
ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF ATTUKAL PONGALA FESTIVAL: INSIGHTS INTO LOCAL PERCEPTIONS AND COMMUNITY LIVELIHOOD

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Abstract

Festivals exhibit the rich culture and heritage of a particular community. Festivals often unite communities, fostering social unity and a sense of belonging. Festivals can stimulate economic activity and create opportunities for local livelihoods across various sectors, including retail, hospitality, transportation, tourism, event support services, and more. Businesses that strategically align themselves with festival audiences can influence the inflow of visitors to generate revenue and support their livelihoods. This study explores the resident's perception of Attukal Pongala, a significant religious festival in Kerala, India, on local livelihoods. The Attukal Pongala held in Attukal Temple, Thiruvananthapuram, holds the Guinness World Record for being the largest gathering of women for a religious activity. Women from different walks of life come together to participate in the ritual, irrespective of caste, creed, or social status. This annual religious festival is vibrant evidence of cultural heritage and spiritual devotion. The study examines residence perception and the impacts of the festival on local livelihood. It also investigates the relationship between demographic factors and the

influence of pilgrimage tourism in the local community. This paper analysis explores the manifold benefits of festival tourism and development within the community, demonstrating how these initiatives enhance residents' income and living standards, create job opportunities, and promote infrastructural improvements, all while fostering community pride and entrepreneurial growth.

Keywords: *Religious Festival, Residence Perception, Local Livelihoods*

Introduction

Attukal Pongala, an annual festival celebrated in Kerala, India, holds profound cultural and religious significance for millions of devotees. The festival, dedicated to the goddess Attukal Bhagavathy, draws multitudes of worshippers who converge in the city of Thiruvananthapuram to participate in the ceremonial offering of Pongala, a sweet porridge cooked in earthen pots. Beyond its spiritual dimensions, Attukal Pongala has emerged as a socio-economic phenomenon, significantly impacting the lives of local communities (Ariyaputhiri et al., 2023).

While the festival brings out a flow of religious enthusiasm and communal unity, its effects extend far beyond faith (Bandyopadhyay, 2008). The influx of devotees, tourists, and vendors during Attukal Pongala has positive and negative repercussions on the socio-economic fabric of the region. Understanding these implications is crucial for policymakers, researchers, and local stakeholders in formulating sustainable development strategies and fostering harmonious community relations (Babu et al., 2015; Shandilya et al., 2019; Shandilya & Srivastava, 2024).

This study seeks to delve deeper into the perception of residents of Attukal Pongala, examining its effects on local livelihoods through a multifaceted lens. By employing statistical methods such as factor analysis, one-way ANOVA, cross-tabulation, frequency analysis, and demographic profile, we aim to distinguish patterns, correlations, and disparities in the festival's impact. The study is grounded on the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework to measure the economic impact, placing less emphasis on the social and environmental dimensions to enhance the evaluation of events and festivals.

Through this investigation, we aspire to shed light on the complexities built into the intersection of religious tradition, tourism, and socio-economic development. By unravelling these shades, we aim to provide valuable insights that can give evidence-based insights into the economic development

of residents which helps in decision-making and thereby contribute to formulating inclusive and sustainable development strategies in festival management and tourism planning contexts.

Historical Background

Attukal Bhagavathy Temple, located in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, stands out as a significant site in Indian religious and cultural history. Referred to as the ‘Sabarimala of women,’ the temple is dedicated to the Hindu goddess Bhagavathy, also known as Attukal Amma. The origins of both the temple and its renowned festival, Attukal Pongala, are steeped in historical legend and cultural tradition.

The legend associated with Attukal Pongala is centred around Kannagi, a revered Tamil woman symbolising purity and integrity. According to the myth, Kannagi, wronged by the ruling king of Madurai, set fire to the city before journeying to Kerala. During her travels, she is said to have rested at the location where the Attukal Bhagavathy Temple was later established. This mythological narrative highlights the temple’s deep-rooted cultural significance and the reverence for Kannagi’s purity and resilience (Sreedhar, 2014).

In Kerala, a rural state, festivals are often linked with agricultural cycles. Attukal Pongala, celebrated in the Malayalam month of Kumbham (February - March), has evolved into a grand event predominantly celebrated by women (Devika, 2024). The term “Pongala,” which means “boil over,” refers to the preparation of a special offering involving rice, jaggery, coconut, and other ingredients cooked in earthen pots over open fires. The preparation begins with the ‘Aduppuvettu’ ritual, where the chief priest lights the pongala hearth, known as Pandarayaduppu, inside the temple premises.

Spanning ten days, Attukal Pongala is not only a religious event but also a significant cultural phenomenon. The festival, recognized globally for its scale, earned a place in the Guinness World Records in 2009 for hosting the largest gathering of women (Thomas, 2022; Haryana, 2023) for a single religious event. This celebration draws women from various regions and backgrounds, transcending caste, creed, and religion, reflecting the festival’s profound impact on community unity and cultural identity (Mini, 2016; Jenett, 2005). This festival illustrates Kerala’s rich artistic and religious heritage. The festival, celebrated with immense dedication and devotion, continues to uphold the traditions and historical narratives of the region, reinforcing its vibrant cultural identity.

Scope and Objective of the Study

India is one of the world's great civilisations, boasting four thousand years of civilised life. India has a diverse range of languages, religions, dances, music, architecture, foods, and customs. For the cultural enthusiast, India is nothing short of a paradise. Among its numerous festivals, Attukal Pongala stands out as a religious attraction that draws thousands of devotees and tourists to the region each year. Considering the impacts of this festival on the local community is crucial for gaining insights into the broader socio-cultural and economic aftermath of such large-scale religious events.

The primary objective of the study is to explore the festival's influence on local livelihood, particularly examining the relationship between demographic factors and the tourism impacts associated with Attukal Pongala. The study examines into both the positive and negative effects of the festival, highlighting how the arrival of tourists influences the socio-economic fabric of the local community. The scope of the study is not limited to surface-level observations but extends to providing meaningful recommendations for festival organisers and other stakeholders. By evaluating these impacts, they can take informed steps to mitigate negative consequences while enhancing positive outcomes, ultimately fostering a more harmonious relationship between tourism and the local community. This, in turn, is expected to promote a more sustainable tourism industry in the region and encourage a positive attitude towards future festivals and visitors.

Review of Literature

In Malayalam, temple festivals are called by many names such as Pooram, Vela, Utsavam and Pongal. The important festivals held at a temple are determined by the reigning god. Temple festivals are typically held as part of the temple's anniversary or as a big event related with the temple. These festivals are unique to each temple and are not frequently observed in other temples. Such celebrations will be known by the temple's name alone. Every temple has a special day called Prathishta dinam, which marks its founding. This day is celebrated joyously by devotees.

Furthermore, each temple celebrates specific festivals dedicated to the deity it worships. For instance, temples dedicated to Lord Shiva observe Mahasivarathri. In Bagavathy temples, festivals like Vijayadasami and Pongala are celebrated. "Pongala is a festival in which women devotees perform the ritualistic preparation and offering of a sweet dish made of rice and molasses to Bagavathy, the goddess" (Nair & Babu, 2022).

“Attukal Bhagavathy temple is a small and renowned temple for the Goddess Attukal Devi known for the famed “Pongala” festival where millions of ladies participate. Ladies prepare the ‘Pongal’ in clay pots placed over bricks like tripods with a fire underneath. Ladies sit in and outside the temple and on the wayside to prepare the food. They spread across a radius of 3.5 km from the temple” (Sumitha, 2020).

The impact of religious festivals on local livelihoods underscores their significance in fostering community solidity and stimulating economic activity (Srivastava, 2023). Studies have highlighted that festivals, such as the Attukal Pongala in Kerala, serve as vital nodes for cultural expression and economic development. For instance, research by Chang and Huang (2022) demonstrates that festivals enhance social unity and generate substantial economic benefits by increasing demand in sectors like retail and hospitality. These festivals create opportunities for local businesses and entrepreneurs, contributing to economic resilience and growth. The empirical evidence from Kumar and Sharma (2023) suggests that festivals positively influence pilgrimage tourism, which in turn boosts local economies. They argue that the demographic diversity of festival participants, including variations in age, socio-economic status, and occupation, affects how local communities benefit economically. Recent studies, such as those by Patel et al. (2024), further indicate that residents’ perceptions of festivals can significantly impact their support for and engagement with local tourism initiatives (Srivastava et al., 2023). These perceptions are influenced by factors like cultural significance, personal experience, and perceived economic benefits. This illustrates the multifaceted impact of religious festivals on local livelihoods and underscores the importance of aligning festival management strategies with both community needs and economic opportunities to ensure sustainable development and tourism growth.

Singh and Rathi (2024) provide a comprehensive analysis of how religious festivals like the Attukal Pongala create a ripple effect across various sectors, including transportation, food services, and retail. Their study shows that the inflow of visitors during such festivals significantly boosts local businesses, leading to temporary employment opportunities and enhanced income for local vendors and service providers. This finding aligns with Patel et al. (2024), who emphasize the role of festivals in creating seasonal economic spikes and opportunities for micro-enterprises.

Research study by Gupta and Verma (2023) highlights the role of demographic factors in shaping residents’ perceptions and interactions with festival-driven tourism. Their study suggests that variations in age, socio-

economic status, and educational background influence how residents experience and benefit from festival activities. Younger residents, for instance, may engage more actively with modern tourism trends, while older generations might prioritize traditional aspects of the festival. This demographic variability impacts how effectively the local community can harness the economic benefits of festivals.

In terms of sustainability, recent work by Mehta and Sen (2024) explores the balance between economic gains and cultural preservation. They argue that while festivals can drive economic growth, there is a need for strategies that ensure the cultural integrity of the event is maintained. Sustainable festival management practices, such as those proposed by Kumar et al. (2023), are essential for mitigating adverse effects on local communities and preserving cultural heritage while maximizing economic benefits.

The current literature underscores the importance of understanding the nuanced relationships between festivals, local economies, and community perceptions. Effective festival management requires a comprehensive approach that considers economic opportunities, cultural preservation, and demographic diversity to foster sustainable development and enhance the benefits of religious festivals for local communities. The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework—encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions—offers a comprehensive perspective on the impact of Attukal Pongala, a major festival in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. Economically, the festival significantly benefits the local economy by creating temporary business opportunities for vendors and artisans who sell ingredients, cooking utensils, and other goods. This influx of participants also boosts the hospitality sector, including hotels and restaurants, thereby generating additional income and employment. Socially, Attukal Pongala fosters community cohesion and gender empowerment. The event is primarily organized by women, highlighting their leadership and organizational capabilities, and strengthening social bonds among participants. It also serves as a platform for preserving and transmitting cultural traditions, reinforcing communal identity and solidarity (Kerala Tourism Department, 2023). Environmentally, managing the impact of the festival involves significant challenges, particularly in waste management and sanitation. Efforts are made to minimize environmental degradation through effective waste disposal and the use of eco-friendly materials. Despite the large-scale nature of the event, ongoing initiatives aim to mitigate its environmental footprint and promote sustainable practices.

Thus, Attukal Pongala demonstrates a multidimensional impact, contributing to economic vitality, social unity, and environmental sustainability.

The host community's quality of life is enhanced by the advantages created by festivals, including creating jobs, generating revenue, and drawing more tourists and communities. These benefits include employment, income generation, and increasing tourist numbers, thereby improving the quality of life of the host community. The paper discusses how events like festivals can improve communities by bringing people together and boosting the local economy. It says everyone involved in the event, like organizers and supporters, should work together to make it successful. When everyone pitches in, the event can bring more benefits to the community. The passage also says that the community needs to make the most of the event to get as many benefits as possible. It is about how events can help communities grow and thrive if everyone works together (Adendorff, 2009).

People who recognize the significance of tourism for economic growth, reap its advantages and understand its positive impacts do not have different views regarding the negative aspects of tourism compared to others. Educating and raising awareness among the public through widespread campaigns could help enhance understanding of the tourism industry. Ultimately, this could lead to more significant support for the benefits it brings to a community (Andereck, 2005).

Research Methodology

This study aimed to explore the impact of the Attukal Pongala, a religious festival in Kerala, on the livelihoods of the local community. Data were collected from residents living within a 10 km radius of the Attukal Bhagavathy Temple in Trivandrum, with a sample size of 420 participants. A convenience sampling method was employed to gather the data. A tailor-made questionnaire is framed in order to collect the information & was designed based on a comprehensive literature review of event impact studies (Bindu & Babu, 2022; Small et al., 2005; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012), a 16-item instrument was developed, supplemented by relevant demographic information. The statements were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, The analysis included descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, cross-tabulation, and demographic profiling.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Gender	Percentage	Religion	Percentage
Male	68	Hinduism	81.6
Female	32	Christianity	13.6
		Islam	4.8
Age Group		Occupation	
18-24	11.6	Private sector	44.0
25-39	41.6	Government sector	19.2
40-45	34	Homemaker	23.2
60 above	12.8	Business	13.6
Marital Status		Annual Income	
Married	71.2	Less than 1 Lakh	41.6
Unmarried	25.2	1-5 Lakh	53.6
Widow	2.4	5-10 Lakh	4.8
Divorced	1.2		
Education Qualification		Consider Yourself a Believer	
Primary/secondary	33.2	Yes	91.6
Diploma	16.8	No	1.2
Graduate	40.4	Maybe	7.2
Post graduate	9.6		
Living in Town		Time Spent in Conducting Activities of Attukal Pongal	
Under 10 years	23.2	Upto 2 hrs	20.0
More than 10 years	54.4	2-4 hrs	24.8
Since born until now	22.4	4-6 hrs	13.2
		6 hrs and more	42.0

Source: Authors.

Most respondents are female. Additionally, the age range of the bulk of responders is 25-39. The majority of them are married. Graduates make up the majority of respondents. Employees in the private sector make up the majority of respondents. The majority of them practice Hinduism. Most earn between one and five lakhs. Most of them identify as believers. Most have spent more than ten years living in the same place. Additionally, they devote at least six hours to Attukal Pongala activities (Table 1).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Factors	Mean
Increase in economic opportunities	3.75
Increase in number of visitors	4.44
Migration of people from outsiders	3.43
Increase in land/house price	4.25
Increase in safety and secure	4.36
Effect on religious environment	4.15

Source: Authors.

The factors of this table associated with the Attukal Pongala festival highlights several significant impacts on the local community. The increase in the number of visitors scores the highest mean of 4.44, reflecting the festival's significant ability to attract tourists and boost local engagement. This inflow of visitors contributes to a notable rise in land and house prices, with a mean score of 4.25, indicating a positive effect on real estate values driven by intensified demand. The festival also enhances safety and security, evidenced by a high mean score of 4.36, which suggests improved awareness of safety within the community. Additionally, the effect on the religious environment is rated 4.15, underscoring the festival's role in enriching the local religious and cultural atmosphere. However, the migration of people from outside the area has a lower mean score of 3.43, indicating a less evident impact compared to other factors. Overall, the Attukal Pongala festival significantly influences local economic dynamics, property values, safety, and religious life, while its impact on migration is relatively modest (Table 2).

Table 3: Impact of Pilgrimage Tourism on Local Community

Factors	Mean
Increase the income of the residents.	3.90
Improves standard of living of the residents.	4.23
Creates more jobs for local residents.	3.91
Generates employment during off season.	4.08
Makes effective utilization of workforce.	3.76
Leads to occupational diversification of the residents.	3.86
Produces an opportunity for women's participation in micro business.	3.78
Encourage the private sector participation on tourism infrastructure.	3.95
Promotes transport and ICT facilities.	3.95
Improves road, Sewage, Drinking water, and other facilities.	4.49
Creates new business ventures and enriches.	3.74
Entrepreneurial talents and skills of the local residents tends to flourish local economic activities.	3.54
Increases the demand for housing.	4.09
Improves the financial status of Trivandrum corporation.	4.69
Improves the financial status of Attukal temple.	4.98
Upgrades the social and ethical value of native residents.	4.44
Brings community infrastructural facilities such as toilet, bathroom, drinking water, and drainage.	3.61
Promotes economic infrastructure such as hotels.	4.18
Provides an incentive for creation of tourism infrastructure.	3.87
Enables community to feel proud about the popularity of their hometown.	3.62

Source: Authors.

The analysis of the factors influencing the Attukal Pongala festival reveals varied impacts on local development. The highest mean score is attributed to the improvement in the financial status of the Attukal temple (4.98) and the financial status of Trivandrum corporation (4.69), indicating significant economic benefits directly linked to the festival. The improvement of essential community facilities, such as road, sewage, and drinking water, also scores high (4.49), emphasizing the festival's role in enhancing local infrastructure. Other notable impacts include the generation of employment during the off-

season (4.08) and the encouragement of private sector participation in tourism infrastructure (3.95). However, aspects like the degradation of social and ethical values of native residents (4.44) and the creation of new business ventures and entrepreneurial skills (3.74) reflect mixed effects. While the festival promotes local economic activities, it also introduces challenges related to social and ethical concerns. Overall, the Attukal Pongala festival is seen as a powerful driver of economic development and infrastructure improvement, though it also brings about complexities that need to be managed (Table 3).

Table 4: The Duration of Residence Vs the Likelihood of Participating in the Attukal Pongala festival

Factors		Percentage	
How long have you lived your town	Under 10 years	Count	58
		% within How long have you lived your town	100.0%
		% within Do you consider yourself a believer	23.2%
		% of Total Count	136
	More than 10 years	% within How long have you lived your town	100.0%
		% within Do you consider yourself a believer	54.4%
		% of Total Count	56
		% within How long have you lived your town	100.0%
	Since born until now	% within Do you consider yourself a believer	22.4%
		% of Total Count	250
		% within How long have you lived your town	100.0%
		% within Do you consider yourself a believer	100.0%
Total	% of Total	100.0%	

Source: Authors.

The table analyzing the relationship between the length of residence in a town and participation in the Attukal Pongala festival highlights notable trends. Among individuals who have lived in their town for under 10 years, 23.2% are active participants in the festival. This proportion increases

significantly to 54.4% among those who have resided in their town for more than 10 years, indicating a strong connection between longer residence and festival involvement. Conversely, among individuals who have lived in their town since birth, the participation rate is slightly lower at 22.4%. This data suggests that longer-term residents, particularly those who have lived in the town for more than a decade, show higher levels of engagement with the Attukal Pongala festival. In contrast, newer residents and those who have lived in the town their entire lives exhibit lower participation rates, highlighting the influence of residence duration on festival involvement (Table 4).

Table 5: The Level of Educational Qualification Vs Participation in the Attukal Pongala Festival

		Factors	Total
Educational qualification	Primary or secondary	Count	83
		% within Educational qualification	100.0%
		% within Do you consider yourself a believer	33.2%
		% of Total Count	33.2%
		% within Educational qualification	42
		% within Do you consider yourself a believer	100.0%
	Diploma	% within Do you consider yourself a believer	16.8%
		% of Total Count	16.8%
		% within Educational qualification	101
		% within Do you consider yourself a believer	100.0%
		% of Total Count	40.4%
		% within Do you consider yourself a believer	40.4%
Graduate	% of Total Count	24	
	% within Educational qualification	100.0%	
	% within Do you consider yourself a believer	9.6%	
	% of Total Count	9.6%	
	% within Educational qualification	250	
	% within Do you consider yourself a believer	100.0%	
Total	Post graduate	% within Do you consider yourself a believer	100.0%
		% of Total	100.0%
			100.0%

Source: Authors.

Table 6: The Time Spent Participating in Attukal Pongala Activities Varies Vs Different Age Groups

	Factors	How Much Time Do You Spend in Conducting the Activities of Attukal Pongala				Total
		Up To 2hrs	2-4hrs	4-6hrs	6hrs and More	
	Count	6	10	1	12	29
18-24	% within Age	20.7%	34.5%	3.4%	41.4%	100.0%
	% within How much time do you spend in conducting the activities of attukal pongala	12.0%	16.1%	3.0%	11.4%	11.6%
	% of Total	2.4%	4.0%	0.4%	4.8%	11.6%
	Count	15	34	17	38	104
25-39	% within Age	14.4%	32.7%	16.3%	36.5%	100.0%
	% within How much time do you spend in conducting the activities of attukal pongala	30.0%	54.8%	51.5%	36.2%	41.6%
	% of Total	6.0%	13.6%	6.8%	15.2%	41.6%
	Count	8	18	15	44	85
40-59	% within Age	9.4%	21.2%	17.6%	51.8%	100.0%
	% within How much time do you spend in conducting the activities of attukal pongala	16.0%	29.0%	45.5%	41.9%	34.0%
	% of Total	3.2%	7.2%	6.0%	17.6%	34.0%
	Count	21	0	0	11	32

Factors	How Much Time Do You Spend in Conducting the Activities of Attukal Pongala					Total
	Up To 2hrs	2-4hrs	4-6hrs	6hrs and More		
60 above	65.6%	0.0%	0.0%	34.4%		100.0%
% within Age						
% within How much time do you spend in conducting the activities of attukal pongala	42.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.5%		12.8%
% of Total	8.4%	0.0%	0.0%	4.4%		12.8%
Count	50	62	33	105		250
% within Age	20.0%	24.8%	13.2%	42.0%		100.0%
% within How much time do you spend in conducting the activities of attukal pongala	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%
% of Total	20.0%	24.8%	13.2%	42.0%		100.0%

Source: Authors.

The analysis of the table examining the relationship between educational qualifications and participation in the Attukal Pongala festival reveals some trends. Among individuals with primary or secondary education, 33.2% actively participate in the festival, indicating a significant level of engagement. This participation rate drops to 16.8% among those with a diploma, suggesting a decrease in involvement as educational attainment increases. Conversely, participation rises again to 40.4% among graduates, demonstrating a notable interest in the festival within this group. However, among postgraduates, participation is lower at 9.6%. Overall, the data suggests that participation in Attukal Pongala is higher among individuals with primary or secondary education and graduates, while it decreases among those with a diploma and postgraduate degrees. This pattern highlights a complex relationship where intermediate educational levels are associated with higher festival involvement, whereas the highest educational attainment shows reduced participation (Table 5).

The data shows that younger individuals (18-24) and middle-aged participants (25-39) are more likely to spend longer hours on festival activities, while older individuals (60 and above) tend to spend less time. This distribution reflects varying levels of engagement with the festival activities across different age groups, highlighting that younger and middle-aged participants are generally more involved in longer-duration activities related to Attukal Pongala may be due to physical reasons (Table 6).

Table 7: Significance of Annual Income, Educational Qualification, Occupational Status, and Age

Socio-Economic Factors	F Values	Sig Values	Significance
Annual Income	3.382	.036*	Significant
Educational Qualification	.419	.740	Not Significant
Occupational	2.016	.112	Not Significant
Age	.307	.736	Not significant

Source: Authors.

H1: Annual income significantly affects the dependent variable, while educational qualification, occupational status, and age do not.

The One-Way ANOVA analysis shows different effects of socio-economic factors. Annual income is significant, with an F value of 3.382 and a significance value of .036, meaning income differences matter for the groups

studied. However, educational qualification, occupational status, and age were not significant, with F values of .419, 2.016, and .307, and high significance values (0.740, 0.112, and 0.736). This suggests that in this sample, income is the main factor affecting the outcomes, while other factors like education and age might need more study to understand their effects (Table 7).

Table 8: KMO and Bartlett’s Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.748
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2394.068
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

Source: Authors.

The results of the KMO and Bartlett’s Test indicate that the sample size is adequate for factor analysis, with a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of 0.748. This value suggests that the data are suitable for this type of analysis. The Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity produced a chi-square value of 2394.068 with 190 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.000. This indicates that the correlation matrix significantly differs from an identity matrix, further supporting the factorability of the data. These findings confirm that conducting factor analysis on this dataset is appropriate (Table 8).

Table 9: The Socio-Economic Impact of Attukal Pongala, its Development in the Local Community

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.356	26.781	26.781
2	2.612	13.061	39.842
3	1.738	8.689	48.530
4	1.539	7.697	56.228
5	1.016	5.081	67.206
6	.989	4.946	72.153
7	.851	4.256	76.409
8	.796	3.979	80.388
9	.661	3.304	83.692
10	.590	2.948	86.639

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
11	.503	2.514	89.153
12	.476	2.380	91.534
13	.366	1.829	93.362
14	.347	1.736	95.098
15	.322	1.612	96.710
16	.261	1.306	98.016
17	.214	1.069	99.085
18	.117	.585	99.670
19	.066	.330	100.000

Source: Authors.

This analysis outlines the numerous benefits of Temple Attukal pongala in the Local community, highlighting its potential to enhance residents' lives. Primarily, tourism increases the income of residents and improves their standard of living by creating more jobs, particularly during off-seasons, and effectively utilizing the local workforce. It encourages occupational diversification and opens opportunities for women to engage in micro-businesses, promoting private sector participation in tourism infrastructure.

The festival development contributes to improved transport and ICT facilities, alongside essential services such as roads, sewage, and drinking water. This infrastructure improvement supports the creation of new business ventures and enriches the entrepreneurial skills of local residents, leading to flourishing economic activities and increased housing demand. Attukal Pongala positively impacts the financial status of local institutions like the Trivandrum Corporation and the Attukal Temple, while upgrading the social and ethical values of the community.

Festival development enhances community infrastructure by providing necessary facilities such as toilets, bathrooms, and drainage, while promoting economic establishments like hotels, restaurants, and community halls. This not only incentivizes further tourism infrastructure creation but also fosters a sense of pride among residents regarding the popularity of their hometown.

The accompanying Eigenvalues indicate that the analysis captures significant variance in perceptions, with the first few components revealing underlying themes related to these impacts. To better understand these

dynamics, additional qualitative feedback from residents could be beneficial, ensuring that tourism growth aligns with community values and needs (Table 9).

Table 10 : Rotated Component Matrix-Local Community Benefits

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
LC8	.883				
LC1	.802				
LC4	.724				
LC7	.641				
LC3	.598		.555		
LC17		.872			
LC18		.860			
LC19		.831			
LC20		.773			
LC6			.902		
LC5			.890		
LC10				.674	
LC11				.596	
LC16				.529	
LC15					
LC12					.766
LC13					.663
LC9					.547
LC14					
LC2					.729

Source: Authors.

LC-Local Community

The Rotated Component Matrix suggests a factor analysis that identifies key components related to local community benefits from tourism or development initiatives. The first component, characterized by high loadings from items like LC8, LC1, LC4, LC7, and LC3, likely reflects economic

benefits and increased income for residents, focusing on direct economic improvements and job creation. The second component, dominated by LC17, LC18, LC19, and LC20, emphasizes community development and social benefits, highlighting improvements in infrastructure and overall quality of life. A third component, represented by LC6, LC5, LC10, and LC11, pertains to the provision of essential services and facilities. The fourth component, featuring items such as LC12, LC13, and LC9, suggests a focus on community initiatives and empowerment, underscoring the support for local businesses. Finally, the fifth component, represented by LC2, indicates an emphasis on economic diversification and community pride. Understanding these components can guide policymakers in prioritizing initiatives that foster economic growth while enhancing social infrastructure and community well-being, ultimately leading to more sustainable tourism practices that maximize benefits for local residents. To deepen this analysis, gathering qualitative feedback from community members would enrich the quantitative findings, and using this framework can inform future research studies aiming at promoting local benefits.



Source : Authors

Fig. 1: Local Community Benefits through Festival Tourism

Findings

This study investigates how residents perceive the Attukal Pongala festival's influence on their local livelihood, uncovering notable trends that highlight the event's significance. It was found that residents who have lived in the town for over a decade are more likely to participate in the festival, suggesting that a longer residence fosters a stronger connection to the event and a greater appreciation of its economic and social benefits. There is a strong correlation between tourism and economic improvement, with evidence suggesting significant increases in local income, job creation, and effective workforce utilization. The data highlights the importance of community development, showcasing how tourism contributes to enhanced infrastructure and essential services, which ultimately leads to a better quality of life for residents. Empowerment and participation are also critical themes, particularly for women, as tourism creates opportunities for micro-business involvement and occupational diversification, fostering a sense of ownership and pride within the community. The findings indicate that tourism not only generates economic benefits but also drives improvements in crucial infrastructure, such as roads and public utilities, creating a more sustainable living environment. The potential for economic diversification is evident, as tourism can reduce reliance on a single industry and enhance local engagement in development efforts. However, the analysis underscores the need for ongoing support and investment in community infrastructure to sustain these benefits over the long term, emphasizing the importance of involving local residents in tourism planning and decision-making to maximize positive impacts. Overall, these findings provide a comprehensive understanding of how tourism can foster economic growth, enhance community infrastructure, and empower local residents, contributing to sustainable development in the area.

Unlike traditional studies that primarily emphasize economic metrics, this research integrates a holistic perspective by examining how festival tourism impacts community infrastructure, social empowerment, and quality of life. This research not only deepens the understanding of the social and economic impacts of cultural festivals but also offers practical insights into how such events can be leveraged to boost tourism, strengthen community ties, and drive sustainable local development. By highlighting the importance of localized benefits and the need for equitable distribution of resources, the research advocates for a participatory approach that prioritizes the voices and needs of residents. This emphasis on community-centric strategies not only enhances the relevance of the findings but also paves the way for future studies aimed at fostering sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

Suggestions

It is crucial to develop targeted programs that support local businesses, especially micro-enterprises, ensuring that economic benefits are widely distributed among residents through grants, training, and resources. Investing in community infrastructure, such as transportation and public utilities, should be prioritized to accommodate increased tourist traffic while benefiting local quality of life. As well as promoting community engagement by involving residents in tourism planning and decision-making processes can ensure their needs are addressed; establishing community advisory boards can facilitate this collaboration. Special attention should be given to women's empowerment through skills training and support for women-led businesses in the tourism sector, fostering greater gender equity. Encouraging sustainable tourism practices that protect local resources and developing marketing campaigns that highlight local culture and heritage can attract visitors while promoting community pride. A system for monitoring and evaluating the social, economic, and environmental impacts of tourism initiatives is essential for informed policymaking. Lastly, fostering partnerships among local government, tourism businesses, and community organizations will create a unified approach to tourism development, leveraging resources and enhancing overall effectiveness. By implementing these strategies, communities can maximize tourism benefits while ensuring sustainable development and improved quality of life for all residents.

Promoting awareness about the need for local activity and planning for the same during the festival will be helpful during the season. A discussion session with organizers and the local community will be useful in understanding the problems faced by both groups, and they can plan and conduct the festival by addressing these issues. Planning cultural festivals by considering factors like marital status, employment status, annual income, type of resident, number of years completed in the area of residence distance from the festival's location and central role when participating etc., will help increase positive economic impacts further.

Conclusion

All festivals are cultural in one way or another. They are meant to bring happiness to our lives, strengthen our sense of community, and enhance people's standard of life. This study primarily focuses on the impacts of Attukal Pongala – the religious fest on local livelihood. The study identified certain factors that contribute to the impacts of festivals and the level of each effect. The positive impacts of tourism and development on the community

not only elevate residents' livelihoods and enhance infrastructure but also foster a sense of pride and unity, highlighting the importance of aligning future growth with local values and needs. The paper has also given suggestions on how to improve the positive impacts. Managing the effects of cultural festivals on local community livelihood will help develop a positive attitude towards tourism among the local community, which will, in turn, increase the tourist flow to the community and thus contribute to the growth and development of the tourism industry.

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