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PROFILING VISITORS TO URBAN SPORT EVENTS: TRIPOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND VISITOR ENGAGEMENTS

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Abstract: Urban sport events are increasingly incorporated into destination strategies yet understanding of who attends these events and how they behave within the destination remains important for effective tourism and planning and event management. This is particularly relevant in South Africa, where domestic tourism has demonstrated considerable resilience and has become an important part of tourism sector recovery. This study profiles attendees at an urban sport event in Cape Town, South Africa, with particular attention to demographic and tripographic characteristics and visitor engagement with the event space and surrounding urban environment. Data collected from 373 event attendees reveal a predominantly domestic visitor profile, with local residents representing the largest group, alongside domestic and international tourists. Although the visitor profile was dominated by local residents and short stay domestic visitors, substantial engagement with tourist attractions and leisure activities beyond the core event was evident. The tripographic profile indicates that attendance is characterised by relatively short visits, varied group composition and a combination of event focussed and destination related activities. Visitors also reported engagement with tourist attractions, shopping, and leisure and recreational activities beyond the core event. Four motivational dimensions were identified: self-development and personal enrichment; socio-psychological motivations; destination and event experience attributes; and experiential and relational motivations. The findings demonstrate the value of moving beyond conventional demographic profiling towards a more comprehensive understanding of how event visitors travel, participate and engage with urban destinations. The study contributes to sport event tourism research by demonstrating the importance of tripographic profiling in understanding urban event visitors, particularly domestic visitors, and provides practical implications for event organisers.

Key words: sport event tourism; visitor profiling; tripographic characteristics; domestic tourism; urban events; Cape Town

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INTRODUCTION

Sport events have become an increasingly important component of tourism development and destination marketing, providing opportunities for destinations to attract visitors, stimulate travel and expose travellers to places and experiences beyond the event itself (Getz & Page, 2016; Richards, 2017). Recent research increasingly emphasises that the tourism significance of sport events extends beyond attendance itself and depends on understanding how visitors behave within the event and destination environment (Duignan et al., 2023; Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2020). This means that event organisers and destination managers require a deep level of understanding of who attends sport events, how they travel, how long they stay, who they travel with, where they stay, what they spend and what they do within the destination. This understanding is known as visitor profiling. While demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education and employment are useful for identifying visitor markets, they provide only a partial picture of the event visitor. Tripographic characteristics such as place of residence, travel party, length of stay, accommodation, repeat visitation, expenditure and activities undertake, provide additional insights into how visitors travel and interact with destinations. This distinction is particularly important in sport event tourism because visitors attending the same event may have substantially different patterns of travel, participation and engagement. The importance of visitor profiling is particularly evident in relation to domestic tourism. In South Africa, domestic tourism has become an important component of tourism-sector resilience and recovery following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent national tourism data indicates continued growth in domestic travel, with Statistics South Africa reporting 33.5 million domestic day trips and 26.2 million overnight trips in 2024, accompanied by approximately R60.6 billion in domestic tourism expenditure (Statistics South Africa, 2025). The South African National Department of Tourism similarly reports that domestic overnight trips reached 40 million in the 2024/25 financial year, with domestic spending increasing to R133.1 billion, describing the domestic market as an important source of resilience for the tourism sector (South Africa, 2025). Supporting this, an analysis conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) identified domestic tourism as an important contributor to South Africa's post-pandemic tourism recovery, with domestic tourism reaching approximately 40.2 million trips in 2024 (OECD, 2024). Sport events are relevant within this context because they can stimulate domestic travel and provide a specific reason for people to visit destinations. According to Nyikana and Tichaawa (2020), domestic sport tourists include a substantial proportion of educated and employed younger travellers whose participation is motivated by both sporting interests and visiting friends and relatives. Their findings demonstrate the value of examining the characteristics and motivations of domestic sport tourists rather than treating them as a homogeneous market.

The need to understand visitor behaviour is particularly important in urban sport event spaces. Urban events take place within destinations that contain established tourism attractions, accommodation, restaurants, retail facilities, transport infrastructure and recreational spaces. Consequently, visitors attending an urban sport event may interact with a much wider range of destination services and experiences than those associated directly with the event. However, this engagement cannot be assumed. Duignan et al. (2023) conceptualise event zones as potentially functioning as relatively self-contained spaces and demonstrate that only a proportion of visitors engage more extensively with the wider destination. Their findings highlight the importance of examining not only who attends an event but also how visitor characteristics relate to movement and engagement beyond the event space. This issue is particularly relevant to Cape Town, an established urban tourism destination with a strong portfolio of sport events. Events such as the Cape Town Cycle Tour, Two Oceans Marathon and Cape Town Marathon take place within a complex urban environment in which event participation intersects with tourism attractions, accommodation, food

and beverage, retail and leisure activities. Profiling attendees therefore provides an opportunity to understand the relationship between the characteristics of event visitors and the ways in which they engage with the event and its surrounding urban environment.

Despite the growing literature on sport event tourism, there remains a need for greater attention to the visitor profile itself, particularly the tripographic characteristics that distinguish different types of sport event attendees. Understanding whether visitors are local residents, domestic tourists or international tourists; whether they travel alone or in groups; whether they stay overnight; whether they are first-time or repeat attendees; and whether they engage with activities beyond the event provides information that cannot be obtained from attendance figures alone. Such information is particularly valuable in the context of domestic tourism recovery, where understanding the behaviour and preferences of domestic visitors can support more targeted event and destination strategies. In light of this, the current study profiles attendees at an urban sport event in Cape Town, South Africa, focusing on their demographic and tripographic characteristics and engagement with the urban event environment. The study answers the following questions: (1) What are the demographic and tripographic characteristics of attendees at an urban sport event in Cape Town? (2) What patterns of visitor behaviour and engagement are evident among event attendees? (3) What does the emerging visitor profile indicate for the management and marketing of urban sport events, particularly in relation to domestic tourism? By answering these questions, the study contributes to sport event tourism research by demonstrating the value of tripographic visitor profiling in understanding how different urban sport event tourists experience and engage with urban sport events. The study provides practical insights for event organisers and destination managers seeking to better understand their visitor markets and to develop urban sport event experiences in response to actual visitor patterns of behaviour. The novelty of the study lies in the use of an integrated demographic, tripographic and behavioural profile to understand who urban sport event visitors are and how they engage with the wider urban destination, with particular attention to domestic visitors in the South African tourism recovery context. This profiling provides empirical evidence that is necessary for understanding the composition and behaviour of an urban sport event audience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sport event tourism and the event visitor

Sport event tourism is the systematic planning, development, marketing and hosting of sport events as visitor attractions and catalysts for economic, infrastructure and destination development (Getz & Wicks, 1993). It also incorporates travel for attendance, participation or to spectate at a sport event (Delpy, 1998). The hosting of sport events as a component of tourism has grown significantly over the last decade, gaining recognition amongst academics, governments and event practitioners (Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2020; Maditinos et al., 2021) because of the potential that these events hold to stimulate tourism, generate profits, attract international investment, create employment opportunities and encourage urban development (Chaigasem & Leruska, 2020; Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021a). The dramatic global growth of sport event tourism has largely been influenced by its experiential value, with travellers seeking not only destinations and attractions, but immersive experiences (Jiang et al., 2025). Within sport event tourism, the event visitor is an important unit of analysis as these visitors may participate in the event, attend as spectators, accompany participants or combine both sport and non-sporting purposes (Getz & Page, 2016). Consequently, they cannot be viewed as a homogenous group of travellers as their motivations, travel arrangements, length of stay, expenditure and engagement with the destination may differ considerably depending on their relationship with the event and the destination (Bazzanella et al., 2023). This sport event visitor centered perspective is important as attendance figures alone cannot illustrate the significance and impact of sport event tourism on a destination. While attendance figures indicate how many people

attend an event, they do not reveal a more in-depth visitor profile, considering visitor characteristics and behaviours (Bazzanella et al., 2023).

In the context of sport events hosted in urban areas, the distinction between the event and the broader destination is important as these events are embedded in areas that contain a range of tourism services including accommodation, restaurants, retail and recreational opportunities. Visitors therefore have the opportunity to engage with a tourism environment wider than just the event itself. Despite this, the presence of these tourism opportunities and services does not mean that event visitors will automatically engage with them and this engagement is largely dependent on the characteristics of the visitor (Duignan et al., 2023). This suggests that understanding sport event tourism requires a shift from asking how many people attend an event to who attends, how they travel and what they do during their event-related trip. The event visitor consequently provides an important point of departure for the present study.

In South Africa, sport event tourism has long been considered a means to stimulate social and economic development (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021b), and this has been strongly encouraged by the South African government. The result of this has been that the country has identified sport event tourism as a catalyst for overall development and growth. The South African National Tourism Sector Strategy (2017) states that the country is currently recognised as a notable global competitor in the sport tourism industry and an attractive destination for the hosting of sport events. The strategy further states that these events do not only provide the country with economic spin offs, but are also effective tools for the promotion, positioning and branding of the country. Despite this, there remain many challenges around the hosting of sport events as a means of developing tourism due to the unique context of South Africa. Like many other developing countries, South Africa is still faced with challenges around limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, social inequalities and political instabilities, limiting the growth potential of the sector (Nyikana et. al., 2021; Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2020). Compounding this, strategies for the implementation and growth of sport even tourism in the country are largely based on models tried and tested in the Global North, with limited research being conducted on the developing context. The City of Cape Town is South Africa's most prominent tourism destination and has established itself as a premier sport tourism destination, offering a combination of world class sport events such as the Cape Town Cycle tour and the Cape Town Sevens. Cape Town's urban sport event portfolio has developed since the 1970s from a small number of events into a large and diversified calendar. This was boosted dramatically by the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, which left the Cape Town stadium as a legacy asset (Cornelissen, Bob & Swart, 2011; Visser, 2016).

Visitor profiling and the importance of tripographic characteristics

Visitor profiling is an essential aspect of sport event tourism as it assists event marketers and stakeholders to make visitor focussed decisions (Upadhyay et al., 2016) and provides insights into event visitors. This enhanced knowledge of event visitors provides event stakeholders with a better understanding of visitor patterns for future event hosting and marketing (White, 2010). Having an in-depth profile of an event attendee further allows stakeholders to focus on the core needs of the visitor, allowing for the refinement and tailoring of the event to meet these. Traditionally, basic visitor profiling considered only the demographic profiles of event visitors, using demographic characteristics to determine expectations and perceptions (Tsiotsou & Vasioti, 2006). The most widely used variables in demographic profiling included sex age, income, education and occupation, as well as geographical, behavioural and spending patterns of visitors (Shi et al., 2018; Guo, Ling, Yang, Li, & Liang, 2013; Lee et al., 2012). Despite this, demographic information provides on a partial profile of the visitor, as visitors with similar demographics may have substantially different travel patterns and destination behaviours (McKercher et al., 2023). Historically, the profile of a sport event visitor focussed largely on geography, demography and behavioural characteristics. A

study by McKercher et al (2023) found that the various characteristics selected to profile visitors can produce substantially different understandings of their behaviour. These findings illustrate the importance of selecting characteristics that are closely connected to the behaviour being investigated, rather than relying specifically on demographics. This is particularly relevant to sport event tourism, where the tourism significance of visitors is not only influenced by who they are, but also the details of their trip and travel behaviours. In light of this, profiling has evolved, taking into consideration the characteristics of the trip itself known as the tripographics. According to Duignan et al (2023), tripography describes traditional travel or trip characteristics, but with additional connotations that reflect new attributes and dimensions and travel related behavioural characteristics including length of stay, sources of information, accommodation preference and purpose of visit. These characteristics play an important role in extending the visitor profile, as they consider the attributes associated with the nature and organisation of the trip. The value of including tripographic profiling in sport event tourism is supported by Duignan et al. (2023), who research findings found that tripographic characteristics are significant in determining the likelihood of visitors venturing beyond the event zone. These findings challenge the assumption that event visitors automatically engage in activities beyond the event itself, positioning visitor profiling not only as descriptive demographics but as a means of understanding how different types of visitors interact with the host destination. This distinction is particularly important in the context of urban sport events as they are hosted within complex urban environments where there is a wealth of tourism services that visitors may or may not engage with (McGillivray, 2019). For the present study, demographic and tripographic profiling is therefore treated as a necessary foundation for understanding the event visitor.

The important of multidimensional profiling is arguably even greater in the context of developing and emerging tourism destinations where visitor markets, tourist behaviour and access to tourism opportunities is different from more established tourism locations. Existing research on visitor profiling has traditionally been conducted in developed and well-established tourism markets. Applying these approaches directly to the developing and emerging destinations overlooks the social, economic and spatial characteristics of these contexts. This developing-destination perspective is important because visitor behaviour cannot be separated from the wider context in which tourism occurs. Issues such as affordability, accessibility, infrastructure, transport, perceptions of safety, social inequality and familiarity with tourism spaces can influence how visitors travel and engage with destinations. Consequently, profiling visitors in developing urban destinations requires attention not only to who visitors are, but also to the conditions under which their trips occur. In South Africa, research on sport event tourists has found that lifestyle differences product distinctly different visitor groups with differences in travel patterns, spending and participation frequency (Myburgh, Kruger & Saayman, 2019), illustrating that sport event markets are not homogenous and that characteristics beyond conventional demographics can be important in explaining visitor behaviour. More recent research (Myburgh & Kruger, 2026) has found that South African sport event visitors differ distinctly in terms of demographic characteristics, distance travelled, travel-party composition, overnight stays, previous participation and expenditure, demonstrating the extent to which detailed trip characteristics reveal the nature of the market and its relationship with tourism activities. These findings are particularly relevant because sport-event visitors cannot necessarily be assumed to behave like conventional leisure tourists. Their travel may be structured around participation schedules, event timing, training requirements, companions or competition-related activities. Understanding these characteristics is therefore necessary when determining the extent to which event visitors have the opportunity or intention to engage with the wider destination. The importance of the further profiling of event visitors in the South African context is underscored by Daniels & Tichaawa (2025) whose work on tourism industry resilience in the developing context highlights the need for sport event tourism products that respond directly to

visitor demands. Similarly, recent South African research on research on niche sport events argues that these visitors represent an important market for strengthening tourism resilience and stimulating local tourism activity (Daniels & Wentzel, 2025).

The literature therefore establishes that visitor profiling is important but also reveals a gap in that most existing research either examines general domestic tourists, spectators at only major sporting events or visitors associated with specific sport tourism products, with less attention paid to the profiles of visitors attending urban sport events, particularly within the diverse socioeconomic and spatial context of developing host cities. In response to this, the study adopts a multidimensional approach to visitor profiling, providing a more contextually grounded approach to understanding the tourism significance of urban sport events in a developing destination.

Domestic visitors and tourism system recovery

Globally, prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, the hosting of sport events was largely international visitor oriented. This was the case for most destinations in the Global South, meaning that the onset of the pandemic resulted in the outright cancellation of most sport events (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021a). The COVID 19 pandemic exposed the vulnerability of the sport event industry, particularly where there was a heavy dependency on international visitor flows, prompting renewed attention to the value of domestic tourism markets (Weed, 2020). For destinations reliant on inbound international tourism, the closure of international travel during the pandemic demonstrated the risks of an over-reliance on international demand, and highlighted domestic and local visitors as a comparatively stable and accessible market, capable of sustaining tourism activity when international travel is disrupted (Weed, 2020). This is particularly relevant to sport event tourism as domestic event visitors and local residents are less exposed to the currency fluctuations, travel costs, visa restrictions and geopolitical uncertainty that shape international travel decisions (Nyikana, Tichaawa & Kimbu, 2021; Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021a). For most urban sport events, the market is substantially domestic, comprising of a local visitor market (Rogerson, 2016). In South Africa specifically, structural challenges including limited financial resources, infrastructural constraints and economic inequality further shape the extent to which international visitor flows can be relied upon to sustain sport event tourism (Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2020). Despite this, sport event tourism scholarship has continued to centre on international visitors, typically within Global North contexts. This has resulted in a limited understanding of domestic sport event visitors - their socio-demographic and tripographic profiles, and their significance for the recovery and ongoing sustainability of the broader tourism system in developing city contexts. Addressing this gap requires research that explicitly profiles the domestic sport event visitor rather than treating the visitor base as a homogenous or predominantly international one.

Towards a profiling framework for domestic urban sport event visitors

Based on the literature reviewed, it is evident that visitor profiling is essential for urban sport event management and marketing. The profiling framework proposed by the current study conceptualises the urban sport event visitor using three dimensions: (1) the urban sport event context; (2) the visitor profile; and (3) visitor engagement behaviour. These components are influenced by contextual characteristics specific to the host urban area. In terms of the urban sport event context, the characteristics of the event play an important role in determine the profile of its attendees. Urban sport events differ in terms of scale, location, duration and target markets – all factors which influence the type of people who attend the event. The location of an urban destination is also relevant as the event is embedded within the urban space which includes attractions, accommodation, leisure services, commercial activities and transport infrastructure (McGillivray, 2019). Understanding the event context is therefore important for understanding visitor behaviour, rather than treating attendance at an urban event as an isolated activity (Getz & Page, 2016). The

second and most central component is visitor profiling, encompassing both demographic and tripographic characteristics, considering both who the visitor is and how the visitor attends the event. The final component is visitor engagement behaviour. In the context of this study, this refers to the activities that event attendees undertake within and beyond the immediate event environment. This is an important distinction as these activities are not automatically undertaken as a result of event attendance. According to Duignan et al. (2023), event zones can in fact constrain engagement with the broader urban space and that demographic and tripographic characteristics will influence the extent to which this takes place. Consequently, considering attendee engagement with the broader urban space is an important aspect of profiling. When considered together, the three dimensions identified provide a comprehensive profile that is particularly relevant to the context of the Global South.

METHODS

The study adopted a quantitative research design, using a structured questionnaire to identify patterns and relationships. The questionnaire was developed based on the study objectives and relevant literature on sport event tourism, visitor profiling and visitor behaviour. Development of the questionnaire involved identifying variables relevant to the research objectives and obtaining information related to demographic characteristics, tripographic characteristics and visitor behaviour. The questionnaire the consisted of three sections: (1) demographic information, (2) tripographic information and (3) event related behaviour. The study was conducted as a single event case study at the Cape Town Marathon (CTM) in Cape Town, South Africa. The city of Cape Town has a well-developed portfolio of urban sport events hosted in and around the city center. In June 2026, the CTM became the first Abbott World Marathon Major to be hosted in Africa and will formally join the Abbott World Marathon Major series in 2027. The marathon was first hosted in 1994 and was cancelled for the first time in 2020 due to the COVID 19 pandemic. (Cape Town Marathon, 2026). The race is located inside the Green Point precinct at the Cape Town Stadium which is a walkable urban precinct within Cape Town's most popular tourist area. This provided a realistic urban setting in which to observe how event attendees engage with the surrounding urban space, rather than remaining confined to the event venue, interacting with surrounding attractions, retail, restaurants, accommodation and recreational spaces. The Cape Town stadium is a legacy venue following the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, whose ongoing viability has depended largely on the hosting of regular smaller scale recurring sport events focussing on attracting domestic and local visitors rather than repeated large scale international events. It is therefore an appropriate setting in which to examine the domestic and local visitor profile. This is of heightened significance following the COVID 19 pandemic which increased reliance and dependence on domestic markets to sustain tourism activity and visitor numbers (Weed, 2020). Cape Town's standing as South Africa's leading sport event tourism destination, and the urban and tourist location of Green Point make it a feasible and contextually relevant site to examine visitor profiles at urban sport events in the Global South. Cape Town Tourism's 2025 Economic Value of Tourism report recorded R24.5 billion in direct tourism spend for 2025 and a record 11.1 million airport passengers – a boom that has been overwhelmingly international led (Cape Town Tourism, 2025). Despite this, during this time domestic spend fell by approximately 32% compared to the previous year and average domestic visitor length of stay dropped from 5.2 to 4.4 nights (Cape Town Tourism, 2025). The inner city of Cape Town specifically continues to undergo a dramatic post pandemic revival with various initiatives launched aimed at increasing foot traffic in urban areas (Wesgro, 2024). As Cape Town's tourism economy becomes increasingly focussed on international, higher spending visitors and centers around specific centers such as the V&A Waterfront, domestic tourism faces a challenge of being displaced, both economically and spatially (Jessa & Rogerson, 2025). As urban sport events

rely heavily on a domestic visitor base, they are tourism products that can counteract this, keeping changing urban spaces accessible to local residents and domestic visitors.

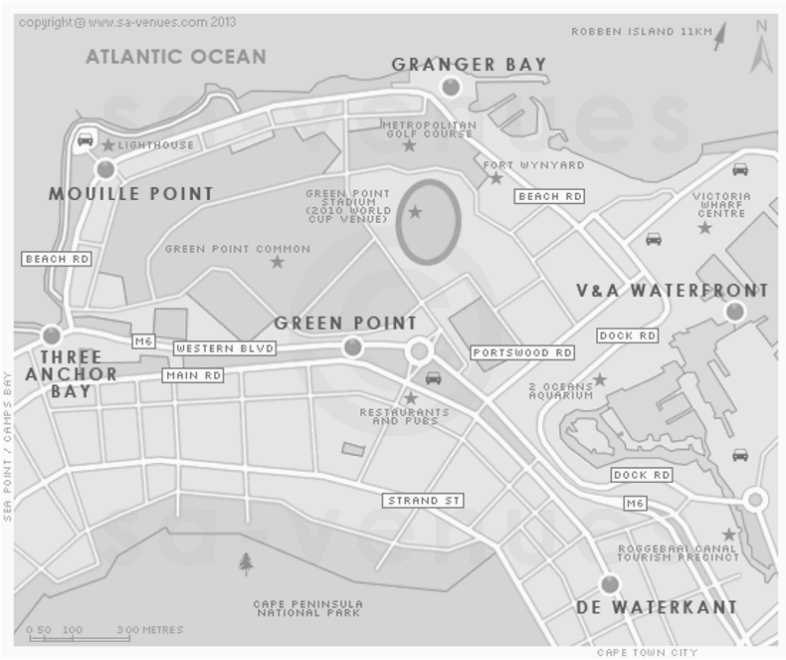


Figure 1: The Green Point precinct
Source: SA Venues (2026)

The population of the study comprised of attendees at the CTM, with the sample size determined using attendance figures from previous years. At a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, a minimum sample of 353 respondents was required. A total of 373 usable questionnaires were obtained, using a probability sampling approach. Participation in the study was voluntary and ethical clearance was obtained. Completed questionnaires were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to profile the demographic and tripographic characteristics of respondents. Where appropriate, cross-tabulations were used to examine patterns between visitor characteristics and behavioural variables. The analysis was interpreted in relation to the proposed profiling framework, with the statistical findings used to build a profile of the domestic sport event visitor and to identify patterns of urban engagement relevant to domestic tourism demand and event management strategies.

RESULTS

Profile of respondents

A socio-demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1. Of the respondents, 189 (50.7%) were female and 177 (47.5%) were male, while 4 (0.8%) preferred not to disclose their gender and 3 (1.1%) identified as other. Respondents aged 26–35 years constituted the largest group (32.2%), followed by those aged 36–45 years (26.5%) and 18–25 years (23.9%). Respondents aged 46–55 years accounted for 12.6% of the sample, while 4.6% were aged 56–65 years and 0.3% were over 65 years, indicating a concentration of younger to middle aged respondents. The largest proportion of respondents held a certificate or diploma (34.6%), followed by an undergraduate

degree (28.7%) and a postgraduate degree (20.1%). A further 12.6% had completed secondary schooling, while 2.7% reported no formal schooling and 0.8% had completed primary schooling. Regarding employment, 60.6% of respondents were employed full-time, 13.1% were self-employed, 15.0% were unemployed and 8.6% were employed part-time. Retired respondents represented 1.9% of the sample, while the remaining respondents were classified as home executives or other. An important characteristic of the sample was the predominance of local residents. Local residents accounted for 240 respondents (64.3%), compared with 98 domestic tourists (26.3%) and 35 international tourists (9.4%). Thus, almost two-thirds of the respondents were residents of Cape Town, while just over one-third travelled to Cape Town from elsewhere in South Africa or internationally. This distribution provides an important basis for understanding the subsequent findings relating to the tourism and urban engagement potential of the event.

Table 1: Profile of respondents
(Source: Fieldwork)

Profile of respondents			
		Frequency	**Percentage**
Gender	Female	189	50.7
	Male	177	47.5
	Prefer not to say	4	0.8
	Other	3	1.1
Age	18-25	89	23.9
	26-35	120	32.2
	36-45	99	26.5
	46-55	47	12.6
	56-65	17	4.6
	>65 years	1	0.3
Highest level of education	No formal schooling completed	10	2.7
	Primary schooling completed	3	0.8
	Secondary schooling completed	47	12.6
	Certificate/diploma	129	34.6
	Undergraduate degree	107	28.7
	Postgraduate degree	75	20.1
	Other	2	1.5
Employment status	Unemployed	56	15
	Working full time	226	60.6
	Working part time	32	8.6
	Retired/pensioner	7	1.9
	Self employed	49	13.1
	Home executive	1	0.3
	Other	2	0.5
Location	Local resident	240	64.3
	Domestic tourist	98	26.3
	International tourist	35	9.4

Tripographic characteristics and visitor behaviour

Table 2 presents the tripographic characteristics of respondents and their event related behaviour. Respondents mostly attended the event with friends (27.1%), followed by family members (19.8%), a spouse or partner (18.5%), colleagues (15.5%) and alone (12.9%). Smaller proportions attended with sport teammates (3.5%), school groups (1.3%) or organised tour groups (1.3%). The event attracted a substantial proportion of first-time attendees, indicating that it served both as an established activity for returning participants and as an entry point for new visitors to the event experience. The trip duration demonstrates that the event was predominantly associated with

short-duration visits, indicating that, although the event generated some overnight and extended visitation, most respondents did not remain in the destination for an extended period. Despite this, respondents reported expenditure across several tourism-related categories. Importantly, respondents demonstrated substantial engagement with activities beyond the core sport event. As respondents could participate in more than one additional activity, these categories represent multiple forms of engagement rather than mutually exclusive groups. The findings demonstrate that participation in the sport event frequently occurred alongside engagement with other tourism, leisure and consumption activities within the event area and wider urban environment.

Table 2: Tripographic characteristics and visitor behaviour
(Source: Fieldwork)

Tripographic characteristics and visitor behaviour			
		Frequency	**Percentage**
Group composition	Alone	48	12.9
	Spouse/partner	69	18.5
	Friends	101	27.1
	Family	74	19.8
	Colleagues	58	15.5
	Sport teammates	13	3.5
	School group	5	1.3
	Tour group	5	1.3
First time event attendance	Yes	236	63.3
	No	137	36.7
Duration of trip to attend event	Attending only the day of the event	167	44.8
	1-3 days	137	36.7
	4-5 days	33	8.8
	6-7 days	17	4.6
	8-2 weeks	11	2.9
	More than 2 weeks	8	2.1
Additional activities engaged in within the event area	Visiting tourist attractions	256	68.6
	Shopping	208	55.8
	Leisure and recreational activities	231	61.9

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study provide empirical answers to why visitor profiling is necessary, why the domestic sport event visitor base is important and why it is important to understand visitor engagement and behaviour in the urban sport event setting. In terms of profiling the results underscore that attendance figures alone obscure the composition and the behaviours of an events visitor base. The profiling at the event reveals that the overwhelming majority of attendees (90.6%) were domestic (local residents and domestic tourists combined) and that most attendees were short stay day visitors yet still seeking experiences beyond the event itself. This emerged from the systematic profiling using a combination of socio-demographic characteristics and tripographic behaviours. This is notable as most strategies for leveraging urban sport events for tourism development are based on the assumption that visitors and event attendees are international and long stay visitors (Chalip, 2004; Chalip, 2017). This could therefore result in the misalignment of marketing strategies and urban sport event tourism products. This risk is particularly significant in the case of the study site – a stadium which is the legacy of the 2010 FIFA World Cup – an event largely associated with large scale and internationally focussed tourism development ambitions (Steinbrink, Haferburg & Ley, 2011). Despite this, more than a decade on from the event, it is clear

that the ongoing sustainability and viability of the venue does not depend on the repeated hosting of sport mega events, but on the hosting of smaller scale recurring events such as the CTM that rely on domestic travellers and local residents. This mirrors a broader pattern in sport event tourism in South Africa, where mega-event infrastructure is leveraged for a sustained portfolio of smaller scale domestic events (Tichaawa & Bob, 2015). The findings of the current study provide empirical support for this shift as the high level of domestic attendees profiled suggests that the long-term value of mega event legacies, particularly in cities in the Global South, relies on capacity to host regular smaller events which mobilise domestic markets. This should also be considered against the backdrop of the landscape of urban sport event tourism has changed following the COVID 19 pandemic. Globally, the pandemic resulted in the complete closure of the sport event tourism sector. In South Africa, this led to the cancellation of numerous sporting events including the CTM itself. Prior to the pandemic, most destinations in the Global South utilised sport events as tools to grow international visitor numbers. The recovery path since the pandemic has demonstrated a significant shift, with a greater reliance on domestic demand (Weed, 2020; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2022). The profile developed in the current study – developed post pandemic – reflects that shift directly and implies that domestic visitor dominance is now a feature of the sport event tourism sector. This is particularly significant given the current trajectory of tourism development in Cape Town. Recent data shows that Cape Town International Airport welcomed 121,612 visitors in February 2026. Of the 161,707 European arrivals recorded nationally, 90,427 flew directly into Cape Town. The United Kingdom and Germany were the leading source markets, followed by the Netherlands and France (African Travel & Tourism Associated, 2026). Despite this, there was a fall in domestic visitor numbers and length of stay during the same period (Cape Town Tourism, 2025). This data exposes a significant risk relating to booming tourism performance, but a weakening local and domestic visitor base. In response to this, urban sport events such as the CTM that are not dependent on the international market, providing opportunities as tourism products that can attract substantial local and domestic participation as the wider destination remains skewed towards the international market. This is particularly important for the Green Point precinct in Cape Town where various efforts are being made to grow foot traffic and local visitation. The additional activities that study respondents indicated that they were engaged in while at the event (68.6% visiting tourist attractions and 61.9% engaging in leisure activities), supports that domestically driven urban sport events have a meaningful spillover into the urban spaces surrounding the event and led by domestic attendees.

The selected event and the identification of a strong domestic visitor base are significant as this suggests that urban sport events can act as catalysts for domestic travel and local urban activity, even when there are not significant international visitor flows. The predominance of local residents and domestic tourists, combined with the high number of first-time event attendees (63.3%) indicate that the event has an established base of repeat domestic participants and continues to attract new domestic attendees. Given the resilience of a domestic visitor base relative to international visitors who are more sensitive to economic and geopolitical disruptions (Nyikana, Tichaawa & Kimbu, 2021; Weed, 2020), the findings suggest that this event and potentially other recurring events can be used as mechanisms to mobilise domestic and local visitor activity within a host city. This is particularly relevant in the context of the Global South, where reliance on international tourism can carry significantly greater risk (Rogerson, 2016). The findings of the study reveal that the value of the event is not in its ability to draw international tourists, but more so in how it mobilizes domestic visitors and local residents. Profiling this population, rather than only counting attendance, provides an understanding of who is being reached (predominantly younger to middle aged, well educated, employed local residents and domestic visitors); how they attend (with friends or family for short stays); and why they attend (a mix of self-development and social goals). This level of detail on the visitor profile allows event organisers to create urban sport event experiences, services and marketing tools that match the actual attendees, rather than an assumed visitor type. Despite

attendees having a short length of stay at the event location, respondents reported significant engagement with surrounding tourist attractions and shopping and leisure within the urban area surrounding the event (68.6% and 61.9% respectively). This indicates that even local, short stay event visitors participate in activities beyond the core event. An event only lens overlooks this detail, requiring an urban centered focus which considers how visitors move through and engage with the city beyond the boundaries of the event.

Taken together, the findings of the study support the proposed profiling framework. Rather than viewing urban sport event tourists as a homogenous and presumptively international group, the framework positions visitor profiling as the central point connecting event hosting to an understanding of urban sport event behaviour and ultimately, the event's contribution to domestic tourism demand and system recovery. Practically the findings of the study highlight the importance of event organisers and destination marketers designing strategies around the domestic and local visitor base. Theoretically, the study extends sport event scholarship by demonstrating that visitor profiling is a necessary precondition for the development of urban sport events as generators of urban tourism, particularly where there is a reliance on a domestic visitor base in Global South cities.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to profile attendees at an urban sport event in Cape Town, South Africa in order to understand their demographic and tripographic characteristics and their engagement with the surrounding urban space. The findings illustrate that the visitor base for the event is largely domestic, dominated by local residents and short stay visitors who still engage meaningfully with the urban context of the event through shopping, leisure activities and visiting attractions. The changing profile of the urban sport event tourist needs to be understood within the various contexts of recurring portfolios of urban sport events frequented by domestic and local visitors, future disruptions and the recovery pathway following the COVID 19 pandemic, and the city of Cape Town where the current tourism boom is largely focussed on the international market. Against this backdrop, the findings underscore the importance of visitor profiling at urban sport events that goes beyond considering attendance figures and demographics alone. The study makes a contribution to existing studies on sport event tourism by providing an empirically grounded profile of the urban sport event visitor, demonstrating the value of incorporating demographic, tripographic and behavioural characteristics to understand how different urban sport event tourists experience and engage with urban sport events. In doing so, it builds on existing sport event tourism studies by demonstrating that visitor profiling is essential for effective event growth and sustainability. The findings suggest that domestic and local visitors deserve greater attention and consideration within urban sport event planning and hosting strategies in the context of developing cities, particularly where tourism recovery strategies are focused on strengthening resilient domestic demand. Practically, the findings of the study provide urban sport event stakeholders with an evidence base for designing and marketing urban sport events matched to the local and domestic attendees at a point in time when strengthening domestic demand is of strategic importance. The study findings should be viewed with some limitations. The study was conducted as a single event case study in one city, limiting the extent to which the findings can be generalised to other urban sport events in other destinations. The research design captures visitor profiles, tripographic characteristics and behaviours at a particular point in time and cannot account for how this might change over longer periods or at repeated events. Future research should extend the profiling approach used in the study across multiple events, locations and time periods. These future studies could also include longitudinal tracking of repeat domestic visitors to determine how engagement with urban spaces develops over time.

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