 0,9% and 0,1% respectively in 2020. In 2020, tourists from overseas and 'other' African countries spent, on average, seven and five days per month respectively in South Africa, compared to tourists from SADC who spent only two days. Tourists continued to be predominantly male (53, 8%). With the world of travel having changed drastically due to the pandemic, the year 2020 will always be remembered as the year that COVID-19 changed the world.

In recent years, tourism has been touted as a contributor to socio-economic development in South Africa. For instance, in 2019, the sector was estimated to have contributed 7% towards the GDP, amounting to approximately USD23.7 billion whilst more than 1.4 billion jobs were also linked to tourism (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2020). The business events (MICE) subsector also generated revenue in the region of USD720 billion globally (South African Tourism, 2019). Before 2017, the business events sub sector contributed USD7.7 billion to South Africa's GDP (SANCB, 2020). Therefore, the business events sub sector contributed one-third of the total amount generated by tourism. This demonstrates the importance of the business events subsector to South Africa.

In terms of travel behaviour, the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) notes that approximately 30% of all delegates attending international business events in South Africa participate in pre-and post-tour activities of an average duration of 3.5 days (SANCB, 2020). The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that the business events subsector became adversely affected in comparison to other purposes of travel (Dube et al., 2023; Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2021). The sheer volume of cancellations and postponements or suspensions of business events seriously dented the industry, a negative outlook that persists as countries battle various elements relating to the pandemic.

Sguazzin and Njini (2020) state that with the South African economy forecasted to contract by more than 6.4% in 2020, the business tourism subsector, like other sectors, will shed jobs. While the exact number of job losses as a result of the pandemic is yet to be definitively determined, an approximation of 11% redundancies was noted within the tourism sector. According to Lekgau and Tichaawa (2021), South Africa would have hosted 40 international business events in 2020 that received support through South Africa's Bid Support Programme (BSP) administered by the South African National Convention. These events would have attracted a total of 16,833 delegates to the country.

Furthermore, these events included conferences and exhibitions, with an average delegate spend per day of USD427. These secured events would have generated more than USD 32 million for South Africa's economy in 2020, which represents a sizable contribution to the economy of the country. Vaccination programs are currently being rolled out in several countries, including South Africa's tourism source markets, like the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Germany (Hills, 2021). Additionally, South Africa has also been involved in a vaccination rollout since February 2021 (Pheto et al., 2021). It is hoped that with the implementation of vaccination programmes and other non-pharmaceutical interventions, the cessation of the State of Disaster, fewer events will be cancelled, and the sector will resume an ascendancy towards achieving pre-pandemic levels.

2.7 Benefits of hosting events

According to Pettinger (2019), there are multiple benefits of hosting events. These benefits include a raised profile of a host country, long-term investments, job creation as well as investments, country enthusiasm, short-term economic benefits and a unique experience for locals (Pettinger 2018).

The enhanced profile of a country creates multiple economic benefits (Boss, 2017). When looking at countries which host events such as the Olympic Games, there is an increase in recognition and tourism is in turn guaranteed as shown by Barcelona, Sydney and Beijing (Al Hajeri, 2014). Hosting a well-known sporting event can allow a country such as China which has a disputed human rights reputation, to achieve greater global acceptance (Al Hajeri, 2014). For a country like South Africa, hosting the 2010 Rugby World Cup was a significant occurrence which showcased the 'post-apartheid' South Africa to the world (Boss, 2017). The raised profile created a better public perception of South Africa which is crucial to achieving economic benefits, which include drawing in tourists and gaining new commercial opportunities and financing (Boss, 2017).

A significant advantage of hosting a major event is the long-term investment that is derived from preparing for the particular event (Al Hajeri, 2014). Countries will likely improve existing facilities and road works, build new infrastructure, and invest in transportation in order to accommodate an inundation of tourists (Aperian Global, 2020). The 2012 London Olympics benefited London greatly as a substantial investment in public transportation was made due to the event, which left a lasting legacy for London locals (Pettinger, 2019).

When a country hosts major events, even depressed cities can become revitalised creating employment opportunities for many citizens (Aperian Global, 2020). It was projected that the 2012 London Olympics generated 8000 permanent jobs and led to an increased economic return (Pettinger, 2019)

A country which hosts an event of great magnitude can create abundant enthusiasm and exhilaration within the local community (Bohlmann & van Heerden, 2005). An increase in participation of sports is also highly likely which acts as a benefit for a country's health and hosting a major event can lead to an upsurge in volunteerism which endorses public virtues (Bohlmann & van Heerden, 2005).

A major event such as a sporting event attracts many tourists, sports participants and media personnel which results in a rise in spending and money entering the host country (Pettinger, 2018; Swart et al., 2017). The injection of money will be on a short-term basis and only creates a minor effect on the economy (Pettinger, 2018). Hosting a large event can also be seen as giving the local citizens a momentous and unique, once-in-a-lifetime experience (Pettinger, 2018).

2.8 The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

It is evident that the global community (including over 200 countries) was greatly affected by the Coronavirus negatively (Poddar, 2020). When the virus first broke out there was no vaccine to contain the virus, thus, to decline the spread of the Coronavirus, countries had to vulnerably exercise great isolation by ordering a lockdown. The lockdown greatly affected economic growth on a global scale (Poddar, 2020).

A pandemic can be described as a far-reaching outbreak of a virus that can vastly increase misery and death all over the globe and can create great economic depression and societal and political disruption (Poddar, 2020). Research states that the possibility of pandemics occurring has increased due to an upsurge in international travel, development and significant abuse of the environment (Morse 1995). Within the industry of meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE), a great contribution to economic diversification is evident and dynamically fuels the usage of cultural-historical and natural recreational assets (Aburumman, 2020).

In the year 2019, the UAE MICE industry was one of the most successful countries before the COVID-19 pandemic emerged. Approximately 2.3 million individuals stated that they travelled to Dubai due to business (Aburumman, 2020). Due to extreme isolation procedures, the bulk of destinations across the globe announced COVID-19-related travel constraints that lasted until May 2020 (Aburumman, 2020). Within the UAE, the COVID-19 pandemic had a great impact on all industries, more specifically the MICE industry (Aburumman, 2020). Consequences of COVID-19 with regard to its global and local effects on the MICE industry and potential means of survival for the industry are defined inadequately by the multiple UAE researchers that have analysed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (Aburumman, 2020).

The study conducted by Aburumman (2020), found that due to conditions of severe travel constraints and no access to flights, the UAE MICE industry experienced a huge decline in demand. Various tourism-related industries have endured great material fatalities with scheduled flights making up the bulk of the loss with 82%. The 5P marketing strategy was identified as a subcontracting technique for the MICE industry to survive and recover from the losses caused by the pandemic (Aburumman, 2020).

When the Coronavirus hit Malaysia in March 2020, a Movement Control Order was implemented. A rapid rush in COVID-19 infections was detected after an event was executed, which meant that large gatherings of people portrayed a risk for fast spreading of the virus (Ho et al., 2020). As a result, every form of assembly was forbidden, which became a challenge for the event industry (Ho et al, 2020). However, the MICE industry was permitted to recommence from 1 July 2020, yet the event industry would have a tough time recovering from the effects that already took place (Ho et al., 2020).

In identifying the business events sector as the primary growth catalyst, projections suggested that by the year 2020, 16,720 people would have been employed and approximately RM3.9 billion would have been generated through the hosting of business events in Malaysia, while during the same period, an estimated 2.9 million people would have entered the country for business event pursuits (Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau, 2017).

According to the study conducted by Malay Mail (2020a), results found that more than 2 million jobs in Malaysia were anticipated to be lost as a result of the pandemic since many individuals worked in the tourism and events industry sector (Malay Mail, 2020a, 2020b). Due to this great number of job losses, many Malaysian citizens' purchasing power is expected to be reduced, which is predicted to result in extreme effects for the individuals that are employed at community businesses (The Star, 2020). In addition, the upsurge in the unemployment rates will undoubtedly increase criminal activity due to the lack of food (The Star, 2020).

India was also devastatingly affected by the pandemic and had to deal with exceptionally catastrophic effects due to the natural phenomenon (Poddar, 2020). On 30 January 2020, the first COVID-19-positive patient was confirmed in India. Within six weeks there were 10000 confirmed cases and 400 deceased (Poddar, 2020). Thus, the Indian Government made the decision to take much-needed steps to prevent the spread of the virus (Poddar, 2020). The occurrence of COVID-19 triggered a societal stigma and biased behaviours towards individuals of a specific ethnicity and individuals who had previously suffered from the virus. (Barrett R et al, 2008). The outbreak brought about a hard lockdown along with added effective measures to stop the spread of the virus (Poddar, 2020). It was no shock that a large number of events were cancelled all around the globe since the pandemic first hit. Due to the fact that event execution is not an independent task, cancellations have also negatively affected various event

stakeholders. These stakeholders include consumer advocates, personnel, owners, volunteers, sponsors, suppliers, emergency services, host communities, competitors, environmentalists, mass media, tourism organisations, financial establishments and governmental groups (Freeman, 1984). These measures resulted in great job losses and had a huge impact on the Indian exporting industry as countries such as Europe and Southeast Asia rationalised their import operations (Poddar, 2020).

For multiple tourism destinations all over the world, the events industry is a vital stream of income (Getz & Page, 2020; Raj, Walters, & Rashid, 2017). This is highly evident for Portugal which was placed in the 10th position on a global scale in 2019 for the number of congresses hosted (International Congress and Convention Association [ICCA], 2020). APECATE forecasted that the losses would surpass 300 million euros and approximately 30.000 jobs could be lost (APECATE, 2020).

Bama and Nyikana (2021) state that modern tourism history is filled with a plethora of examples of natural disasters, economic downturns, political turmoil, health scares, terrorist activity and other events that have negatively impacted the volume and direction of tourism flows. Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa's economy was in a dire state having witnessed two consecutive periods of negative GDP growth and bordering on a technical recession (Asmal & Rooney, 2021). The advent of COVID-19 compounded the already dire circumstances. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) asserted that the COVID-19 pandemic was a defining global health crisis of our time, and the greatest challenge since the end of the Second World War (UNDP, 2020). Beyond being a global health crisis, the tourism industry and its affiliated sub sectors were one of the most severely affected by the pandemic, consequent to the inability of people to travel at the time of the onset of the pandemic (Ateino, 2020). Such a situation could only lead to a cross-section of negative effects on the sector, a discussion which will be the focus of the discussions below. Cheer (2021) asserts that the outset and the evolving nature of the pandemic have dealt a severe blow to the tourism industry and its various stakeholders whose livelihoods are derived from tourism. The ensuing discussion considers tourism in South Africa, in the context of the business events sector.

2.9 Impacts of business events

It is without a doubt that business events impact the environment, therefore this section analyses the positive and negative impacts on an event destination. According to Ritchie (1984), there are multiple impacts that are caused by the event, these impacts consist of six categories, namely, tourism or commercial, economic, political, socio-cultural, psychological and physical. Within this research study, the social and economic impact of business events were discussed.

2.9.1 Economic impacts

Business events are viewed as one of the most financially fruitful forms of tourism, therefore countries have considered and looked after the business events industry greatly (Swarbrooke & Homer, 2012:75). UNWTO (2015:2), has supported this statement by announcing that the tourism industry has supported the economy of the world with up to 10% of the world GDP, created a significant amount of job opportunities throughout the world, contributed 6% of the world's exports, around 30% of service exports and generated approximately 1.5 trillion in exports as seen in Figure 2.1.



Figure 2.1: World tourism impacts

Source: UNWTO (2015: 2)

The aspect that makes business events so crucial is the spending habits of business attendees to the events within the resident economy, which inspire output in the economy such as infrastructure (Cibinskiene, 2012:1334). Business tourists, specifically delegates attending a conference, have spending habits that well exceed those of leisure tourists (Swarbrooke & Homer, 2012:75). Around 400 000 MICE events are hosted globally per annum which produce a large total of US\$280 billion CopperBridge Media (2012:12). In addition to this, it was accentuated by the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry that the yearly MICE production amounted to US\$1.16 trillion, of which around US\$400 billion could be attributed to exhibitions, and, with conferences contributing US\$760 billion to the global economy (CopperBridge Media, 2012:12).

2.9.1.1 Foreign exchange remunerations

Through hosting these business events, delegates from other countries enter the local community and provide foreign currencies through the local businesses. For example, transportation systems, food and beverage businesses, entertainment centres and shops Davidson and Rogers (2006:20). Foreign exchange earnings are boosted through one single conference whereby the national economy is positively impacted (Davidson & Rogers, 2006:20).

2.9.1.2 Creation of jobs

Tansakul (2010:26) stated that “the business events industry is mainly a service sector, which is labour intensive and responsible for a great proportion of jobs in the hospitality and transportation sectors”. As per the statement by Auckland Convention Bureau (2014:12), business events not only create job opportunities but also support educational ventures with the aim of developing skilful employees within a destination.

2.9.1.3 Income

The native, as well as the international government, benefit greatly from business events spending habits from various forms of contributions. Some of the contributions include airport departure levies, tax and on tax placed on duties which are levied on products and services delivered to or consumed by business event delegates during the hosting of such events (Davidson & Rogers, 2006:21). The business event benefits are normally articulated in terms of the economy, specifically in the final outflow of finances (Morrison, 2013:527).

2.9.1.4 Infrastructure

Business events not only benefit destinations financially but also through destination promotion whereby the development of transportation infrastructure and building infrastructure is supported. This attracts investments in various other sectors as it delivers superior accessibility and resource logistics (Oxford economies, 2014:15). With business events, both public and private financial exchanges (investments) are made due to the expansion of airlines connectivity amid various destinations which will likely back the development of the economy (Oxford Economies, 2014:16).

2.9.1.5 Expansion of the economy

It can be said that business events ensure that a destination gains an economic increase when highlighting the fact that there is economic growth, businesses are attracted, multiple investments occur, and a culture of entrepreneurship is built (Auckland Convention Bureau 2014:12). The business events sector was so fruitful towards the Auckland economy in 2013, that a shockingly large amount of \$236 million was contributed to the economy (The Auckland Convention Bureau, 2014:8). Morrison (2013:527) stated that around 35% of business travelling expeditions are for the purpose of attending a meeting, revealing that meetings afford the largest financial return for business marketing. Thus, business events can act as a platform to enable the promotion of several sectors which include food and beverage, tourism, data and communications tools, construction, engineering, sport and even international education to name but a few (Auckland Convention Bureau, 2014:12).

2.9.1.6 Destination familiarity

Business events endorse a destination by creating familiarity, building destination awareness and associations in profitable networks from having delegates physically experience the destination (Oxford Economies, 2014:19). As per Bowdin et al. (2011:94) and Swart et al. (2017), tourism which is produced in the course of an event will create media exposure and endorse the exposure which enriches the profile of the host destination, as a consequence, the tourism image is enhanced, and more tourists are attracted to the particular destination.

2.9.1.7 The negatives

Trying to cater for the business traveller often demands pushing the destination to spend money which they might not necessarily possess, thus making huge financial investments in the attempt to develop infrastructure which include newly done roads and event hosting arenas. With the distinct possibility that such investments do not necessarily generate a profit, therefore raising questions about their sustainability in the longer term, which will be detrimental to the economy as the investments could have been channelled for more important social issues such as education and health (Bama, 2018; Bama & Tichaawa, 2020; Swarbrooke & Homer, 2001:9).

2.9.2 Social impacts

(Fredline et al. 2006:3) stated that impacts that can possibly generate effects on the quality of living in a particular destination where a business event is being hosted are considered a social impact. An aspect which plays a vital factor in improving the host destination's quality of living is the hosting of business events in a particular developing country such as sports stadiums (Oxford Economies, 2014:32).

2.9.2.1 Knowledge, innovation and relationships

Events are well known for their potential to create relationships amongst individual groups as well as within the local community (Cibinskiene, 2012:1334). Business events allow individuals to gather with the purpose of sharing information as well as ideas about specific topics and mutual interests (Auckland Convention Bureau, 2014:8). Networking usually takes place at business events resulting in beneficial business relationships that could potentially lead to long-term investment (Auckland Convention Bureau, 2014:8).

Through the hosting of business events, innovation is promoted, and knowledge is expanded (Oxford Economies, 2014:31). A study which was conducted by the Oxford Economies in 2013 investigated the impacts of business events such as conventions and conferences. The study's findings were mainly positive and included the building of partnerships, consumer retention and the gaining of industry insights to name but a few (Oxford Economies, 2014:31).

2.9.2.2 The negatives

Although there are many positive social impacts, some negative impacts surface. This includes possible overcrowding of individuals to one location and the potential to attract thieves who identify business tourists as an easy target to steal from (Swarbrooke & Homer, 2001:9). A few individuals who travel for business might have ulterior motives for their trips such as smuggling (Swarbrooke & Homer, 2012:77). Community resistance to tourism acts as a negative social impact as local business owners may increase the prices of their products and/or services with the tourists in mind, however, the local residents might feel the financial strain that this might cause (Ardahaey, 2011:206).

Business events are a good tactic to endorse tourism for many reasons. Through the hosting of business events, the image of a destination can be improved, prevailing brand standards of a destination can be enhanced, and destinations may pursue a wider range of financial developments. Business events have the potential to create profound lifelong legacies for the host destination some of which include excellent infrastructure, operational transport systems, lucrative business investments and elevated host destinations and communities (Bama, 2018; Bama & Tichaawa, 2020; 2021).

2.10 Theoretical framework

The following section discusses the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework discusses the result of integrating a number of interlinked notions which explain and deliver a better understanding of a specific phenomenon which is being investigated (Imenda, 2014:189). This allows the researcher to be able to answer the research questions, and in doing so, the study's objectives can be reached. Within this specific study, the Stakeholder Theory (ST) has been identified as the central theoretical lens for guidance.

2.10.1 Stakeholder theory

A stakeholder analysis is the action whereby data is collected about a specific individual or group of people which will undoubtedly impact a certain project or event. By conducting a stakeholder analysis, the event organiser can find the particular needs and wants that a stakeholder expects from an event (Stokes, 2006).

Through the process of a stakeholder analysis, the event organiser can identify crucial stakeholders, some of which will have a positive feeling or a negative feeling towards the event (Stokes, 2006). With the information obtained from a stakeholder analysis, various plans and strategies can be selected in order to find the best way in which to communicate with the stakeholders (Boatright, 2006:108). It is important to conduct a stakeholder analysis as this will help create loyal customers/event attendees and could potentially assist the individuals which are more resistant within gaining a positive attitude (Boatright, 2006:108). After gaining the results from the stakeholder analysis, the event organiser can increase productivity as it will

be known where to allocate time and efforts accordingly as well as to proactively deal with any identified issues (Boatright, 2006:108). There are various benefits which arise from conducting a stakeholder analysis some of which include but are not limited to inclusivity, effective engagement, the ability to anticipate issues, obtaining insights and the encouragement of comprehension and alignment (Jones, 2011).

2.10.1.1 Inclusivity

Through the process of identifying and analysing the stakeholders, a clear insight is obtained of who the stakeholders are, and it assists with the inclusion and consideration of all parties that are or potentially can be impacted (Jones, 2011).

2.10.1.2 Effective engagement

In order to increase the possibility of positive engagement, the stakeholders should be grouped together based on the stakeholder analysis as this will allow the event organisers to plan specific messages for each group (Jones, 2011).

2.10.1.3 Anticipating issues

It is a great benefit to know the stakeholders as this assists with planning, thus any potential risk that could damage a project can therefore be avoided. Risk management through resilience and planning for any potential issues could ensure a successful event as organisers are prepared.

2.10.1.4 Obtaining insights

The stakeholders that have been identified as the key stakeholders could provide crucial and relevant views and suggestions, thus improving an event and this could even lead to more support from the stakeholders (Simon, 2022).

2.10.1.5 Encouragement of comprehension and alignment

A significant benefit from conducting a stakeholder analysis is that communication channels are built which makes it possible for the identified stakeholders to fully grasp the goal along with the benefits of an event, it also builds trust and helps the project gain necessary support (Simon, 2022).

When analysing Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory, it is suggested that stakeholders of organisations consist of all parties affected by the organisation and its various procedures. Additionally, they include all the groups who support the organisation and without the support from these groups, the organisation would not be able to operate (Simon, 2022).

According to Clarkson (1995), an organisation is a structure of stakeholders that has the sole objective to be pleased. An organisation's distinctiveness is constructed on the numerous

existing stakeholder connections (Scott & Lane, 2000). According to Freeman (1984), the main objective of the stakeholder theory is the ability to comprehend the relationships between groups and entities which affect or are affected by the organisation, which is a valuable technique of examination with regard to organisational success.

The stakeholder theory also decides on which strategy should be used whilst responding to the actions and needs of the stakeholders (Jones, 2011). Identifying the event stakeholders differs with regards to the techniques used (Stokes, 2006). When identifying the event stakeholders, the multiple networks are revealed, despite the type of technique being utilised (Jörgen, 2009:228).

According to Clarkson (1995:97) stakeholders can be classified as primary as well as secondary. When analysing primary stakeholders, it is said that these stakeholders have a higher level of interaction and are crucial in order for the organisation to survive. The secondary stakeholders have the ability to affect and to be affected by the main organisation, however, the secondary stakeholders are not essential to its survival (Clarkson, 1995:97).

Event stakeholders can also be grouped as internal and external stakeholders (Jones, 2014:33). Jones (2014:34) stated that internal stakeholders consist of staff members, temporary crew and management, whereas external stakeholders consist of suppliers, contractors, government regulators, local municipal authorities, community groups, sponsors, local businesses, media, the general public neighbours, NGOs, and event participants.

Jones (2014:35) suggests that there are various questions that should be asked in order to identify stakeholders in regard to maintaining event sustainability, outcomes and impacts. These questions include:

- Will individuals be affected?
- Can these individuals actively add to solutions?
- Will personal opinions be shared to the public?
- Are actions being regulated?
- Are there legal obligations to these individuals?
- Will they hinder us in reaching the set objectives?

Stakeholders are quite complex as some stakeholders could have interests which compete with one another, and others could struggle to voice their viewpoints or even to actively engage with event organising due to coming from a vulnerable community (Jones, 2014:35).

Within the events management industry, the stakeholders comprise of but are not limited to consumers, consumer advocates, personnel, owners, volunteers, sponsors, suppliers,

emergency services, host communities, competitors, environmentalists, mass media, tourism organisations, financial establishments and governmental groups to name but a few (Freeman, 1984). All these groups are vital in order to keep the organisation running and prosperous (Simon, 2022). A way in which stakeholders' roles can be defined is according to the power they hold, their legitimacy and the urgency (Mitchell et al., 1997). These stakeholders are all directly and indirectly involved in events, thus it is crucial to gain an in-depth understanding of the influence and role which they each possess, resulting in the formation of a network and as an outcome the applicable stakeholders' work can be recognised and coordinated (Simon, 2022).

2.11 Event stakeholders

Event stakeholders play an important part in the hosting of a successful event. A stakeholder can be defined as a person who possesses an overall concern in a project and is therefore affected by the outcome either directly or indirectly (Gray, 2007:4). A stakeholder can be defined as "someone who has an interest or a stake in something, especially an enterprise, business" (Gray, 2007: 4).

A stakeholder is considered to be any person such as an employee or even a volunteer, who is impacted by an organisation's activity (Bryson, 2004: 22). According to Bryson (2004:22), a stakeholder is a person or business that needs to be considered by event organisers, administrators and frontline employees of the business event organisation. Without the crucial backing of the crucial stakeholders namely, the government, media, sponsors and local communities, businesses will be unable to occur (Wang, 2009:25). As per Goldblatt (2000:6), event stakeholders comprise numerous individuals such as "volunteers, vendors, politicians, regulatory and government officials, the media and multiple other stakeholders". It is important to note that there are multiple role players that need to be considered within business events such as event managers, event organisers, suppliers, venue owners and noteworthy industry relations (Etiosa, 2012:6).

Stakeholder relationships are highly critical; therefore, they should be dealt with in such a way that the main focus should be on achieving beneficial outcomes for the stakeholders (Boatright, 2006:108). Boatright (2006: 108) added that relationships with stakeholders must not only focus on the benefits of individual stakeholders but rather acquiring collaboration between the stakeholders and their welfare. Should the interests of stakeholders be ignored, then without a doubt the event organisers will experience hardships which could result in disastrous consequences (Boatright, 2006:108). Nevertheless, this research study focuses on the event attendees, government, local community, sponsors and the event organisers of the business events. These stakeholders were also greatly affected by the COVID-19

pandemic. The following stakeholders are crucial to ensure that an event is successful as seen in Figure 2.2.

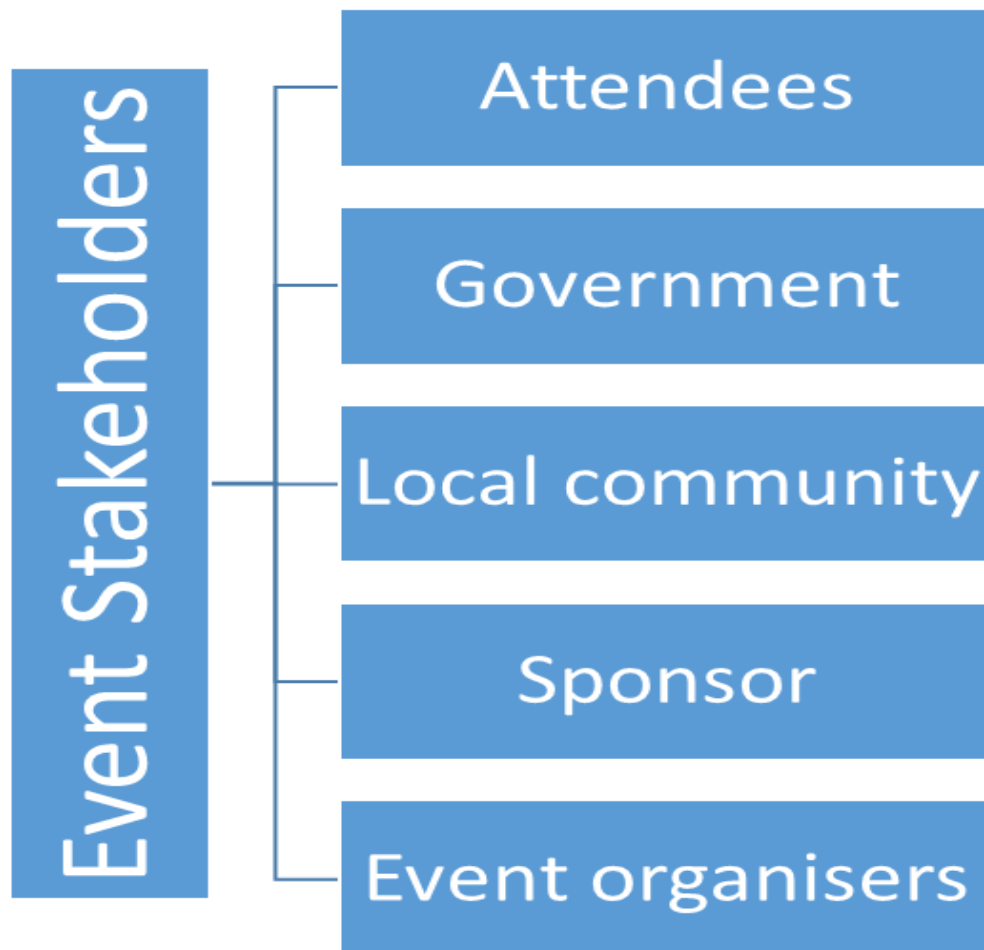


Figure 2.2: Event stakeholders

Source: Authors' construction

2.11.1 Attendees

According to Shone and Parry (2013:9), attendees to an event can be defined as “a group of people attending an event, for a range of purposes, from watching the event take place, to actively participating in some or all of the event’s activities”. An event attendee is considered to be a significant stakeholder in an event due to the fact that their attendance will be the deciding factor on whether or not an event is successful. The attendee’s experience of the event will determine whether the attendee will return to the event or destination, therefore attendee’s perceptions are highly crucial.

2.11.2 Government

The government plays a supportive role in business events (Wang, 2009:26). As per Wang (2009:26), the government might oversee and even manage business events in order to confirm that an event is implemented well. According to Wang (2009:26), the local government might gain more duties and roles within business events. These include aspects such as event

funding (subsidies), the use of investment for business events, the promotion of incentives for delegates, and providing distinctive native resources with the aim of supporting business events to attract more tourists. Business events are being used as a strategy for developmental purposes by the government, however, not all governments take on the same active roles. There are governments that are very active within the business events industry and then there are governments that do not really participate.

Solberg and Preuss (2007:231) stated that it is an extremely intimidating and intricate duty for most governments to provide subsidies for events as there is much uncertainty that goes with it. According to Solberg and Preuss (2007:231), a government that is not really involved in business events might lose out on lucrative prospects. There is also the possibility that a government can be too generous which could negatively affect them. For example, the government might sponsor a business event that is not able to reach the anticipated benefits. Thus, it is crucial for the government to sponsor sustainable events which can produce a profit for the government.

2.11.3 Local community

Within this research study, the local community denote people who live within the host destination of the business event. The local community usually have comparable characteristics and are affected by specific business events in one way or another (Aref et al, 2010:155). In addition, the local community most likely have similar belief systems, livelihood or ethnicity (Mattessich & Monsey, 1997:56).

Mattessich and Monsey (1997:56) stated that from a South African perspective, individuals from a local community might live in the same area but can be surprisingly different. Irrespective of societal class, geographic area, age, race, or sex, a community may possibly have massively dissimilar insights and worldly views which could be the result of personal experiences and life objectives and interests.

A comprehension of the professed role of the local community is therefore important when it comes to a business event. The local community should be made aware of events with regards to the benefits that come with them as well as their impact on them (Harrill, 2004). As said by Wisansing (2008:52) a community should be prepared for tourism and/or events. Community involvement will naturally follow if the community is well-educated on the benefits and impacts of the industry. According to Wisansing (2008:47), "Different terms, such as community development, public participation, and community empowerment, are used to denote the involvement of people in local affairs". People who live in an area where a business event is going to be hosted in and are involved in the decision-making process are known as community participants (Muganda, 2009:53). Participation from the local community guarantees capability

building, empowerment and communication of important skills to individuals of the community (Madonsela, 2010:6). Being an active person participating in the community with regards to the hosting of business events comprises of management, organising, application and appraisal of a business event.

2.11.4 Sponsor

Geldard and Sinclair (2002:3) define sponsorship as “the purchase of the usually intangible, exploitable potential (rights and benefits) associated with an entrant, event or organisation, which results in tangible benefits for the sponsoring company (image/profit enhancement)”. Geldard and Sinclair (2002:2) disclose that sponsorships have the ability to nurture crucial relationships amid an organisation and its objective market with the use of personalised approaches. Many businesses are enthusiastic about connecting with business events with the intention of accumulating transactions, presenting novel merchandise or improving the business image (Geldard and Sinclair (2002:2).

Allen et al. (2008:135) mentioned that the sponsorship of mega events became a well-known method to increase transactions and improve brand awareness. As per Masterman (2004:260), “sponsors have objectives that fit into one or more of these areas: to increase product or corporate awareness, to develop the product or corporate image, to drive sales, or to develop a market position”. Geldard and Sinclair (2002:5- 6) further explain the benefits of sponsoring business events, which include client and brand awareness, great relationships between different communities, exclusiveness, naming rights, cost efficiency and affiliation marketing.

2.11.5 Event organisers

With this research study, an event organiser denotes a person or a collection of individuals who possess the power and ability to coordinate and execute an event. An event organiser is said to be “the individual, or organisation, who promotes and manages an event” Shone and Parry (2013:22). Event organisers have numerous responsibilities with regard to the organisation process of an event and remain accountable for any outcome which occurs as a consequence of the event in question (Shone & Parry, 2013:22).

According to Getz (2008:406), inside the business events sector, many role players are identified as persons responsible for implementing strategies to ensure the success of events. The role players consist of the event coordinator, the event tourism planner and the tourism event producer. All of the mentioned role players have an independently allocated role and obligation which assists with the successful execution of an event. Getz (2008:406) emphasises that the event coordinator creates event consciousness and contributions towards an event destination in reaching their potential in liaising with the venue owners and/or relative

organisations. The tourism event producer, according to Getz (2008: 406), coordinates and executes an event and is responsible for liaising with numerous event stakeholders.

2.12 Stakeholder analysis and management

When analysing the management aspect of the stakeholder theory, it is noted that the theory is focused on delivering satisfaction and ethical accountability to the various stakeholders. The stakeholders are concerned with factors that are present outside of the financial shareholders (Gibson, 2000). With regards to the planning, executing and post-management of events, the stakeholder's objectives are to host successful events which can be measured by customer feedback, in other words, the legacy of the event (Gibson, 2000).

Freeman et al. (2004:365), highlight the fundamental part which the stakeholders play and the networking which is done particularly by the event managers responsible for securing the support of the community and for the acquisition of various resources. This is known as the stakeholder theory, the theory in discussion is concerned with the overall management of the organisational ethics which should be applicable to corporate governance and communal performance (Freeman & Miles, 2002; Phillips, Freeman & Wicks, 2003:472) The main focus of the theory is for the purpose of proving that the correlated explanation of the functionality of the business which consist of the identification of ethical or philosophical instructions by which the involved parties work (Donaldson & Preston, 1995:66)

There are three definite aspects which the stakeholder theory has been developed into, namely the descriptive, instrumental and normative aspect. The descriptive aspect outlines the behaviour of an organisation and thus determines its characteristics. The instrumental aspect assists with the identification of the relationship amongst the stakeholders and their various interests along with the areas which align with the objectives of the organisation. The normative aspect is utilised in order to explain the company instructions, functioning and oversight philosophy (Donaldson & Preston, 1995:46-74).

Within a corporate environment, staff members significantly contribute towards a company which makes them the most crucial resource of the company to which they work for, with regards to representing it to the various other stakeholders (Crane & Matten, 2004:224). With the help of the stakeholder theory, companies can better develop themselves by receiving the feedback from the various stakeholders to a specific company with regards to the partnership which is needed to reach a specific goal which should align with the organisation's interests (Harrison, Freeman and Abreu, 2015:862; Byrd, 2007:7).

2.13 Stakeholder consideration on impacts of events

A stakeholders' interests may be a direct outcome from the factors which affect any individual organisation or group (Byrd, 2007:6; Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Jones, 2011). When analysing

the stakeholder theory, it is concluded that individuals, employees, customers, groups, organisations, societies, and institutions to name but a few are considered as stakeholders or potential stakeholders (Lewis, 2006:15; Cassidy & Guilding, 2010). As per the statement by Freeman (2011), stakeholders also possess voting, economic, positional and political power. The aforementioned authors emphasize the importance of the power that the stakeholders have, stating that it also includes the urgency and legitimacy (Marzano, 2007:6). Stakeholders are thus described as individuals with substantial power, which should be considered greatly (Marzano, 2007:6). Three attributes were distinguished by Shahzad (2015:155), regarding the interaction between the stakeholders, observing that stakeholders could be recognised as well as prioritised by virtue of their possession of three attributes which include power, legitimacy and urgency. According to The stakeholder theory is the comprehension of being able to predict the actions and behaviour of the various stakeholders (Lewis, 2006:15).

In order to achieve successful implementation of an organisation's planning, it is recommended when focusing on the outcomes of a product or service delivery, the stakeholders should possess a communal respect for the many interests of all involved members (Lewis, 2006:15). According to Reynolds et al. (2006:286), the stakeholder theory is "the ability to balance the various stakeholders interests with competing claims by process of assessing, weighing and addressing interests of those who have a stake in the actions of the organisation".

Jörgen (2009:233), accentuates the significance of understanding that every stakeholder has unique interests, thus it will undoubtedly have a large influence on the level of eagerness of the stakeholders to prepare resources, as well as to engage in numerous activities connected to the event. The stakeholders also have their individual networks which permit task performance, consequently strengthening the statement that an event will either be directly or indirectly influenced (Jörgen, 2009:228). According to Getz et al. (2007:105), these above-mentioned influences decide which type of political strategy should be used in order to reach specific objectives.

The ability to recognise the stakeholders is considered as the most crucial step with regards to leveraging events and thereafter formulating a strategy (Jörgen, 2009:229). The multifaceted form of networking, along with the purpose of the relationships amongst the stakeholders, will influence the productivity of the network, thus highlighting identifying the stakeholder as a critical success factor (Jörgen, 2009:229).

The Sustainability Reporting Guidelines (SRG) from the year 2010 regarding the matter surrounding sustainability, economics, environmental and social factors of sustainable development stated that it should consider the stakeholders interests (Aggarwal, 2013:56). The SRG emphasizes that all the stakeholders affected hold an equal responsibility to implement responsible tourism through every action (Aggarwal, 2013:57).

2.14 Stakeholder perspectives on the impact of crises on business events

In order for stakeholders to generate sustainable wealth that results in durable and continuous value, stakeholders should be invested in the actions of other stakeholders which they would like to build relationships with (Post et al., 2002:8). The interests and actions of these stakeholders should be focused on the sustainability approach, with specific measurements being incorporated with regards to economics, social and environmental relevance (Schaltegger & Burritt, 2005:189). A policy community is a community that consists of the various interests which are mutual between the role players in the policy sector and who usually add to the policy processes, as well as interacting with it, with the purpose of balancing and optimising each other's relationships. With regards to the policy network, the action may be in need of the parties which are affected to function on a sub-sectoral level (Swart & Bob, 2007:379). Swart and Bob (2007:386) highlighted numerous aspects with related features with regards to the framework strategy of South Africa's tourism which include but are not limited to the marketing, the financial implications, the incorporation of developmental agenda, the regulatory mechanisms and the implementation imperatives.

In the event and tourism context, with regards to tourism, the stakeholders are in control of all the decision making within a destination which could affect various other stakeholders, (Stokes, 2006). Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the numerous stakeholders are understood including the influence that each stakeholder has. Thus, the responsibility does not only fall in the hands of only one stakeholder. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic the stakeholders were greatly impacted. Due to the hard lockdown in South Africa the stakeholders could not attend any event, financial implications arose as there was no stream of income, the government and local community was also negatively impacted as there was no tourism which was a lucrative contribution to the local economy. The event organisers of the business events sector (MICE) are the stakeholder that this study focuses on. The impacts that the event organisers of the business events experience are discussed in detail in the following chapters.

2.15 Chapter summary

The purpose of the literature review was to assess the mutual factors in studies regarding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Africa's business events sector from a multi-stakeholder perspective. In the following chapter, the methodology and every aspect of the research applied will be thoroughly deliberated. Topics such as the literature study, empirical survey, sampling and method of collection, development of a questionnaire and data analysis are discussed in detail.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The current study examined the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Africa's business events sector from a multi-stakeholder perspective. Whilst the opening two chapters have provided a background and laid a theoretical compass for the study, Chapter Three provides a summary of methodologies that were utilised to effectively complete the study. The chapter describes the research methodology in terms of the research design, the data collection methods and techniques, the questionnaire design, the sample selection, and the data analysis which were used to conduct the study. To begin, a reminder of the research questions is stated, as in Chapter One.

3.2 Research questions

Question 1: What are the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector in South Africa?

Question 2: What strategies can be implemented for recovery of the business events sector from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

Question 3: What measures could be implemented in future in dealing with crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector in South Africa.

3.3 Research philosophy and paradigm

According to Schlegel (2015), it is crucial to determine the primary philosophical assumptions that intentionally and unintentionally directed a research study. As such, the purpose of this discussion is to consider the research philosophy and philosophical assumptions guide this research enquiry (Schlegel, 2015). While there exist four main research philosophies including pragmatism, positivism, realism and interpretivism (Schlegel, 2015), this study adopted the interpretivism approach as it was found relevant and applicable to the study by providing the researcher to delve deep into the understandings of participants by being able to probe and garner insightful knowledge regarding their opinions around the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector.

Due to the nature of a qualitative study and the need to conduct interviews with multiple business event stakeholders, an interpretivism approach was adopted as it intended to understand social subjects through engagement with them (Nel, 2016). The interpretivist paradigm considers reality as multifaceted and intricate where a particular occurrence could have numerous understandings or versions (Nel, 2016). By researching an occurrence, investigation methods are used which will aid the researcher in understanding how individuals

understand and cooperate inside a particular social environment or with regard to a certain experience (Nel, 2016). When considering the framework of the interpretivist paradigm, the methodology is idiosyncratic, opinion based and qualitative. In this study, the data was obtained through conducting semi-structured Interviews and through the review of relevant literature.

3.4 Research design

According to Whitemore and Melkus (2008:11), the research design is the general strategy for conducting a study which will enhance the possibility of attaining the objectives of the study in an accurate manner. The research design is anticipated to provide a suitable outline for a study and guarantees that the findings of the study are a true and credible answer to the research question (De Vaus, 2001:9).

With the aim of determining the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Africa's business events sector, a qualitative research approach was undertaken through conducting exploratory research. In order to understand a specific problem and recognise ways in which to solve research problems, qualitative research approaches should be used (Mack et al., 2005:1). Qualitative research is highly beneficial when collecting comprehensive data concerning the moralities, beliefs, and behaviour of a specific group of individuals (Mack et al., 2005:1).

The research design is the approach that a researcher selects in order to incorporate the various mechanisms of a study in a comprehensible and rational manner which guarantees that the research problem will be efficiently addressed, thus, it establishes the framework for the assortment, measurement, and examination of information (Universal Teacher, 2020). The research design that was done in this study is the phenomenological design. Phenomenological design is a method of qualitative exploration that concentrates on studying a particular person's personal experiences within his/her lifetime (Neubaer et al., 2019). According to Neubaer et al. (2019), this method makes use of interviews, observation and surveys to collect data about certain topics and is exceedingly concerned with how participants feel about a topic during a particular event or activity. A phenomenological research design was done as the researcher pursued to investigate a particular individual's actual experiences regarding a certain occurrence (Bhattacharjee, 2012:106). The current study made use of semi-structured interviews to obtain information. Having face-to-face interviews is the most suitable method for obtaining the data as the study is strictly qualitative. In cases, respondents were asked questions regarding their personal experiences with the effects on COVID-19 on their business.

3.5 Research methods

A population can be described as an inclusive collection of participants who have a mutual or shared similar experience that a researcher wants to investigate (Saunders et al., 2008). When observing the research aim, it is noted that the population for this study was made up of multi-stakeholders in the business event sector within South Africa. Therefore, the individuals that were targeted in this study consisted of business events owners, organisers, stakeholders and/or vendors. These business event stakeholders were selected from the various provinces of South Africa. Women and men alike were interviewed in order to deliver a balanced, unbiased and fair view on the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on business events within South Africa. The study adopted a non-probability sampling approach and more specifically, a purposive sampling method, to collect data from the study participants.

The participants were selected based on specific criteria (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015), including their knowledge of the South African business events sector, and owning or managing business events companies in South Africa. In addition, those who were available, accessible and willing to participate in the study were included (Gray et al., 2020). In total, 14 event business representatives (organisers, owners, managers and supervisors) were selected to participate in the study. The study participants had first-hand experience and a comprehensive understanding of all the issues, especially how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their event businesses.

3.5.1 Qualitative methods

A qualitative research approach was used to conduct research in order to investigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Africa's business events sector from a multi-stakeholder perspective by means of exploratory research. This research method was chosen as the findings of a qualitative method are more evocative and the implications can be found much easier from the information that is acquired than that of a quantitative method (DeFranzo, 2020). Qualitative research is a market research technique that concentrates on the procurement of information via unrestricted questions and informal communication and is also created in a way that assists in uncovering the behaviour and opinion of a particular group by focusing on a particular topic (Crossman, 2020).

According to DeFranzo (2020), qualitative research is predominantly exploratory research as it is utilised in order to develop an understanding of fundamental reasons, opinions, and motivations and delivers an understanding of the research question or aids with the development of concepts for possible quantitative research. Qualitative research depends on linguistic (words) rather than data analysis and is based on naturalistic components with regard to the natural environment where communication arises naturally (Crossman, 2020). There are multiple unstructured or semi-structured methods when collecting data through using

qualitative research methods which include but are not limited to, group discussions, interviews, observations, ethnographic research, content analysis and case study research (Crossman, 2020). The sample size is characteristically made up of a small group (DeFranzo, 2020).

3.5.2 Study area

The geographical location for this study was confined to South Africa. In this study the focus was mainly on the business event sector, thus variables that will not be included in this study are events of any nature other than business events.

3.5.3 Justification of the study area

This study was conducted within South Africa. South Africa is made up of nine provinces, namely the Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, Northwest and Western Cape. South Africa has three cities that serve as capitals (Executive, Legislative & Judicial) which are Pretoria, Cape Town, and Bloemfontein. Johannesburg, the largest urban area in the country and a centre of commerce, lies at the heart of the populous Gauteng province.

South Africa's neighbouring countries include Namibia to the northwest, Botswana and Zimbabwe to the north, and Mozambique and Swaziland to the northeast and east respectively. South Africa's coastlines border the Indian Ocean to the southeast and the Atlantic Ocean to the southwest. The total land area in South Africa is 1,213,090 Km² (468,376 square miles) whereby the current population of South Africa is 60,241,635 as of Saturday, October 2, 2021 (SA-V, 2021).

The population density in South Africa is 49 per Km.² (127 people per mi²) and the average age of individuals in South Africa is 27.6 years (Data Commons, 2020). Up until 1991, South African law separated the population into four main ethnic groups which consist of the Black Africans (80.7%), the Whites (7.9%), the Asians (other) (2.6%) and the Coloureds who are of mixed White and Black descent known as the mixed race (8.8%) (Data Commons, 2020). These groups are still apparent today (Data Commons, 2020). The Black Africans are made up of numerous groups such as the Khoisan, IsiXhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Sotho, Shangaan and Venda, to name but a few (Data Commons, 2020). According to SA-V (2021), within South Africa there are eleven official languages. These include English (9.6%); Afrikaans (13.5%); Ndebele (2.1%); Sepedi (9.1%); Xhosa (16%); Venda (2.4%); Tswana (8%); Southern Sotho (7.6%); Zulu 22.7%); Swazi or SiSwati (2.5%) and Tsonga (4.5%) (SA-V, 2021). Numerous other languages from other countries are also spoken in South Africa which include but are not limited to Portuguese, Greek, Italian, French and Chinese (SA-V, 2021).

At present, South Africa relishes in a moderately steady diverse economy that pulls on its bountiful agronomic lands, plentiful mineral resources, tourist attractions, and exceedingly advanced knowledgeable capital (Thompson, 2021). Improved political equivalence and economic steadiness, yet do not essentially refer to social peacefulness as South Africa continues to endure trials such as the increasing criminality rates, racial strains, excessive inequalities with regards to housing and a lack of educational prospects, as well as the AIDS pandemic (Thompson, 2021).

3.5.4 Overview of events/ business events in SA

As mentioned in Chapter One, a business event is a happening in a business set-up and defines significant occurrences with the process of planning, managing and include all the communication throughout the conceptualisation of events (Rouse, 2020). Events that are considered a business event and that are key events hosted in South Africa include conferences, conventions, legislatures, advertising events, meetings, trade shows, brand or merchandise launches and exhibitions to name but a few (BECA, 2020). The intended outcome for a business event is to transfer particular messages, to educate various individuals on a specific topic, to approve or market a particular brand or product, or to produce resources (BECA, 2020). The business events industry has a powerful impact on the South African economy (Hiller, 2017). The predominant business event locations are in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban as seen in Figure 3.1 (Hiller, 2017).

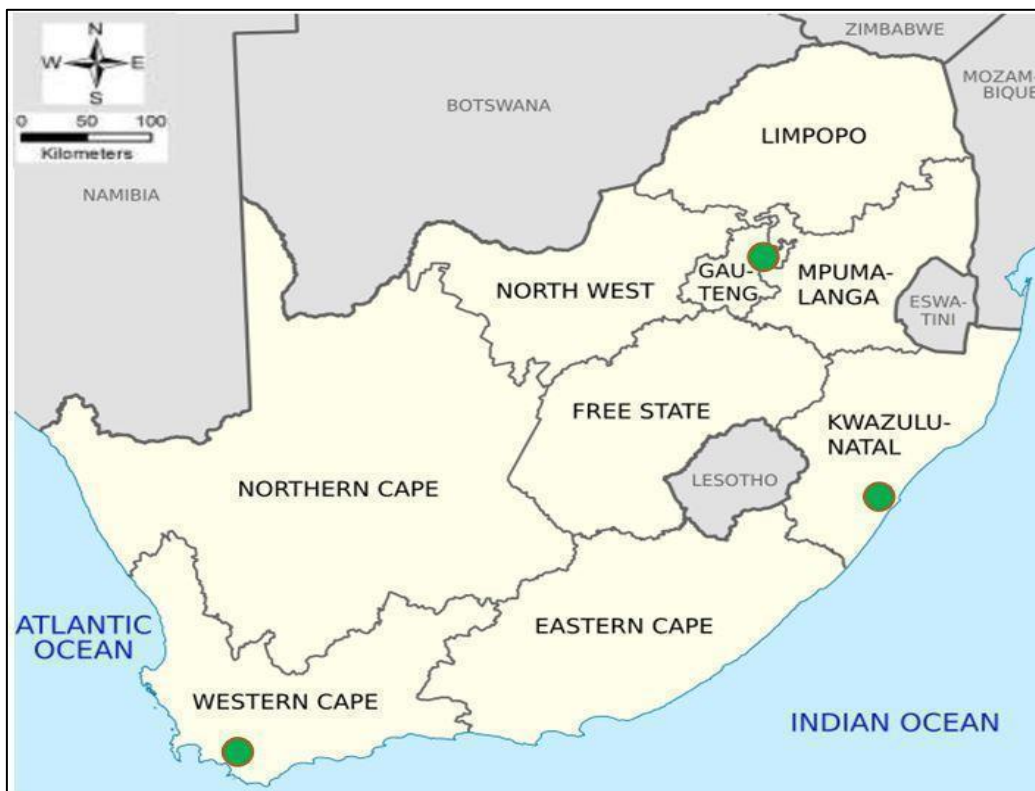


Figure 3.1: Predominant event locations in South Africa

Source: GIS Author Constructed

3.6 Research approaches and methods

3.6.1 Survey population

For this particular study the population/ participants to the study consisted of individuals who reside in the various provinces of South Africa and who are involved in a business event, whether they own the company, are managers of a business event, are vendors or even business event organisers.

3.6.2 Sampling techniques

The current study employed a qualitative research approach where selected business event representatives (owners, organisers, managers and supervisors) were requested to participate in semi-structured interviews. To support and achieve the study's objectives, it was deemed necessary to conduct interviews. Since the study participants were dispersed across the country, and the restrictions on people's movement were in place, the researchers opted to conduct email interviewing, which was combined with Microsoft Teams, Zoom, WhatsApp and telephonic calls in cases where the participants would elect such methods. Greef (2020) argues that given the pandemic situation, emailing the questions to participants and following up for clarity would be an acceptable method. Santana et al. (2021) weigh in to support the use of online tools to collect qualitative data, especially when conditions are not appropriate for in-person interviews. Some scholars (e.g., Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004) argue that telephone or video conferencing interviews do not yield significantly different results from those obtained from in-person interviews. The participants were identified and selected based on their involvement in the South African events business sector.

A series of questions were developed following the study's objectives and used to conduct the semi-structured interviews with the study participants. In some cases, especially where it was difficult to arrange suitable interview times between the researcher and participant, the questions were sent via email to the participants who had been specifically selected and briefed on the requirements of completing the interview schedule. The study participants were given the flexibility to respond to the questions at their own pace, and after they had finished, they simply submitted their comments to the researchers for consideration. With the email interviews, there was no need to transcribe the information provided by the respondents because the information was already in electronic (print) format. However, in the other segment of the data obtained from the interviews, the researcher transcribed and later compared the emerging themes with those from the emailed data. This was followed by a thematic analysis of the responses from the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.6.3 Sample size

The study by Dworkin (2012), recommends that a sample size of between 5 to 50 participants is sufficient to reach conclusive decisions with in-depth interviews. Saturation is needed for

comprehensive interviews and grounded theory (Barker et al., 2012). The quality and quantity of data in qualitative research are discussed in data saturation, whereby data saturation can be defined as the point when “no new information or themes are observed in the data” (Guest et al., 2006:59).

Throughout qualitative studies, research is obtained through conducting interviews, observing subjects, or visuals and this is done in order to better understand certain occurrences or phenomena (Dworkin, 2012). According to Guest et al. (2006), saturation happens when idleness is reached in data analysis, thus signalling that data gathering can be concluded. Guest et al. (2006) discovered that only 12 interviews of a particular cluster are required to acquire saturation, whereby theoretically speaking, saturation is the anticipated goal of data gathering. Thus, in this study 14 interviews were conducted before saturation was attained.

3.7 Data collection methods and techniques

A qualitative research method was selected as the methodology and data were collected using semi-structured interviews. This was commenced to understand how various businesses and stakeholders alike have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak with regard to socio-economic factors, revenue, assets as well as staff to name but a few. This study also aims to investigate how this sector can recover from the effects of the pandemic and also improve future ways in which operations take place in order to always be resilient, thus guaranteeing that the sector contributes to the continuous development and sustainability of business events. This chapter particularised the techniques used for the study and explains why the specific data collection method was the most suitable. It is imperative that the right techniques were used in order to attain the anticipated outcomes as an assortment of participants was part of the study, numerous techniques were used and are described in this methodology section.

Since this study was qualitative in nature, the data collection method was conducted by means of face-to-face interviews with the business events stakeholders. Due to the nature and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were completed via online platforms such as Zoom, Skype or Microsoft Teams. The individuals that were interviewed in this study consisted of business events stakeholders residing in any of the nine provinces in South Africa. These included event organisers, managers, sponsors and vendors. The interview questions are set up in order to answer the research question whereby intentional and goal-oriented questions were answered in a semi-structured interview in order to evoke in-depth and informative answers from participants.

During the interviews, specific questions were asked in order to answer the research questions. An interview entails asking a well-planned series of open-ended questions to communicate

with respondents and accumulate vital and detailed information about a particular focus (Doyle, 2020). There are three central categories of interviews which consist of structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews (Doyle, 2020).

A semi-structured interview is a gathering of individuals whereby an interviewer asks a respondent question and is not limited to following formalised questions only (Doyle, 2020). For this study, data was collected through conducting semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews comprise a rudimentary interview arrangement but also consist of a substantial quantity of freedom with regard to probing respondents for answers (Pollock, 2020). This form of interview permits an objective contrast of respondents, while at the same time offering an opening to impulsively discover subjects applicable to that particular respondent (Pollock, 2020).

Interviews are regarded as a more personal method of collecting information than collecting information through questionnaires (Kvale, 1996). Conducting interviews was the most relevant method of data collection for this specific study as each individual that was being interviewed was expected to speak from a unique point of personal experience which would benefit the results of this research.

In this study, the data collection instrument that was utilised was an interview guide as this was a qualitative study with the data collection tool being semi-structured interviews to leave freedom with regards to probing the respondents for answers. The instruments were credible and reliable as the researcher asked questions and allowed the respondent to answer without the researcher influencing the answers. This study followed CPUT ethical considerations that protect both the researcher and the respondents.

3.7.1 Interview schedule

The data collection method used in this study was based on an interview guide as this study creates an open space for respondents to answer questions freely through a semi-structured interview. The researcher did not influence the respondents' answers by any means in order to maintain reliable results. This was achieved as the researcher asked the interviewee questions and allowed them to respond according to their personal views and experiences and the interviewer followed strict ethical guidelines.

The interview guide was divided into three sections: Section A determined the socio-demographic profile of the business event's organisers or managers and entailed questions based on the work of Saayman (2011) which determined the attendees' age, nationality, and education.

Section B determined the business event profile of the organisers or managers whereby the respondent answered questions based on the business such as when the business was

established, what the core purpose of the business was and who the target market was to name but a few.

Section C was based on the effects that COVID-19 had/has on the participant and the business event in question. Questions such as how the business has been affected by the pandemic and what the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business event were discussed.

3.8 Data coding and analysis

The data obtained from the interviews were used by the researcher to assess the discoveries of the research. The tool that was used to assist with data analysis was NVIVO; a software program utilised for conducting qualitative or mixed-methods studies. This program is used for the purposes of the investigation of unstructured manuscripts, audio, audio-visual, and image files, which also comprises interviews, focus groups, surveys as well as journal articles (Kent State University, 2020). The constant comparative method was also used in the data analysis process. The constant comparative analysis approach was implemented to assist in analysing the gathered data.

This technique of analysing qualitative research data is often used when coding and analysing data from already-developed concepts (Taylor et al., 2015). According to Conrad et al. (1993:280), the constant comparative technique usually combines “systematic data collection, coding and analysis with theoretical sampling to generate theory that is integrated...” for testing and articulation. In brief, the approach consists of a data-analytic procedure in which the findings and interpretations supplied are compared with the literature as it emerges from the data analysis process.

Since this is a qualitative study, thematic analysis was assumed whereby the focus was on the emerging themes and concepts emanating from the interviews. This method is quite flexible as it can be used with various research designs (Statistics Solution, 2020). Thematic analysis is a great option for the purpose of discovering patterns within qualitative figures from respondents and researchers frequently use this method to investigate interviews (Statistics Solution, 2020). The coding of themes was done to assist in categorising and interpreting them in order to answer the research questions mentioned above.

3.8.1 Qualitative data analysis

The data that was collected from the interviews and the results was captured in Microsoft Excel. The analysis was undertaken in three sections. Firstly, Section A determined the general profile of the respondents to the study. Section B was used to determine the business event profile while Section C determined the effects of COVID-19 on the business events. This section sought to understand how the pandemic affected the events tourism industry by

drawing from the experiences of business event stakeholders in South Africa. Qualitative data analysis was conducted as the researcher's aim was to understand the participant's life experiences (Neubaer et al., 2019).

3.9 Chapter summary

The aim of Chapter Three was to view and discuss all aspects of the research that was applied while conducting the study on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Africa's business events sector: a multi-stakeholder perspective. Topics such as the literature study, empirical survey, sampling and method of collection, development of questionnaire and data analysis were highlighted and thoroughly discussed. It is clear from the research methods reviewed that there are many aspects to consider when conducting research which is precise and ethical. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the numerous methods and rules of research and how to apply them to a study to obtain the most accurate results. In the succeeding chapter, the data obtained from the survey are analysed and discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, a critical analysis was conducted and presented based on the study's methodologies that were utilised to effectively complete the study, the research design and data collection methods. The study was guided by the objective of investigating the effects of COVID-19 on the business event tourism sector in South Africa from a multi-stakeholder perspective. Therefore, Chapter Four presents the results that were captured throughout the duration of the data collection phase. To allow for enhanced comprehension of the responses that were received from the interviews, the study's findings were analysed with respect to the previously stated research objectives as well as the research questions which were highlighted in Chapter One. Throughout this chapter graphic representations were utilised in order to support the presentation of the findings of the study. In this chapter the results from the interviews are discussed in two sections, firstly the profile of the business event stakeholders is discussed, followed by the effects of COVID-19 on business events.

4.2 Profile of attendees

The succeeding sections display the profiles of the interview respondents. The general characteristics which were examined regarding the interviewees included age, nationality, highest academic qualification, and employment/occupation status other than that of the business event company which they were involved in as well as the employment categories. These particulars were crucial as they provided the researcher with a better understanding of the demographics of the business event stakeholders. The study results derived from the interviews conducted with business events owners, managers and representatives revealed several themes which are discussed under the following headings: COVID-19 effects, event business recovery and the future of business events. Under each of the above, key themes were identified and elaborated on with supporting quotes from the data provided to further support the claims.

To better describe and present the study findings, the researchers found it necessary to describe the individuals who participated in the study to ensure that data were obtained from relevant participants. A thorough understanding of each participant's profile was essential since it provided context that assisted in interpreting the study findings in a more meaningful way (Muresherwa et al., 2022a). As such, the researchers began by identifying the business event stakeholders or participants (P) who possessed the necessary and applicable characteristics to provide the required information that was useful to achieve the study's goal.

In the current study, the demographic profiles of the participants are presented (see Table 4.1) followed by an analysis of the emerging themes derived from the 14 semi-structured interviews.

4.2.1 Age category

One of the questions required respondents to specify the age category in which they currently were. The answers were recorded and captured in five separate categories, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Profile of business event stakeholders

Participant no.	Age	Years of service in the business	Nationality	Highest academic qualification	Other occupations besides event
P1	46 – 55	20	South African	Matric	Yes – Owns book shop
P2	46 – 55	35	South Africa	Certificates: Marketing, Hotel Management and Business Management	No
P3	46 – 55	15	Indian (SA Permanent Resident)	Degree: Marketing Management	Yes – Deputy Director
P4	36 – 45	19	South African	National Diploma: Food Services	No
P5	36 – 45	22	South African	Diploma: Events	Yes – Safety Officer
P6	36 – 45	7	South African	Degree: Education	No
P7	26 – 35	4	South African	Diploma: Marketing	Yes – Marketing Manager
P8	26 – 35	2	South African	Degree: Bachelors	Yes
P9	26 – 35	5	South African	Diploma: Events	Yes – Graphic Designer
P10	36 – 45	14	South African	MBA	No
P11	26 – 35	5	South African	Diploma: Event	No
P12	46 – 55	22	South African	Matric	No
P13	36 – 45	16	US Citizen	Degree: BA	No
P14	26 – 35	10	South Africa	Certificate	No

Source: Liedemann et al. (2023)

Kirtiraj (2012: 146), advances that age is one of the most important characteristics in understanding respondents' views about event aspects, therefore it is important to examine these responses. The participants' ages ranged from 26 to 55 years, there were no business event stakeholders that were in the 18-25 and 56+ age category. The age category that had the most individuals were 26-35 and 36-45 with five individuals each. According to Table 4.1, a total of 4 individuals fell in the age category of 46-55. Mostly in the younger age category, 26–35 years.

The majority of the business events stakeholders that were interviewed were millennials. Individuals born between 1981 and 1996 (ages 26 to 41 in 2022) are regarded as Millennials

(Dimock, 2019). Millennials are considered to be more advanced, innovative, and creative than earlier generations due to the fact that they were born into a technological era and grew up in a novel millennium (Dimock, 2019).

Technology governs every aspect of their existence, and they bear witness to technological evolution and development (Dimock, 2019). An interesting characteristic of millennials is that they generally prefer electronic communication as opposed to face-to-face communication and even phone calls (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2011:3). They are more socially connected with regards to having the necessary skill set and access to smartphones, laptops, social media and the internet in general, yet they tend to avoid in person social interactions. Millennials have a need for rapid access to information (PricewaterhouseCooper, 2011:3). During the COVID-19 lockdown, the business event stakeholders were forced to be innovative with the way they hosted events which led to the use of multiple different sources of technology which without a doubt changed the way in which events are being hosted in a post-COVID world (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2011:3).

4.2.2 Level of education

The business event stakeholders were asked what their highest level of education was. Table 4.1 shows the education level of the business event stakeholders. An analysis of the results of the educational qualifications of the participants show that they possess qualification levels ranging from a Matric/High school certificate to an MBA. Most of the participants held a diploma and the second highest academic qualification that they held was an undergraduate degree in various fields of study. Therefore, the findings propose that the majority of the business event stakeholders are educated with a minimum education level of secondary education and that they have professional careers.

4.2.3 Occupation categories

The participants were actively involved in business for a period spanning from two to ten years. The businesses of all the study participants were in existence pre-COVID-19 and they were able to comment on how the pandemic affected event business operations. Some of the participants had other occupations (six) which were not related to the events they planned or managed. These occupations included owning bookstores (P1), deputy director for a chamber of commerce company (P3), safety officer (P5), marketing manager (P7) and graphic designer (P9). The other eight study participants were only focused on their events businesses and did not have other occupations which is presented in Table 4.1.

4.2.4 Nationality

Table 4.1 presents the findings with regards to the nationality of each business event stakeholder. When analysing the nationality of the study participants, it is noted that the majority of the participants are South African (93%) citizens which is not surprising as the study was done on South African business events which supports the outlook by Brown (2010:22) that at most events, the bulk of the individuals in attendance are usually local, in this case it would be the business event stakeholders. One participant (P3) was an Indian however, a permanent South African resident and another participant (P13) was a US citizen.

4.3 Business event profile

When focusing on the business event profile, the business event stakeholders were asked to describe the business event or events that they were involved in in an effort for the researcher to better understand the responsibilities of the interviewee within the MICE sector. The business event stakeholders were also asked who the primary target market of their business was and what the main purpose of the events that they hosted were. Due to the anonymity agreement with each business event stakeholder, the researcher was not able to go into specific detail. However, the findings (as seen in table 4.2) revealed that each interviewee was in fact involved within the business events sector (MICE) and therefore proved to be the perfect candidates for this specific research which is focused on business event stakeholders within South Africa.

Table 4.2: Business event profile

Participant no.	Type of business event	Years event business has been in operation	Primary target market of business	Main purpose of event
P1	Convention	2016	Cosplay community, literature readers, comic book fans.	For attendees to experience the love of comic books, games, cosplay, literature, marvel, DC
P2	Incentive travel	2008	Corporate clients from overseas (USA, UK, a bit of Europe).	Corporate functions. 6 to 8 incentive trips per year. To make a profit.
P3	MICE sector (Tours, leisure tours, social and historical tours).	2012	Destination management in different countries, companies that want to run corporate events (Incentive travel).	Primary focus is to get Indians to come to South Africa. Professional corporate travellers and

				conducting meetings and business and collaborations.
P4	Music festival	2000	Locals and international tourists	To introduce jazz to mainstream audiences in South Africa and the sophistication of jazz as a lifestyle, rather than simply a music taste.
P5	A full-service eventing, promotional and corporate gifting, project management and event coordinating company.	2002	Corporates, Private sector – anyone requiring the services of an Event Manager / Safety Consultant	The goal is to expand throughout South Africa as the leading Event and Project Management Company developing a strong base of key clients.
P6	Workshops and training within a specific field	1994	Specialists, Teachers in Inclusive Education	To continuously equip individuals with the needed skills to do their job (Ensuring quality education for every child).
P7	Special events and corporate events	2018	Brides to be, moms for kiddies parties, moms to be for baby showers and corporate clients.	To create memorable events for clients.
P8	Conferencing.	2017	Corporate clients.	To gain knowledge and network.
P9	Private events, commercial events, corporate events as well as occasional fundraisers and charity events.	2017	Heterosexual couples from either Cape Town, Paarl or Stellenbosch (Northern Suburbs), caucasian or mixed raced (coloured) individuals, within a LSM group of 7+ and mainly millennials	The main purpose of the business is making a profit while simultaneously creating jobs for those in need.
P10	Commercial/ corporate events.	2013	Social and formal events (special events and corporate events)	To deliver an unforgettable event experience to clients and make a profit through doing so.

P11	We cater for all kinds of events, hiring of decor & equipment. We specialize in Muslim weddings & events of a larger capacity.	2018	Weddings to Corporate events to festivals, so our target market has a wide range.	We aim to exceed our clients expectations as there are another +- 200 potential clients attending the event and we want to leave a lasting impression.
P12	We plan and host conferences and exhibitions.	2007	Corporate (Exhibitions, workshops)	To grow and develop the African energy, manufacturing and infrastructure development arenas in Africa.
P13	Corporate events (Exhibitions and conferences).	1994	The entire Mining value chain on the African Continent	Investing in African Mining, solely dedicated to the successful capitalisation and development of mining interests in Africa. Educating individuals at conferences and exhibitions.
P14	conferencing, exhibitions and networking events.	2021	Government, National Oil Companies, International Oil Companies, Energy Companies overall, private businesses within the industry, etc.	Seeks to unite specific stakeholders, drive industry growth and development, and promote Africa as the destination for African-focused events and for the future of Africa's energy sector.

Source: Authors' construction

4.3.1. Description of the business events in which the participants were involved in

As per Table 4.2, all the participants that were interviewed for the study were involved in the MICE sector prior to COVID-19 as well as when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. The majority of the respondents stated that they were involved in the corporate side of the events industry as they planned and hosted events such as exhibitions, conventions and conferences. Some respondents to the study were involved in incentive travel, workshops and training within a specific field. There were also respondents to the study that stated that they hosted music festivals, commercial events, special events, traditional events, destination and leisure tours as well as social and historical tours. It was also found that project management, fundraisers and charity events were also being planned and hosted by some of the studies respondents.

4.3.2. When was this business event established/ been in operation? What is the history behind it?

The majority (a total of eight respondents) of the event business companies was established between the years 2012 and 2018 with the most recent company which began in 2021. Between the years 2000 and 2008 four of the companies were established and only two of the companies started in the year 1994 which is the longest companies to exist among the interviewees.

It is apparent that the history behind the starting of these businesses all differ as each business stakeholder had different motives for starting the companies. Most companies were established in order to generate an income and make a profit, however, a few of the interviewees stated that they started their companies due to a passion they had for the industry. Some interviewees wanted to share their love of South Africa with other countries and some wanted to share their interests/ hobbies/ knowledge about a specific topic with the public in order to grow a certain community or to educate individuals on a particular topic.

4.3.3. The primary target market(s) of the business

In order for your business to flourish, it is important to know who the primary target market is (Hubbard, 2019). By identifying who the target customers are, will aid with targeting individuals who are prepared to purchase the product or service from a business (Hubbard, 2019). With the identification of the target market, a company can develop a functional and successful marketing communication strategy (Hubbard, 2019). The business event stakeholders which were interviewed within this study highlighted who their target market was and it was evident that although they are all in the MICE sector, that they do not all have the same target market as seen in table 4.2. Multiple respondents to the study stated that corporate clients were the main target market for their business events while some stated that their market was quite specific to their business.

4.3.4. The main purpose for organizing or planning the events

While most of the business event companies organised events with the main objective being to generate income and make a profit, there were some event companies who were driven by other purposes. Participant 1 stated that the main purpose for hosting the event was to create a unique experience for the attendees where they can experience the love of comic books, games, cosplay, literature and marvel. Participant 2 has the sole objective to create a profit as opposed to participant 3 whose primary focus was getting Indians to come to South Africa through professional corporate traveling while conducting meetings and collaborations.

The main purpose for organising the event for participant 4 was to introduce jazz to mainstream audiences in South Africa and the sophistication of jazz as a lifestyle, rather than simply a music taste. The goal for participant 5 was to expand the business throughout South Africa as the leading Event and Project Management Company by developing a strong base of key clients. Participant 6 stated that the main purpose of hosting the event was to continuously train industry specialists with the needed skills to do their job effectively. Participant 8 also stated a similar objective whereby gaining knowledge and networking was the goal of hosting the event.

Participants 7, 10 and 11 voiced that their main objective for hosting events was to create memorable events for clients which would exceed the clients expectations and grow their business'. Leaving a lasting impression was also highlighted as crucial to participant 11 in order to increase their customer base. When interviewing participant 9, it was found that the main purpose of the business was to make a profit while simultaneously creating jobs for those in need.

Participant 12 also communicated that it was crucial to grow and develop their business throughout South Africa and created awareness with regards to manufacturing and infrastructure. Similarly, participant 13 hosted events in order to educate individuals on matters related to mining interests in Africa. The promotion of Africa as a destination was what participant 14 stated at the most significant driving force to hosting their specific event.

4.4 The effects of COVID-19 on event businesses

The business events representatives for this study were asked to highlight how their organisations were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Several themes emerged from the interviews as seen in Figure 4.1. The emerging themes included event cancellation and postponement. In addition, several businesses closed operations as there was a massive loss of revenue. As a result, numerous businesses had to restructure their work format by making use of a virtual space (online/remote/virtual events). Retrenchment of staff was also highlighted as a devastating effect of COVID-19 whereby valuable industry skills were lost. It was also noted that banks were unwilling to support the struggling businesses. The implementation of the 'no work no pay' principle became popular. These themes are further discussed in detail in the following sections.

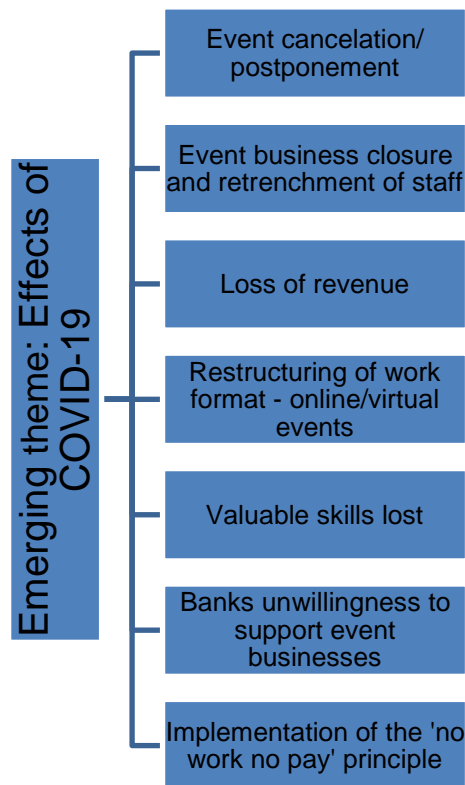


Figure 4.1: Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector - Emerging themes

Source: Authors' construction

The choice to cancel or postpone an event is never simple. Events play a significant role in defining the brand of an organisation (Jago et al., 2003), generating income (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021), and offering face-to-face networking opportunities for event attendees (O'Brien, 2006). Occasionally, cancellation or postponement of any planned tourism event is the only viable alternative. In such situations, it is essential to understand how to effectively convey these changes to the attendees and how to alter the plan to accommodate the changes (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021).

4.5 Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector

4.5.1 Event cancellation/postponement

As the COVID-19 situation worsened, especially when strict travel restrictions were instituted in the country in March 2020, the events industry was severely affected. With the stringent travel restrictions in place, only essential service providers whose roles were non-tourism related were permitted to travel as they carried out their duties (Stevano et al., 2021). As a result of the 'no movement of people' restriction, several planned business events had to be cancelled. Several consequences linked to event cancellation were realised, for example, 'shut down of operations,' 'laying off staff', and 'retrenchments.' The interviews with the different

event representatives revealed event cancellation as one of the distressing ways in which the pandemic affected the event business sector. One event owner and manager (P5) highlighted that within a short period after the announcement of national lockdown and travel restrictions, they had cancelled more than 100 planned and scheduled events. This is evidenced in the following excerpt: “Clients have cancelled over 100 events since the outbreak ...” (P5, Male, with 22 years in the events business). While some events were cancelled, others had to be postponed to a date when it was safe to host these events. However, it was not easy to predict when the situation would improve for event hosting, thereby putting businesses in a difficult position to plan. One event owner, a middle-aged South African with marketing experience, expressed how the COVID-19 pandemic affected her business:

“The events industry has been one of the hardest hit industries by COVID-19, with gatherings either being restricted or limited. It's still being affected with restrictions till today. The pandemic has affected my business in a big way, we have had weddings postponed and cancelled, there was a massive reduction in kiddies' parties, bridal showers etc. And corporate events were almost non-existent. With the reduction in events, it has of course affected the revenue of the business.” (P7, event business owner and organiser of weddings for four years)

4.5.2 Event business closure and retrenchment of staff

One of the factors businesses had to consider during the lockdown was that there was no source of income, thus placing the businesses under immense stress (Qukula, 2020). This resulted in cost-cutting and one major aspect to consider when cutting costs was to cut salaries and/or wages. The last option was to retrench employees (Qukula, 2020). Many businesses had no choice but to close down their business practices as they could not afford to keep their business in operation and funding was very difficult to obtain within the events industry (Qukula, 2020).

Meeting and convention organizers, who were unable to guarantee the safety of participants, decided either to cancel, postpone or relocate their events.

For most businesses, “everything came to an abrupt stop without warning ...” (P9). No business anticipated that the pandemic would affect businesses to this magnitude, causing several people to lose their jobs. One participant, a young graphic designer with an events qualification (diploma), expressed how his business was affected and the changes which had to be implemented to help in creating hope for clients and the industry. This is expressed in the quote below, where the business had to actively use social media to maintain communication with stakeholders:

“Staff had immediately been moved from working at the office to working from home should there have been any admin/design work, clients requested deposits back that had already gone into the organisation, and no new enquiries came our way for months. Eventually staff had to be reduced to the point where we were just two or three people trying to keep the company alive in some way or another, even if it was simply to post motivational messages

on social media to keep the platform alive, as there were no weddings or events to post. As work became less, staff became less, revenue became less and the chance of losing the company became a very big reality.” (P9, event business owner and organiser of weddings for four years)

As indicated earlier, the cancellation of events led to the closure of businesses for some time as business was lost. All the study participants agreed that in cases where events could not be cancelled, postponement of the event was an option. However, with the postponements, it was difficult to predict the duration of the postponement, as shown in the following excerpts:

“We had to close down operations for quite some time, lost business since all the planned events had to either be cancelled (the worst situation), and postponed (but could not quickly predict until when – no one knew when the lockdown was going to end, especially that there were changes in regulations and control measures for the pandemic. We ran into massive losses and hopefully with many countries easing travel restrictions, we are more likely to get going.” (P12, event business owner with 22 years of experience)

“Less staff (retrenchment) and moved all events to virtual events. We did not need as many staff to run virtual events. Revenue was slightly less than when we hosted physical events.” (P12, event business owner with 22 years of experience)

Participant 3 also stated that the COVID-19 pandemic led to the retrenchment of staff as in the following excerpt:

Prior to COVID-19 was refereeing from drought and business started getting normal. Once COVID-19 hit I had to retrench staff, only one team member working right now, the rest not employed currently. Had 5 in total before COVID-19. Cape Town Based (Plumstead) [P3].

4.5.3 Loss of revenue

Loss of revenue arises when a business generates less profit from operations than what was expected caused by either external or internal elements such as the COVID-19 lockdown (Marquis, 2022). The restrictions imposed on South Africa due to the COVID-19 pandemic led to a substantial revenue loss for the business events sector as normal business practices could not be conducted and many businesses opted to move their events to a virtual platform (Marquis, 2022). The loss of revenue is a disastrous prospect for any business which has been in operation over a long duration of time. Revenue loss which has been in occurrence for an extended period of time might result in the retrenchment of employees, minimizing the size of the business or even closing down of the business as business owners will be unable to pay for staff and business operations (Marquis, 2022). This was definitely the case with the COVID-19 pandemic on business event stakeholders as seen in the following excerpt:

Lost revenue on flight tickets for celebrity guests appearing at the event. The ticket became a voucher but will expire soon and most likely won't host an event of this magnitude in the next few years especially in South Africa. Contracts was all signed and in place before the announcements for the event was aloud. So, the time spent to complete the contracts was also wasted as the event was postponed and then cancelled. Had to refund exhibitors. Luckily the sale for tickets was not open yet. (P1, owner of two comic bookstores)

With the loss of revenue, the business event stakeholders were forced to find alternative means to continue the business operations whereby some business event stakeholders opted for the use of virtual online events.

Participant 8 stated that there were dates where an event was totally shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that zero revenue was made. In addition to this, employee salaries were raised by other activities and duties.

4.5.4 Restructuring of work format - online/remote/virtual events

When the pandemic first hit, the business events industry was one of the industries that suffered the most due to the lockdown and social distancing laws that were put in place to contain the spread of the virus. This led to the development and growth of virtual/online events in order to keep businesses in operation (Kightley, 2022). According to Kightley (2021), virtual events flourished greatly since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Without a doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic shifted how companies all around the world functioned, this was no different for the business events industry as business organisers were faced with making difficult decisions with regard to the events which has been planned for quite a period of time (Kightley, 2021).

As per Graham (2022), a new movement emerged whereby as a substitute for complete cancellation or postponement of events, events were now restructuring the work format by replacing in-person events with online virtual events. In the early 2000s, with a pandemic, events would just have been cancelled or postponed, however with the new technology that has been developed event organisers can easily shift their events to a virtual platform (Graham, 2022). Conventionally, with the use of online events, it has been difficult to recreate the unique feature of face-to-face events (Graham, 2022). At business events such as a conference, networking is one of the motivating factors to attend the event which happens in a spontaneous and organic manner, however with virtual events this is not the case (Graham, 2022).

Face-to-face events are unquestionably beneficial and valued. Online events are without a doubt incapable of replacing face-to-face events, however it is a progressively sustainable alternative for business events (Ton et al., 2022). However, according to Ton et al (2022), virtual events have its disadvantages when it comes to the social aspect, an extremely low amount of interpersonal interaction takes places as opposed to face-to-face events, thus attendees and business organisers alike feel less satisfied with the event and feel disconnected as can be seen in the following excerpt:

“...There is a feeling of disconnection as we haven't been face to face since before 2020 lockdown.” (P6, Deputy Chief Education Specialist (DCES), government employee)

4.5.5 Valuable skills lost

It was stated that the world-wide response to the COVID-19 outbreak would result in a powerful deterioration in the South African economy, specifically in the business events industry (Qukula, 2020). Consequently, this would leave many individuals without work or unable to conduct their usual work practices resulting in the loss of valuable industry skills (Qukula, 2020).

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown event employees were suffering the loss of valuable industry skills as they were unable to practice. Many event employees were retrenched and/or sought for work in other fields losing industry professionals. One event owner, a middle-aged female with 35 years' experience in the business events supported this concern highlighting loss of skills "*...Losing a lot of valuable skills as the young employees are now seeking jobs in other fields.*"

An event owner (P9), a young South African woman with five years' industry experience, articulated how the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in retrenchment and her company was left with two or three employees whose only duty was to complete simple tasks such as posting motivational messages on social media. As such, relevant industry experience was not being practised by the employees left in the company as well as by the employees that was retrenched, thereby losing out on valuable opportunity to upskill oneself. This is supported in the following excerpt:

"...eventually staff had to be reduced to the point where we were just two or three people trying to keep the company alive in some way or another, even if it was simply to post motivational messages on social media to keep the platform alive, as there were no weddings or events to post. As work became less, staff became less, revenue became less and the chance of losing the company became a very big reality." (P9, female, with five years in the events business).

Participant 13, an employee in one of the world's largest mining investment conferences in South Africa, revealed that in 2021 they were forced to host virtual events and virtual investor meetings in order to remain functional in the business events sector.

4.5.6 Banks' unwillingness to support event businesses

Business events faced many challenges, however one of the biggest challenges which they were faced with was in relation to difficulty in accessing finances (South African Government, 2021). Banks were hesitant to issue business loans as the nature of the pandemic was uncertain and business event companies were considered a high risk (South African Government, 2021). The government tried to alleviate some of the financial strain on employees of industries such as the tourism and events industry by providing a Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant. The grant did not have to be paid back to the government (South

African Government, 2021). The government provided food parcels to individuals and families that were in dire need of and could not fulfil their basic necessities. The assistance was only given to South African citizens, permanent occupants or immigrants who were in need (South African Government, 2021).

One of the major challenges experienced by the business event stakeholders was that they had no source of income. Most businesses in other industries could simply apply for a business loan at a bank. This was not the case for event companies which had no physical assets and were identified by banks as high risk and therefore business loans were not a possibility as supported in the following statement:

“... Has government helped? TERS yes from April, May to October. Business council fought hard for more TERS funding as event sector was not allowed to operate. They reintroduced it from October to December then January to March. Been so complicated as applications opened from first of March and it ended at the end of April, and they are still trying to verify companies and are unable to give an answer and need to reapply due to tax and they don't know when they will be able to provide funding. Events is considered high risk by banks etc as they do not have physical assets, but the employees are the assets, and they are out of work. No collateral.” (P2, incentive travel expert with 35 years of active engagement with events)

4.5.7 Implementation of the ‘no work no pay’ principle

Business event stakeholders experienced an array of unfortunate occurrences as a result of the pandemic, some of which included retrenchments, lack of funding from the local government and banks, loss of industry experience, cancelled and postponed events and unanticipated costs which they were unable to pay as they were not able to host events and therefore incapable of generating an income (Qukula, 2020). Some business adopted the “no work, no pay” principle whereby employees were told that they would not get a salary as there was no money being generated (Qukula, 2020.) The following excerpt supports this statement:

“Unfortunately, some employees had to be laid off, and a no work no pay principle was applied as there was no source of income being generated.” (P11, young female, with 5 years of business events experience)

Unfortunately, the effects were not only limited to the business event employees, but this also affected all the event service providers, vendors and even the venues at which events were to be hosted as seen in the following excerpt:

“...They [event organisers] were not able to run the event at all due to the pandemic, vendors effected as they lost work and revenue. Fans losing out on experience. Stagehands, sound and stage managers, vendors and suppliers were out of work completely. The venue (CTICC) also affected by the events not being held anymore.” (P1, owner of two comic bookstores)

4.6 Event business recovery

The events industry was severely hit, such that nearly all in-person/physical exhibitions and events did not take place for almost two years. As seen in the previous sections, several events

were cancelled or restructured to be delivered virtually. The year 2022 had a promising start, signs of normality were returning with the successful hosting of major events in Cape Town (e.g., Cape Town Carnival, World Travel Market, and Two Oceans Marathon). Collectively, most of the interventions proposed and implemented for event business recovery contributed towards the preservation of employment, sustaining of industries, and were a basis for stimulating the business economy during recovery. Several strategies continue to help in the recovery of the events industry, especially noting that the COVID-19 pandemic is still in existence with fears of the emergence of new variants, which could disrupt the industry again.

In March 2020, during hard lockdown restrictions (Magongo et al., 2020), no one knew how long it would last, making it more challenging to formulate viable solutions, which were mostly on 'trial', especially in the South African context, taking lessons from countries which had experienced global crises. The researcher sought to investigate how the South African business events sector could recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most participants were hopeful that the situation would improve. However, this was only achievable if different event stakeholders collaborated and worked together. For example, P1, with business experience of two decades, remarked, "... event business owners, organisers and managers can strive to maintain clientele for the future so that once the borders open and events are allowed again, the sector can operate in full swing again." This highlights the importance of communication with the clients so that they are retained for future purposes. The notion of collaboration as a strategy towards recovery was also evident as shown in the following quote from an event business owner with more than three decades of being actively involved with the events industry:

"... the South African events councils should come in and work hand in hand with the tourism business council of South Africa. ministerial task team under department of sports arts and culture ... the Minister has been extremely supportive with helping us get meeting with right departments such as SARS, treasury, COGTA to find ways to mitigate the financial impact (tax breaks, banks). ... regards to events sector recover is trust and confidence from clients. South Africans is on a red list as no travelling is allowed. PR is crucial and events council should inform other countries that we are open for business and is safe. Vaccine will not take the problem away, still going to need to practice safe protocols and rapid testing. PCR tests at event venues – gives people peace of mind that no one has virus. Rapid tests are fast and effective. Events can be run safely with the correct procedures." (P2, incentive travel expert with 35 years of active engagement with events).

The above excerpt highlights several ways of ensuring industry recovery and mirrors the views of some study participants. Some suggested working together by having "brainstorming and engagement" sessions where new ways of operating could be discussed. Moving operations to online formats also came out strongly in the conversations with the study participants. However, for some, it meant added costs to make or adopt technological innovations for event production and consumption. Following the health and safety protocols such as the wearing of face masks, sanitising, maintaining social distancing, encouraging vaccinations and taking the PCR tests, were some of the suggested ways to ensure that the industry would be permitted

to reopen as this would guarantee safety. One participant with five years of experience working on events stated:

“The best way to recover is to stop fighting COVID-19 rules and regulations and adapt to the 'new norm' where events are smaller and have a lot more rules to adhere to. We need to keep promoting events ...” (P9, event owner with five years of experience).

Governments around the world introduced rules and policies to help fight and prevent the further spread of the virus and protect their citizens (Lyu & Wehby, 2020). However, the effectiveness of some of the policies introduced, especially that of face masks, was highly debated emanating from a lack of sufficient evidence of masks mitigating the spread of the virus (Jefferson et al., 2020). Despite this, face masks remained critical in limiting the spread of the virus and the participants felt that complying with the regulations would help in preventing the spread, thereby enabling the industry to recover more quickly.

When conducting the interviews, the researcher asked the interviewees to highlight the actions that were taken in order to recover from the effects of the pandemic. P1 stated that they posted a lot online, shared podcasts and digital content with online supporters in order to stay relevant. The business also kept in contact with sound and stage managers as well as vendors and suppliers to encourage and motivate them as they too were greatly affected by the lockdown. In an attempt to generate some form of income, they started selling products via online platforms which kept us afloat. P8 also created an online shop as an effort to generate an income.

P2 took a unique approach with trying to recover from the effects of the pandemic, the owner of the business events company started a support group for all individuals affected by the COVID-19 pandemic within the industry which started January 2021. This was a good way for people to realise that they are not alone and helped support these individuals mentally and emotionally.

P3 and P4 both stated that they were unable to take actions in order to recover from the pandemic at this point in time. However, they used this time to think and strategise on matters regarding how to place the company on a global scale through different products and markets, collaborations and becoming more digital.

P5 diverted to offering safety consultancy to events and clients as the business owner is also a trained COVID-19 Compliance Officer. As many others, P6 took the virtual route whereby they moved events to virtual platforms in order to keep operating. P6 stated that the pandemic caused them to rapidly adapt to the digital space and also saved costs such as catering and venue hire, however virtual events have proved to be a challenge when it comes to keeping the attention of the attendees. In addition, P7 and P12 stated that they had to adapt to survive

and therefore virtual events were the only option for them. However, P7, they soon followed the event trend of “drive-by” parties for funerals and baby showers to name but a few.

Drive by events had become very popular where people drove by houses and gave gifts and well wishes and drove off again, P11 also stated that this was the only form of events that they could host besides that of the virtual events.

One participant with five years of experience working on events stated:

“To counteract the effects of COVID-19 on the event industry's/our company we had to significantly drop our prices in order to become affordable to the few individuals who could still afford an event planner, we also had to look at new ways of marketing. Facebook and Instagram were no longer the most visited platforms for our target audience, Tiktok was. That meant learning how to make videos and follow strange trends to get exposure for our company. We also started offering packages for 10-20 guests versus the usual 80-120 guest packages, and our most requested service, wedding planning, became our least requested service. We kept getting requests for funeral planning, so after the first few months, we created a sister company aimed at funerals. Still an events company, but one that focused on funeral planning, styling and “catering” - although the catering was mainly pre-packed snack boxes that were meant for takeaway as attendees at the funeral were not allowed to gather after the funeral service...” (P9, event owner with five years of experience).

In addition, P10 and P13 kept constant communication with the various stakeholders which helped as it assured stakeholders that we were not forgotten about. Staff became creative and developed content which was shared via social media groups which was aimed at making clients feel relaxed and happy. Making clients happy with reassuring messages was one of the marketing strategies that helped keep the business events company relevant and also gave the staff something to keep themselves busy and distracted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.6.1 Possible ways in which the South African business events' sector can recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Many of the participants stated that recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic was a really challenging and daunting task. However, there were a few ways that could alleviate the damage caused by the pandemic and help the business events' sector to recover. Participant 1 highlighted that all they could think of doing was to strive to maintain clientele for future purposes so that when the borders open and events were allowed to be hosted again, that the events sector can immediately operate in full swing. Participant 7 suggested that it was a necessity to keep promoting events throughout the lockdown as to keep the industry relevant and back in operation as soon as the lockdowns restrictions were lifted. Participant 6 also stated a similar method in order to stay relevant through sending emails, letters and hosting online seminars in order to maintain clientele. Participant 6, 7 and 14 were some of the individuals that stated how crucial it was to follow all the COVID-19 rules and regulations by avoiding mass gatherings and conduct business online as well. One participant with three years of experience working on events stated:

“The events industry needs to open up and start operating, but with strict protocols in place. We are all well trained in social distancing, sanitizing and mask wearing and now we need to put this into practice...” (P7, event owner with three years of experience).

In addition, two participants with five years of experience working in the events industry strengthened this statement by adding:

“The best way to recover is to stop fighting COVID-19 rules and regulations and adapt to the “new norm” where events are smaller and have a lot more rules to adhere to...” (P9, event owner with five years of experience).

“The only way the events industry can recover is if they lift the rules & regulations back to normal.” (P11, event manager with five years of experience within the industry).

Participant 3 stated that the lock down should be used to brainstorm new ways to operate in the event of another lockdown. They also mentioned that online operations were safe, thus developing and working on creating a unique online experience was how they strived to overcome the challenges. Participant 4 also suggested to utilise the lockdown as a means to focus on the identification of products and experiential development opportunities to support the industry.

Participant 5 stated that the only means to recover was by investing into entrepreneurs as they were the only saving grace at the time whereas participant 8 stated that joint ventures with other business sectors would be an effective method to overcome the devastation caused by the pandemic and also to apply for financial funding.

This is expressed in the quote below, where collaboration was believed to be a key to surviving within the events industry:

“Collaborating with the various people (stakeholder network) is critical. This helps in that businesses can share experiences and best practices especially on how they are dealing with the challenge. Sharing of practical experiences is critical since it is in this information that is shared that we find best strategies and solutions to problems facing the industry. Being generous with information is also important. Government needs to also do a lot to support event businesses, the recovery funds need to be disbursed to businesses so that it helps minimize the effect of the virus on businesses. In addition, government need to support businesses with information, funds, and also change polices to favour businesses for example at times exempt businesses from paying high tax especially the hard-hit (extreme suffering businesses), education and just help...” (P10, event owner with fourteen years of experience).

Participant 12 expressed that a virtual platform was a good alternative to hosting events, however, a more tangible aspect needed to be developed. An example of this would be to utilizing an aspect from gaming glasses (3D glasses).

4.7 The future of business events

Business event organisers will undoubtedly continue to place a high priority on the necessity of safety, security, and flexibility in the future. Most business event clients during the planning for events will need to pay much attention to several aspects, including cleanliness, especially

within hotels, airlines, ground travel, airports, and event venues. The clients will also need to look for the existence of a crisis management plan in case a new COVID-19 variant emerges. In addition, the study participants think that a good infrastructural base, one with sufficient medical response facilities, would be a consideration for business event clients. Governments are therefore encouraged to upgrade, renovate, and expand infrastructure at destinations so that event attendees will consider visiting. Technology will continue to dominate in event production and consumption, which necessitates more training on how to plan for safer business events.

As an event stakeholder, it is important to focus on the possible measures to take regarding the future success of business events in order for the events industry to survive. Participant 1 outlined a step that was crucial for their company's survival during the lockdown which was to practice efficient marketing in an effort to keep clients informed regarding future events and even informing clients about governmental changes in real time. Participant 2, 6 and 13 once again highlighted the importance of following the correct protocols and follow all COVID-19 restrictions to ensure client safety.

Participant 3 emphasised the importance of being organised and plan for when the world reopens and the industry will be extremely busy as seen in the following excerpt:

“When the industry comes back to normal it is going to be very busy and lots of tourists are coming so getting ready with regards to getting all your ducks in a row, talking to suppliers, protocol and procedure and COVID-19 protocols in place, rates ready, doing spread sheets, contracts. Preparedness is the focus going forward, and have one on one interaction with clients, just finding out if they are safe where they are and telling them that we are here and let us know when you are ready, making presence known. Be proactive. Get on social media platforms (market) Instagram fb search engine optimization, maximize exposure...” (P3, event owner with 15 years of experience in the events industry).

Participant 4 mentioned that in order to recover from the pandemic funding needed to be sourced and sustainable events needed to be developed by integrating technology and/or hybrid events.

It was evident that business event stakeholders utilised online platforms, social media and technology trends to their benefit in order to stay in business throughout the lockdown as seen in the following excerpts:

“To sell their services remotely. Using the internet/digital technology as an event platform...” (P8, event manager with two years of event industry experience).

“For our business to keep succeeding, we simply have to keep adapting and let go of our usual way/pre-COVID-19 way of operating, and keep developing with our target audience, because without our target audience, our company will perish. We also have to keep up with latest COVID-19 trends, as mentioned above, such as TikTok marketing, as well as re-asses what it is that our target audience require from us as event managers - which is many safeties at the moment...” (P9, event manager with five years of event industry experience).

Evolving with the times and keeping up to date with technological trends was what participant 7 mentioned as extremely important for the survival of the industry. Participant 10 and 11 also mentioned the importance of being able to adapt to the changes and move with time in terms of being able to understand the emerging trends. Participant 10 stated that being flexible is a significant aspect to focus on.

Participants were asked what could they have done differently with regards to when the pandemic first hit and the world shut down. Most participants stated that they could not have done anything differently as they had no way in knowing that there would have been a pandemic and that the world would have shut down. However, there were a few participants that stated that they could have went virtual with hosting of events sooner instead of fearing the change and used technology more extensively (P2 and P10). Participant 4 expressed that if they had the power, they would have closed the borders sooner so that more businesses could have operated within the country as oppose to closing everything down. Participant 8 communicated that they would have saved money for unseen circumstances and that they would have started to explore the online aspect way sooner. Participants 9 expressed their opinion in the quote below:

“I really wish I didn’t keep thinking and fighting against the pandemic the first 6 months. I should have closed down our company the moment we were in level five, and reopened when events reopened. I would have saved a lot of money on staff, marketing and refunds...” (P9, event owner with five years of experience).

4.7.1 Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the business events

A significant socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on the various business events were events being cancelled which left many without work, this included stage hands, vendors, suppliers and numerous other stakeholders (P1, P3). Participant 5 and 8 also highlighted that the service providers were negatively affected by the pandemic:

“I run hundreds of events so cannot comment on 1 particular. However, I can say that because so many events were cancelled that meant that all their service providers were cancelled too which has a great impact on the socio-economics.” (P22, event owner with five years of experience).

“On the days where there were no events, income for suppliers were zero. Socializing was limited. The community safety was fairly impacted. The ripple effect of suppliers earning an income influenced the fact that they could have spent they earning into the economy.” (P8, event owner with two years of experience).

Since there were no events being run, there was no income being generated and this gave some business event stakeholder no option but to seek employment elsewhere and if unsuccessful in that regard, then they had to live off their families as stated by participant 2. Job loss and retrenchment was a recurring theme throughout the participants. Participant 12 stated that they were forced to retrench staff. The following excerpts shows just how apparent job loss was during the lockdown:

“The main social economic factors that were influenced for us, were employment which drastically decreased, as mentioned above, we were no longer able to keep all our employees, as well as income, which became next to nothing, and finally also losing support and clientele to death.” (P9, event owner with five years of experience).

“We lost revenue, a lot of money was lost as result of the pandemic and emanating from the decisions which were made by government of restricting movement of people as well as the gathering of people. Remember, we are in the events industry where we rely mostly from the gathering of people, and now that we were under lockdown, it meant we lost businesses, lost clients, lost employees (could not pay them – unsustainable to keep them, costly). It affected us as the owners of the businesses especially seeing that someone who had been serving you well for years is going home with no alternative job, it was not easy but what could we do?” (P10, event owner with 14 years of experience).

“More people were unemployed or reduced salary, therefore were not spending money on decor and doing more DIY projects. People were also not allowed to host events or gatherings, therefore not hiring or needing our services.” (P11, event owner with five years of experience).

4.7.2 Operation of business events since being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

Multiple business event companies had to alter the way in which they operated as a result of the effects from the COVID-19 pandemic. Some companies, specifically in the business events industry were completely unable to operate due to the nature of the pandemic and the restrictions from the government. Without being able to organise and host events, there is a possibility that industry workers will be without practice and lose crucial industry skills. Participants 2 expressed their opinion in the quote below:

“Absolutely no business, I am concerned is that I have not run a program for a whole year, and run out of practice and will have to work extra hard to gain back my industry skills. Experience is flagging, as addressed with the government. Need to keep industry in practice, run mock groups. Practice art of planning...” (P2, event owner with 35 years of experience).

There were however some companies that stated that since the lockdown their business has not had to change in a significant way as can be seen in the following excerpt:

“Hasn’t altered much, slogan “definitely different” we always willing to change by offering the best to our clients. Changes that we will make is collaborate and synergise better, collaborating with a company in India that represents my company in India so that cuts out traveling to travel to India because they represent my company and does marketing for me and still gets business from current clientele travelled a lot for business... By having the synergy of having representation in other countries, you cut off you cost of having to travel, marketing also. They do share your profits but you don’t need to stress about traveling etc....” (P3, event owner with 15 years of experience).

Although some business’ were fortunate enough to have had minimal effects, there were other business’ that suffered a great deal such as participant 4 who had to move out of their business premises and work from home since March 2020, which also left with a high possibility of retrenching their staff. Participant 10 and 11 also stated that they had no other option other than to work from home. The following excerpts support this statement:

“We had to quickly shift some of our work to be done remotely, and still offer our services online. However, what we noticed was that most people prefer being or working physically (online is not for everyone) ...” (P10, event owner with 14 years of experience).

“Working from home has become an option and alternating shifts to adhere to the COVID-19 protocols.” (P11, South African event owner with 5 years of experience).

It was evident that multiple business' had to learn towards retrenchment which also created a larger work load for the few remaining staff members which is evident in the below excerpt:

“Operation wise we are a lot less staff, which means the work load for the remaining staff has increased a lot. We also constantly watch the news, or listen to the radio to prepare ourselves in case there is word of the levels going up/down. We also no longer invest our client deposits into our company, but rather keep it aside in case our services are cancelled, as we came in the habit of offering 25% of the 50% none refundable deposits back to our clients if the cancellation is due to COVID-19 Finally we also have rapid COVID-19 tests done before every event, especially staff that's not vaccinated, and do daily screenings. Staff are booked off or asked to stay home and rather work from home if they feel under the weather.” (P9, South African event owner with 5 years of experience).

In addition, participant 5 communicated multiple practical ways in which their business had to adapt in order to survive such as staying up to date with the current news regarding COVID-19 and the various restrictions thereof, changing the way in which they manage their finances and also comply with the COVID-19 rules and regulations. Participant 7 also stated that they had to abide by the COVID-19 rules and regulations as a means to adapt to the new way of conducting business as seen in the excerpt below:

“Stricter health & safety protocols have been put in place. The dynamics of how events are held and managed have now changed. Alternatives to the “normal” have had to be created in order to allow people to celebrate (Virtual weddings, meetings, expos, birthdays – Drive by birthdays, baby showers, etc.)” (P7, business event practitioner with 3 years of experience).

Maintaining social distancing through conducting online meetings as opposed to face-to-face meetings were a critical developmental and survival tool used by many and was evident with participant 6 and 13 as seen in the below excerpts:

“Less face to face meetings and workshops etc. strictly on online platforms. At first it was an awkward adjustment period so our work was quite behind as we couldn't operate for a while.” (P6, business event practitioner with 6 years of experience).

“A lot more focus is on Health and Safety for our customers and employees on-site.” (P13, business event practitioner with 16 years of experience).

There were some participants that stated that they had to rely on a different career line simply to generate some sort of income as can be seen in the following excerpt:

“I have had to transition to being more of a safety consultant as opposed to Event Manager with safety as a by-product.” (P2, South African event owner with 15 years of experience).

4.8 Chapter summary

In the present chapter the study's findings were presented, analysed and the responses from the interviews were discussed. The results were graphically presented throughout Chapter 4. Various conclusions were derived from the results and recommendations were made, as deliberated within the next chapter, Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study investigated the effects of COVID-19 on the event tourism sector in South Africa from a multi-stakeholder perspective. In Chapter 5, conclusions are discussed, and recommendations are made with regards to future research. The studies limitations are discussed, and Chapter 5 also determines if the objectives of the study have been attained.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to several undesirable impacts, especially on the event tourism industry. As a result of the devastating impact of the pandemic, several events around the world had to be restructured, redesigned, cancelled or postponed as the industry explored better strategies to survive the impact (Perold et al., 2020; Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021; Muresherwa et al., 2022b). Event organisers had to work with technological innovations to allow survival, including adopting new delivery modes for events (Aldao et al., 2021). One of the modes that worked and continue to be utilised in today's events is switching to digital format and combining the virtual format with in-person attendance (Bama et al., 2022, Muresherwa et al., 2022b; Woyo & Nyamandi, 2022). The crisis created by COVID-19 resulted in several changes, especially in the production and consumption of events, which will continue to shape how future events will be produced, managed, and consumed.

The paper highlighted the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on business events in South Africa. It also presented the actions which were taken by event businesses in responding to such effects, together with recovery strategies, which could be applied by event organisers and managers, especially when faced with similar crises. According to the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI), the COVID-19 pandemic saw business events losing much revenue. In 2020 alone, the cancelled events resulted in salary losses amounting to more than USD3.5 million (Hill et al, 2022; Magangqaza et al, 2022).

5.2 Research and objectives

The results of this research study were based on the research questions as stated in Chapter 1: In order to answer these research questions, the following objectives were identified:

Objective 1: To explore the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector in South Africa.

Objective 2: To propose strategies for the recovery of the business events sector from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

Objective 3: To suggest measures that could be implemented in future in dealing with crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic on the business events sector in South Africa.

5.3 Conclusion and recommendation

5.3.1 Conclusions regarding objective 1

The above objective was met. Through conducting the interviews with the business event stakeholder, the results indicated that a significant amount of events were cancelled and postponed, businesses closed down, there was a great loss of revenue, and restructuring of work format had to be undertaken whereby online/remote/virtual events were the only alternative in order to remain operational, retrenchment of staff was done, valuable industry skills were lost, banks' were unwilling to support event businesses and the implementation of the 'no work no pay' principle was implemented. From the interviews, it was reported that job losses were a major effect of the pandemic in the business events sector. The government intervened to assist businesses with the provision of Temporary Employee Relief Scheme (TERS) funding and other support. However, this support was not obtained or received by all businesses and the processes of disbursing these funds could be improved so that the burden on businesses is curtailed.

Based on the results highlighted in the previous chapter, the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was extremely detrimental to the business events industry as well as the event service providers. The business events stakeholders had to find alternative and feasible measures to take in order to generate income and to find ways in which to stay operational throughout the uncertainty that COVID-19 brought.

5.3.2 Conclusions regarding objective 2

Interviewees indicated that one of the most significant ways in which the South African business events sector can recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is with the help of the local government finance and continuing to support business event stakeholders by introducing them to departments such as SARS, in order to find ways to mitigate the financial impact (tax breaks, banks).

The findings showed that another extremely important aspect with regard to events sector recovery is trust and confidence from clients, thus maintaining relationships with clients was also identified as crucial to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This would ensure business continuity after lockdown restrictions have been lifted, ensuring that clients feel safe and informed to start making enquiries again. Therefore, it is important for businesses to remain relevant by continuously promoting events and event companies via sending emails, motivational cards, informative messages, seminars, and letters to name but a few.

The business events sector should create a more tangible event experience with regards to online events on a virtual platform by making use of gaming glasses or event gamification. This will be costly, but it is a unique experience which is one of the main aspects which attracts

people to events. The public relations officer of South Africa is crucial and should inform the world about South Africa as a safe event destination which complies with COVID-19 protocols. Online operations are safe thus should be developed and improved to create a unique online experience which will be a demand in the industry. One interviewee stated that the best way for the industry to recover would be to stop fighting COVID-19 rules and regulations and to instead adapt to the “new norm” where events are smaller yet has many more rules to adhere to.

5.3.3 Conclusions regarding objective 3

The strategies adopted by businesses to deal with the effects of COVID-19 were uniform across the board. These ranged from reducing salary, retrenchments, removal of work-related benefits, placing staff on leave, reduction of expenditure (e.g., rental fee cuts, remote work – no need for office space), and being innovative (expanding digital platforms for the hybrid format of events).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on business events across the globe required them to be strategic in their approaches, particularly in terms of sustainability. One way of achieving this is being cognisant of responsible tourism practices as suggested by Bartis et al. (2021), such as reducing the carbon footprint of the business. The findings indicated that collaboration was key for the success of business events as supported by scholars such as Muresherwa et al. (2022b) and that this should include all the stakeholders in event production, consumption, and management. Through collaboration and engagement with the different event tourism suppliers, business event stakeholders can share experiences, which could help some businesses to learn from others' experiences. Another way in which the business event stakeholders can ensure the success of the business events tourism sector would be to remain compliant to the COVID-19 rules and regulations by following the health and safety protocols such as the wearing of face masks, sanitising, maintaining social distancing, following lockdown rules, encouraging vaccinations, and taking the PCR tests (perhaps at entrances to events).

5.4 Limitations of the study

There are a few possible aspects that could compromise or limit the research which is as follows: no access to the Internet; load shedding; and limited research conducted on this particular topic. The effect of COVID-19 was difficult to foresee, as a pandemic of this magnitude had not yet been experienced. Thus, generating conclusions founded on previous pandemics would have had an inadequate influence to envisage the potential effects of COVID-19 with regard to event tourism.

Limited research was conducted on this topic which affected this study negatively since little is known regarding the long-term effects of COVID-19 on the business events sector specifically within South Africa.

5.5 Fieldwork challenges of qualitative research

Some of the limitations experienced throughout this study included the unwillingness of individuals to participate in the study affecting the target sample size and resulted in consuming valuable time since the researcher had to identify new participants. Some event business stakeholders that were identified and approached to participate in the study agreed to the interview at first, however they kept cancelling meetings which resulted in the data collection as well as the study taking longer to complete than anticipated. After striving to establish a connection with them on multiple different occasions the only option was to identify and approach the next business event stakeholder.

During the research, there were periods when the researcher had limited or no access to the Internet due to load shedding which proved to be a huge challenge and compromised the study as it affected the ability to meet deadlines. This resulted in the researcher missing an appointment with an interviewee and rearranging another one which affected the timelines for data collection. One of the participants did not manage to attend their online interview as she got her times wrong, due to stress and pressure to find alternative means of income as her business was no longer generating an income.

Research was conducted during a period in time where people preferred to keep physical distance, thus online meetings were the best option for conducting meetings. However, a lot of challenges were met due to this as unstable internet connection was common and crucial information could have been missed.

5.6 Recommendations

Given the findings of the study, various recommendations can be made which will act as a recipe for business event owners to overcome similar situations such as an outbreak of a new COVID-19 variant or any other pandemic. The recommendations will help alleviate any possible negative effects that business event stakeholders might experience and help them to survive and continue their business.

5.6.1 Risk management plans

Business event companies should have risk management plans in place and or alternatively strengthen their risk management plan by having a risk management budget. This budget can be used for any potential period of being out of work therefore not generating an income. Thus alleviating the pressures of the “no work, no pay” principle and allowing employees to still have some form of income.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 acts as a severe reminder that pandemics, although they seldom occur, have occurred previously thus, will without a doubt occur in the years to come, it is unavoidable (Jaworski et al., 2000). It is not possible to completely avert deadly outbreaks from emerging, however, it should be considered in order for stakeholders to prepare efforts to reduce its impact on society (Jaworski et al., 2000). The COVID-19 outbreak proved to have great economic effects throughout the world, therefore leaving no country unaffected. The economy was not the only thing affected by the outbreak but also society as a whole (Jaworski et al., 2000). This has required businesses to change the manner in which they were operating (Jaworski et al., 2000).

Even though the events and tourism industry experienced a sudden descent throughout the lockdown, the industry demonstrated great resilience whereby event companies utilised online events in order to create an income and maintain their business (Jorda et al., 2020). This was proof that the event organisers adapted by creating a disaster risk management plan and found alternative ways in which to operate throughout the unprecedented circumstances (Jorda et al., 2020). Business event companies now have the tools to practice resilience by proactively planning for the worst-case scenarios in an effort to be better prepared for any unforeseen situations that might leave the industry fragile once again (Jorda et al., 2020).

5.6.2 Restructuring of work format

In response to the extensive effects of the COVID-19 virus and guidance from medical professionals to participate in social distancing, numerous event businesses had to make difficult decisions regarding what the next step would be for their business (Graham, 2022). In order to have an event, individuals physically need to gather at one predetermined location (Graham, 2022). Without the ability to physically gather in one place because of the COVID-19 outbreak, the tourism and events industry had to make drastic changes to the way in which events were being executed (Graham, 2022). The restructuring of the work format worked smoothly for business events as opposed to private events. Business event organisers can move face-to-face business events to a virtual space. Numerous businesses prospered through the hosting of virtual events (Nowland et al., 2018).

The only challenge that would arise is if the business event organisers do not know how to use these virtual platforms (MS Teams, Zoom, etc.), this is where training the staff on how to host virtual events would be beneficial (Nowland et al., 2018).

5.6.3 Training opportunities

Within the study, one of the most challenging effects of COVID-19 was that employees and business event owners lost valuable industry skills. Therefore, a recommendation can be made whereby a focus should be placed on continuous training in the post-pandemic era. This should be done in order to get individuals at a competent level of work once again. Keeping a safe

social distance became the new normal throughout the world which impacted how organisations operated on a daily basis. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in the US motivated businesses to produce a response plan for the purpose of being prepared for any possible infectious outbreaks in the future (McBride, 2020).

It is recommended that South African businesses also develop a response plan. This response plan should also include the training of business event owners and staff alike on the basis of how to practice safe social distancing within the workplace, reducing operations, applying staggered labour hours as well as reducing any possible exposure processes (McBride, 2020). It is also encouraged to still practice social distancing once the COVID-19 wave is over by avoiding unnecessarily large crowds and reduce contact between staff event consumers through substituting face-to-face events with virtual event spaces as far as possible in order to ensure future safety (McBride, 2020). The following recommendations were made as seen in Figure 5.1.

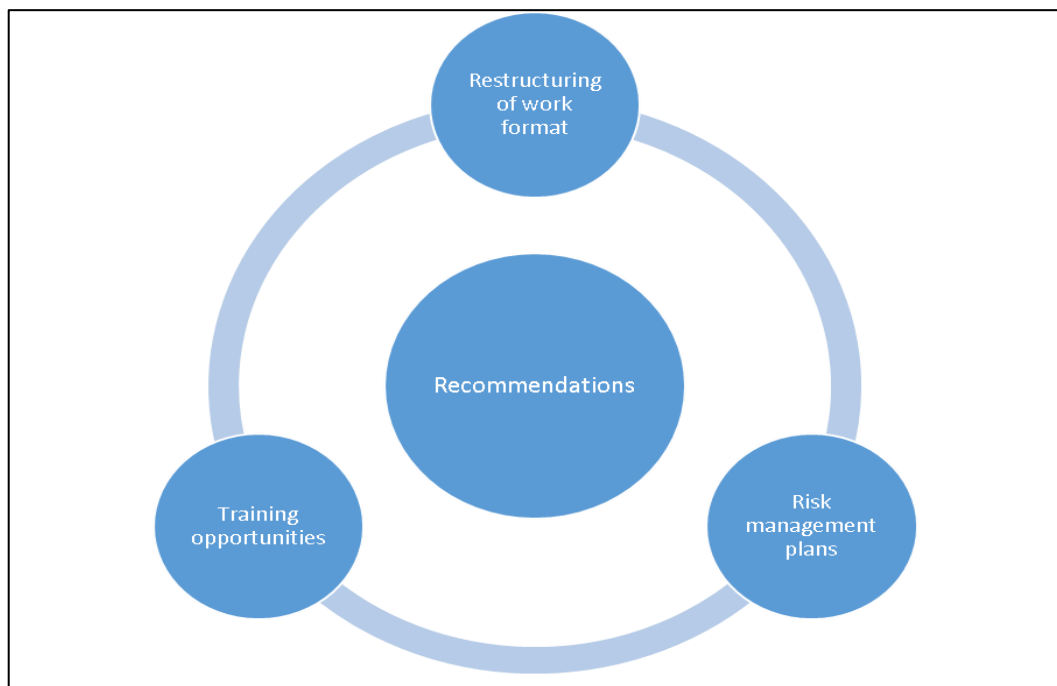


Figure 5.1: Recommendations to the business events sector

5.7 Future research direction

The following sections present possibilities for future research as seen in Figure 5.2.

5.7.1 Focus on other countries

The present study only investigated the effects of COVID-19 on the event tourism sector from a South African business event stakeholder’s perspective, thus for future research purposes, the study can be conducted in other countries in an attempt to deliver a greater, more diverse sample. A focus on other developing countries could be done.

5.7.2 Focus on other sub-sectors of tourism

Future studies should be expanded by not only focusing on business events but rather other sub-sectors of the tourism industry such as sport tourism.

5.7.3 Focus on event participants

A quantitative section can be incorporated into the study to add a holistic aspect to the study. Event participants can be interviewed in an effort to see how the COVID-19 pandemic affected them.

5.8 Concluding remarks

The study was aimed at identifying the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the South African business events sector. The literature stated that the events and tourism industry was one of the hardest hit industries when the COVID-19 pandemic first hit due to the lockdown, thus the business events sector was identified as the focus of this study. The research findings show that the business event stakeholders experienced multiple negative impacts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The outcome of the research places emphasis on the importance of collaboration and compliance with COVID-19 rules and regulations as a recovery strategy for the business events sector in South Africa.

The identified objectives within this study have successfully been reached. Based on the literature and study findings, it can be concluded that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on South African business events were severe, however, there are feasible recovery strategies that can be designed and implemented.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: INTERVIEW GUIDE



Faculty of Business and Management Sciences

Department: Tourism and Events Management

This interview guide is designed to gather data aimed at fulfilling a partial requirement for a Master's degree at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The study aims to examine the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Africa's business events sector. This will be done by gathering the views of multiple stakeholders within the event sector, and get an understanding of how the sector can recover from the effects of the pandemic.

The information provided remains strictly confidential, and your personal details will remain strictly protected. Please note that the collected data will be used for academic purposes only.

SECTION 1: PERSONAL PROFILE

1. Age category: 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56+
2. Years active in the business events industry?
3. Nationality?
4. What is your highest academic qualification? Please specify what you studied if relevant.
5. Do you have an occupation other than the business in question?
6. Current employment position

SECTION 2: BUSINESS EVENT PROFILE

1. Can you tell me a bit more about the business event that you are involved in?
2. When was this business event established/ been in operation? What is the history behind it?
3. Who is the primary target market(s) of the business?
4. What is the main purpose for organizing or planning this event (history – prompt for more info i.e mission etc)
5. How many employees were employed with your event company? (prior to the first lockdown in 2020)

SECTION 3: COVID-19 EFFECTS

1. How has your business or organisation been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with regards to revenue, staff etc.?
2. What actions have you taken in order to recover from the effects of the pandemic?
3. How can the South African business events' sector recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. What are the possible measures to take regarding the future success of your business event/organisation?
5. What were the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on your business event?
6. Do you know of any companies that have also drastically been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic? If yes, please mention the company and how they were affected?
7. How has the operation of your business altered/changed since being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?
8. What, in your opinion, could you have done differently with regards to when the pandemic first hit and the world had to shut down?

APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



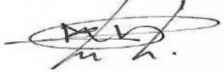
P.O. Box 1906 | Bellville 7535
Symphony Road Bellville 7535
South Africa
Tel: +27 21 4603291
Email: fbmsethics@cput.ac.za

Office of the Chairperson Research Ethics Committee	FACULTY: BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
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The Faculty's Research Ethics Committee (FREC) on **02 March 2021**, ethics **APPROVAL** was granted to **Shanté Carly Liedemann (218076045)** for a research activity for **M Tech: Tourism and Hospitality Management** at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Title of dissertation / thesis / project:	The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Africa's business events sector: A multi-stakeholder perspective Lead Supervisor (s): Dr. H. Bama and Mr. Gift Muresherwa
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Decision: APPROVED

 <hr/> Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee	<hr/> 2 MARCH 2021 <hr/> Date
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The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the CPUT Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study requires that the researcher stops the study and immediately informs the chairperson of the relevant Faculty Ethics Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, notably compliance with the Bill of Rights as provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (the Constitution) and where applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003 and/or other legislations that is relevant.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after two (2) years for Masters and Doctorate research project from the date of issue of the Ethics Certificate. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report (REC 6) will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Clearance Certificate No | 2021 FBMSREC 003

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTER / SUPPORT LETTERS



crystal
EVENTS AFRICA

P O Box 50596
Waterfront
Cape Town
8002

3 February 2021

To whom it may concern

Your application, seeking permission to conduct research under the title: The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Africa's business events sector: a multi-stakeholder perspective, refers. Having considered the merits of your application, this letter serves to confirm that Miss Shante' Carly Liedemann has obtained the required permission to conduct her field study within CRYSTAL EVENTS AFRICA for the purpose of completion of her MTech studies.

The applicant has indicated that all the required ethical considerations have been taken into account and therefore, in this regard we have granted the student support to conduct this study. This agreement is made on the assumption that the student will be willing to share the outcomes of the study if such a request is made once the research is complete.

Should you have any queries concerning the above please feel free to contact me.

TES M. PROOS
Founder
Crystal Events Africa

APPENDIX D: LANGUAGE EDITOR CERTIFICATE

GRAMMARIAN CERTIFICATE

MELKOZAH CONSULTING PTY LTD

17 November 2022

Dear Sir/ Madam

Re: Confirmation of proof reading of dissertation for Shante' Carly Liedemann

This confirms that I have proofread and edited the dissertation titled, “*The Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on South Africa's Business Events Sector: A Multi-Stakeholder Perspective*” and that I have advised the student to make the required changes before submission.

Yours faithfully

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to be 'MR Kozah'.

MELODY RUMBIDZAI KOZAH

Editor

melkozah@gmail.com

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