

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY ★ FOSTERING UNITY:

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE

AFRICULTURES

FESTIVAL

2023

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY	2		
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3		
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4		
FOREWORD	5		
1. INTRODUCTION	6		
The Africultures Festival	6		
Scope and Purpose of this Report	8		
2. ATTENDEE PROFILE	9		
Gender and Age Distribution	9		
Socio-economic Status	9		
Cultural Background	10		
Immigration Patterns	10		
Locational Diversity	10		
3. ATTENDEE FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE	11		
Prior Experience and Attendance Record	11		
Companionship Preferences	12		
Spending Patterns	12		
		Festival Activities and Programs	13
		Motivations	16
		Overall Satisfaction and Loyalty	16
		4. STRENGTHENING BONDS THROUGH THE AFRICULTURES FESTIVAL	18
		Festival Experience and Sense of Community	19
		Sense of Community and Social Well-being	22
		5. EMPOWERING STALLHOLDERS AND PERFORMERS AT THE AFRICULTURES FESTIVAL	23
		Understanding Stallholders and Performers	24
		Capacity Building for Stallholders and Performers	28
		6. THE LEGACY OF THE AFRICULTURES FESTIVAL	33
		Cultural Connections in Festival Programming	34
		Cultural Engagement, Outreach and Empowerment of Stallholders and Performers	37
		Fostering a Community of Practice among Stallholders and Performers	38
		REFERENCES	39

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT **OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the Boorooberongal people of the Dharug Nation, the Bidiagal people, and the Gamaygal people upon whose ancestral lands the University of Technology Sydney stands.

We also acknowledge the Wangal people as the first Custodians of the land, air, and waters now known as Sydney Olympic Park, where the 2023 Africultures Festival took place.

We pay respect to the Elders, both past and present and recognise their continuous connection to the land and community of the oldest surviving culture on the planet.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The report is the result of a collaboration between researchers at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and the Africultures Festival organising team, showcasing their collective efforts and engagement.

We acknowledge the generous funding of UTS Business School and UTS Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion which was essential for achieving the study objectives. Their support has played a crucial role in facilitating this research and disseminating its findings.

The findings presented in this report are derived from survey responses collected from the 2023 festival attendees, stallholders, and performers. We would like to express our sincere appreciation for their invaluable contributions, which have significantly enriched our understanding and analytical depth.

Special recognition is extended to the Digital Immigrant Resource Network and Dr Michael Camit for conducting a series of webinars and workshops tailored for the festival's stallholders.

We extend our gratitude to the Africultures Festival volunteers, partners, sponsors, and funding bodies for their unwavering dedication and support, which have been instrumental to the festival's success.

We also extend special thanks to the research assistants and volunteers, particularly Dr Janine Williamson, Dr Samaneh Soleimani, and Dr Hongbo Guo, as well as the UTS stall volunteers who assisted with research activities and stall operations.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Africultures Festival, organised by the Somali Welfare and Cultural Association (SWCA), has evolved into Australia's premier African festival, attracting over 40,000 attendees to Sydney Olympic Park in 2023. This vibrant festival provides a platform for the African community to celebrate its rich heritage while inviting the wider Australian community to explore and embrace African cultures and traditions. The 2023 festival featured 33 performers across three stages and hosted 81 stalls, with 35 volunteers supporting the event's operation and contributing to its overall success.

Researchers from the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), in collaboration with the Africultures Festival organising committee, conducted an evaluation of the festival's impact on promoting cultural exchange and integration, as well as enhancing the business capacity and social capital of stallholders and performers. The evaluation, forming the core of this analysis, was based on surveys administered to attendees, stallholders, and performers at the 2023 festival.

Key findings from the assessment highlight the festival's significant social impact on attendees. The festival fosters a sense of community among attendees from diverse backgrounds. African attendees reported enhanced connections within their own communities and with the broader Australian community. Non-African attendees experienced a deepened appreciation for African cultures, promoting cross-cultural understanding and integration. The strong sense of community among festival attendees was linked to their improved social well-being. Participants who felt connected to specific communities, even those outside their own cultural background, showed a greater openness towards positively changing their views on societal functioning and expressed greater optimism about society as a whole.

In terms of capacity building for stallholders and performers, the festival offers an opportunity for stallholders to directly promote and sell their goods and services, thereby increasing sales and visibility within and beyond the African

community. Similarly, performers are given a stage to showcase their talents, contributing to cultural exchange and celebration. The festival's capacity-building initiatives include necessary preparations and training sessions, such as food safety training and marketing and promotion workshops. These initiatives not only help enhance the skills of stallholders and performers but also improve their business operations, enabling them to thrive in their respective fields.

The Africultures Festival celebrates African heritage and contributes to social cohesion and mutual understanding among diverse communities in Australia. By enhancing cultural exchange and providing valuable capacity-building opportunities for stallholders and performers, the festival strengthens the diversity of Australia's multicultural society. Moving forward, the continued support and development of such inclusive events will be crucial in promoting a more integrated and harmonious society.

FOREWORD

The Africultures Festival is more than a festival and holds a special place in our hearts! In 2009, we embarked on a journey for communities from Africa to get to know each other, which is now a major part of the social calendar of many.

We are immensely proud that the Africultures Festival continues to be community-led, for us and by us Africans. It gives us the platform to showcase who we are and connect with others who want to know more about us.

We continue to grow each year, forming new partnerships and increasing relations across communities, all with the aim of celebrating African cultures.

Despite the challenges in staging the event, we are proud of what we achieve each year. This is only possible through the strong community foundations and partnerships that the festival is built on.

- Africultures Festival Team



I. INTRODUCTION

THE AFRICULTURES FESTIVAL

The Africultures Festival is an outstanding testament to cultural celebration and integration, which has evolved from a humble community event in 2009 into a significant cultural festival. This vibrant festival provides the African diaspora with a platform to celebrate its rich heritage while inviting the wider Australian community to explore and embrace African traditions.



THE AFRICULTURES FESTIVAL OBJECTIVES

- Provide an entertaining, informative, safe and festive event
- Bridging the gap between Africans and Australians by celebrating African music, art, crafts, dance and food
- Strengthen relationships between the local communities, the wider community, business leaders and African community through better cultural awareness programs and events
- To stimulate and provide channels for individuals, groups and skill based participants to develop cultural and community services in Australia
- Promote and support community based cultural projects and events where communities create positive influence and participation to the African community in Australia
- Stimulate and provide opportunities for community development programs with a focus on cultural projects that have tangible social, community and artistic development outcomes

source: africultures.com.au/about-us

Drawing over 40,000 attendees to the Sydney Olympic Park in 2023, Africultures has firmly established itself as Australia's premier African festival. Organised by the Somali Welfare and Cultural Association (SWCA), the Africultures Festival is an annual celebration highlighting the rich heritage and cultures of Africa.

Led by a devoted African-Australian committee of 7 members, who generously volunteer their time and expertise year-round, the festival serves as a bridge between Africans and Australians, fostering understanding and connections across diverse cultural groups. This one-day event offers a diverse program featuring African cultures, art, cuisine, dance, music, fashion, sports tournaments, and a dedicated kids' zone.

The 2023 Africultures Festival showcased 33 performers over three stages along with 81 stalls (57 market stallholders and 24 food stallholders). On the day, 35 volunteers dedicated their time to support the overall success of the festival.





SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Researchers from the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), in collaboration with the Africultures Festival organising committee, conducted an evaluation of the festival's impact on promoting cultural exchange and integration, as well as enhancing the business capacity and social capital of stallholders and performers. The evaluation, which formed the core of this analysis, relied on surveys administered to attendees, stallholders, and performers at the 2023 festival.

The purpose of this report is to articulate the social impact of the Africultures Festival. Specifically, this report aims to:

- Illustrate how the festival fosters a sense of community among African and non-African attendees.
- Explore the ways in which the festival enhances the business capacity and social capital of stallholders and performers.
- Provide recommendations to event organisers to enhance the festival's social impact for various stakeholders, including attendees, stallholders, and performers.

DATA SOURCES

The analysis in this report is informed by a range of sources, including:

ATTENDEE SURVEY:

During the 2023 festival, attendees were invited to participate in a survey to gather insights into their experiences. Surveys were distributed both during and up to one week after the event, using various engagement strategies.

Research volunteers with iPads approached attendees, while QR codes and announcements were used to promote the survey. After the festival, a direct link to the survey was shared on social media. The survey received 209 responses, providing valuable insights into attendee perspectives.

STALLHOLDER AND PERFORMER SURVEY:

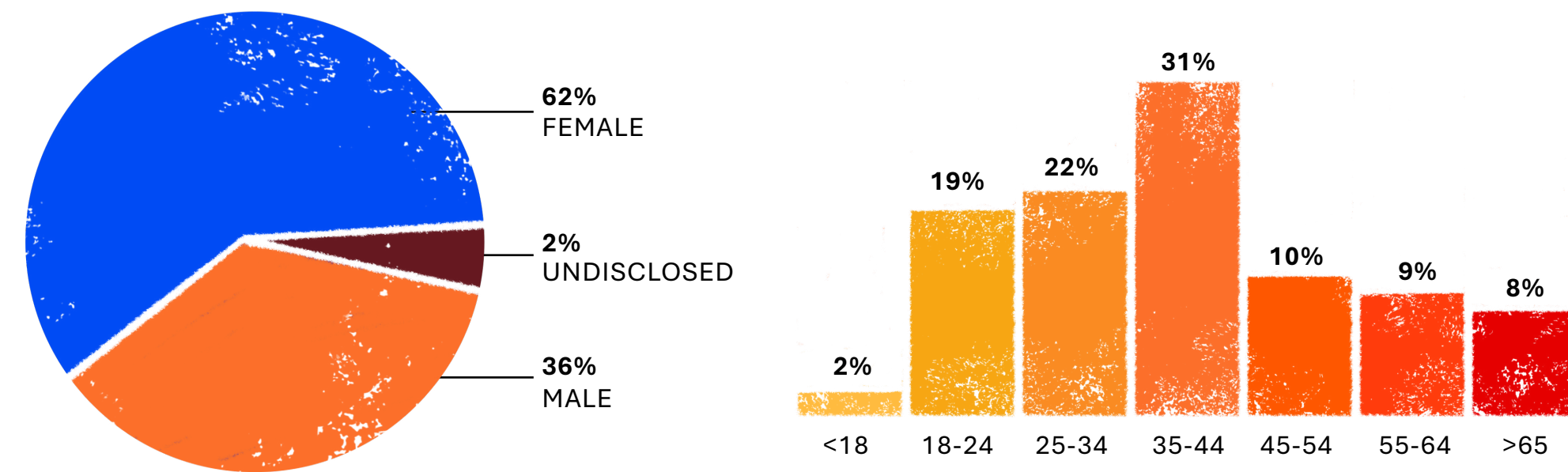
Surveys were conducted to evaluate the festival's impact on stallholders and performers, focusing on two key capacity building opportunities. First, participants engaged in the festival, which included preparations and training sessions such as a food safety workshop. A total of 14 fully completed surveys from stallholders and performers were collected and analysed. Second, a series of capacity building workshops and webinars were held before and after the festival, specifically targeted to festival stallholders. A total of 13 stallholders participated in these sessions, and their feedback and reflections were analysed.

This approach facilitated a thorough evaluation of the Africultures Festival, capturing viewpoints from attendees, stallholders, and performers. It provided valuable insights into the festival's social impact, particularly its role in fostering cultural exchange and integration, as well as its contribution to capacity building.

2. ATTENDEE PROFILE

Based on the 209 fully completed surveys, the festival's attendees represented a diverse cross-section of the community, reflecting varied demographic backgrounds and socio-economic status.

GENDER AND AGE DISTRIBUTION



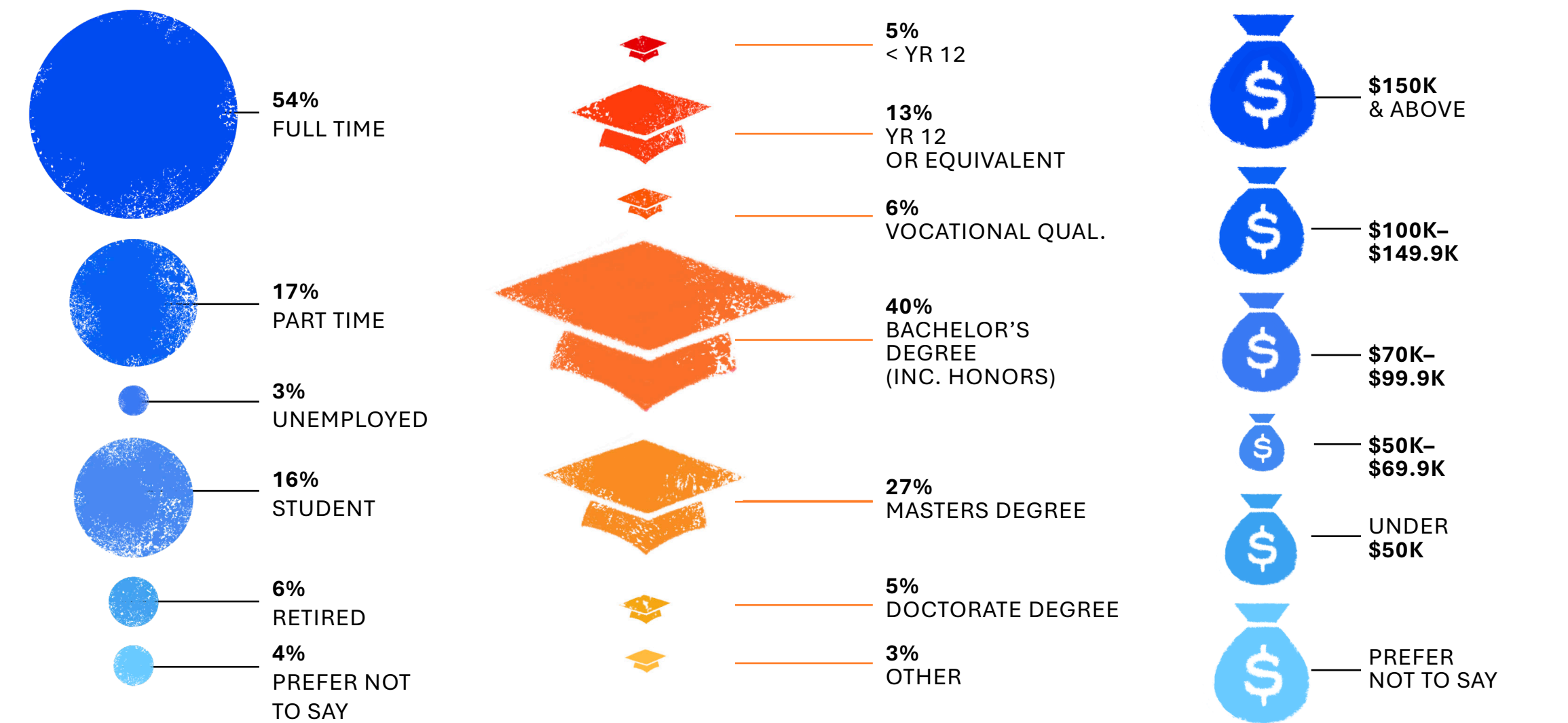
Base: Survey question – What gender do you identify as?

Base: Survey question – What is your age?

Among the respondents, 62% identified as female and 36% as male. The age distribution of attendees was skewed towards younger demographics, with the majority falling within the 18 to 44 age range. The average age of attendees was recorded as 26 years old, with a median age of 20 years old, highlighting the festival's appeal to a youthful audience.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

The socio-economic diversity among attendees was evident, with a slight majority indicating full-time employment. Notably, 58% of respondents disclosed annual household earnings exceeding \$70,000, reflecting a broad spectrum of economic backgrounds. Furthermore, nearly three-quarters of attendees possessed tertiary-level qualifications, highlighting the festival's engagement with a well-educated participant base.



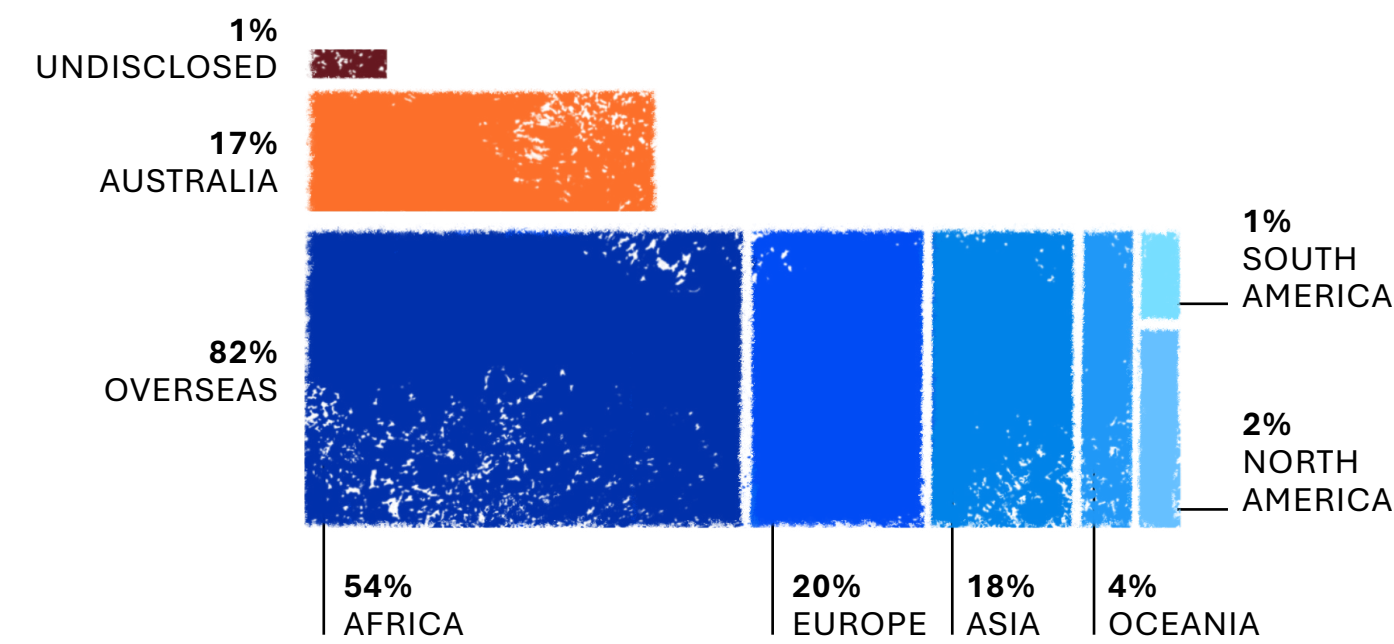
Base: Survey question – What is your employment status?

Base: Survey question – What is the total combined gross income of your household each year?

Base: Survey question – What is your highest formal qualification?

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

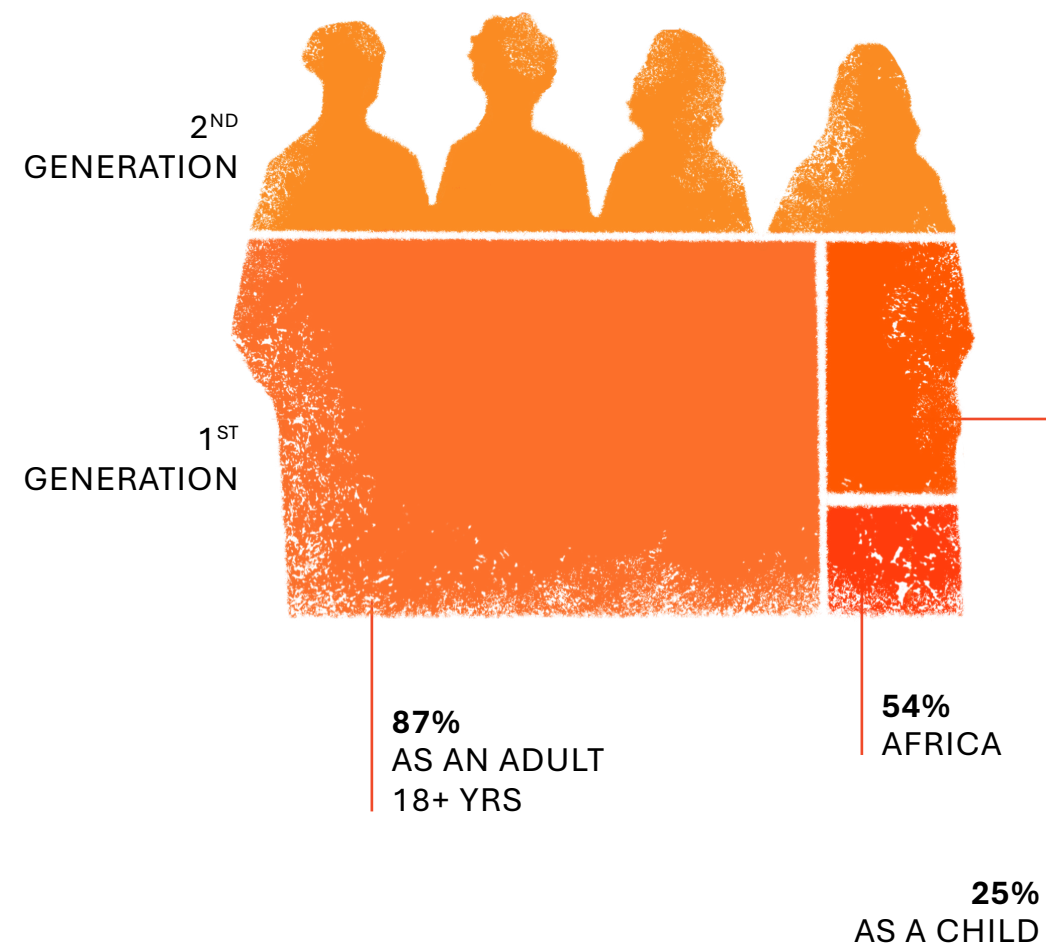
The survey explored the cultural backgrounds of attendees, shedding light on their diverse origins and migration histories. While 34% of respondents were born in Australia, the majority (65%) hailed from overseas, enriching the festival’s cultural diversity. The specific regions of origin were identified as Africa, comprising the largest proportion at 54%, followed by Europe (20%) and Asia (18%).



Base: Survey question asking about the country of birth of respondents (Australia/Overseas)

IMMIGRATION PATTERNS

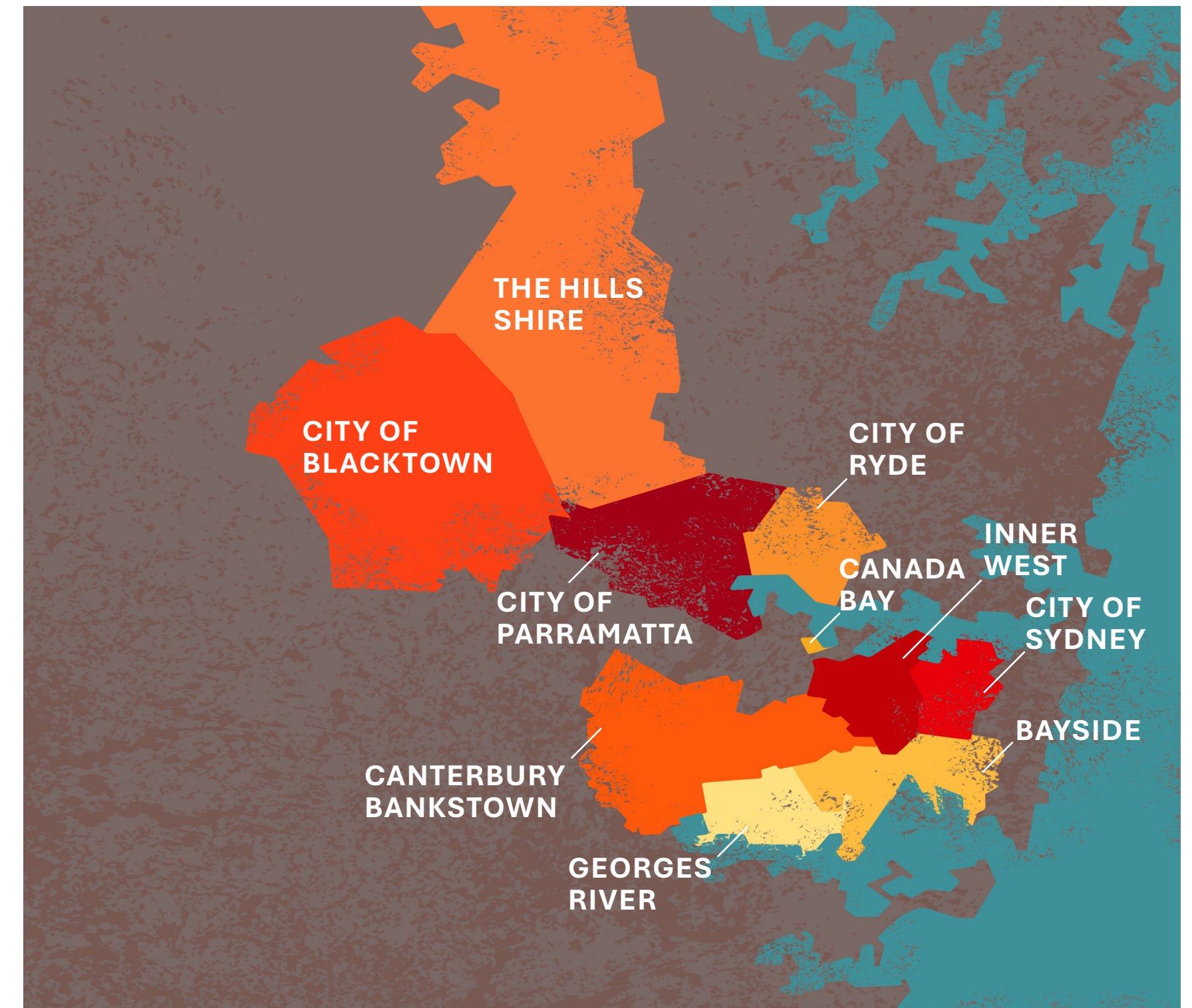
Respondents were queried about their immigration status, distinguishing between first- and second-generation immigrants. First-generation immigrants, constituting 80% of respondents, encompass individuals born overseas who migrated to Australia during their lifetime. Further analysis of this group provided insights into the age at which they immigrated, with 25% arriving as children, 8% as young adults, and the majority (67%) immigrating to Australia as adults aged 18 years or older.



Base: Survey question asking about the country of birth of respondents and their parents; Survey question – When did you arrive in Australia?

LOCATIONAL DIVERSITY

The festival served as a vibrant hub of cultural exchange, drawing attendees from diverse geographic locations. Analysis of the attendance data revealed the top 10 postcodes or Local Government Areas (LGAs) represented, providing insights into the geographic reach of the event. This diverse representation underscores the festival’s ability to attract participants from various regions, contributing to its wide-ranging impact and outreach.



Top 10 Postcodes/Local Government Area (LGAs)

Base: Survey question – What is your (residential) postcode?

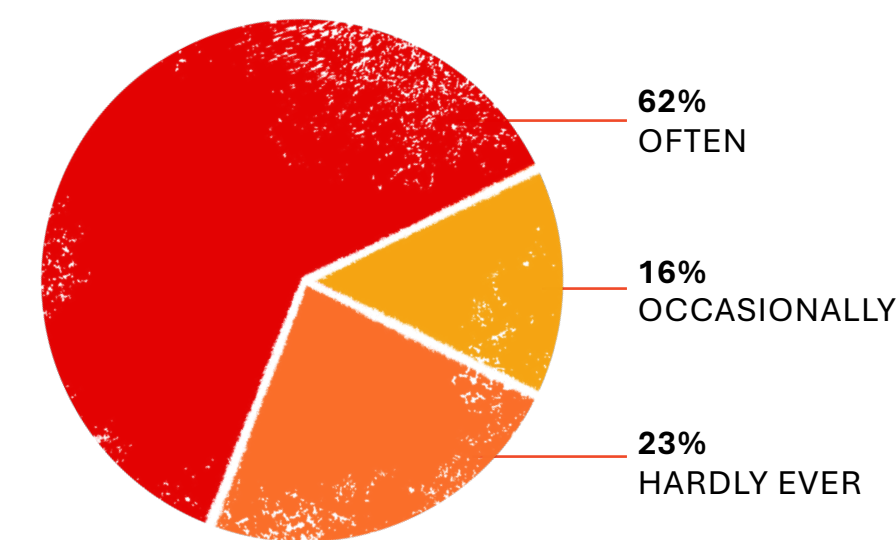
3. ATTENDEE FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE

PRIOR EXPERIENCE AND ATTENDANCE RECORD

Attendees provided insights into their prior engagement with cultural festivals, indicating a strong familiarity with such events.

The survey results indicate that:

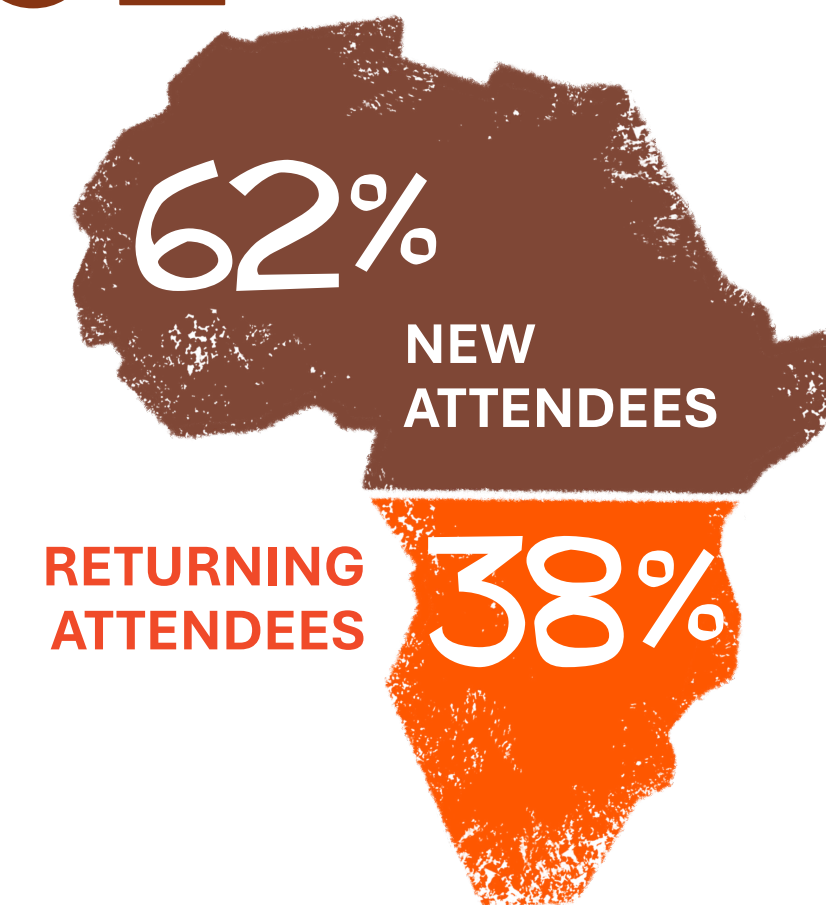
- A significant majority of attendees (61%) displayed a strong familiarity with cultural festivals, indicating an understanding of their typical features and atmosphere.



Base: Survey question – How frequently do you attend/experience (multi)cultural festivals?

- The familiarity with cultural festivals suggests that attendees may approach the Africultures Festival with distinct preferences and expectations shaped by their past experiences in similar cultural settings.

Of the attendees, 38% reported attending the Africultures Festival before, indicating a loyal following. However, the majority (62%) were new attendees, highlighting the festival’s ability to attract and engage a diverse audience. The presence of returning attendees indicates the festival’s consistent delivery of memorable experiences, fostering enduring connections. Similarly, the influx of new attendees underscores the festival’s ongoing success in expanding its community reach and engaging diverse demographics.



Base: Survey question - How many times have you attended the Africultures Festival in the past?

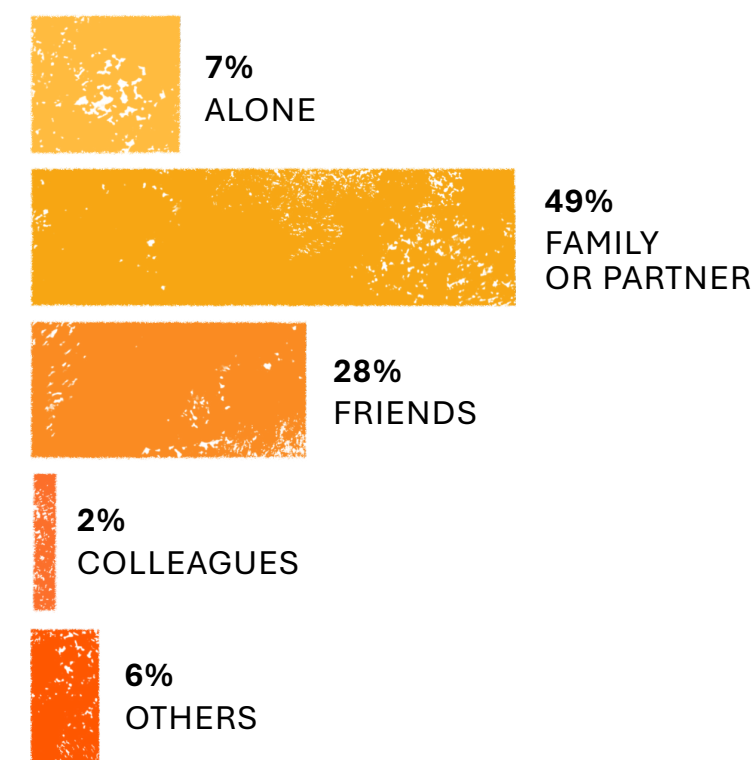


COMPANIONSHIP PREFERENCES

Attendees expressed their preferences for company at the festival, revealing diverse social dynamics among participants.

The data reflects varied companionship preferences:

- **Family or Partner:** A combined 55% of attendees chose to share the festival experience with loved ones or significant others (37% with family and 18% with a partner), indicating a desire for shared experiences and bonding opportunities within close relationships.
- **Friends:** 30% of attendees opted to attend the festival with friends, fostering a communal desire for camaraderie and collective enjoyment of the festival atmosphere.
- **Alone:** 7% of attendees preferred a solitary experience, suggesting a desire for independent exploration and immersion in the festival’s offerings.
- **Colleagues:** A smaller percentage of 3% attended the festival with colleagues, possibly seeking networking opportunities in a relaxed and culturally vibrant setting.
- **Others:** 6% of attendees preferred other companionship options.



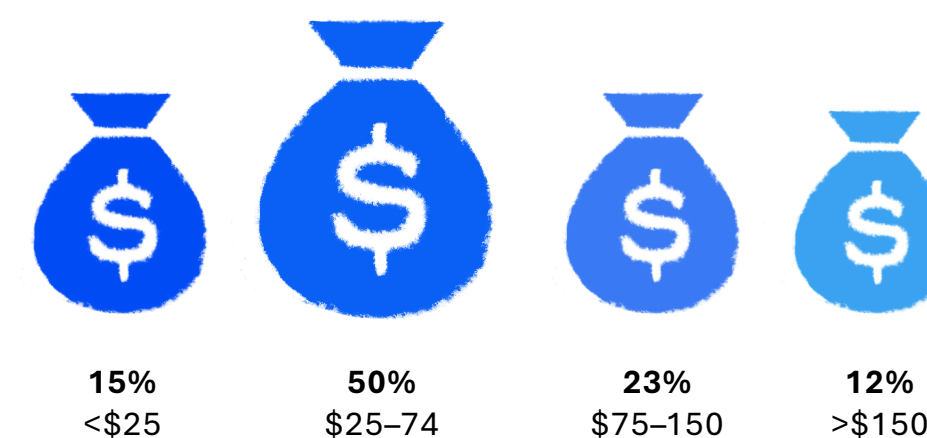
Base: Survey question - With whom did you attend the festival?

SPENDING PATTERNS

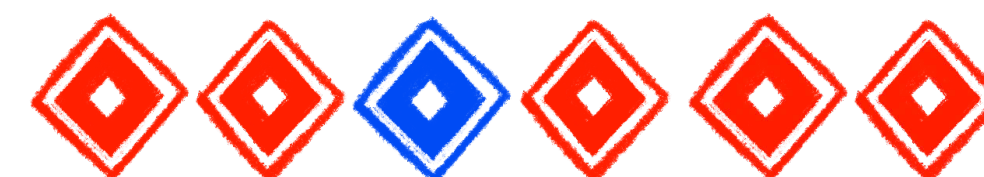
The expenditures of the festival attendees on the day varied significantly, with a strong majority being moderate to high spenders.

Insights into attendees’ expenditures at the festival provide valuable information:

- **Higher spending (more than \$150):** Making up 12% of attendees, this demographic presents a notable subset ready to make a significant investment in the festival. Their increased spending demonstrates a strong dedication to engaging fully with the festival atmosphere.
- **Moderate to high spending (\$75–\$150):** With 23% of attendees falling into this category, they show a willingness to indulge in a wider array of activities and offerings.
- **Moderate spending (\$25–\$74):** Encompassing the majority at 50% of attendees, this category signifies a significant portion willing to make a moderate investment in their festival experience.
- **Lower spending (less than \$25):** Comprising 15% of attendees, this group’s lower spending may indicate a more selective approach to festival expenditures.



Base: Survey question - What was your expenditure at the Africultures Festival? If attending in groups, consider the per-person expenditure.



FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

Festival attendees enjoyed a diverse range of activities and programs, with the performance stages and food being the most enjoyable activities.

Each activity is described in the list below, and the five activities most enjoyed by attendees are presented in the figure below.



Base: Survey question – Specify your level of enjoyment for each activity (respondents were provided a list of festival activities)

ENTERTAINMENT

The festival featured all-day performances on the Kilimanjaro Stage (main stage), the interactive Serengeti Stage, and the SOPA Music Box, showcasing live music, singing,

dancing, and a youth talent show. Attendees were treated to a diverse range of performances, including artists, dancers, drummers, and unique African acts.



THE NILE FOOD COURT

The food court offered an impressive array of traditional African cuisine, providing a taste sensation from across the continent. Featuring 24 food stalls with a wide variety of dishes and tasting samples, it was a fantastic opportunity to experience and enjoy the diverse flavours of Africa.





AFRICAN MARKETPLACE

With over 57 vibrant stalls, the marketplace showcased a variety of African products, including clothing, fabrics, accessories, and more. It offered attendees a comprehensive experience, allowing them to explore the diverse cultures of Africa in one location.

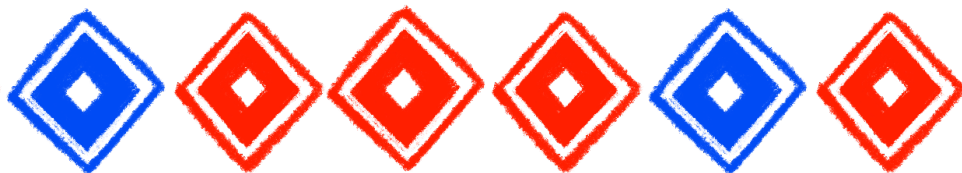


FASHION PARADE

The best of African fashion was showcased in a live parade on the main stage, drawing participants of all ages from various African countries.

DANCE AND DRUMMING WORKSHOPS

Festival goers experienced the rhythm and beats of Africa through interactive dance and drumming workshops.



KANU SPORTS ZONE

This zone featured interactive sports activities, including basketball clinics.



WATOTO'S CORNER

A vibrant play area offering a variety of children's activities, including face painting, necklace making, and traditional African games.



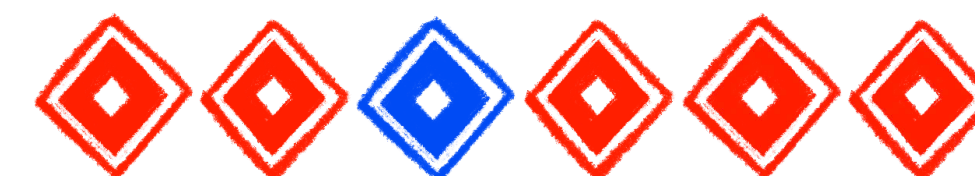
FIRST NATIONS ZONE

Attendees experienced traditional weaving workshops and learned about Indigenous cultures and legacy at the mobile Education Centre.



INTERACTIVE CULTURAL WORKSHOPS AND SESSIONS

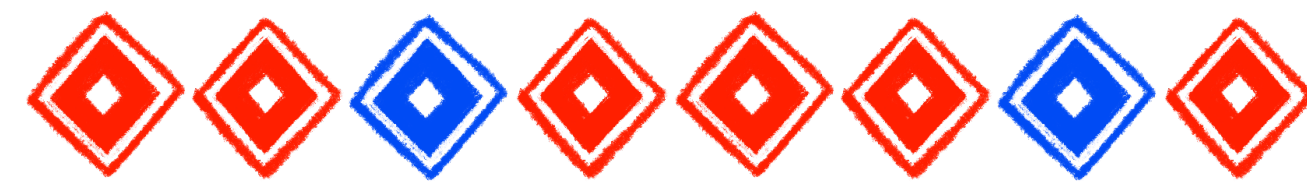
Featuring a traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony, an African cooking demonstration by the 2022 My Kitchen Rules (MKR) winner, and an African Health Q&A.



MOTIVATIONS

The Africultures Festival attracted attendees by offering a unique experience of African cultures and the opportunity to spend time with family and friends.

Attendees cited various motivations for their participation in the festival, providing valuable insights into their expectations and experiences. The top 5 reasons included:



1. TO EXPERIENCE CULTURES FROM AFRICA

Attendees were drawn to the festival's diverse lineup of cultural performances, exhibitions, and culinary delights, offering a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the rich diversity of African traditions and heritage.

3. TO SPEND TIME WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Many attendees viewed the festival as a cherished opportunity to bond with loved ones, creating lasting memories amidst the backdrop of cultural festivities and entertainment.

2. TO ENJOY A UNIQUE ATMOSPHERE

The festival's vibrant ambience and festive spirit captivated attendees, providing an engaging setting for celebration and cultural exploration.

4. TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE OF SIMILAR INTERESTS

Whether sharing a passion for African cultures, music, or cuisine, attendees sought meaningful connections, fostering a sense of belonging and kinship within the vibrant festival community.

5. TO RECONNECT WITH THEIR AFRICAN HERITAGE

For individuals of African descent, the festival served as a powerful reminder of their cultural roots and identity, offering a platform for cultural expression, reflection and celebration.



OVERALL SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY

16

The attendee survey provided the following results:

- An overwhelming majority of participants (97.6%) expressed satisfaction with their overall festival experience.
- A significant 98.1% of attendees expressed their intention to return to the Africultures Festival in the future, indicating the festival's success in building lasting connections with its audience.



Base: Survey question – Overall, I am satisfied with my visit to the Africultures Festival & I would like to visit the Africultures Festival again next time. (respondents were provided a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree)

Attendees were also asked to encapsulate their festival experience in three words and share photos to provide a visual representation of their experience at the Africultures Festival.

Below, the word cloud and collage combine to showcase the vibrant atmosphere and diverse perspectives shared by participants throughout the event.

FABULOUS GREAT MUSICAL
 NOSTALGIC PEACEFUL
 FULFILLING **FUN** ENLIGHTENING
 GOODHEARTFOOD GOOD ENRICHING
 HOME **COLOURFUL** NICE
 VIBRANT
 FANTASTIC INSPIRING LOUD
 INSIGHTFUL FESTIVE MUSIC CULTURAL
 ENJOYABLE INTERESTING
 SAFE WELCOMING
 LIVELY **EXCITING** ENRICHING
 ENERGISING WHOLESOME
 AMAZING BRIGHT INCLUSIVE DELICIOUS
 RELAXING
 ENTERTAINING

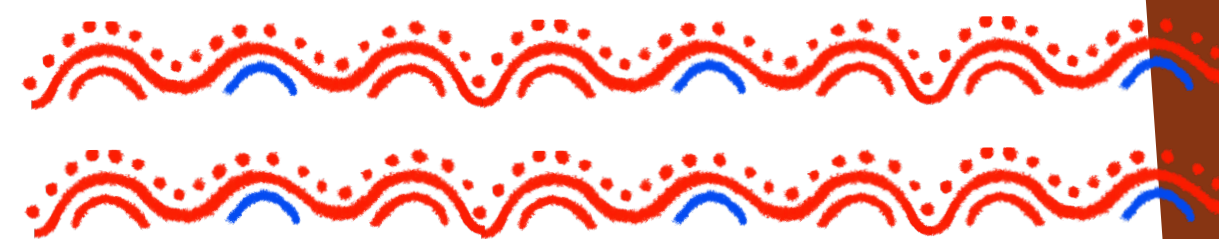


4. STRENGTHENING BONDS THROUGH THE AFRICULTURES FESTIVAL

The Africultures Festival has demonstrated a positive social impact on attendees. This is supported by data showing a favourable change in the sense of community and social well-being attributed to participation in the festival.

This section presents findings related to the festival's social impact, based on an analysis of:

- The delineation of four types of festival experiences: Educational, Esthetic, Escapism, and Entertainment¹.
- The link between festival experiences and the cultivation of a sense of community² among attendees, including both African and broader Australian communities. Results demonstrate how participation in the Africultures Festival fosters a sense of community among attendees from diverse backgrounds (African and non-African).
- The connection between a sense of community and attendees' social well-being.



¹ **The 4E Framework** offers a comprehensive approach to enhancing business value through experiential offerings [2]. It encompasses four realms: educational, esthetic, escapist, and entertainment experiences, each catering to different levels of customer involvement and immersion in the experience. The 4E Framework provides a valuable lens for understanding attendee engagement and the impact of event components. Passive participation characterises the entertainment and esthetic dimensions, where attendees observe and absorb the experience without direct involvement. Active participation defines the educational and escapist dimensions, where attendees actively engage in and contribute to the experience. The festival survey included questions aimed at assessing attendees' engagement and the impact of the festival's offerings in terms of education, entertainment, esthetic appeal, and escapism (4E Framework). Analysing these responses through the 4E Framework provides valuable insights into the festival's ability to deliver a memorable and enriching experience.

² **Sense of Community** reflects individual experiences within a community and emphasises the importance of supportive community environments [3]. It includes four elements: needs fulfilment (access to resources and fulfilment of community members' needs), group membership (sense of belonging and ability to relate to others), influence (ability to make a difference within a community), and shared emotional connection (common history, places, time together, experiences) [4].



FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY

The Africultures Festival serves as a vibrant celebration of African cultures, significantly enhancing the sense of community among its attendees.

By providing a platform for individuals from diverse backgrounds to engage in cultural appreciation, the festival fosters inclusivity and connection. This engagement strengthens bonds within the broader Australian community and promotes cross-cultural understanding, reinforcing a profound sense of community among participants.

Through its dynamic programming and experiences, the festival plays a pivotal role in promoting cultural exchange and understanding. It cultivates a shared appreciation for the richness and diversity of African cultures, contributing to a more cohesive and interconnected community.

This section explores the impact of the Africultures Festival on the sense of community, both within the broader Australian community and the African community itself. Based on analysis of the survey results, it uncovers how the festival experience shapes perceptions of community and fosters deeper connections among its diverse attendees.

Using the 4E Framework, the festival survey included questions aimed at assessing attendees' engagement and the impact of the festival's offerings in terms of education, esthetic appeal, escapism, and entertainment. An analysis of these responses provides valuable insights into the festival's ability to deliver a memorable and enriching experience. The survey also included questions aimed at assessing attendees' sense of community, using an 8-question scale³ for both African and non-African communities.



³The Sense of Community Scale

has eight questions representing four constructs: needs fulfilment, group membership, influence, and shared emotional connection [4].

Questions include:

1. I can get what I need in this community.
2. This community helps me fulfil my needs.
3. I feel like a member of this community.
4. I belong in this community.
5. I have a say about what goes on in this community.
6. People in this community are good at influencing each other.
7. I feel connected to this community.
8. I have a good bond with others in this community.

AFRICAN ATTENDEES

(Based on the survey questions about country of birth and region of origin)

SENSE OF COMMUNITY TOWARDS THE BROADER AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY⁴



Significant role of esthetic experiences

Esthetic experiences at the Africultures Festival play a crucial role in deepening connections for African attendees, enhancing their social integration within multicultural Australia.

When attendees highly value the festival's esthetics (e.g., "I felt a real sense of harmony at the festival), it significantly enhances their sense of community with the broader Australian community. This indicates that the festival's esthetic elements, including visual arts, performances, and decorations, foster deeper connections and enhance the sense of community among African attendees.

Experiencing the Africultures Festival as a "celebration of inclusivity"

The festival serves as a platform for African communities to find a sense of belonging within the broader Australian community. It offers an immersive cultural experience through visual and performing arts that reflect the cultural heritage of African attendees. This experience profoundly influences their sense of belonging within the broader Australian community.

The esthetic elements of the festival serve as colours in a mosaic, adding connection and enhancing communal bonds among attendees. This deep resonance suggests that such elements play a crucial role in creating an inclusive festival atmosphere that recognises and celebrates the diverse backgrounds of its participants.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY TOWARDS THE AFRICAN COMMUNITY⁵



20

Significant role of escapism experiences

Escapism at the Africultures Festival allows African attendees to immerse themselves in familiar cultural settings and reconnect with their cultural heritage and other African attendees.

The experience of escapism (e.g., "I completely escaped from reality at the festival") strongly contributes to the sense of community within the African community. Activities that enable attendees to immerse themselves in different cultural or imaginative settings are particularly effective in enhancing their sense of connection and belonging to the African community.

Significant role of educational experiences

The festival serves as a valuable learning experience for African attendees, possibly due to the content's relevance or alignment with their cultural backgrounds or interests.

The educational aspect (e.g., "The festival improved my knowledge about African cultures") strongly contributes to the sense of community within the African community.

Experiencing the festival as a "cultural identity hub"

The festival acts as a hub where each educational interaction plants seeds of community belonging and strengthens African attendees' cultural identity. This educational component creates a deep connection with the African community by turning lessons into bridges that connect attendees to their roots and each other.

The combination of strong education and escapism in African attendees' experiences at the festival provides a place for them to immerse themselves in experiences that transcend the ordinary, refreshing their sense of identity and belonging.

⁴Base: Survey questions – Select to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements in relation to the African community; Select to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements in relation to the Australian community

⁵Base: Survey questions – Select to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements in relation to the African community; Select to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements in relation to the Australian community

NON-AFRICAN ATTENDEES

(Based on the survey questions about country of birth and region of origin)

SENSE OF COMMUNITY TOWARDS THE BROADER AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY⁴



Significant role of escapism experiences

Escapism experiences at the Africultures Festival help non-African attendees feel more connected and integrated within the broader Australian community.

Experiencing the festival as a form of escapism (e.g., “I completely escaped from reality at the festival”) significantly enhances their sense of community towards the broader Australian community. This indicates that experiences allowing non-African attendees to immerse themselves in different cultural or imaginative settings effectively enhance non-African attendees’ sense of community. This immersion helps attendees momentarily step away from their daily routines, fostering

mutual understanding and recognising similarities rather than differences among members of the broader Australian community.

Experiencing the Africultures Festival as a “cultural odyssey”

Attendees value the opportunity to explore new and diverse cultural realms, viewing the festival as a journey of cultural discovery.

The element of escapism serves as a bridge to these experiences, significantly enhancing their sense of community. This escapism allows them to step outside their everyday experiences and immerse themselves in a different cultural perspective, broadening their understanding and appreciation of the multicultural Australian society.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY TOWARDS THE AFRICAN COMMUNITY⁵



21

Significant role of escapism experiences

Escapism at the Africultures Festival helps non-African attendees immerse themselves in different and potentially novel cultural settings, particularly African cultures.

These positive experiences foster their connection with the African community. The experience linked to escapism (e.g., “I completely escaped from reality at the festival”) strongly contributes to the sense of community towards the African community.

Experiencing the festival as a “haven”

For non-African attendees, participating in activities that transform the festival into a haven effectively strengthens their connection to the African community.

The positive experience of escapism (for non-African attendees) creates an opportunity for new experiences. Thus, escapism is not only an escape from mundane everyday life but also a journey into diverse cultures. This positive multicultural experience broadens non-African attendees’ horizons and deepens their sense of community through a festival that welcomes broader communities.

THE ENTERTAINMENT EXPERIENCE IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR NON-AFRICAN THAN AFRICAN ATTENDEES.

The entertainment activities at the festival (like performances or interactive elements) are particularly important for non-African attendees and are possibly more aligned with their cultural preferences or expectations.

Experiencing the festival as a form of entertainment enhances their feeling of community belonging as they perceive society through similarities rather than differences.

⁴ Base: Survey questions – Select to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements in relation to the African community; Select to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements in relation to the Australian community.

⁵ Base: Survey questions – Select to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements in relation to the African community; Select to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements in relation to the Australian community

SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING

A strong sense of community among both African and non-African attendees contributes to overall social well-being⁸. Therefore, fostering a sense of community among festival attendees towards both the African and broader Australian communities is a crucial and desirable outcome for the festival.

The survey results reveal significant support for the link between participants’ sense of community—whether towards the African or Australian community—and their social well-being.

Moreover, the findings suggest that when attendees feel connected to specific communities, even those outside their own cultural background, they are more open to positively changing their views on how societies function. As they strengthen their sense of belonging, despite diverse ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, they tend to perceive more similarities, adopt a positive outlook towards others, and express greater optimism about society as a whole.

⁸ **Social Well-being**, as characterised by the World Health Organization, is a pivotal measure of individuals’ overall health and relates to the happiness experienced by both individuals and societies [1]. It reflects how people perceive the functioning of society around them, which encompasses their relationships with diverse communities and interactions with others. The measurement scale includes constructs of social integration, contribution, coherence, actualisation, and acceptance [2].

The way that the society in Australia works makes more sense to me.



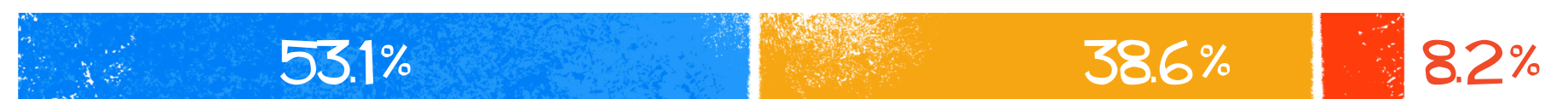
I have more things in common with other people living in Australia.



More positive about other people living in Australia.



That I now have something important to contribute to the society in Australia.



The society in Australia is becoming a better place for everyone.



STRONGLY AGREE
NEUTRAL
STRONGLY DISAGREE

Base: Survey question – We are interested to know how attending the Africultures Festival changed your view of society.



5. EMPOWERING STALLHOLDERS AND PERFORMERS AT THE AFRICULTURES FESTIVAL

Aligned with the festival's objective of stimulating individuals, groups, and skill-based participants to develop cultural and community services and providing channels for them to do so, the 2023 Africultures Festival provided a platform for 81 stallholders and 33 performers. This opportunity empowered them to showcase their talents, contributing to community capacity building.

The 2023 Africultures Festival provided significant capacity-building support to stallholders and performers through two primary initiatives:

- 1) Participation in the festival, which encompassed necessary preparations and training. Fourteen surveys completed by stallholders and performers were returned and analysed with both quantitative and qualitative questions.
- 2) Attendance at a series of workshops and webinars specifically designed for festival stallholders and conducted before and after the festival. Webinar reflections made by stallholders were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and the insights informed the findings of this report.

The following sections provide insights into the aggregated findings from both surveys. First, a profile of the stallholders and performers is presented, followed by an exploration of the role of the Africultures Festival in supporting them and their businesses.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Surveys, in paper form and online, were distributed among festival stallholders and performers between August and October 2023.

- Fourteen fully completed surveys were analysed, incorporating both quantitative (scales) and qualitative (open-ended) questions.

A workshop series focused on enhancing marketing and promotional strategies, as well as skills in social media technologies relevant to the festival setting was delivered by Dr Michael Camit from the Digital Immigrant Resource Network.

- Thirteen stallholders registered and actively participated. The program began with an in-person workshop in August 2023, followed by two interactive one-hour webinars in the weeks leading up to the festival, and a final webinar after the festival.

- The final webinar in September 2023 allowed stallholders to reflect on the newly acquired marketing and sales strategies. Participants shared their festival experiences, highlighting the effectiveness of the strategies learned. Discussions and reflections from this session were recorded and transcribed, providing valuable insights into the stallholders' capacity building and how they applied their learnings at the festival.

UNDERSTANDING STALLHOLDERS AND PERFORMERS

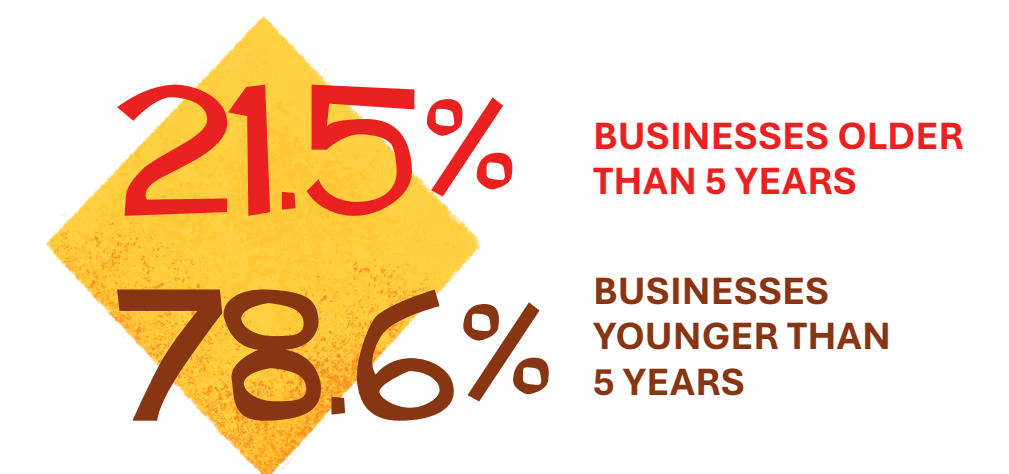
An analysis of the demographic makeup of the festival stallholders and performers reveals a diverse array of cultural backgrounds and entrepreneurial endeavours.

Regarding cultural background and origin, the survey findings indicate the following:

- A notable portion of respondents are first-generation immigrants (79%), reflecting the multicultural nature of the festival.
- Respondents' length of residency in Australia ranges widely, with half of respondents living in the country for over 21 years, while nearly a quarter have been residents for less than five years. This underscores the festival's crucial role in fostering connections for newcomer communities, allowing them to share their cultural heritage.

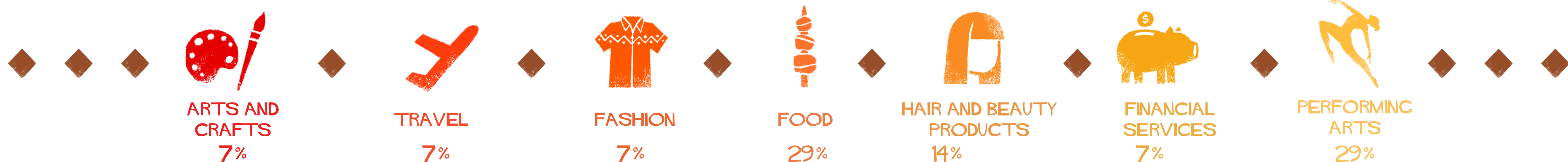
The businesses of stallholders and performers also exhibit diversity in terms of maturity and sectoral focus:

- The festival attracts both new and returning businesses. About half of the stallholders and performers had returned to the festival in 2023.
- Stallholders and performers represent various sectors, with performing arts (29%), food (29%), and hair and beauty products (14%) as the predominant categories.
- Despite this diverse representation, more than half of these businesses earn less than \$5,000 annually, and about half of them function as sole traders, reflecting the entrepreneurial nature of the festival stallholders and performers.
- Among the participating stallholders and performers, 21.4% have been established for over 5 years, while 78.6% are younger than 5 years, demonstrating the inclusive character of the Africultures Festival as a stage for both established enterprises and emerging talents to present their offerings and engage with audiences.



Base: Survey question – In which year did you make your first sale?

SECTOR REPRESENTATION



Base: Survey question – In which sector does your business operate?

The festival’s impact is evident in its ability to support stallholders and performers in areas where they may have less experience, thereby assisting them in growing and succeeding in their entrepreneurial endeavours.

The survey data indicates the following:

- Although the majority of stallholders and performers have significant prior experience in starting a new business (79% strongly agree or agree), fewer have experience in new market development (43%) or product development (36%).
- The festival serves as a platform for these entrepreneurs to showcase their offerings and gain experience in expanding their businesses into new markets and developing new products.



I have experience with starting a new business.



I have experience with new market development.



I have experience with new product development.



STRONGLY AGREE
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
STRONGLY DISAGREE

Base: Survey question – What is the level of your experience with the following entrepreneurial-related activities?

Alongside their growth aspirations, stallholders and performers encounter various barriers that hinder their business development.

Common barriers include:

LACK OF LOCAL NETWORKS

71%

LIMITED FINANCIAL RESOURCES

71%

INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORTING THEIR BUSINESS/ART PRODUCTION

71%

LIMITED BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE

57%

UNFAMILIARITY WITH AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS CULTURE

43%

INSUFFICIENT GOVERNMENT/ COUNCIL SUPPORT

43%

Base: Survey question – Which barriers would prevent you from establishing a new business or growing your current business?

To provide a glimpse into the diverse array of festival stallholders and performers, four profiles are presented.

While these profiles may not capture every stallholder and performer, they offer valuable insights into the individuals contributing to the rich fabric of the Africultures Festival.



SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA: THE SOCIAL VENTURE



Profile: This stallholder operates a social venture that coordinates multiple projects focused on arts, crafts, and tours in Africa, all sold and promoted at the festival. The primary goal of these activities is to fund the construction of a Community Centre in an African country. The Centre will offer cultural experiences, with profits contributing to its construction. Once established, proceeds from these cultural experiences will support projects within the Community Centre.

The owner, still learning the ropes of operating a social venture, made their first sale in 2019. Although this venture isn't their main source of income, the owner dedicates approximately 20 hours per week to its growth and management.

FLAVOURS OF AFRICA: CATERING BUSINESS EXPANSION



Profile: This business operates as a catering service offering food from Eastern Africa, along with food products. Established in 2022 as a family business, it involves both first- and second-generation migrants, each dedicating about 5 hours per week to the startup.

The owners have noticed significant interest in their products from both African and non-African attendees at the festival. They aim to expand their business, particularly focusing on catering and selling chilli products. However, they lack experience in product and market development and perceive the Australian business culture as unfamiliar and risky.

ESSENCE OF AFRICA: SKIN AND HAIR CARE ENTREPRENEUR



Profile: This stallholder is an entrepreneurial producer of skin and haircare products that incorporate native African ingredients. Operating as a sole trader business, the business was established in 2022 and has since effectively expanded its social media presence. The entrepreneur's expertise lies primarily in market and product development.

Their growth strategy focuses on expanding the number of wholesale outlets and hiring employees for operations and communications. Despite being a first-generation migrant and residing in Australia for over two decades, the entrepreneur still feels significantly hampered by their lack of business knowledge and local networks.

MUSICAL HARMONY: A BAND'S VISION FOR GROWTH



Profile: This venture is a music band established in 2011. Its members dedicate fewer than 20 hours per week to the business, and it is not their primary source of income. The interviewed member, who was born in Australia to overseas-born parents, expressed the strongest growth intention among the case studies.

They believe they have sufficient local networks to expand domestically and are aiming to enter international markets for increased financial returns. Additionally, they have a social goal. One of the members has experience in youth work, leading to a growth vision of developing a youth arts space to utilise their musical skills.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR STALLHOLDERS AND PERFORMERS

The Africultures Festival provides a unique platform for stallholders and performers to grow their businesses and ideas.

For stallholders, the festival offers an opportunity to directly promote and sell their goods and services, boosting sales and visibility within and beyond the African community. Similarly, performers find a stage to showcase their music and dance talents, contributing to cultural exchange and celebration.

The survey data indicates the following:

- The festival significantly influences the decision of stallholders and performers to grow their businesses or art production.
- Stallholders and performers have various growth intentions and aspirations, with respondents expressing a strong desire for business growth.
- Stallholders' and performers' ambitions range from expanding product lines and market reach to scaling up operations and increasing profitability. This growth orientation underscores their entrepreneurial drive and eagerness to capitalise on opportunities presented by participating in the festival.

My decision to grow my business has changed since participating in the Africultures Festival



Base: Survey question – We are interested to see if your participation at the Africultures Festival impacted your decision to grow your business.



FINANCIAL STABILITY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

Some survey participants emphasised the importance of securing investment to support their products and pricing strategies. They aim to sustain themselves and their families while potentially expanding to employ workers.

GEOGRAPHICAL EXPANSION AND PRODUCT DIVERSIFICATION.

Some stallholders and performers expressed their intentions to expand their businesses interstate and internationally and increase the number of products and services offered.

“For the future of my dance group, I intend to widen our audience reach, thereby getting more large-scale performances and diverse artists to perform for and with.” (survey response)

NEW BUSINESS IDEAS.

Some participants envisioned establishing new ventures that extend their current operations, such as opening personal recording studios or catering businesses.

“To be more known, expand in service delivery. Be able to sustain myself and my family, be able to have a company and employ workers. Currently, I have only casuals.”

(survey response)

STALLHOLDERS AND PERFORMERS EXPRESSED INTENTIONS TO GROW THEIR BUSINESSES IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS.

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES.

Some performers and stallholders demonstrated a commitment to community development by integrating their businesses with social initiatives, such as establishing youth arts spaces and supporting communities in Uganda through cultural experiences.

“I have multiple projects that I am working on that I want to connect to my business, for example, to build a Community Centre to support communities in Uganda. I am interested in managing my business as a social enterprise.” (survey response)

PRODUCT AUTHENTICITY.

For many selling handmade and craft products, maintaining authenticity while growing was crucial. This involves partnering with investors who value craftsmanship and charging premium prices to reflect a dedication to quality.

“Look for an investor who understands and appreciates the time and effort it takes to handmade items and expect to charge higher rates for my products, and hopefully an investor can help with this with the right marketing and stores to sell it or online.” (survey response)

The Africultures Festival acts as a support platform where stallholders and performers can showcase their talents, products, and cultures while engaging with diverse audiences. This support role is formed through a tight-knit community that extends beyond the event.

Survey findings highlight the festival's essential role in fostering mutual support among participants, contributing to community empowerment and a deep sense of belonging. This support system is pivotal, creating a collaborative environment where individuals can thrive and grow their businesses. The festival provides a platform for showcasing talents and cultural expressions, offering exposure that leads to recognition and appreciation. Stallholders, in particular, value the festival for its role in connecting them with diverse audiences and cultural communities, fostering genuine interactions and relationships.

Moreover, the festival's spirit of reciprocity strengthens community bonds, with participants actively supporting and promoting each other's work. This collaborative ethos extends beyond the festival, with stallholders and performers exchanging contacts and planning to collaborate on future projects. The Africultures Festival not only celebrates African cultures but also serves as a catalyst for community building, collaboration, and personal growth.

The following examples offer detailed insights into the support provided by the Africultures Festival and the stallholders and performers themselves in response to two survey questions: *How (if in any way) has the Africultures Festival supported you and other stallholders/performers?* and *How (if in any way) have other stallholders/performers at the festival supported you in your business/art production?*

A PLATFORM TO SHOWCASE POTENTIAL.

One of the primary roles of the Africultures Festival, as highlighted by the stallholders, is its provision of a platform for showcasing talents and cultural heritage. The festival offers stallholders and performers exposure that leads to recognition and appreciation. This exposure can also act as a springboard for broader audience reach or business growth.



“It has provided the audience required to showcase our group’s dance capabilities and performance potential.”
(survey response)

ROLE OF OTHER CULTURAL COMMUNITIES.

The festival serves as a place where individuals from various cultural backgrounds meet, strengthening cultural interactions and understanding. Stallholders and performers expressed their gratitude for the opportunity offered by the Africultures Festival to connect with people from different communities, sharing moments of joy and camaraderie. For many, this experience allowed them to interact with individuals they may not have encountered otherwise, including other stallholders, performers, and attendees.



“Giving me the platform to, for the first time, share a great moment with so many people from different backgrounds.”
(survey response)



“Many of the other stallholders have taken our contacts for potential collaboration in their future events.”

(survey response)

COMMUNITY RECIPROCITY.

The spirit of reciprocity is evident in the data from stallholders and performers. They engage in mutual support and promotion beyond the festival grounds. As reported in the survey, collaborations extend to attending each other’s events, sharing information on social media, and spreading the word through personal networks. This reciprocal support strengthens community bonds and supports the work and activities of individual stallholders and performers.



“I always enjoy performing at the Africultures and appreciate the reciprocal support shown – always happy to return the love!”

(survey response)

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION.

Beyond the festival itself, survey responses highlighted the importance of community collaborations that extend beyond the festival. Stallholders and performers exchange contact details, which can pave the way for future collaborations and cross-promotions. The networking at the festival extends opportunities for stallholders to participate in other events and projects with the broader community. Survey responses also indicate that stallholders exchange tips and advice on how to style merchandise products or stalls.



“The festival] has given me the hope that I have a chance to better and expand my music to lots of different audiences.” ”

(survey response)



PROVIDING A SENSE OF HOPE.

The Africultures Festival serves as a source of inspiration for participants, imbuing them with confidence in their creative work. The opportunity to reach a diverse audience and showcase their arts and crafts contributes to their potential future growth. Respondents expressed optimism about the future, motivated by the possibilities of reaching new heights, whether it be starting a new business, pursuing a promising music career, or transitioning from home cooking to owning a restaurant.

Through the workshop and webinar series, the Africultures Festival has contributed to capacity building in marketing, promotion, and digital literacy.

In addition to the impact of participating in the festival, the workshop and webinar series had a profound impact on stallholders, extending beyond their festival experience.

DIGITAL LITERACY AND ONLINE MARKETPLACE.

Participants gained insights into digital literacy and online marketplaces. For instance, one stallholder, selling jewellery and craft products, highlighted the significance of establishing a robust online presence and launching their site on Etsy.com. Moreover, participants had the opportunity to spend \$20 on Facebook ads to promote their businesses. This practical experience, coupled with learning about utilising keywords in social media, resulted in one participant growing their online audience significantly:



“I got so much reach... before I was getting like 60. And then it went to... it was in the thousands.”
(reflection of a stallholder during the webinar)

PROMOTION AND MARKETING STRATEGIES.



The workshop and webinars introduced innovative promotional strategies that were effectively applied at the festival. For example, one stallholder initiated a social media competition, encouraging festival attendees to share pictures of the stall on social media. Another successful strategy involved offering bundled products. For instance, a participating stallholder sold food as well as ready-made chilli in jars. This strategy addressed the reluctance of some festival attendees to purchase chilli outright. By bundling the chilli jars with ready-made food, attendees had the opportunity to taste the chilli first.

PRODUCT DIFFERENTIATION.

The workshop and webinar series emphasised the importance of selling products or services that stand out while maintaining authenticity and cultural elements. For example, a jewellery and craft stallholder implemented a premium pricing strategy to emphasise the unique value of their products. Another stallholder selling cosmetic products used traditionally woven white fabrics instead of commonly used wax print fabrics, creating a unique visual appeal.

INFUSING PRODUCTS WITH CULTURAL HERITAGE.

Stallholders learned to engage the festival audience by infusing their products with African narrative and imagery. This approach not only attracted customers seeking diversity but also conveyed the deeper meaning behind the products, connecting them to African heritage. For instance, one stallholder created tags for each product, demonstrating how sales contribute to building a community centre in Africa. Another participant realised that their branding did not reflect their connection to Africa and plans to enhance this aspect in the future.



“Those fabrics have been around that still has been around in Africa for about 500 years. So, I did something completely different. And I wanted it to look visually different to what everyone else would be doing. So, which is, which worked really well.”

(reflection of a stallholder during the webinar)



“Someone told me: ‘Oh, this doesn’t have the African brand. It’s just the normal one’. So, it’s something that [I] may need to think about.”
(reflection of a stallholder during the webinar)

6. THE LEGACY OF THE AFRICULTURES FESTIVAL

The Africultures Festival significantly contributes to the Australian cultural landscape, leaving a lasting impact on both attendees and stallholders/performers. From its humble beginnings as a community gathering, the festival has evolved into a symbol of cultural vibrancy and inclusivity, as demonstrated by the 2023 event.

Key findings in this report underscore the significant social impact of the festival, contributing to a sense of community among participants from diverse backgrounds. African attendees establish stronger connections within their communities and with the wider Australian community, whereas non-African attendees gain a greater understanding and appreciation of African cultures, promoting cross-cultural understanding and integration. This sense of community correlates with enhanced social well-being and increased openness to positive societal change.

Furthermore, the festival offers valuable capacity-building opportunities for stallholders and performers through various initiatives, including preparations and training sessions. These initiatives enhance their skills and enable success in their respective fields.

Festivals, like the Africultures Festival, serve as a testament to the power of cultural celebrations in fostering social cohesion and mutual understanding among diverse communities [5]. By providing a platform for African cultures to shine, the Africultures Festival not only celebrates the richness of these cultures but also contributes to the broader Australian community's sense of inclusivity and diversity. It showcases the strengths and capabilities of the African community in Australia, challenging stereotypes and promoting integration.

Moreover, the festival's emphasis on cultural exchange and celebration underscores the importance of integration for both newcomers and host communities. Through its various activities, programs, and capacity building initiatives, the Africultures Festival leaves a lasting legacy of unity, diversity, and cultural appreciation of African cultures in Australian society. In support of a thriving Africultures Festival, this report identifies strategies for organisers to consider in supporting attendees and stallholders/performers in the future.

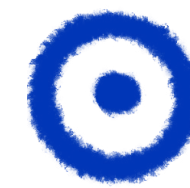
CULTURAL CONNECTIONS IN FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING

The festival presents a one-day opportunity for individuals from various cultural backgrounds to come together and celebrate African cultures. Understanding the geographic origins and motivations of attendees, organisers can tailor future editions of the festival to cater to a range of needs and interests.

ENHANCE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES INFUSED WITH ENTERTAINMENT

Educational elements should be bundled with entertainment, showcasing unique aspects of African cultures in an engaging manner. By leveraging the festival's diverse program to blend education with entertainment, organisers can enhance attendees' overall experience while simultaneously advancing the festival's mission of cultural exchange and understanding. The festival can develop and promote educational experiences that highlight African cultures, history, and contributions. The educational opportunities should be diverse and align with various interests and age groups. These initiatives will bolster African attendees' cultural identity and sense of community while fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation among non-African attendees, enhancing their sense of community with both African attendees and the broader Australian community.

Examples may include:



- **Dedicated spaces for cultural interaction:** Designate areas within the festival for attendees to interact and engage in meaningful conversations. These spaces can facilitate connections between African and non-African attendees, fostering a deeper sense of community. Create interactive exhibits that highlight aspects of African culture, such as traditional clothing, rituals, folklore, and language. Attendees can participate in activities like trying on traditional attire, learning basic phrases in African languages, or participating in mock ceremonies, allowing them to actively engage with and learn about African culture.



- **Language exchange pods:** Set up language exchange pods where attendees can learn basic phrases in African languages and engage in conversational exchanges with native speakers. This promotes linguistic diversity and facilitates cultural immersion in a fun and interactive way.



- **Cultural sensitivity resources:** Provide supplementary resources, such as cultural sensitivity guides or online materials, to non-African attendees prior to the event. These resources can offer insights into African cultures, customs, and social norms, empowering attendees to navigate intercultural interactions with confidence.

CELEBRATE THE DIVERSITY OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

Continue building on the festival's core strength, which lies in uniting African cultures through the participation of diverse attendees, stallholders, and performers. This inclusive approach ensures that attendees from African backgrounds perceive the festival as a platform for enriching experiences that deepen their sense of community and connection to the broader African communities.

Examples include:



- **Panel discussions and talks:** Host panel discussions and talks on topics related to African diversity, identity, and unity. Invite speakers from diverse backgrounds to share their perspectives and experiences, fostering dialogue and understanding among attendees.



- **Cultural discovery trails:** Design festival maps that guide attendees through a cultural journey, highlighting different regions and traditions of Africa. Encourage exploration with interactive exhibits and storytelling sessions. Organise storytelling sessions where attendees can learn about the rich cultural heritage of African communities. These sessions can be both entertaining and educational, deepening understanding and appreciation of diversity.



- **Curating diverse stallholders and performers:** Curate a diverse selection of stallholders offering authentic African products, crafts, and cuisine. By encouraging representation from various African countries, the festival can showcase the distinctive flavours and cultural nuances of each region. This not only enhances the festival's cultural richness but also provides economic opportunities for African stallholders and performers.

PROMOTE CULTURAL ESCAPISM

Design festival experiences that allow attendees to immerse themselves in different cultural settings. Both non-African and African attendees highly value the opportunity to experience something novel or different from their everyday lives. Create spaces and activities that transport attendees to different African cultural environments, offering them a temporary escape from their daily lives.

Examples include:



- **Cultural pavilions:** Set up pavilions representing different African regions or countries, each showcasing their unique cultural heritage through art, music, dance, and cuisine. Attendees can wander through these pavilions, immersing themselves in the sights, sounds, and flavours of various African cultures.



- **Culinary adventures:** Host culinary workshops or tasting sessions featuring traditional African dishes from various regions. Attendees can sample diverse cuisines and learn about the cultural significance of different ingredients and cooking techniques.

HIGHLIGHT STORIES OF CONNECTION

Highlight the festival's impact by showcasing stories and testimonials from attendees that vividly illustrate its influence on their sense of community and social well-being. Personal anecdotes from African participants underscore their deepened sense of belonging and pride in their cultural heritage.

Examples include:



- **Storytelling sessions:** Set up interactive storytelling stations where attendees can listen to recorded narratives or read written testimonials from past festival participants. These narratives also offer valuable insights into the transformative power of cultural exchange, fostering empathy and a strong sense of community among non-African attendees towards their African counterparts.



- **Documentary screenings:** Screen documentaries or short films that highlight stories of connection and cultural exchange. These films can feature interviews with festival attendees, organisers, and participants sharing their experiences and insights, showcasing the impact of the festival on diverse communities.

EXPAND ESTHETIC ELEMENTS

Continue enhancing the esthetic components, such as visual arts, performances, and decorations. Esthetic elements play a significant role in fostering a sense of community and belonging, particularly among African attendees.

Examples include:



- **Interactive art installations:** Create interactive art installations that engage attendees and encourage participation. For example, set up a community mural where attendees can contribute their own artwork throughout the festival, or install interactive light displays that respond to movement or sound, creating a dynamic and immersive visual experience.



- **Art workshops:** Offer workshops on traditional African art techniques, costume design, or body painting. Attendees can learn hands-on skills from skilled artisans and artists, gaining a deeper appreciation for the esthetic traditions of Africa.

CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT, OUTREACH AND EMPOWERMENT OF STALLHOLDERS AND PERFORMERS

The Africultures Festival serves as a cornerstone of diversity and inclusion. By fostering significant interactions with attendees from various backgrounds, organisers empower stallholders and performers to elevate the festival experience while expanding its reach to diverse and multicultural audiences.

Through carefully crafted strategies, the festival can cultivate cultural exchange, empowering stallholders/performers to elevate the experience for diverse attendees and reach new multicultural audiences:

EXPANDING REACH AND OUTREACH

Support stallholders/performers interested in expanding beyond their local communities to reach diverse, multicultural audiences. This support can include workshops or seminars on marketing (promotion strategies tailored to reach broader audiences) and finance, empowering stallholders/performers to maximise their potential reach and impact. By providing resources and guidance, organisers empower these participants to extend their reach and foster cultural exchange beyond traditional boundaries.

EDUCATION-CENTRIC APPROACH

Prioritise educational initiatives aimed at stallholders/performers to solidify the Africultures Festival as a cultural hub. Organise workshops to guide stallholders/performers on branding strategies that authentically represent African cultures while appealing to diverse audiences. Encourage these participants to adapt their products in ways that respect cultural authenticity while catering to varied preferences. Training on cultural sensitivity and access to resources for adaptation are essential components of this approach.



FOSTERING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AMONG STALLHOLDERS AND PERFORMERS

The Africultures Festival serves as an important platform for fostering collaboration and mutual learning among stallholders/performers, significantly contributing to their empowerment. Leveraging this role to facilitate knowledge exchange is essential for building a robust community of practice.

To ensure the longevity of capacity-building initiatives for stallholders/performers, despite funding challenges, the following strategies are recommended:

RESOURCE HUB AND DEDICATED SUPPORT TEAM:

Establishing a comprehensive online resource hub is crucial, providing essential information, templates, and guides for stallholders. Topics may encompass marketing (booth setup tips, legal requirements, and customer engagement techniques) and financial literacy (budgeting, working with financial reports, and planning). Concurrently, appointing a dedicated support team to assist throughout the process ensures timely assistance and proactive solutions.

VENDOR NETWORKING EVENTS AND MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

Organise regular networking events tailored specifically for stallholders/performers, fostering connections, experience-sharing, and relationship-building. These events can range from informal gatherings to structured speed networking sessions, fostering a sense of community and collaboration. Additionally, launching a mentorship program where experienced stallholders or industry professionals offer guidance and support to newcomers or those seeking professional advice enhances community cohesion.

RECOGNITION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Implement recognition programs to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of stallholders/performers to the festival's success. This could involve awards ceremonies, highlighted features on the festival website or social media platforms, or offering special benefits to long-standing participants. Simultaneously, establish a review panel comprising stakeholders, including stallholders and performers, to regularly evaluate the festival's operations. This ensures transparency and accountability in decision-making processes, facilitating ongoing improvements.

REFERENCES

[1] Africultures Festival (2024). About. Retrieved April 1, 2024, from <https://africultures.com.au/about-us/>

[2] Pine, B., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

[3] Sarason, S. B. (1974). *The psychological sense of community: Prospects for a community psychology*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

[4] Peterson, N. A., Speer, P. W., & McMillan, D. W. (2008). Validation of a brief sense of community scale: Confirmation of the principal theory of sense of community. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 36(1), 61-73.

[5] Hassanli, N., Walters, T., & Williamson, J. (2021). 'You feel you're not alone': how multicultural festivals foster social sustainability through multiple psychological sense of community. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(11-12), 1792-1809.



CONNECT WITH US

Dr Pavlina Jasovska

University Of Technology Sydney Business School
Pavlina.jasovska@Uts.edu.au

Dr Najmeh Hassanli

University Of Technology Sydney Business School
Najmeh.hassanli@Uts.edu.au

THIS REPORT WAS DESIGNED AND ILLUSTRATED BY SH8PESHIFTERS
HELLO@SH8PESHIFTERS.COM www.sh8peshifters.com

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY, FOSTERING UNITY: THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE AFRICULTURES FESTIVAL