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Socio-cultural and Economic Impacts of Religious Festivals on Sustainable Local Community Livelihoods in Kerala: The Case of Palakkad

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Festivals depict the heritage, culture, and traditions of a particular region. They create a state of exhilaration and enthusiasm. Kerala is a state in southwest India with its own distinct culture and traditions. The state is also known for its religious pluralism. This study attempts to understand the perceived impact of religious festivals on the local community livelihoods in Palakkad, a district in central Kerala. Twelve temples in which religious festivals are held annually, with attendance in the range of thousands, were selected. The selected temples are famous for hosting specific religious festivals which attract a large number of visitors, from within and beyond the region. Using a sample of 420 community members living around these temples, this study examined how the socio-cultural and economic impacts of these religious festivals are perceived by the community. The findings show that there is a statistically significant relationship between the perceived socio-cultural and economic impacts of festivals on local communities. The celebration of local values and distinctiveness were evident in these religious festivals. The local community considers these festivals as part of their community identity and as offering impetus for annual family and community reunions.

Key Words: religious tourism, host perception, socio-cultural impact, economic impact, sustainability

Introduction

As the south-westernmost state of India, Kerala is known for its lush green scenic beauty, backwaters, beaches, and Ayurveda. It is known for its tagline, 'God's Own Country', and is a global tourist destination. Kerala is attractive not only for its leisure, recreation, and health tourism but also for its rich culture and heritage. The state's diverse culture is mainly influenced by its religious plurality. No other state in India exhibits such religious pluralism. Kerala has three main religions: Hinduism (54.73%), Islam (26.56%), and Christianity (18.38%) (Census of India, 2011). The state hosts the finest religious centres in the country. For instance, the Sabarimala and Guruvayoor Temples are two major Hindu religious centres in the state, whereas the Malayattoor Church and Santa Cruz Basilica, Cochin are two famous Christian religious centres, and the Cheruman Perumal Juma Masjid and Beema Palli are two of the great mosques in the state. Each religion has its own customs, traditions, and practices. Among the most evident practices are religious festivals, which involve gatherings and celebrations.

Festivals are a growing force in the tourism industry; many festivals start as small community events where residents and neighbours celebrate the area's heritage, history, and culture (Chacko & Schaffer, 1993). A festival's contributions to local tourism falls into a variety of spheres, such as economic welfare and influence on the physical environmental and socio-cultural realms (Felsenstein & Fleischer, 2003). Like any other form of tourism, religious tourism impacts the community, both positively and negatively.

Festivals offer socio-cultural benefits. They allow host communities to show their local traditions, religiosity, art forms, food, and identity through collective efforts (Walker, 2019). They enrich social bonding and strengthen ties among local communities. They fortify cultural roots and values and enable the preservation of traditions and customs (Jauhari & Munjal, 2015). Festivals provide an opportunity to celebrate cultural heritage and identity and improve local community pride (Ferdinand & Williams, 2013; Kim, 2014). Events and festivals contribute towards regional economic development, as well (Getz,

1993; Gursoy *et al.*, 2004). The tourist-attracting nature of festivals is now being widely utilised for employment opportunities and income generation. In recent times, festivals have begun playing prominent roles in the economic planning and tourism development trajectories of many regions, communities, and countries (Davies *et al.*, 2010; Getz & Page, 2016; Tichaawa, 2016).

Although several studies have been conducted on festivals and events, only a few have purported the correlation between religious festivals and local community livelihoods. Studying the impacts of tourism events can help clarify their role in local development (González & Miralbell, 2009). Research on the nature of festival tourism and its contribution to sustainable development has been recommended in several studies. O'Sullivan and Jackson (2002) propose consideration of the physical and socio-cultural impacts of festival tourism concerning the creation of 'more sustainable' or at least, 'less unsustainable' localities. Thus, recent uncertainties over the future of even well-established festivals adds urgency to the pursuance of the current study.

Religious festival tourism is an unexplored area in the Kerala domestic tourism market. The primary aim of this study is to assess the perceived socio-cultural and economic impacts of religious festivals in the selected area, namely Palakkad, on local community livelihoods. The local community's active participation in the arts, indigenous culture, and local business development are unique features of religious festivals. This study presents the local community's perception of the socio-cultural and economic impacts of religious festivals on the local community's livelihood. Understanding the impacts of festivals is essential to gain a better understanding of their reverberations, and to plan and implement sustainable approaches to festival tourism with minimal negative and maximum positive impacts on the local community. The rest of this article is divided into three sections; the first part explores the importance of pilgrimages, religious tourism, and the impacts of festivals in the existing literature. The second part focuses on the background of the selected temples, and provides descriptions of the festivals, with methodologies being discussed briefly. The third part examines the socio-cultural and economic impacts of the festivals on the local community, as well as the implications and limitations of this study.

Literature Review

Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage

Rinschede (1992) highlighted that religious tourism, motivated by religious factors, is the oldest form of tourism. The author differentiates religious tourism into different forms based on the duration, distance, number of participants, mode of transport, seasonal travel, and social structure. The term 'pilgrimage' implies a religious journey to a sacred place; there can be secular, traditional, and spiritual pilgrimages within the scope of religious tourism products (Griffin & Raj, 2017). The meaning of 'pilgrimage' is changing in the twenty-first century. Collins-Kreiner (2018) noted that even though the purpose and activities of pilgrimages are different, the distinction between pilgrims and tourists is fast disappearing as both pilgrimage and tourism require an emotional urge on part of the traveller to visit places that are important to them. Shinde (2008) reinforced the idea that religious tourism comprises religious and recreational characteristics. These studies have proposed that the scope of religious tourism and pilgrimage is changing and getting broader. Aukland (2018) recommends going beyond motivation as a criterion for defining and conceptualising pilgrimages and pilgrims.

India is known as the cradle of civilisation and the mother of four of the world's major religions; it has also been one of the top religious tourism destinations in the world for decades (Manhas & Bipithlal, 2020). In India, domestic religious tourism is a large part of society. Religiousness is a keystone of Indian culture and the basis of community values and rituals in daily life. The ancient popular religious sites in India are flourishing markets for both international and domestic tourism. Domestic tourism is the backbone of Indian tourism and 60% of domestic visits are indirectly or directly linked to religious tourism and pilgrimage (Shinde & Rizzello, 2014). According to the 2019 tourism statistics survey, around 60% of package tours were organised for pilgrimage purposes (India Tourism Statistics, 2019), which contributes a considerable amount of money to the local economies of these religious sites in particular and the Indian economy in general. (Manhas & Bipithlal, 2020).

Socio-cultural Impacts of Festival Tourism

All festivals contribute to the society and culture of a region both positively and negatively. Durgamohan (2015) noted that festivals embrace culture – which comprises music, dance, drama, and food specialities – handed down by

ancestors and let the participants peep into the past. The author also identified that festivals offer an opportunity for artists to perform, especially art forms that are not prevalent in contemporary times. Fostering community pride (Jauhari & Munjal, 2015) and strengthening community relationships (Chwe, 1998; Yolal, *et al.*, 2009; Jauhari & Munjal, 2015) have been identified as social benefits of festivals in different studies. Other positive socio-cultural impacts identified for festival tourism include family togetherness, the opportunity for cultural exchange, entertainment, and self-development (Yolal *et al.*, 2016). Munjal and Jauhari (2015) identified that the benefits of festival tourism were not leveraged enough with challenges like poor infrastructure, lack of government support, poor stakeholder engagement, and local apathy towards the commodification of culture. Babu and Munjal (2015), studying Pandrandu Vilakku, a festival celebrated in Kerala, identified negative impacts such as the lack of visitor control, the shift in focus from the religious to the business aspect, and local arts and crafts being side-lined by imported products, and suggest that these have overshadowed the positive impacts of the festival.

Gaur and Chapnekar (2015) reported that festivals promote national cohesion, communal harmony, and preserve family values and national identity. Pavluković *et al.* (2018) examined the impacts of festivals using the Festival Social Impact Assessment Scale (FSIAS) and suggested that there are two dimensions of social impacts, namely social benefits and costs. Social benefits include greater awareness of the host society and culture, raising national pride and community spirit, and offering opportunities for the community to discover and develop their skills. The authors identified an increase in the rise of prices and lower involvement of the local community as social costs.

Small (2007) used the Social Impact Perception (SIP) Scale with factor analysis and identified inconvenience, behavioural consequences, and personal frustration as social costs. Conversely, the author identified community identity and cohesion, opportunities for entertainment and socialisation, community growth, and development, as social benefits. Faulkner and Tideswell (1997) developed a list of positive and negative impacts of tourism and presented a framework to monitor its community impacts. The negative impacts identified included the disruption of peace, increased crime rates and the cost of living, and crowding and queuing for services.

Economic Impacts of Festival Tourism

The economic benefits arising out of festival tourism are huge. Community-level festivals bring economic benefits through different means such as providing a platform for artisans to gain economic benefits by showcasing their arts and crafts (Jauhari & Munjal, 2015). Nagy and Nagy (2013) identified the role of festivals in the economy of Hungary and recommended creating a series of festivals throughout the year to balance supply and bring in more financial benefits. Nurse (2001) noted that the economic benefits of festival tourism include an increase in tax revenues and employment opportunities, the arrival of more businesses to the region, high hotel occupancy levels, and increased media value for the host region.

Durgamohan (2015) identified that the economic benefits for artists were not restricted to the local context of the Hampi festival, as international performers were also invited. The alliances formed between these artists offer a chance for local artisans to perform on international platforms. Gaur and Chapnekar (2015) explained the phenomenon of consumerism as a result of festival tourism and noted that there are two extremes: the deep-rooted religious belief of the people motivates high spending during religious festivals, which brings money into circulation and this leads to inflation in anticipation of high demand for items in the market.

Festivals and events have only recently emerged as viable options for uplifting community livelihoods and alleviating poverty (Wu & Pearce, 2013). According to Steinbrink *et al.* (2011), there is a growing appeal for festival and event tourism globally, particularly in developing countries that seek to diversify their economies. Hosting festivals can also serve as a stimulus for the development of other small, micro, and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) that tend to be quite instrumental in job creation. Festivals feature prominently in the economic planning and tourism development trajectories of many regions, communities, and countries (Davies *et al.*, 2010; Getz & Page, 2016; Tichaawa, 2016). The benefits of festivals are multifaceted and present a holistic platform from which to approach the challenge of community livelihoods, predominantly in favour of direct economic gains such as job creation and income generation (Dwyer *et al.*, 2005; Sharpley, 2002). Festivals have impacts that stretch well beyond direct economic benefits, as subsidiary industries like agriculture, fishing, forestry, handicrafts, and food processing tend to get a boost, albeit indirectly, from them (Muresan *et al.*, 2016; Su *et al.*, 2016). This

literature has highlighted the benefits of festivals and events as instruments of sustainable livelihood in regions and communities. The following study analyses the impacts of festivals by examining the socio-cultural and economic attributes of religious festivals in the selected region.

Background

Kerala is a diverse state with several religions. Festivals that celebrate culture and collectivism are crucial to people in the state (Gaur & Chapnerkar, 2015). Hindu religious festivals are not analogous. Each state, city, and/or temple has its own rituals and narratives. Temple festivals in Kerala exhibit many differences when compared to those in other Indian states (Yadukrishna, 2020).

Temples serve as an abode of *devatas*¹ and infuse positivity within and around the area. Temples are a favourable hub for art, culture, and other fields of knowledge. The general structure of temples in Kerala comprises a *sree kovil*², *nalambalam*³, *bali peetam*⁴, *gopuram*⁵, a kitchen, and a temple well / tank. The *kuthambalam*⁶ is the place where various performances of temple art forms happen. Kathakali, koothu, theyyam, poothanum thirayum, and mudiyettu are a few temple art forms in Kerala, most of which entertain and educate people on temple legends. Lord Shiva, Vishnu, and Bagavathy are the most popular deities enshrined in temples. Other common deities include Lord Ganesha, Ayyappa, and Lord Muruga. *Nagarajavu*⁷ and *Navagrahas*⁸ are also considered divine and most temples house them as sub-deities. A temple's name is often based on the place where it is located or the main deity within the temple, or a combination of both.

- 1 *Devatas*: Divine beings / Gods; can be male or female.
- 2 *Sree kovil*: The part of the temple where the deity is installed and offerings are done; only priests are allowed to enter.
- 3 *Nalambalam*: A rectangular structure in which the central temple and the associated hall is located.
- 4 *Bali peetam*: The ritual stone; Bali means sacrifice, one should sacrifice their ego and bad thoughts in front of the bali peetam and enter the temple.
- 5 *Gopuram*: The monumental entrance tower.
- 6 *Kuthambalam*: A closed hall for performing ritualistic art forms of Kerala like koothu, koodiyattam etc.
- 7 *Nagarajavu*: Naga (cobra) and Raja (king). Snakes are considered divine in Hinduism.
- 8 *Navagrahas*: Navagraha are nine heavenly bodies (as well as deities) that influence human life on Earth in Hinduism and Hindu astrology; Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu (Shadow planet- swallows sun and moon causing eclipse) and Ketu (a comet).

Festivals are known as *Pooram*⁹, *Vela*¹⁰, or *Utsavam* in Malayalam, the local language. The major festivals celebrated in a temple depend on its presiding deity. Most temple festivals are celebrated as part of the temple's anniversary or any other major event associated with the temple. These festivals are unique to the particular temple and will not be celebrated in other temples. Such festivals will be known in the temple's name itself. All temples have a founding day which is known as *Prathishta dinam*¹¹. It is also a day of great celebration for devotees. Other festivals are specific to individual deities and are celebrated in all temples that have that particular deity. For example, temples with Lord Shiva as the main deity celebrate *Mahasivarathri*¹². In *Bagavathy*¹³ temples, *Vijayadasami*¹⁴ and *Pongala*¹⁵ are celebrated. The livelihood of people in Kerala is heavily dependent on agriculture. Some festivals like *Onam*¹⁶ and *Vishu*¹⁷ are celebrated at the time of harvest in all temples. Farmers donate a part of their harvest to a temple near them as an offering during festivals.

The dates of festivals are decided based on the Malayalam calendar, which is the regional calendar of Kerala. There are 12 months and 27 stars in the Malayalam calendar. The date of the festival is decided as either a day of the particular month or a combination of the particular month and star. For example, *Vishu* is celebrated annually on the first day of the Malayalam month of *Medam*¹⁸ whereas the Chinakkathoor Pooram, a festival in Chinakkathoor

9 *Pooram*: Festival.

10 *Vela*: Festival.

11 *Prathishta dinam*: Anniversary of temple celebrated with tantric rituals and offerings.

12 *Mahasivarathri*: A festival celebrated annually in honour of Lord Siva, usually falls in February or March. The name for this festival comes from the Sanskrit roots, Maha, meaning 'great'; Siva, referring to the deity; and rathri, meaning night.'

13 *Bagavathy*: A polite form to address female deities in Hinduism.

14 *Vijayadashami*: This festival marks the end of Durga Puja, remembering goddess Durga's victory over the demon Mahishasura to restore and protect dharma; occurs in October.

15 *Pongala*: 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.

16 *Onam*: Officially the state festival of Kerala, celebrated with great religious harmony and brotherhood by everyone in August.

17 *Vishu*: The astronomical New Year day of Kerala which is celebrated state-wide with lights and fireworks in April.

18 *Medam*: Ninth month in Malayalam calendar; Corresponds to months of April and May.

temple, is celebrated annually on the day of the *Makam*¹⁹ star in the *Kumbham*²⁰ month in the Malayalam calendar. Usually, the festival falls in the same English month every year, but the dates change.

The festival rituals vary from one temple to another. Elephants, fireworks, and cultural art forms are common in all kinds of temple festivals in Kerala. The *Kodiyettam*²¹ ceremony conducted in a temple marks the start of the festival of that particular temple. Special prayers and offerings are made from the day of flag hoisting to the last day of the festival. The last day of the festival is specific to each temple, mostly before or on the tenth day from the day on which the flag was hoisted. Various temple art forms are performed in the evenings these days. The *thidambu*²² is offered prayers and is decorated with *pattu*²³, sandal, turmeric, and rose water. This *thidambu* is taken out on the streets of the *thattakam*²⁴, which is the domain of influence of the particular deity. The idea is that the deity visits the people and checks on their well-being. The people offer paddy, fruits, and grains. On these days, the resident community, devotees, and visitors are all in a festive mood. They paint and decorate their houses. The streets are cleaned and illuminated. On the last day of the festival, the celebration is particularly grand, as a procession of elephants carries the *thidambu*, along with fireworks, a percussion orchestra, people parading in costume as gods and goddesses, decorated tuskers, and myriads of other people.

All major temples in Kerala are managed by a government body called the Devaswom Board which comprises people nominated by both the government and the local community. There are five Devaswom Boards in Kerala. They manage around 3000 temples together.

19 *Makam*: Tenth star among the 27 stars in Malayalam astrology.

20 *Kumbham*: Seventh month in Malayalam calendar. Corresponds to February- March months.

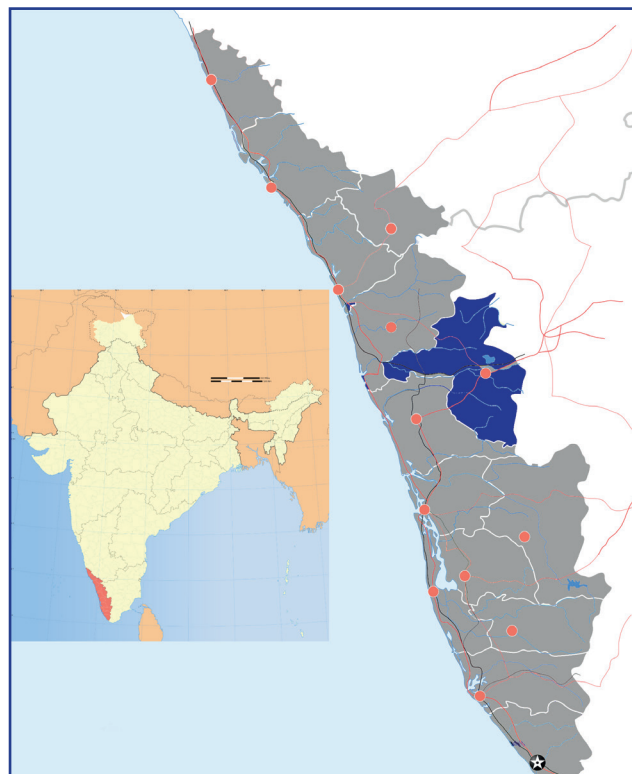
21 *Kodiyettam*: Flag hoisting ceremony conducted in front of the temple to represent the commencement of the festival. The main day of the festival will be within 10- 12 days from this day.

22 *Thidambu*: A replica of the deity

23 *Pattu*: A new silk dress given as an offering to Gods on special days.

24 *Thattakam*: The domain of influence of the particular deity. This is the area surrounding the temple and the people in that region.

Figure 1: Location of Palakkad District Study Area (highlighted in blue) in Kerala



(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Palakkad_district.png)

Methodology

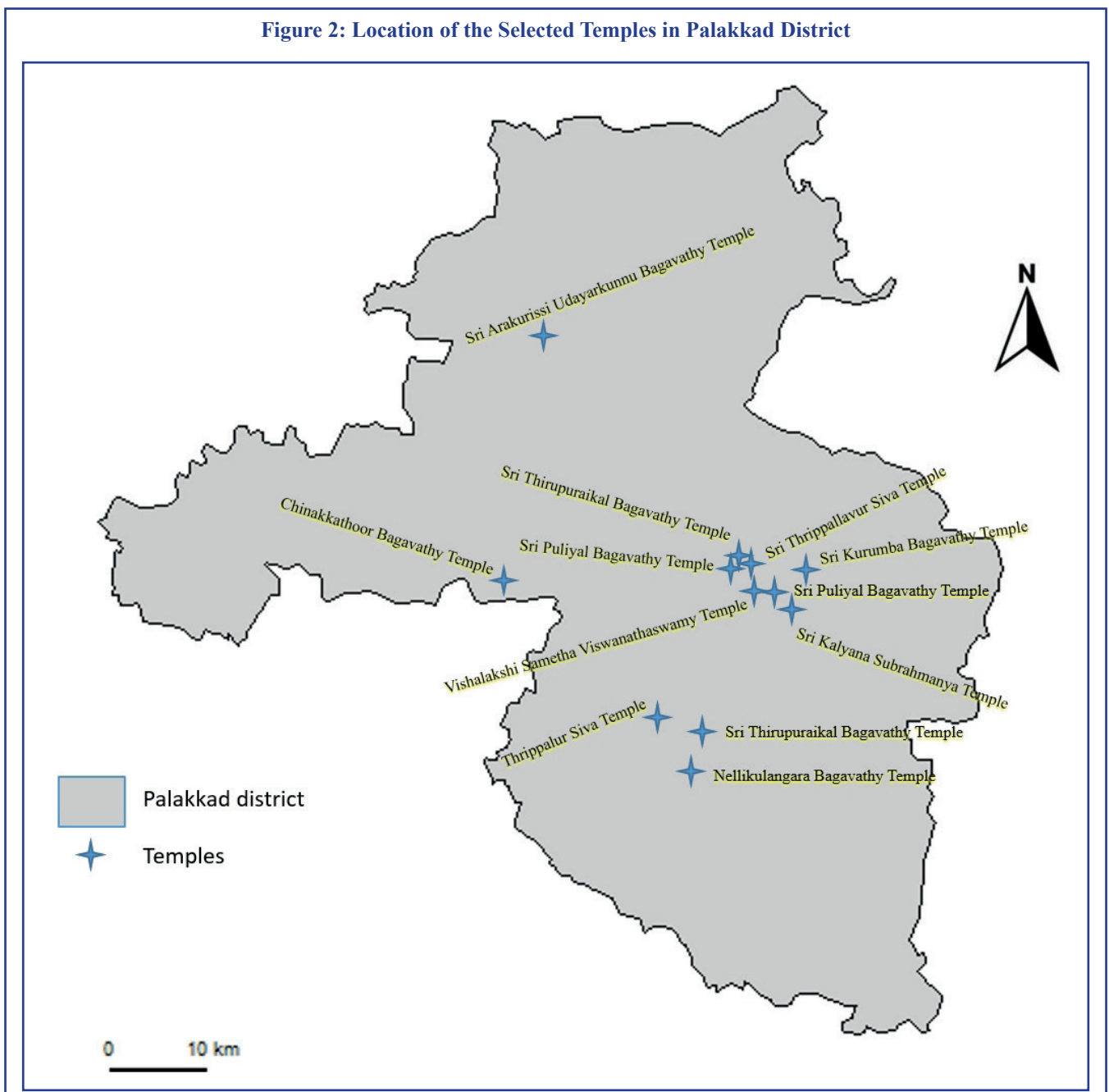
This study aimed to understand the impact of religious festivals on local community livelihoods. A wide range of festivals are celebrated in Kerala. This study focuses on the temple festivals in Palakkad, which is one of the central districts in the region (Figure 1). It has a rich legacy of Hindu temples and festivals.

Data were collected from people residing within 10 km of the selected temples in Palakkad. A total of 12 temples were selected based on the criterion that their festivals attracted more than a thousand visitors. The profiles of the selected temples are listed in Table 1. Figure 2 represents the location of the selected temples on the map of the Palakkad district. The resident Hindu population was the focus of this study and thus, the local community, who participate actively in the festivals, were approached for the survey. People who resided within 10 km of the temple for more than 5 years were included in the study. Finally, through a purposive sampling technique with 35 respondents from each temple, a total of 420 responses, were collected. To corroborate the primary objective

Table 1: Descriptive Profile of the Festivals

Festival	Temple	Area/ Location
Annual opening festival	Sri Puliyal Bagavathy Temple	Kodumbu
Chinakkathur pooram	Chinakkathoor Bagavathy Temple	Ottappalam
Kalpathy Ratholsavam	Vishalakshi Sametha Viswanathaswamy Temple	Kalpathy
Manappullikavu vela	Manappulli Bagavathy Temple	East Yakkara
Mannarkkad Pooram	Sri Arakurissi Udayarkunnu Bagavathy Temple	Mannarkkad
Pudussery Vedi	Sri Kurumba Bagavathy Temple	Pudussery
Nenmara–Vallanghy vela	Nellikulangara Bagavathy Temple	Nenmara
Pooram Deepavali	Thrippalur Siva Temple	Alathur
Puthur vela	Sri Thirupuraikal Bagavathy Temple	Puthur
Ratholsavam	Sri Kalyana Subrahmanya Temple	Kodumbu
Thrippallavur vela	Sri Thrippallavur Siva Temple	Pallavur
Vadakkanthara valiya vilakku vela	Sri Thirupuraikal Bagavathy Temple	Vadakkanthara

Figure 2: Location of the Selected Temples in Palakkad District



of assessing the perceived socio-cultural and economic impacts of festivals, the scale was adopted from Small *et al.*, (2005).

The two main research questions addressed in this study are:

- What are the positive and negative socio-cultural and economic impacts of the festivals on the local community?
- What is the relationship between positive economic and socio-cultural impacts and negative economic and socio-cultural impacts of these religious festivals?

The questionnaire was developed based on a literature review of event impact studies. There is no standardised instrument to measure the community's perception of economic and socio-cultural impacts of events in an integrated manner. Therefore, an instrument with 48 items was developed along with necessary demographics by reviewing the works of multiple authors (Small *et al.*, 2005; Gursoy *et al.*, 2004; Getz, 2010; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012). The statements were measured using a well-defined five-point Likert scale.

Selected temples and their festivals:

Sri Puliyaal Bagavathy Temple: A famous Hindu religious centre in the Kodumbu locality of Palakkad, the sanctum of the Sri Puliyaal Bagavathy Temple is open only once a year. However, devotees can visit the temple and offer worship on other days. The annual opening happens on the first Monday after the 10th day of *Dhanu*²⁵ month of the Malayalam calendar which usually falls in December. This day is celebrated by the local people and other visitors who come from neighbouring states.

Chinakkathoor Bagavathy Temple: This temple is situated in Palappuram, Ottappalam. The temple festival, Chinakkathoor Pooram, is celebrated on the day of *Makam* star of *Kumbham* month in the Malayalam calendar which takes place in February or March. The festival lasts for ten days. A huge procession of 28 tuskers accompanied by a traditional orchestra and art forms offer a visual treat to visitors.

Vishalakshi Sametha Viswanathaswamy Temple: Situated in Kalpathy near Palakkad town, this temple

hosts the famous Kalpathy *ratholsavam*²⁶. The festival takes place over the last three days of the Malayalam month of *Thulam*²⁷, which falls in the English month of November. It attracts foreigners and people from other states. Three chariots carrying the idols of deities are drawn through the streets of the village by the local people with the help of elephants over three days of the festival.

Manappulli Bagavathy Temple: This temple is over 2000 years old and is located in the East Yakkara area of the Palakkad district. It hosts a famous festival known as Manappullikavu vela. The festival starts on the first Friday of the Malayalam month of *Kumbham* and ends with grand celebrations on the fourteenth day. It usually falls between the last week of February and the first week of March.

Sri Arakurissi Udayarkunnu Bagavathy Temple: The temple is situated in Mannarkkad region of Palakkad. The famous Mannarkkad pooram honouring the deity of the temple is celebrated here annually. It usually falls in the Malayalam month of *Kumbham* and takes place over 7 days.

Sree Kurumba Bagavathy Temple: This temple is located in the Pudukkottai town of Palakkad and is believed to have been built around 500 years ago. The most famous temple festival here is the Pudukkottai *vedi*.²⁸ Vedi means fireworks. The festival is named so because of the unique and extravagant display of fireworks that takes place as part of the celebrations. The festival is celebrated on the first Friday of the Malayalam month of *Kumbham*, which usually falls in February or March.

Nellikulangara Bagavathy Temple: This is a very old temple and is famous for the Nenmara Vallanghy vela, which is their annual temple festival. The festival is conducted like a competition between the two villages of Nenmara and Vallanghy and takes place over 20 days. It is usually conducted on the 20th day of the Malayalam month *Meenam*²⁹ (which falls on April 2nd or 3rd each year).

26 *Ratholsavam:* A festival in which decorated carts/chariots carrying the idol of the deity will be pulled by devotees around the temple and associated areas. It is considered that the deity is visiting its people on this day.

27 *Thulam:* Third month on Malayalam calendar. Corresponds to October-November months.

28 *Vedi:* Massive fireworks.

29 *Meenam:* Eighth month on Malayalam calendar. Corresponds to March -April.

25 *Dhanu:* Fifth month on Malayalam calendar. Corresponds to December-January months.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Positive Socio-cultural Impact Variables	Mean	Negative Socio-cultural Impact Variables	Mean
Increased pride	4.35	Disturb the normal routine of the residents	3.12
Strengthening of ties	4.38	Visitors disturb the privacy of the residents	3.34
Opportunities to communicate	4.17	Increase in traffic and traffic jams	3.01
Opportunity to learn new skills	3.94	Disturbing noise	3.40
Opportunity to escape from routine life	4.38	Overcrowding in the community and facilities	3.39
Improve community services	4.15	Overcrowding in public transport	3.17
Improve cultural facilities	3.98	Increased consumption of alcohol and drugs	3.42
Opportunity to have fun	4.30	Increase in crime rate	3.35
Increased entertainment opportunities	4.12	Frustration because of the increased number of visitors	2.74
Opportunities for social interaction	4.14	Road closures and redirections	3.35
Increased opportunities for cultural experiences	4.07	Increase in vandalism	3.14
Opportunity to host family and friends	4.15	Rowdy and delinquent behaviour	3.06
More visitors to the community	4.19	Increase in litter	3.22
Joy of hosting visitors	4.11	Crowding in local shops and facilities	3.53
Diversity of people visiting	4.15		
Sense of community ownership	4.01		
Enhanced community identity	3.97		
Opportunity to display the uniqueness and speciality of the community to outsiders	4.10		
Encourages tourism	4.10		
Sense of togetherness	4.22		
Groups work together to achieve goals of festival	4.11		
Local residents display their talent	4.27		
Positive Economic Impact Variables	Mean	Negative Economic Impact Variables	Mean
Opportunity to improve the city	4.08	Increase in prices of goods and services	2.66
Attracts tourists who spend more	3.99	Increase in overall costs of living	3.29
Create new job opportunities	3.95	Increase in rent rates	2.69
Develop new businesses	4.04		
Improves local life quality and standards	3.95		
Greater profit to local businesses	4.16		
Promotes awareness about the destination	3.91		
More investment in the community's economy	4.08		
Increases property value	3.89		

Thrippalur Siva Temple: The temple is located in Alathur, Palakkad. It is believed to have been built around 1500 years ago by Gharamahirshi, a Hindu saint. *Mahasivarathri* and *Deepavali*³⁰ are the main festivals of this temple.

Puthur Sri Thiruparaikal Bagavathy Temple: The main deity in this temple is Goddess *Badrakali*. The main festival is the annual temple festival, which begins on the first Friday of the Malayalam month of *Meenam* with a flag hoisting ceremony and ends on the last Friday of the same month.

30 *Deepavali*: It is known as the festival of lights marking the victory of good over evil. Usually falls in October or November.

Sri Kalyana Subrahmanya Temple: This temple is believed to have been built around 500 years ago. *Ratholsavam* is the main festival of the temple. It is celebrated on the day of the *Pooyam*³¹ star in the Malayalam month of *Makaram*³². Decorated chariots or carts carrying the idol of the deity are pulled by devotees with the help of elephants, and they are accompanied by people playing traditional musical instruments. This parade is the highlight of the festival.

31 *Pooyam*: Eighth star among the 27 stars in Malayalam astrology.

32 *Makaram*: Sixth month on Malayalam calendar. Corresponds to January- February.

Sri Thrippallavur Siva temple: This is one of the 108 shivalayas³³ across Kerala. *Deepavali vaavu*³⁴ is the famous festival of the temple. It is celebrated on the day before the New Moon in the Malayalam month of *Thulam*, that is, October–November.

Vadakkanthara Sri Thirupuraikal Bagavathy Temple: This temple hosts one of the famous festivals of Palakkad district, the Vadakkanthara valiya vilakku vela. This festival is held once every three years in the month of *Kumbham* (February–March) and attracts a large number of visitors even from neighbouring states.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for positive and negative socio-cultural and economic impacts. The mean values for positive socio-cultural and economic impacts ranged from 3.94 to 4.38, and from 3.89 to 4.16, respectively. This implies that the residents' opinions ranged from agreeing to strongly agreeing on the positive impacts of festivals. The mean value of the negative socio-cultural and economic impacts ranged from 2.74 to 3.53 and 2.66 to 3.29, respectively.

This shows that the respondents had a neutral view of the negative socio-economic impacts of festivals. The descriptive analysis indicated that the positive impacts outweighed the negative ones. Community identity, pride, and family and community reunion were the most evidently accepted factors among the community.

Positive Socioeconomic Impact

Principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted to simplify a large number of variables (48 items) into a smaller and more manageable number of critical factors or dimensions to summarise the economic and socio-cultural impacts resulting from these religious festivals. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy was above 0.6 for positive (0.703) and negative (0.907) impacts. Thus, this measure was significant enough to carry out factor analysis.

The 31 positive socioeconomic variables were extracted to 9 variables with an Eigenvalue higher than 1.00. The cumulative percentage variables explained by these 9 factors was 72.982. These 9 factors explained nearly 73% of the positive socio-economic impacts of these religious festivals.

33 *Shivalayas*: Home of Lord Shiva; There are 108 shivalayas in Kerala.

34 *Vaavu*: New moon and Full moon days.

Table 3: Eigen Values of Factor Analysis for Positive Variables

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.179	26.384	26.384
2	2.879	9.288	35.673
3	2.447	7.892	43.565
4	2.247	7.249	50.813
5	1.733	5.590	56.404
6	1.509	4.869	61.272
7	1.330	4.291	65.563
8	1.205	3.887	69.449
9	1.095	3.533	72.982
10	.895	2.886	75.868
11	.848	2.737	78.605
12	.718	2.316	80.921
13	.685	2.208	83.129
14	.619	1.997	85.127
15	.555	1.792	86.918
16	.517	1.669	88.587
17	.486	1.569	90.156
18	.465	1.500	91.656
19	.386	1.244	92.900
20	.334	1.076	93.976
21	.296	.954	94.930
22	.254	.819	95.749
23	.244	.788	96.538
24	.200	.644	97.182
25	.181	.585	97.766
26	.158	.511	98.277
27	.140	.451	98.729
28	.134	.433	99.161
29	.105	.339	99.500
30	.097	.312	99.812
31	.058	.188	100.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

A 9-factor structure (Table 4) for 27 items was developed based on a PCA with a varimax rotation. Based on the similarities among the variables, the factors identified were named as follows:

- destination development (4 items),
- quality of life (4 items),
- community cohesion (3 items),
- community identity (4 items),
- opportunity to socialise (4 items),
- community development (2 items),
- entertainment opportunities (2 items),
- capacity building and development (2 items), and
- individual development (2 items).

Table 4: Factors Extracted for Positive Variables

Factor Identified	Variables	Supportive Results
Destination Development	Encourages tourism (.547)	Saayman & Saayman, 2012; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012
	Promotes awareness on the destination (.718)	Boo & Busser, 2006; Jago <i>et al.</i> , 2003; Getz, 2010
	More investment in the community's economy (.778)	McHone & Rungeling, 2000; Tyrrell & Johnston, 2001; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012
	Increases property value (.795)	Kreag, 2006; Slabbert, 2000; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012
Quality of Life	Opportunities for social interactions (.568)	Fredline & Faulkner, 2002; Adendorff, 2008; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012
	Creates new job opportunities (.891)	Yolal <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Lasso & Dahles, 2018
	Develops new businesses (.743)	Kreag, 2006; Saayman & Saayman, 2012; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012
	Improves local life quality and standards (.587)	Ui <i>et al.</i> , 2016
Community Cohesion	Increased pride (.722) Strengthening of ties (.826)	Gursoy <i>et al.</i> , 2004
	Opportunities to communicate (.694)	Rao, 2001; Gursoy <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Community Identity	Diversity of visitors (.507)	Shone & Parry, 2004; Small <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012
	Sense of community ownership (.877)	Andereck <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Wood, 2006; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Gursoy <i>et al.</i> , 2004
	Enhanced Community identity (.761) Opportunity to display the uniqueness and speciality of the community to outsiders (.509)	
Socialising Opportunity	Increased opportunities for cultural experiences (.557)	Gibson & Davidson, 2004; Getz, 2010
	Opportunity to host family and friends (.605)	Fredline & Faulkner, 2002; Adendorff, 2008; Delamere <i>et al.</i> , 2001; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012
	More visitors to the community (.754) Joy of hosting visitors (.786)	Fredline <i>et al.</i> , 2003a; Delamere <i>et al.</i> , 2001; Waitt, 2003; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012
Community Development	Improve community services (.724)	Acha-Anyi & Dlamini, 2019
	Improve cultural facilities (.856)	Besculides <i>et al.</i> , 2002; Gursoy <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Entertainment Opportunities	Opportunity to have fun (.822)	Fredline & Faulkner, 2002; Adendorff, 2008; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012
	Increased entertainment opportunities (.860)	Viviers & Slabbert, 2012
Capacity Building and Development	Local residents display their talents (.738)	
	Opportunity to improve the city (.546)	Gursoy <i>et al.</i> , 2004; Wood, 2006; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012
Individual Development	Opportunity to learn new skills (.504)	Kreag, 2006; Gursoy <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012
	Opportunity to escape from routine life (.745)	

As propound in the table these impact factors were supported with the above results. The unique factors that were extracted as new variables were as follows. Under community identity, the factors were 'Enhanced community identity' (.761) and 'Opportunity to display the uniqueness and speciality of the community to

outsiders' (.509). Under the capacity building, the factor was 'Local residents display their talents' (.738). Under individual development, the factor was 'Opportunity to escape from routine life' (.745). The local community felt that religious festivals had strong socio-cultural and economic benefits for the community.

Negative Socioeconomic Impacts

The 17 negative socioeconomic variables were extracted to 3 variables with an Eigenvalue higher than 1.00. The cumulative percentage variables explained by these 9 factors was 69.314. These three factors explained nearly 69% of the positive socio-economic impacts of these religious festivals.

A three-factor structure (Table 6) for negative variables was developed from 17 items. The factors identified were named as follows:

Conflicts (9 items),

Inconvenience (5 items), and

Personal frustration (3 items).

These variables were supported by Viviers and Slabbert (2012) and Gursoy *et al.* (2004).

Correlation tells us whether the relationship between variables is positive or negative, and how strong it is. In this study, correlation analysis was conducted to identify how the four variables under study: positive and negative socio-cultural and economic impacts influence each other. Table 7 presents the results of the correlation analyses. When the local communities have positive economic impacts, it will lead to positive socio-cultural impacts. Similarly, negative economic impacts will lead to negative socio-cultural impacts.

Table 5: Eigen Values of Factor Analysis for Negative Variables

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.106	53.562	53.562
2	1.622	9.540	63.102
3	1.056	6.212	69.314
4	.771	4.533	73.846
5	.740	4.354	78.200
6	.625	3.676	81.876
7	.493	2.902	84.778
8	.461	2.712	87.490
9	.371	2.183	89.673
10	.317	1.863	91.536
11	.291	1.711	93.246
12	.265	1.557	94.803
13	.241	1.415	96.218
14	.186	1.097	97.315
15	.184	1.084	98.399
16	.165	.971	99.370
17	.107	.630	100.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The results show that there is a statistically significant, linear relationship between negative socio-cultural and economic impacts, with a Pearson's r-value of 0.809. That is, when the perception of the negative socio-cultural impact of a festival by a community is increasing or decreasing the negative economic impact will also be

Table 6. Factors Extracted for Negative Variables

Factor Identified	Variables	Supportive Results
Conflicts	Visitors disturb the privacy of local residents (.656) Road closures and redirections (.637) Increasing vandalism (.815) Crowding in local shops and facilities (.640)	Delamere <i>et al.</i> , 2001; Tosun, 2002; Small <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Viviers and Slabbert, 2012
	Rowdy and delinquent behaviour (.728) Increased litter (.777)	Fredline <i>et al.</i> , 2003b; Small <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Waitt, 2003
	Increase in the price of goods and services (.658) Increase in overall costs of living (.723) Increase rent rates (.591)	Tosun, 2002; Gursoy <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Inconvenience	Disturbing noise (.593) Overcrowding in the community and facilities (.756) Overcrowding in public transport (.759)	Mowforth and Munt, 2003; Fredline <i>et al.</i> , 2003; Gursoy <i>et al.</i> , 2004
	Increased consumption of alcohol and drugs (.789) Increase in crime rates (.625)	Kreag, 2006; Gursoy <i>et al.</i> , 2004; Waitt, 2003; Viviers and Slabbert, 2012
Personal frustration	Disturbing the normal routine of local residents (.834) Increase in traffic and traffic jams (.816) Frustration because of the increased number of visitors (.724)	Delamere <i>et al.</i> , 2001; Tosun, 2002; Small <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Viviers and Slabbert, 2012

Table 7: Correlation Analysis

		Positive socio-cultural impact	Positive economic impact	Negative socio-cultural impact	Negative economic impact
Positive socio-cultural impact	Pearson Correlation	1	.565**	-.069	-.031
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.156	.528
Positive economic impact	Pearson Correlation	.565**	1	.017	.107*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.721	.029
Negative socio-cultural impact	Pearson Correlation	-.069	.017	1	.809**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.156	.721		.000
Negative economic impact	Pearson Correlation	-.031	.107*	.809**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.528	.029	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

perceived to be having the same change and vice versa. A comparatively lesser but positive correlation was identified between positive socio-cultural and economic impacts, with a Pearson's r-value of 0.565.

Conclusion

Using PCA, nine factors were extracted for the positive impacts of festivals. These factors were an extension of those in Gursoy *et al.*'s (2004) validated scale of economic benefits: destination development, employment enhancement, and community development. Community cohesiveness attributes include community cohesion and community identity. Among social incentives, the constructs were opportunities to socialise and for entertainment (Gursoy *et al.*, 2004; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012). The novel attributes of religious festivals were as follows. Under *Community identity*, the attributes included 'Enhanced community identity' (.761) and 'Opportunity to display the uniqueness and speciality of the community to outsiders' (.509). Under *Capacity building*, the attribute was: 'Local residents display their talents' (.738). Under *Individual development*, the attribute was 'Opportunity to escape from routine life' (.745). These were the new variables in this study. The negative impacts were also in line with those in Gursoy *et al.* (2004) and Viviers and Slabbert (2012). Economic costs included conflicts, social costs, inconvenience, and personal frustration.

The descriptive analysis and PCA showed that the positive impacts outweighed the negative ones. Correlation analysis showed that there was a positive correlation between negative socio-cultural and economic impacts; that is, negative economic impacts led to negative socio-cultural impacts. Similarly, a positive correlation was

observed between positive socio-cultural and economic impacts; that is, positive economic impacts led to positive socio-cultural impacts in the local community.

This may sound obvious. However, if there is a high socio-cultural impact and a low economic impact, it may pull down the socio-cultural impacts. These views offer valuable insights on the practicality of the approach from the supply side. Although challenges are expected, research can seek to ascertain the positive and negative factors in adapting inclusive policies for the advancement of the local economy and sustainable tourism development in Palakkad, Kerala. A holistic approach by the three stakeholders, namely the hosts, guests, and service providers, to minimise negative and maximise positive impacts is recommended. Some of the most commonly reported negative impacts are: increases in vandalism, litter, traffic and traffic jams, and disturbance to normal routine life. These challenges can be controlled by forming youth volunteer groups from the National Service Scheme (NSS) and the Community Social Service (CSS) groups of the youth wing among higher education institutions in the state. However, religious tourism is an integral part of the social culture. Mass gatherings, crowds, rituals, and festivals form the core of worship. A real challenge for religious festivals in this present scenario, safety concerns, will supersede all other challenges leading to what might be termed as the survival of the safest. The safety of guests and hosts is critical in both the tactical and strategic planning for the reopening of festivals.

Faith, customs, and rituals are close to the community and bringing the community together. Hence, they are easy to adapt and adopt. They are also a means of preserving one's customs and beliefs. Religion serves as

a point of origin for indigenous art and artistry. These religious festivals often showcase ethnic folklore and authentic handicrafts. Community identity, capacity building, and individual development are unique to these religious festivals. This study shows that these festivals act as a site for family and community reunions. The local community and temple authorities can focus on these aspects collectively to minimise and maximise the negative and positive impacts, respectively, in their planning and implementation.

This study has some limitations. First, not all types of festivals were addressed in this study. It dealt with an area of research that has, to the best of the authors' knowledge, not been examined before. Thus, the results have unique significance. Due to the confidentiality of some information, accurate responses were not revealed by some of the respondents. Respondents may have marked the questionnaire in a manner which they feel is appropriate, yet it may not represent their personal feeling. Surveys such as this cannot be entirely accurate since each survey is subjected to the bias and prejudices of the respondents.

Future research can expand and diversify this study's themes in many ways. Future research can test the factors identified for positive and negative impacts with SEM and examine the mediation and moderation effects of these attributes. Furthermore, the scope of the study can be expanded to include festivals from other religions as well.

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