

Festivals and Tourism: Examining the Relationship on Local Communities with Special Reference to Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

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Abstract

This article is an attempt to bring out the significance of festivals and to explore tourism and local people to the fullest. Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala, India, is known for its rich cultural heritage and vibrant festival scene. Several festivals in Thiruvananthapuram have had a significant impact on the development of locals and tourism in the regio. Kerala has been considered as one of the exciting tourist destinations in the world. The art, crafts, architecture, music, dance, fairs and festivals, cuisine and people all are instances of the cultural rainbow of Kerala. The land of Anantha, Thiruvananthapuram, promises to be an experience of a lifetime with its wealth of culture and traditions, it is also haven for nature lovers. The city capital is an amalgam of various forms of tourism, wherein the influences the creativity and the celebrations of a region. Festival is a slice of India's history, each festival is unique in style and is characterised by colour, gaiety, enthusiasm, feasts and heterogeneity of prayers and rituals. A very interesting aspect brought to light through this study is that prospects of festivals however, lie in the fact that they are the carrier of cultural wealth and moral values and boosters of local economy.

Keynotes: festival, festival tourism, heritage, moral value, carrier, cultural wealth.

Introduction

Festivals, ubiquitous and diverse in their manifestations, serve as cornerstones of cultural, religious, and social identity across the globe. As communal celebrations deeply embedded in the human experience, festivals transcend geographical boundaries, marking significant moments in time, expressing shared values, and fostering a sense of collective belonging. Festivals have long been recognized as significant cultural and social events that attract both domestic and international tourists. These celebrations often showcase the unique cultural heritage, traditions, and identity of a community, making them a focal point for tourism activities. The relationship between festivals and tourism is complex and multifaceted, with festivals playing a dual role as both cultural expressions and tourist attractions.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in understanding the impact of festivals on tourism and their influence on local communities. This interest stems from the recognition of festivals as powerful drivers of economic development, cultural preservation, and community engagement. As such, examining the relationship between festivals and tourism, as well as their impact on local communities, has become a compelling area of research with implications for tourism management, community development, and cultural sustainability.

This research aims to explore the intricate dynamics between festivals, tourism, and local communities, with a focus on understanding how festivals contribute to tourism development and shape the social and economic fabric of the communities hosting them. By examining this relationship, we seek to uncover the various ways in which festivals impact local economies, influence cultural dynamics, and contribute to community well-being.

Overall, this research seeks to advance our understanding of the interplay between festivals, tourism, and local communities, providing valuable insights into how these dynamics can be managed to maximize their benefits for all stakeholders involved.

Objective of study:

The primary objective of this study is:

- To examine the role of festivals in fostering local community.
- To display the festivals of Thiruvananthapuram.
- To investigate how festivals contribute to the preservation and promotion of local cultural heritage, traditions, and identity.

Festivals play a pivotal role in shaping and preserving cultural identity. They are repositories of traditions, customs, and artistic expressions that define a community. Through costumes, traditional arts, music, and cuisine, festivals become living embodiments of cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride and continuity.

Kerala, known as "God's Own Country," is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and vibrant temple festivals. These festivals, known locally as "Utsavams," are an integral part of Kerala's cultural fabric and attract thousands of devotees and tourists every year. Here are some notable festivals in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala:

Some prominent festivals and its impacts

Onam Festival: Onam is one of the most important festivals in Kerala, celebrated with great fervor in Thiruvananthapuram. The festival showcases the cultural heritage of the state through various traditional rituals, folk dances like Kathakali and Mohiniyattam, Thiruvathira and grand feasts known as Onam Sadhya. The festival's impact on tourism is substantial, as it attracts both domestic and international tourists who come to experience Kerala's culture and hospitality.

Impact on Development: Onam festival contributes to the local economy by boosting the tourism industry, leading to increased revenue for businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and souvenir shops. Additionally, the festival provides opportunities for local artisans and performers to showcase their skills and generate income.

Attukal Pongala: The Attukal Pongala festival is a unique event where millions of women gather in Thiruvananthapuram to prepare a special offering called Pongala for the goddess Attukalamma. This festival holds the Guinness World Record for the largest gathering of women for a religious activity. The festival has gained international recognition and draws tourists from far and wide.

Impact on Development: Attukal Pongala has a significant economic impact on Thiruvananthapuram, particularly for businesses catering to the needs of the large number of devotees and tourists. The festival also promotes the cultural heritage of Kerala and contributes to the empowerment of women through their active participation.

Thiruvananthapuram International Film Festival (IFFK): The IFFK is an annual event that showcases a wide range of international and Indian films, attracting film enthusiasts, directors, and actors from around the world. The festival has become a prominent cultural event in Thiruvananthapuram and contributes to the city's reputation as a hub for film culture.

Impact on Development: The IFFK has a positive impact on the local economy by boosting tourism and creating opportunities for the hospitality and entertainment sectors. It also promotes Thiruvananthapuram as a cultural destination and provides a platform for local filmmakers to showcase their work to a global audience.

Swathi Sangeethotsavam: Organized by the Government of Kerala, the Swathi Sangeethotsavam is a week-long music festival held at the Kuthiramalika Palace in Thiruvananthapuram. The festival celebrates the compositions of Maharaja Swathi Thirunal, a renowned composer and ruler of Travancore.

Impact on Development: The Swathi Sangeethotsavam contributes to the promotion of classical music and cultural tourism in Thiruvananthapuram. It attracts music enthusiasts, scholars, and artists, thereby enhancing the city's cultural landscape and generating revenue for local businesses.

Other festivals

Navaratri Celebrations: Navaratri, a nine-night festival dedicated to the worship of the goddess Durga, is celebrated with great enthusiasm in Thiruvananthapuram. The city comes alive with colorful processions, traditional music and dance performances, and elaborate temple decorations. Navaratri is a time of cultural significance and religious fervor, attracting both locals and tourists.

Vishu: Vishu is the Malayalam New Year celebrated in Kerala, including Thiruvananthapuram, with various rituals and customs. The festival is known for its symbolic Vishukkani (auspicious sight) arrangement, which includes items like rice, fruits, and flowers, displayed the night before Vishu. Vishu also involves the giving of gifts and special meals, contributing to the festive atmosphere in the city.

Thiruvananthapuram Flower Show: The Thiruvananthapuram Flower Show is an annual event that showcases a wide variety of flowers, plants, and gardening techniques. The show attracts gardening enthusiasts, tourists, and locals interested in horticulture and landscaping.

Nishagandhi Dance and Music Festival: Organized by the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC), the Nishagandhi Dance and Music Festival is a week-long cultural extravaganza held at the Nishagandhi Open-Air Auditorium in Thiruvananthapuram. The festival showcases classical dance and music performances by renowned artists from across India, attracting both locals and tourists interested in the performing arts.

Sreekanteswaram Dance and Music Festival: This annual festival is organized by the Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala, and features performances by classical dancers and musicians. The festival is held at the Sreekanteswaram Temple in Thiruvananthapuram and aims to promote traditional art forms while providing a platform for artists to showcase their talent.

Thiruvananthapuram Book Fair: The Thiruvananthapuram Book Fair is a major literary event that attracts book lovers, authors, and publishers from across Kerala. Organized by the Government of Kerala, the book fair features book launches, literary discussions, and cultural programs, making it a significant event for promoting literature and intellectual exchange in the city.

These are just a few examples, and there are numerous other festivals celebrated across Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, each with its own unique traditions, rituals, and cultural significance. These festivals not only showcase the rich cultural heritage of Kerala but also play a significant role in the state's tourism industry, attracting visitors from around the world. All these festivals and events, contribute to the cultural diversity and vibrancy of Thiruvananthapuram. They showcase the rich traditions, arts, and heritage of Kerala, attracting visitors and fostering a sense of community among

locals and play a vital role in the development of both locals and tourism. They create global recognition as a destination for art, culture, and heritage

Positive Impacts of Festival on local community

- Promotes and preserves local tradition, custom and culture.
- Helps to improve the host community pride and good will.
- Builds communal harmony and cultural integrity.
- Provide opportunities for local artisans.
- Boosts local investments.
- Creates new jobs, business, events and attractions.
- Explores and relish local authentic cuisine.
- Creates enjoyable experiences for both local residents and tourists.
- Contributes to creativity and sustainable development.

Conclusion

This study is broad and multidimensional, encompassing various aspects of festivals, tourism, and their intersection with local communities. The study covered different types of festivals, such as cultural festivals, music festivals, religious festivals, and arts festivals, each with its unique characteristics and impacts on tourism and local communities. Festivals contribute to the preservation and promotion of local culture, traditions, and identity, as well as their role in fostering social cohesion and community development. Through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature and rigorous research methodologies, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on festivals, tourism, and community development. By shedding light on the complexities of this relationship, we hope to inform policymakers, tourism practitioners, and community stakeholders about the potential benefits associated with leveraging festivals for tourism development while preserving the local cultural, social and economic significance.

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