

THE IMPACT OF FESTIVALS IN PROMOTING CULTURAL TOURISM: A CASE STUDY ON GOPALPUR BEACH FESTIVAL, ODISHA.

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ABSTRACT

Background: Fairs and festivals are important part of life. It contributes peace and imparts relaxation, pleasure to human being. In India we observe number of festivals throughout the year. Odisha is known for its festivals and folk cultures. In Odisha different fairs and festivals attract culture tourists and promote tourism in the state. **Objective:** The objective of the study is to identify the important attributes to attract tourists at GopalPur beach festival of Odisha. **Methodology:** The study was conducted by taking 100 tourists as the sample size. The survey questionnaires were administered along with face to face interviews with the tourists or the respondents. A 5-Point Likert scale was used to measure tourist's satisfaction. **Results:** The findings of this research revealed that attributes like Art and Craft, Sand Art, Local community etc. had contributed in the development of GopalPur Beach festival of Odisha. **Conclusion :** Cultural tourism can thus help in the economic and social development of the state.

Key Words: Impact, Festivals, Culture, Tourism, Economy

INTRODUCTION

In developing country like India, Tourism is considered to be a tool for development. Several countries depend on Tourism industry for their Growth & Development. In spite of the global recession tourism industry has been continued to be one of the leading industries of the world. Tourism helps in development of infrastructure of a premise, improves the local economy of a place, increases social understanding among people and finally brings peace & brotherhood.

India is a vast country having diverse culture with a spectacular heritage and tradition. It is considered as one of the greatest civilisation of the world. India is now considered as one of the important cultural heritage site of the world. Any one visiting India will find monumental & architectural heritage, religious places, natural flora, fauna, music & dance and traditional arts & crafts. Odisha is a state especially rich in culture and heritage. Presently many tourist destinations have entrusted cultural festivals for the economic & cultural development of a tourist destination. Mostly tourism planners

are portraying cultural themes to conduct annual events like beach festivals, dance festivals etc at local level in order to attract more and more tourists to a particular destination. Conducting of such annual events helps in development of tourism as well as pours more of economic and cultural benefits. Many of the researchers have stated that involvement & participation of the local public of the host destination is always having a pivotal role.

Cultural Tourism can be defined as moving out or travelling for experiencing and learning about the heritage, various art forms, fairs, festivals and the other cultural characteristics of an area. Therefore cultural tourists move out from their own place of residence to other places for experiencing and learning the culture of host destinations. The actual purpose of visiting is to explore the cultural heritage as well as monuments. Fairs and festivals are important part of life. It contributes peace and imparts relaxation, pleasure to human being. In India we observe number of festivals throughout the year. Odisha is famous for its cultural activities among tourists. Odisha is known for its festivals and folk cultures. In Odisha different fairs and festivals attract culture tourists and promote tourism in the state. Festivals are now a days are used as an important tool for promoting tourism and boosting the local economy of a place. Hence festivals have to be organised in an effective manner so as to fulfil the economic benefits of tourism to the destination. GopalPur is a cultural city of Odisha situated on the Bay of Bengal coast in Ganjam district of southern part of Odisha. It is known for its famous sea beach and an important tourist destination. Many tourist destinations are now giving more importance to the cultural festivals for the economic as well as cultural development of that particular area.

As per the view of WYMAN Culture has a special and inevitable role in the society. **“In an economic environment when people often concern about health and education, it is also essential to think about the culture which is an important element of a healthy society. Because culture makes the life worth living just as the way health is necessary for life”**. Cultural tourism is defined by international cultural Tourism charter professionals as **“Domestic and international tourism continues to be among the foremost vehicles for cultural exchange, providing a personal experience, not only of that which has survived from the past, but of contemporary life and society of others”**. Therefore culture is an identity as well as the importance on work, leisure and religious activities.

Today festivals are contributing significantly to the cultural and economic development of a tourist destination. Festivals have a great impact on the development of cultural tourism. The organisers are using the cultural as well as historical themes to develop the annual events to attract the tourists and create a cultural image of the destination by organising the festivals. Organising such events helps the host destinations in many folds. Many researchers have stated that the local communities of the host destinations play an important role in developing cultural tourism through festivals. Festivals have a great potential to showcase the traditional cultures, handicrafts, monuments, folk dances of a particular destination. Hence Getz,1997 stated that events have the potential to generate a vast amount

of tourism when they cater to visitors from other generating zones as well as potential for grants and sponsorships, either by direct or indirectly. Now Government and respective state tourism departments support and promote such fairs and festivals as a part of their strategies for economic development and cultural tourism. Such fairs and festivals are an important mechanism to attract tourists to a particular destination.

Getz (1997) states festivals events as a: **“Events constitute one of the most exciting and fastest growing forms of leisure, business and tourism related phenomena”**. In today’s arena organising festivals initiates and meets the demand of the tourists as well as the local public. Festivals showcase and promote the local culture to the tourists and give an identity and pride to the local people and host destinations. Goldblatt (2002) states festival events as a: **“kaleidoscope of planned culture, sport, political and business occasions: from mega events like Olympics and world fairs to community festivals; from programmes of events at parks and attractions to visit by dignitaries and intergovernmental assembles; from small meetings and parties to huge conventions and competitions”**.

The study of festivals and events is now considered as an important and prolific area of tourism research enquiry. India has a long history with diverse culture. The Indians celebrate various fairs and festivals. Most of the Indian festivals are seasonal or religious in nature. The unity of this diverse country like India can be seen at the national festival like Independence day, Republic day etc. There are ample substantiations on how Cultural Tourism festivals benefit the tourist destinations. Festivals gives a new look to the destination. Festivals contribute significantly for the promotion and rejuvenation of a particular destination. At the same time it also helps in creating the employment opportunity for a destination. Many times festivals also helps in development of infrastructure for a destination. Bachleitner and Zins (1992) conveys that festival tourism increases learning of residents, ethnic identity, generates a sense of community pride and helps in opening up of many medium size and small family enterprises. At the same time it is also noted that Cultural events and festivals encourage the cross cultural communication which helps in promoting proper understanding between the guest and the host. Falassi (1987) **“ cultural festival- a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which different forms and a sequence of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to a diverse extent, all members of a whole community, united by race, language, religion, historical bonds and sharing a world view.”**

When a festival is hosted at a particular destination, every stake holders like Governments, private sectors and finally local people’s needs are fulfilled. Festivals have both positive and negative impacts on a particular destination. Hall (1992) stated that the ability of major events perceived to attract economic benefits. **“Economic analysis of events provides one aspect of why events are held and the effects that they have on a origin. However, while many of the economic impacts of events are quite tangible many of the social are not”**

A festival plays a vital role in uplifting economy of a particular destination. It helps in income generation for the local business. For promoting festivals, organisers use new technology and media. Wider publicity attracts both domestic as well as foreign tourists to a destination. Goldblatt(1997) states that “ **some communities use these events to boost tourism during the low or off-season and other focus primarily on weekends to appeal to leisure travellers**”. Hence it is rightly said impact of festivals and events can greatly affect the quality of life of the local publics in host destinations. Festivals are considered as a tool for economic development and cultural development of a tourist destination. Events have the potential to generate a vast amount of tourism activity when they cater to out-of-region visitors, grants, or sponsorships, (Getz, 1997) of direct or indirect intent. Now a day the Government is organising, supporting and promoting festivals to promote an unknown place or tourist destination. Hence these are the strategies of the Government for economic development and nation building. *“In an economic climate where we hear so much about crisis in health and education, it is important to remember that culture, too, is an essential element of a healthy society. It’s not an either-or situation. Health is necessary for life; culture makes life worth living”*(www.culturematters.ca).

Since culture gives a special identity, hence host destination takes a pride in showcasing their culture. **In any location, harmony must be sought between the needs of the visitor, the place and the host community** (English Heritage, 2000). The impact of festivals is very much judged by the local public and when the same festival is organised year after year it states there is a positive impact on community or on the host destination. **Economic analysis of events provides one aspect of why events are held and the effects that they have on a region. However, while many of the economic impacts of events are quite tangible many of the social are not** (Hall, 1992). To attract more and more tourists it is very essential that tourist’s needs and demands should be met. Hence to attract the most variable segment of the market it is essential that a tourist must be satisfied.

In this era of Globalisation, Cultural Tourism is making its own image and have a separate specific market throughout the world. Because of the fast movement of communication and promotional activity more and more domestic as well as foreign tourists are showing interest towards this market, the objective of current study was:

1. To identify the important attributes to attract tourists at GopalPur beach festival

METHODOLOGY

The study area was GopalPur, which is a small beach town in the Ganjam district located in the state of Odisha. This small town is well known for its rich culture and spectacular beach. The study mainly focuses on GopalPur beach festival, which is big and a standardised as well as well organised event that

showcase the traditional dances of India. The study was conducted on GopalPur beach festival-2015. The study involved the convenience sampling method. The study was conducted on 100 tourists as the sample size. The survey questionnaires were administered along with face to face interviews with the tourists. Information from department of tourism, Government of Odisha have been taken into consideration. A questionnaire relating to various attributes of the GopalPur beach festival was prepared and feedback was taken from tourists. A 5-Point Likert scale was used to measure tourist's satisfaction as follows which comprised of Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Neither Satisfied nor dissatisfied, Dissatisfied and Very Dissatisfied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were 74% male and 26% female in the study (table 1). The dominant age group who visited festival was 41 to 60 years that is 42%, followed by 21 to 40 years that is 32 %, 60 years and above was only 8% where as under 20 years was only 18%. Most of the tourists lived in Odisha i.e 62%, from other states 24% tourists have visited where as foreign tourists were only 14%. In terms of level of education most of the tourists were graduates (54%), followed by post graduates (20%) and 26% belonged to other categories. More number of professionals visited the GopalPur beach festival that is 24%, followed by self employed that is 21%. With regard to level of income, the largest group includes those with a monthly income of INR 21,000 to 40, 000/- that is 35% of the total tourists, followed by 41,000 to 61,000 that is 27%, followed by below 20,000/ that is 24%, INR 61,000 and above that is 14%. It was seen that most of the people were of age group from 41 to 60 having good income have visited the festival out of the sample survey.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Subjects

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender -Male	74	74
Female	26	26
State – Odisha	62	62
Others	24	24
Abroad	14	14
Age Below 20years	18	18
21 to 40 years	32	32
41 to 60 years	42	42
60 years and above	08	08
Education level		
Graduate	54	
Post graduate	20	
others	26	

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Employment level		
Un employed	18	18
Self employed	21	21
Retired	12	12
Business person	18	18
Professionals	24	24
others	07	07
Income(INR)		
Below 20,000	24	24
21,000 – 40,000	35	35
41,000 – 60,000	27	27
61,000 and above	14	14

Table2: Festival Attributes Perception by Tourists

Festival attributes	Very Satisfied (1)	Satisfied (2)	Neutral (3)	Dissatisfied (4)	Very Dissatisfied (5)
Music and Dance	33	63	2	2	0
Ambience	46	31	14	5	4
Art and craft fair	39	43	10	6	2
Cuisine	41	37	12	6	4
Safety and security	38	47	12	3	0
Sand art	58	32	10	0	0
Friendliness of local community	47	39	12	2	0
Accommodation	14	47	35	4	0
Infrastructure	17	34	31	15	3
Promotion	28	24	26	17	5
Total (%)	36.1	39.7	16.4	6.0	1.8

The researcher has identified that 36.1% respondents are very satisfied and 39.7% are satisfied on all attributes of the GopalPur beach festival. English Heritage, 2000 in their study reported that any location, harmony must be sought between the needs of the visitor, the place and the host community. The current study also reports that the friendliness of the local community is crucial to promote culture

tourism. Tourists are more dissatisfied on promotional activities. Hence it was found that the factors like infrastructure, cuisine and ambience needs to be developed in order to attract the tourists.

The study reveals subjects dissatisfaction towards certain attributes of the GopalPur beach festival. There is a great tourism potential

CONCLUSION

Cultural tourism is one of the emerging area and festivals are viewed as an important tool for promoting the cultural tourism in the world. Tourism planners and event organisers have used festivals or events to attract tourists and promote cultural tourism for a particular tourist destination. Promotion of fairs and festivals at a destination improves the destination image. Odisha government is planning to organise a lot of festivals to attract the tourists throughout the world. To enhance and uplift the economic condition of a tourist destination regular promotional activities like organising fairs and festivals are vital. Tourism festivals have a great effect on the local economy of a destination either directly or indirectly. Palm trees, sea waves, spectacular beach, pleasant weather and great tradition with culture attracts tourists to GopalPur on sea. Hence immediate attention to be given to the recommended measures so that in future more and more tourists can be attracted to this beach festival and finally it will promote tourism.

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