

Implication of Feasts and Festivals on Host Society: A Study of the Sumi Naga Tribe of Nagaland

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The recent global expansion of festivals stems from a growing appreciation of their importance in tourism, branding, and economic growth. Festivals have been integral to society for centuries, drawing interest from scholars across various fields. Through the ages, feasts and festivals have been intrinsic to the sociocultural fabric of communities, serving as collective expressions of events like harvests, solstices, and equinoxes in Sumi Naga culture. These traditions aim to foster a more equitable society and have enriched Sumi social and moral values. In light of contemporary perceptions, there is an urgent need for sociological investigation into potential social exclusions and inclusions within these festivities and their evolving dynamics within the community. Furthermore, a comprehensive study is required to ascertain whether these festival practices promote social justice, cultivate social capital, and how the host community perceives them.

Key words: Festivals, Feasts, Tribe, Naga, Tourism

Introduction

The growing understanding of festivals' significance for tourism, branding, and economic growth has recently led to their global expansion. For a long time, festivals and feasts have been an important societal component. It has also caught the interest of academicians

from a variety of fields. Since the beginning of time, feasts and festivals have been an integral component of the sociocultural life of communities. According to a widely held belief among the Sumi Naga culture, their festivals are intended to commemorate certain events, such as harvests, solstices, and equinoxes, via collective expression to create a more equal and egalitarian society. Celebrating feasts and festivals is an indispensable part of the socio-cultural life of the Sumis. Feasts and festivals are celebrated throughout the year. It was celebrated not only for eating and making merry but also to invoke the blessings of the Supreme Being on crops and livestock, appease spirits, elevate social and economic status, earn a respectable place in society, and share wealth.

The tremendous changes in recent decades have threatened the essence of socio-cultural values, particularly in peripheral indigenous societies. The rich social and moral values that were once the very essence of the life of the Sumis are fast eroding. Selfish interests and materialism now replace it. The entire Sumi society is on the verge of fragmentation. There is a vast gap between the haves and have-nots, the privileged and the underprivileged. The rich legacy of the social and moral values that were once part and parcel of the very way of lives of the Sumis is on the verge of extinction. Hence, it is also imperative to comprehend the continuity and changes in these feasts and practices and the factors affecting them.

Further, it will be imperative to know how the co-existence of tradition and modernity has impacted the socio-cultural life of the Sumis in general. In this context, besides many others, these considerations form some pertinent research questions that need serious attention.

Methods

The methodological approach for the present study is qualitative, descriptive, analytical, and exploratory. This study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data are obtained by conducting detailed, in-depth interviews using interview guides, unstructured interview schedules, and observation. At the same time, secondary data are drawn from published books, journals, manuscripts,

and other printed materials related to the study. The participatory observation technique is also used in the entire period of study.

The study was conducted in the western Sumi area, covering villages in and around Dimapur (Jimomi, 2018). For that purpose, eleven villages (Khelozhe, Kuhuboto, Pimla, Toluvi, Henivi, Atuphu, Thilixu, Chekiye, Sematila, Shiaphumi, and Akhaiqha) are identified based on their closeness and remoteness to the urbanized area of Dimapur, as five of the villages are close to the urban area of Dimapur. The remaining six are from the peripheral area of the state and the western Sumi area.

The research does not assert to be representative; instead, it focuses on appropriateness. Hence, sampling focuses more on purposeful (non-probability) than random (probability) sampling. In addition, the study is not intended to use fixed samples, so the types and sizes of the respondents tend to be more flexible and practical because the researcher must consciously and intentionally select respondents pertinent to the research work. Additionally, predicting the type of respondents present in different villages is challenging, making it impossible to have a pre-planned sample frame.

Respondents who know the traditional feasts and festivals are identified and interviewed at the initial stage, including village headmen, elderly people, youths, religious leaders, and social workers, together with the present organisers of the festivals and the different stakeholders of the festivals. Unstructured interview guides covering all the objectives are produced for the interview. Additionally, visual recording equipment is employed. An overt participatory observation method is used to gather data.

In addition to gathering information from the respondents' narratives, the researcher also pays close attention to their body language, gestures, and surroundings, all of which are significant sources of data for the current study. Following that, the data are using several qualitative research approach techniques. Both formal and informal styles are used in interviews. Interviews with living tradition-bearers were casual and unobtrusive to avoid confusing and alarming the informant, who may be an uneducated villager. Interviews

are planned formally and methodically when speaking with literate informants and well-known local experts. Long discussions are held to collect fresh material, check and authenticate already collected material, and bring out the significance of particular items. Long conversations are held to gather new information, verify and authenticate information already gathered, and highlight the importance of specific subjects.

For the current study, it is also crucial to realize that qualitative research does not always rely on numerical data, statistical methods, and measurements as critical tools and indicators but instead takes a more thorough, all-encompassing, or holistic approach to researching a particular ritual, viewpoint, problem, or narrative. Generalizations are, therefore, based more on quality than number.

Hence, the villages are selected purposively, and after that, the respondents from each category (consisting of 20 chiefs of the villages, 20 elderly persons, 20 religious leaders, 40 youths, and ten social activists) are identified from the villages using snowball sampling, as the respondents who bear knowledge on the topic may not be found everywhere.

The Study

Finkel (2010) suggests that social inclusion is one of the key reasons community event organizers give for staging events and festivals. Mair and Duffy (2015) explain how a local authority sees the rationale for staging festivals: to demonstrate a commitment to creating a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible community (Mair & Duffy, 2015, p. 3). Socialization or social interaction is one of the main ways that festival organisers see themselves contributing to social inclusion (Laing & Mair, 2015). This is usually achieved by providing an atmosphere of tolerance and inclusivity in which all are welcomed. Jepson and Clarke (2015) even state that the primary role of a community festival is to enhance engagement and inclusivity. However, it is also essential that the planning process for community festivals be inclusive (Jepson & Clarke, 2015).

Social inclusion and festivals

In terms of inclusion, several dimensions affect how inclusive a festival can be considered. These can be tangible factors, such as whether the festival is financially accessible (or indeed physically accessible) or contributes to filling knowledge and skills gaps, or they can be more intangible, such as belonging, identity, and diversity issues. One can observe inclusiveness in most of the Sumis feasts and festivals. For instance, in the Shikusho feast, which means ‘eating and drinking, both the husband and wife are involved in the rituals for the feast, and the feast is given to the whole village. In the second Shikusho, pigs are slaughtered and distributed to the villagers, where everyone eats, drinks, and makes merry.

“During the Shikusho festival, the community gathers to commemorate and honor their ancestral traditions, customs, and beliefs. It is also a time for the community to unite in unity and solidarity, strengthening social bonds and fostering a sense of belonging among its members”: Elderly Person, Age 74, Male.

Likewise, in the Aphikusa Pinne, the feast is given to the entire village, irrespective of class or gender. Everyone is made to feast for days.

The Aphikusa Pinne festival typically involves the entire Sumi Naga community coming together to celebrate. Gathering people from different villages and clans provides an opportunity for social interaction, strengthening bonds, and fostering unity. Village Headman, Age 74, Male.

In the Inami Phikusa (feast to the outside village), people from outside the village are also invited, where feasting goes on for days: Local youth, Age 34, Female.

It is noted that there is financial accessibility for all members of the social group. There is a feeling of belongingness and identity among the group. All community members join the celebrations at feasts and festivals such as the Ahuna, Shikusho, and Tuluni.

Laing and Mail’ (2015), writing from the festival organiser’s perspective, posit that festival organizers may contribute to social inclusion across four areas of society - consumption, production, political engagement, and social interaction.

Consumption of a festival relies heavily on people's ability to access the festival. Festivals and events can be expensive, and this cost can be a barrier to entry for a range of different groups. Several initiatives were documented in the Laing and Mair (2015) study relating to how organisers can make it easier for residents and visitors to access a festival. This allows lower socio-economic groups to access the event and participate in cultural activities that may otherwise be unattainable (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006; Waitt & Duffy, 2010). However, inclusivity is not only about cost but also about location. Specific venues will reinforce feelings of exclusion for those who would not usually go.

In the Sumi feasts, such as the Anivu Pinne,

“The ritual requirements are expensive, and only the rich can afford them. However, during such times, the rich grab the opportunity to have their children’s ears pierced too”: Religious Leader, Age 54, Male.

Pinne is another feast that includes tribes other than the Sumis.

The whole village and the guests feasted, sang songs, and entertained for days at this feast: Local youth, Age 34, Female.

Social inclusion is strongly connected with education levels and participation in broader society. Participating in (‘consuming’) activities such as festivals allows people to develop positive relationships and learn new skills that may lead to positive outcomes in the ‘hard’ indicators of inclusion, such as employment (Johnson et al., 2011). Laing and Mair (2015) also conceptualise *consumption* as more significant than simply accessing a festival; instead, they include what an attendee might learn from working at, volunteering for, or attending a festival. Festivals such as Asuyehiphe Pinne, which means clearing of new Jhums, were observed, including the villagers, who each had to perform rituals in their field. Likewise, festivals such as Visavela, Asu Pine, Miti\Muza Pine, Apiliqu Pinne, Gixu Pine, and Tughakusa Pine all include all the villagers, irrespective of wealth, clan, and gender. In the Susheni Pine, there is no distinction between the rich and the poor, and both groups participate equally in the celebration.

Production in festivals relates to how a festival is produced and how this can be considered an inclusive process. Examples include using local suppliers, developing public-private partnerships with community-based organizations, encouraging local community members to be involved in festivals through volunteering, and using festivals as tools to contribute towards the regeneration of deprived areas (Laing & Mair, 2015).

During the celebration of feasts and festivals such as the Tuluni and the Ahuna, fairs are organized by different entrepreneurs and groups where different local products, cuisines, and wares are displayed and sold". -Organizer of the festivals, Age 29, Female.

Finally, festivals can present a significant opportunity for local talent, for example,

by commissioning local artists or discovering and presenting new local musicians. Tuluni and Ahuna festivals also become a platform for harnessing and exposing local talents, where music and talent shows are organized: Social Worker, Age 54, Male.

During such times, people from all walks of life, even outside the community, join the celebration, enhancing inclusivity for all: Elderly person, Age 78, Female.

Rogers and Anastasidou (2011) proposed that festivals can encourage inclusion by attracting local residents to attend festivals as volunteers, thus mixing people from different walks of life. Additionally, research has demonstrated that those who volunteer at festivals and other events are more likely to consider volunteering in other areas, such as for charities and health-related causes (Gallarza et al., 2013).

"During Tuluni and Ahuna, community welfare-related activities are also taken up, such as organizing medical camps catering to the medical needs of the people, especially those living in rural areas.": Religious Leader, Age 54, Male.

Therefore, volunteering at festivals can arguably benefit not only the festivals and the volunteers themselves but also other charities and causes in the community in the future. In this way, volunteering,

not only contributes to the creation of social inclusion but also is an outcome of social inclusion.

Political engagement can be considered an essential component of social inclusion. Being involved in a festival organising committee (even as a volunteer) can give participants greater awareness of the broader local or regional political landscape and provide an entry point into other community roles. Going further, festivals can be spaces where political causes are publicised - often local or national pressure groups or campaigns will have a presence at a festival - thus, attendees are made aware of issues that they may not yet have known about. Such issues can range from small-scale local protests and grievances like the proposed loss of a children's community playground to issues of national and international importance like terrorism or environmental activism. Feasts and festivals such as the Tuluni and the Ahuna become platforms for displaying political strength. For instance,

individuals in political power are often invited where they unwittingly represent the political party they belong to, which usually enables them to display the political achievements and power of the party they are aligned. Festivals also create a platform for introducing new faces in politics where aspiring candidates for election take the stage to introduce their dreams and aspirations to the people: Village Headmen, Age 67, Male.

Feasts and festivals are also often opportune spaces to highlight the pressing political issues, campaigns for the party, and persuasion for the voters; social issues are also raised and discussed, such as the

threat of diminishing identity and culture. Patriotic talks are also delivered, and issues of nationalism facing the Sumis, in particular, and Nagas, in general, are also raised and discussed during such celebrations: Local Youth, Age 28, Female.

Finally, Laing and Mair (2015) propose that *social interaction* is crucial to generating social inclusion. Festivals have the potential to act as spaces of integration and encounter and thus have an important

role to play in helping people build and sustain a stronger sense of belonging and identity. Festivals are also strongly connected with local or community identity (Morgan, 2008). Derrett (2003) suggests that festivals can help to break down barriers within a community and thus lead to stronger communities. For O'Sullivan (2012), festivals can provide opportunities for social advantage, identity, and improved self-esteem. Gorman-Murray (2009) proposes that festivals might encourage tolerance of diversity and acceptance of difference in the wider community.

Social exclusion and festivals

Although most festivals would argue that they strive to stage inclusive and accessible events, it is accepted that on occasion, festivals operate to exclude sections of the community (Laing & Mair, 2015). Historical and cultural factors may be the source of division; for example, women are traditionally excluded from cultural or religious celebrations or festivals, which have contested meanings. In feasts like Gixu Pinne,

women stay out of the picture in all the rituals. They are only exclusively to prepare food: Local youth, Age 31, Female.

In the Aphikimithe Pinne,

only the males participate in the rituals, and the women must stay isolated from men: Local youth, Age 34, Female.

In the Akithi Pinne (death ritual), it is noted that when the chief or a warrior dies, pigs and mithuns are slaughtered, and a feast is given to the whole village. In burial, the distinction is seen between genders regarding how one is buried. Alternatively, financial considerations may intervene to prevent some community members from attending festivals, such as Lockstone-Binney et al. (2010) suggest that there is also widespread under-representation of socially disadvantaged groups among festival volunteers, which will likely lead to positive inclusion outcomes for those already included in society rather than those on the margins. It is noted that some of the feasts and festivals of the Sumis Nagas are observed to be for some specific groups of people.

For instance, *in the celebration of the feasts and festivals such as Tucho Pinne, Aphikusa, Aghuza Kiphe, and Avikuqo Pinne (Mithun pulling feast), are all meant to be given by men of high social standing. This man has wealth and status. Likewise, the rich play an exclusive part in festivals, such as the Litsapa (God of wealth). In feasts like the Apiliqu Pinne, it is noted that the chief alone enjoys the unique privilege of having the whole villagers work in his field. Likewise, the Shokiphe Pinne/ Aleh ikki Pinne is a feast for the rich; no poor person can observe it: Local youth, Age 44, Male.*

In the Apiliqu pinne, a day after the observance of this ritual, everyone in the villages was expected to work at the chief's field, a special privilege enjoyed by the chiefs of the village.

Given the diversity of stakeholders involved in a community festival, it is arguably challenging to please everyone. Organisers, community groups, residents (those who attend and support the event and those who do not), visitors, local businesses, local authorities, and local media all have a stake in an event. It is not easy to imagine one event being able to satisfy the needs and wants of so many diverse groups. Tensions are bound to arise, and where there is disagreement or dissent between the wishes of one or more stakeholders, there is a risk that those not fully satisfied by how an event is organised or run will feel excluded.

Tourists were marginalized or excluded from involvement and treated as “outsiders”. There was community resistance to widespread publicity for this festival. In celebrating the feasts and festivals like the Tuluni and the Ahuna, although tourists are allowed to visit and be a part of the programme they are treated as outsiders and are not accepted as group members, where one can notice the absence of emotional integration: Organiser of the festival, Age 34, Male.

Festivals have been described as elitist, and it has been suggested that focusing on “high culture” excludes large segments of the local population (Waterman, 1998). The celebration of Festivals and feasts of the Sumis can sometimes be viewed as elitist, as

sometimes much importance seems to be given to the elite groups; for instance, special treatment is sometimes given to the so-called elites, such as special seats reserved, separate tables for luncheon away from the ordinary people, etc. can often be seen. However, the feasts and festivals of the Sumis are a platform where people from all walks of life come together and celebrate their identity and culture with a feeling of belongingness.

Another issue highlighted by Finkel (2010) in her work on Up Helly Aa is the exclusion of women for traditional and historical reasons. Only men can participate in the procession, while women can be involved in other ways, usually by cooking, cleaning, and engaging in traditionally female occupations.

Festivals are closely connected with social inclusion and have tremendous potential to be inclusive activities. The most critical ways that festivals encourage and promote social inclusion are through facilitating access for all (residents and visitors alike), using local resources, suppliers, and producers, incorporating local artists and performers, using local volunteers, encouraging civic participation, and providing a space where people can get together to celebrate identity, community, and belonging. However, in many instances, and often unintentionally, festivals appear to act as spaces of exclusion, where visitors are privileged over locals or vice versa, where minority groups are further marginalised (such as women, old aged residents, and differently-abled people), where diversity is not celebrated, and where divisions are entrenched.

Festival and Social Capital

Social capital has been proposed as a potential theoretical framework for exploring how events may contribute to community resilience (Foley et al., 2011; Misener & Mason, 2006). However, this proposition still needs to be tested. Social capital is essential to economic development and solid communities (Putnam, 2000). It has been demonstrated that leisure activities create informal social networks, which are part of social capital, and can help participants acquire skills, such as planning, organising, and administration - that are conducive to formal participation in the workplace, thus further

strengthening social capital (Van Ingen & Van Eijck, 2009). Given that arts, music, and community festivals are a chance for a group celebration of shared values, it seems likely that they would provide the possibility of developing social capital (Wilks, 2011).

Misener (2013) proposes four broad strategies to assist in developing social capital through sports and sporting events: (1) enhancing the abilities of individuals (education, leadership development); (2) making community organisations stronger (capacity development); (3) building links among individuals (community organizing); and (4) building links among organisations (through collaborations, partnerships). Misener argues that this will allow for the broadening and solidifying of community participation and active citizen engagement. However, although Misener (2013) attempted to demonstrate how these elements and strategies may be used in planning and managing large-scale sporting events, she acknowledges that further empirical research is needed to test these propositions.

It is also worth- highlighting once again that social capital, although generally viewed as a good thing, can also have negative consequences, which apply mainly to bonding social capital. Bonding within a group can lead to strengthened relationships and ties; however, such bonds can also be exclusive, potentially excluding community segments. Notably, the research shows that bonding social capital is the most prevalent form of social capital associated with festivals. This is similar to the contention by Mayblin et al. (2016) that increasing evidence exists that groups resist mixing with others, preferring to self-segregate. Given these findings, festivals may act as spaces of inclusion (for specific groups) and exclusion (for other groups). This may result in higher levels of social capital for the first group (the included) but reduced levels of social capital for the second group (the excluded). It has also been argued that the limited time frame of festivals hinders the development of social capital; however, this ignores the fact that a core group of festival staff (either paid staff or volunteers) work throughout the year to plan and stage a festival. Social capital can be - and often is - nurtured and developed in all festival planning and management aspects.

Festivals and social justice

Festivals ‘have become an established part of contemporary urban or rural planning repertoire’ (Fincher & Iveson, 2008, p. 176), mainly through re-imagining who has a right to the locality. The celebration of the feasts and festivals of the Sumi Nagas has an immense social impact. In its totality, they contribute to the total welfare of the community. In feasts and festivals like the Tuluni and the Ahuna, the whole community gets involved in all the celebrations of the feasts and festivals of the Sumi Nagas, which creates extensive social impact. In its totality, they represent the entire community. The community gets involved in all the celebration events, which adds to its success. These celebrations create a space to recognize new faces of talent and leadership qualities. As highlighted throughout this study, festivals offer a space for encounters. Citizenship, community, and culture are essential to event policy debates and discussions, but the degree to which they influence decision-making varies widely (Foley et al., 2011). In the present study too, during the celebration of feasts and festivals, it was reported that

special guests of social prominence are invited from within the community, wherein large sums are donated to the community, and each participant group is given hefty amounts of money. In many cases, the donations given by the special guest far exceed the expenses spent on the festival. The special guest often promises better development for the area and helps bring better road connectivity, improved water supply, and electrification of specific areas: Organiser of the festival, Age 44, Male.

Festivals also become a time of income generation and development in an area, and a time for the familiar lot to look forward to earning extra. However, it cannot be ignored to mention that not all sections of the community get these opportunities mentioned here. During the celebration of feasts and festivals like the Ahuna and the Tuluni, tourist attractions and attention from the other communities are gathered.

Frequently, the celebration of the feasts and festivals becomes an opportunity for the economically backward to earn their livelihood; where dancing troupes are often hired to perform at certain feasts and festivals, folks women getting paid for cooking for the feasts, the payment for décor arrangement, traditional cuisine and biscuits are prepared, specially packed, and are sold like hot cakes, making the feasts and festivals is also an area where the least privileged can earn an extra income, thus, creating income opportunities: Social Worker, Age 54, Male.

However, there is increasing recognition that the economic impacts and benefits of festivals and events are not the only, or indeed necessarily the most important, way to evaluate them (Wood, 2008). The social dimensions of festivals (along with their environmental impacts) have been the subject of significantly more research in the past decade than previously (Mair & Whitford, 2013). Researchers have examined the social impacts of festivals (e.g., Delamere 2001; Delamere et al., 2001; Rollins & Delamere, 2007; Woosnam et al. 2013), festivals and social inclusion (Laing & Mair, 2015), and celebrating a local communal identity (e.g., De Bres and Davis 2001; Duffy, 2000; Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013). Derrett's (2003) research suggests that festivals and events contribute to community well-being by creating and enhancing the sense of place, which contributes to social identity. Community involvement in and support for events and festivals has also been recognised as significant to their success (Moscardo, 2007). According to Moscardo (2007), various facets of festivals contribute to community well-being, such as the opportunities for residents and participants to socialise and have fun, the celebration of achievement, and the event's relevance to the local community. However, and perhaps more relevant to a discussion of social justice, at least concerning improving access to paid employment and income opportunities, Moscardo (2007) also argued that participation in the planning and running of the event increased community capacity by giving local people opportunities to extend their administration, organisational and leadership skills. Festivals also become a time of income generation and development of an area, and a time for the

familiar lot to look forward to earning extra. However, it cannot be ignored to mention that not all sections of the community get these opportunities mentioned here. It is also vital to remember that communities are not homogenous entities; therefore, to contribute to social justice aims and policies, events and festivals must have elements that appeal to a range of community sub-groups (Pugh & Wood, 2004).

There is no doubt that festivals have the potential to make significant contributions towards community building and other social cohesion processes. However, there has been very little research on how festivals respond to specific social justice issues articulated in local government policy (Pugh & Wood, 2004). The emphasis has been on how the social benefits for the economy generated through festivals and tourism can contribute towards social justice policy aims (Whitford, 2009), and this is naturally a critical component of the roles and responsibilities of local authorities. There has been a growing recognition that festivals, other events, and tourism can all be used to promote economic growth and regeneration, particularly in rural and regional areas with limited alternative livelihood options (Stokes, 2006). During the celebration of feasts and festivals like the Ahuna and the Tuluni, tourist attractions and attention from other communities are gathered. It creates the potential of increasing tourist arrival in the state.

Promoting tourism results in direct employment and creates jobs in other sectors like construction, manufacturing, and other services. Tourism offers an opportunity to boost the economy, create jobs, and lead to overall growth and development: Local Youth, Age 24, Male.

Brerinan-Horley et al. (2007) draw on the example of the Parkes Elvis Festival and explore how a remote place with few economic prospects created a tourism product and subsequently captured national attention through a festival based around the commemoration of the birthday of Elvis Presley. The findings of this study demonstrate how small places, even in remote areas, can develop economic activities through festivals. Festivals also become a time of income generation and development of an area and a time for the

familiar lot to look forward to earning extra. However, it cannot be ignored to mention that not all sections of the community get these opportunities mentioned here.

Festivals are understood as part of a range of cultural activities that attract the so-called creative classes into economically depressed urban areas that then help initiate urban regeneration through a cultural economy (Scott, 2000). As a result, festivals and tourism can bring improved economic prospects and increased community vibrancy and liveability (Mair & Duffy, 2015).

Festivals found in the study foster cultural exchange and interaction between tourists and local communities. These events provide opportunities for tourists to engage with the social fabric of rural life, immerse themselves in local customs, and develop a deeper understanding of Nagaland's diverse cultural landscape.

One key role of festivals is the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage. By showcasing traditional dances, music, rituals, and crafts, festivals in the study area help preserve indigenous knowledge and practices, reinforcing a sense of cultural identity among local communities. Tourists, in turn, are drawn to these authentic cultural experiences, seeking opportunities to learn about and participate in rituals and traditions unique to the region. Furthermore, festivals serve as platforms for social interaction and exchange between tourists and locals. Through shared experiences such as food tastings, craft demonstrations, and cultural performances, tourists and community members can connect personally, bridging cultural divides and fostering mutual understanding. Additionally, festivals contribute to the economic development of rural Nagaland by generating revenue through tourism-related activities. Local artisans, vendors, and hospitality providers benefit from increased business during festival periods, stimulating economic growth and providing opportunities for entrepreneurship within rural communities. These festivals can have transformative effects on social dynamics within rural Nagaland. They serve as occasions for community mobilization and collective action, fostering a sense of solidarity and cohesion among residents. Festivals may also empower marginalised groups within the community by providing

them with platforms to showcase their talents and assert their cultural identities.

Overall, festivals are pivotal in promoting tourism in the study area by facilitating cultural exchange, fostering social interaction, stimulating economic activity, and empowering local communities. Through these events, tourists and locals alike can engage in meaningful cross-cultural encounters that enrich their understanding of one another and contribute to the sustainable development of rural tourism in Nagaland.

Local festivals are integral to the socio-economic fabric of tribes in rural Nagaland. They not only provide economic opportunities but also serve as platforms for cultural preservation, community cohesion, tourism promotion, empowerment, and environmental conservation. By celebrating their heritage through festivals, tribal communities uphold their traditions, strengthen their social bonds, and contribute to the sustainable development of rural life in Nagaland.

Festivals and events offer the opportunity to contribute to social justice aims, particularly those of local authorities tasked with improving rural and regional communities' economic and social conditions. As discussed, this can include improving access to paid employment and income opportunities, extending community capacity by giving local people opportunities to participate in the event's planning and running, contributing to community well-being, and providing opportunities for residents and participants to socialise and have fun.

However, an important caveat, as noted here, is that communities are not homogenous. While festivals may benefit some parts of the community, others may not get equal access to these benefits. Festivals can act as spaces of exclusion or places where particular beliefs, ideologies, or agendas are forefronted. Therefore, any automatic assumption that festivals will always contribute to broad social justice goals is unwarranted. Researchers and policymakers must know the multifaceted nature of the communities they investigate or support. While using festivals instrumentally to achieve specific goals, local authorities must consider the potential for festivals to work actively against some of these goals.

Events are communal celebrations, and because they bring people together, they have the potential to create positive social outcomes for individuals and communities. In recent times, this potential has received more attention from those bidding for and hosting events; however, despite all the well-intentioned rhetoric surrounding the social case for events, there remains a sense that these outcomes are hoped for and desirable as opposed to being expected and planned for (Foley et al., 2011). Pre-event planning and investment are required to counter this and maximise the positive social benefits. This links to what Chalip (2006) refers to as event leveraging, whereby governments (central and local), event organisers, and other stakeholders agree on their social objectives at the earliest stage and plan how to achieve them.

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