

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL FESTIVALS ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN MAHARASHTRA

* *Mr. Siddhesh Surendra Sawant*

* *M. M. College of Arts, N. M. Institute of Science, H. R. J. College of Commerce, Bhavan's College, Andheri*

Abstract:

This study examines the influence of cultural festivals on tourism development and economic growth in Maharashtra. It explores how festivals attract visitors, promote local culture, and boost hospitality, transportation, and retail sectors. The research will study key festivals such as Ganesh Chaturthi, Pandharpur wari, Diwali, and Navratri, highlighting their role in enhancing regional visibility and economic activities. This will help to understand the cultural significance and its impact on the economy. Moreover, the study highlights how festivals act as platforms for preserving and promoting Maharashtra's diverse cultural heritage, traditions, and arts, thereby strengthening regional identity and pride.

Keywords: *Maharashtra Tourism, Culture, Festival, Heritage, Economic Growth.*

Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial Use Provided the Original Author and Source Are Credited.

Introduction:

Maharashtra, one of India's most culturally vibrant states, is known for its rich heritage, diverse traditions, and grand cultural festivals. These festivals reflect the social, historical, and artistic values of the region and play a vital role in preserving local culture. Events such as Ganesh Chaturthi, Gudi Padwa, Pandharpur Wari, Ellora–Ajanta festivals, and Kala Ghoda Arts Festival attract millions of domestic and international tourists every year. Cultural festivals act as a powerful tool for tourism development by enhancing the state's cultural image and providing unique experiences to visitors. They contribute significantly to the growth of tourism by increasing tourist inflow, extending the length of stay, and promoting lesser-known destinations. Festivals also create employment opportunities for local communities, artisans, performers, and small businesses, thereby strengthening the local economy. Moreover, the economic impact of cultural festivals extends beyond tourism revenues. They stimulate growth in related sectors such as hospitality, transportation, handicrafts, food services, and event management. By generating income and encouraging infrastructural development, cultural festivals support sustainable economic growth in Maharashtra. This study aims to examine the impact of cultural festivals on tourism development and economic growth in Maharashtra, highlighting their role in promoting cultural heritage, boosting tourism activities, and contributing to overall regional development.

Review of Literature:

A research paper published by **Rowland Lopes¹, Dr. Apoorva Hiray (2024)** on "Impacts of cultural events and festivals on cultural tourism states that Cultural events and festivals are vital in conserving and promoting cultural history, customs, and identity. They promote cultural interchange, engagement between visitors and

residents, and respect for different cultures. Cultural events and festivals provide a substantial contribution to the tourist industry's economic growth.

The article published in **Indian Express 04 February, 2026** states that A Government Resolution states that In order to promote and develop the live entertainment economy in India and to make India a global leader in the live entertainment sector by 2030, the Centre has established a ‘Live Events Development Cell. The objective has been set to increase the cultural, economic and employment potential of the country

A research paper published by **Mansi Shekhawat, Prof. Ajinkya Malokar (2024)** on Tourism And Culture In Melghat Region states that tourism and culture in the Melghat region is a significant factor contributing to the economic growth and development of the area. The Melghat region is rich in cultural heritage, with archaeological sites like the Gavilgarh fort and Narnala fort, as well as the presence of the Korku tribe, which has diverse traditions and practices.

Objectives :

1. To analyze the influence of cultural festivals on attracting both domestic and international tourists to Maharashtra.
2. To assess the economic impact of festivals, including revenue, employment, and local business growth.
3. To evaluate how cultural festivals contribute to the development of tourism infrastructure and services.

Limitation of Study:

1. The study focuses only on selected major cultural festivals in Maharashtra, which may not represent all festivals across the state.
2. This study is majorly done on secondary data as the perception of study may differ
3. Rapid changes in tourism trends and festival popularity may limit the relevance of the findings over time

Data Collection:

- Data will be collected from government publications, tourism department reports, and festival records to analyze visitor statistics, revenue figures, and infrastructural developments.
- Previous Research and Studies: Relevant academic papers, journals, and industry reports will be reviewed to support and contextualize primary data.

Data Analysis : Maharashtra **Ranked First** among all Indian states for attracting foreign tourists in 2024.

Parameter	Details / Estimates
Total international tourists	1.8 million - 2.2 million
International tourists during festival seasons	150,000 - 250,000 (approx..)
Percentage of total tourists during festivals	8% - 11%
Major festivals attracting international tourists	Ganesh Chaturthi, Diwali, Navratri, local festivals
Peak months for festival tourism	August - October
Increase in tourist numbers during festivals	15% - 25% higher than monthly averages

Source: *Tourism Ministry Reports (Government of India & Maharashtra)*

During Ganpati festival in Maharashtra, especially in major cities like Mumbai and Pune, the influx of tourists reaches its peak, transforming the cities into vibrant hubs of cultural celebration. It is estimated that approximately **1.5 to 2 million tourists, both domestic and international**, visit during this period. Domestic tourists from various states such as Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh travel to Maharashtra to participate in the festivities, drawn by the grandeur of the celebrations, elaborate pandals, and devotional atmosphere. International tourists, mainly from countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and Middle Eastern nations, also visit to experience the unique cultural and spiritual aspects of Ganpati. These visitors are often attracted by the spectacular processions, artistic decorations, and community celebrations that showcase Maharashtra's rich cultural heritage. The ten-day festival, especially during the days of immersion (Visarjan), witnesses a surge in crowd density at prominent locations such as Lalbaugcha Raja, Ganeshostav in Pune, and various community pandals across Mumbai.

This period sees an increase in hotel bookings, transport services, and local markets, contributing significantly to the local economy.

Festivals/Fairs/Events	Probable Period	Tourist inflow		
		INTERNATIONAL	DOMESTIC	LOCAL
LOCAL FESTIVALS/FAIRS				
Ganesh Chaturthi(all over the state)	August – September	★★	★★★	★★★★
DahiHandi (all over the state)	August – September	★	★★	★★★★
Bandra Fair (Bandra) - S	September	★	★	★★
Erangal Fest (Erangal beach, Malad)- S	January	★	★	★
Mango Festival	March - April	★	★	★
Mumbai International Boat Show	February	★	★	★★
EVENTS				
Mumbai Marathon	January	★★	★★	★★★★
Film Fare Awards - S	February – March	★★	★★	★★
Mumbai International Film Festival	Not Specific	★★★★	★★	★★
Lakme Fashion Show	August – October March – April	★★	★★	★★
IPL & Champion Leagues	March May	★★★★	★★	★★★★
Bangana (organize by MTDC)	January	★★	★★	★★★★
Kala Ghoda Arts Festival	January – February	★★	★★	★★★★
Elephanta Festival (Elephanta Island)	February	★★	★	★★
Parle Mahotsav- S	December	★	★	★★★★

Source : Maharashtra Tourism

Tourism has emerged as a **major source of employment generation in Maharashtra**, especially in the post-pandemic recovery phase. With its diverse attractions such as cultural festivals, heritage sites like Ajanta–Ellora, religious tourism centers, hill stations, beaches, and urban tourism in Mumbai and Pune, the tourism sector creates **large-scale direct and indirect employment**. Jobs are generated directly in hotels, resorts, travel agencies, tour operations, transport services, event management, and tourist guiding, while indirect employment is created in handicrafts, food supply chains, retail trade, construction, and local transport services.

The **Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024** has further strengthened employment prospects by focusing on infrastructure development, heritage tourism, rural tourism, eco-tourism, and coastal tourism. According to government estimates, the policy is expected to attract significant private investment and generate **around 18 lakh employment opportunities over the next decade**, including both skilled and unskilled jobs. Special emphasis has been placed on skill development of local youth, promotion of homestays, and support to MSMEs, ensuring inclusive growth and income generation in rural and semi-urban areas. Overall, tourism acts as a **powerful employment multiplier** in Maharashtra. Every increase in tourist inflow leads to higher demand for accommodation, food services, transport, cultural performances, and local products, thereby boosting livelihoods at the grassroots level.

Major festivals such as **Ganesh Chaturthi, Pandharpur Wari, Ellora–Ajanta festivals, Elephanta Festival, Pune Ganesh Utsav, Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, and Lavani and folk art festivals** attract millions of domestic and international tourists every year. To manage this large influx, the government and local authorities invest in improving roads, public transport, accommodation facilities, crowd management systems, sanitation, lighting, security, and digital services in festival locations. Temporary and permanent infrastructure like festival grounds, ghats, pedestrian pathways, and tourist amenities are developed, benefiting both tourists and local residents. Thus, cultural festival tourism not only preserves Maharashtra's rich traditions and heritage but also acts as a catalyst for urban and rural infrastructure development, employment generation, and balanced regional growth.

Conclusion :

- **Cultural festivals significantly enhance tourism development in Maharashtra** by attracting large numbers of domestic and international tourists, increasing tourist inflow, length of stay, and overall destination visibility throughout the year.
- **Festival-based tourism contributes directly to economic growth** by generating revenue for local businesses such as hotels, transport services, food vendors, artisans, and small traders, thereby strengthening the state's tourism economy.
- **Cultural festivals act as a major source of employment generation**, creating both direct and indirect job opportunities for local communities, including artists, performers, guides, event managers, and temporary service workers.
- **Infrastructure development is accelerated due to cultural festivals**, as government and local authorities invest in roads, sanitation, public transport, security, and digital facilities, which continue to benefit residents beyond the festival period.
- **Cultural festivals promote sustainable and inclusive growth** by preserving heritage, encouraging community participation, and supporting rural and semi-urban development, making tourism a balanced and long-term driver of Maharashtra's economic progress.

Referneces:

1. Lopes, R., & Hiray, A. (2023). *Impacts of cultural events and festivals on cultural tourism*. ResearchGate.
2. Pote, R. T. (2020). *Economic effects of festivals: A case study of Ganapati festival*.
3. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Academic Research*, 1(2), 1–8.
4. Pal, S. (2019). *Festivals as agri-tourism attractions in India*. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 6(4), 725–729.
5. IJSART. (2021). *Tourism and hospitality in Maharashtra*. *International Journal of Science and Advanced Research in Technology*, 7(1), 345–349.
6. Government of Maharashtra. (2024). *Maharashtra tourism policy 2024*. Department of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra.
7. Government of Maharashtra. (2023). *Maharashtra vision document 2047*. Government of Maharashtra.
8. Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation. (2024). *Development of tourism infrastructure in Maharashtra*. MTDC.
9. Jadhav, S., & Zine, R. (2021). *Impact of tourism on cultural heritage: A study of Panchavati, Nashik*. EPRA *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*,
10. IVisit Media. (2022). *The impact of cultural festivals on tourism marketing*. IVisit Media Journal.
11. Bigtv Live. (2023). *Ganesh Chaturthi and its impact on the Indian economy*. Big TV Live.
12. Sudheendra, M. (2024). *Economic impact and benefits of Ganesh Chaturthi festival*. *Cultural Economy Review*.
13. Hindutone. (2023). *The business of Ganesh Chaturthi: Market trends and economic impact*.
14. Hindutone.
15. LinkedIn. (2024). *Economic contribution of Ganesh Chaturthi festival in India*. LinkedIn Articles.
16. Wikipedia. (2024). *Pune International Literary Festival*.
17. Times of India. (2024). *Royal Dasara festival of Kolhapur gets state festival status*. The Times of India.
18. Times of India. (2024). *Tuljabhavani Navratri included in Maharashtra tourism calendar*. The Times of India.
19. Times of India. (2025). *Solapur tourism festival to boost regional tourism*. The Times of India.
20. India Brand Equity Foundation. (2024). *Maharashtra: Tourism and hospitality overview*. IBEF.

Cite This Article:

Mr. Sawant S.S. (2026) A Study on the Impact of Cultural Festivals on Tourism Development and Economic Growth in Maharashtra. **In Educreator Research Journal: Vol. XIII (Issue II)**, pp. 248-252.