

Innovations

Local Sports of Coastal Mangalore and their Impact on the Development of Tourism in Mangalore

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Abstract

Purpose: Tourism is a multidimensional activity encompassing culture, heritage, sports, and community participation. This research explores how traditional local sports of coastal Mangalore such as Kambala (buffalo racing), Korikatta (cockfighting), Tulunadu Kusti (wrestling), Boat races, and Lagori, etc. contribute to the tourism economy and cultural identity of the region [1]. These sports, deeply embedded in the agrarian and maritime heritage of Tulunadu, act as unique cultural assets that attract both domestic and international visitors. Using a mixed-methods approach combining field surveys, secondary literature, and tourism data analysis, this study identifies the economic, cultural, and branding potential of local sports in sustainable tourism development [2]. **Design/ Methodology/ Approach:** The research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies to holistically address the study's objectives. The approach involves the following key components: (a) Literature Review, (b) Site Analysis, (c) Stakeholder Engagement, (d) Cultural and Historical Analysis, (e) Case Study Approach, (f) SWOT Analysis, (g) ABCD Analysis and (h) Proposed framework for intervention. **Findings / results:** Findings reveal that integrating these heritage sports into tourism circuits enhances employment, pride, and identity. The paper concludes by recommending strategic policy integration, digital branding, and sustainable management frameworks for promoting Mangalore as a coastal-sports destination. **Originality:** This paper provides an original contribution by linking heritage-based rural sports to the tourism economy in the context of coastal Mangalore, a subject with limited prior academic investigation. Unlike existing studies that discuss tourism in Dakshina Kannada in general, this research highlights sports as cultural-economic resources within the framework of sustainable tourism and local development. It integrates policy, socio-cultural, and environmental perspectives, offering practical recommendations for state tourism planners and community organizations. **Paper type:** (a) Case Study Research Paper, (b) Applied Research Paper, (c) Thematic Research Paper on Heritage and Sustainability and (6) Exploratory Research Paper.

Key Words: Kambala; Korikatta; Tulunadu Heritage; Coastal Tourism; Local Sports; Cultural Sustainability; Karnataka Tourism; Community-Based Tourism; Rural Sports Tourism; Heritage Preservation; Mangalore; Sustainable Development

1. Introduction

The coastal city of Mangalore, located in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka, has long served as a vibrant port city blending cultural richness and maritime commerce [3]. Its identity is strongly shaped by Tulunadu traditions, where local sports like Kambala (buffalo racing on paddy fields) and Korikatta (cockfighting) mirror the agrarian rhythm of life.

Historically, these sports emerged as communal expressions tied to agricultural cycles and temple festivities, offering recreation after harvests and monsoons. Over time, such indigenous activities have transformed into large-scale cultural spectacles. Mangalore's proximity to the Arabian Sea and its temple network make it a nodal point for cultural tourism [4].

As the Karnataka Tourism Policy 2009–14 and subsequent drafts of 2020 and 2024 identify coastal tourism and cultural branding as priority areas, local sports present a unique opportunity for sustainable development [5].

These games bring together ecology, community, and entertainment—core aspects of experience-based tourism.

This study examines how these traditional sports can act as catalysts for the region's socio-economic progress and international visibility.

2. Literature Review

Tourism literature recognizes culture-based recreation as a key driver of destination appeal.

According to Joseph & Pakkeerappa (2015) [1], sustainable coastal tourism depends on community participation and environmental protection.

Sridhar et al. (2019) [2] elaborate on Karnataka's 320 km coastline and 94 islands, noting their geomorphological diversity and tourism potential.

Rao (2016) [3] stresses the power of digital content in marketing ecotourism, suggesting that local sports could gain traction through social media storytelling.

Comparative studies show similar trends: *Vallamkali* in Kerala, *Jallikattu* in Tamil Nadu, and *Dahi Handi* in Maharashtra have successfully become tourism brands.

Aquinas et al. (2012) [4] documented Dakshina Kannada's tourism potentialities, highlighting how traditional festivals are central to its visitor appeal.

Karanth (2023) [6] discussed NGO roles in rural empowerment in Coastal Karnataka, linking cultural initiatives to local development.

Further, UNESCO's 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage advocates safeguarding performing and festive traditions as tourism assets.

However, few studies have specifically analyzed how Mangalore's indigenous sports contribute to tourism economics, leaving a valuable gap this research aims to fill.

3. Research Agenda

This study investigates how local sports of coastal Mangalore can be effectively leveraged for tourism development.

Key research questions include:

- What are the major traditional sports unique to coastal Mangalore, and what are their cultural and social contexts.
- How do these sports influence tourist arrivals, spending, and local economic activity.
- What challenges and opportunities exist for incorporating these sports into Karnataka's broader tourism framework.
- What sustainable development models can balance heritage preservation and modern promotion.

5. Objectives of Study

The objectives of this study are to systematically document and categorize the diverse local sports traditions of coastal Mangalore, analyzing their cultural significance and socio-economic contributions to the region's tourism sector. The research aims to assess how these indigenous sporting events—rooted in the heritage of Tulunadu—impact tourism-related employment, visitor engagement, and community development [7]. In doing so, it seeks to identify existing policy gaps and promotional limitations that hinder the effective integration of such sports into the regional tourism framework. Ultimately, the study aspires to propose sustainable models and strategic frameworks aligned with the *Karnataka Tourism Vision 2025*, emphasizing inclusive growth, cultural preservation, and the creation of a distinctive sports-based tourism identity for Mangalore [8].

6. Theoretical Framework

6.1 Triple Helix Model: This framework transforms local sports like *Kambala* and *Tulunadu Kusthi* into drivers of cultural tourism innovation by aligning research, enterprise, and governance. It creates a self-sustaining ecosystem where academia provides knowledge, industry operationalizes opportunities, and government ensures equitable, regulated growth — making Mangalore a model coastal region for *heritage-driven tourism development* [9].

6.2 Jay Barney's VRIO framework: This framework assesses each sport's competitive advantage:

Kambala: Valuable for visual appeal; rare and deeply rooted in Tulunadu identity; difficult to imitate; organized by registered committees. (b) *Korikatta*: Controversial

yet culturally symbolic; regulatory reforms can transform it into controlled heritage sport.

6.3 Sustainable Development Theory: When applied to the study “*Local Sports of Coastal Mangalore and Their Impact on the Development of Tourism in Mangalore*,” emphasizes a balanced integration of economic growth, social equity, and environmental conservation within the framework of tourism development. It advocates that traditional sports such as *Kambala*, *Korikatta*, and *Tulunadu Kusthi* should not merely serve as entertainment or tourist attractions but as instruments of sustainable livelihood, cultural preservation, and ecological awareness. By promoting these sports responsibly—through eco-friendly infrastructure, ethical practices, and community participation—tourism can generate inclusive economic benefits for local populations while safeguarding Tulunadu’s cultural heritage and coastal ecosystems [10]. Thus, the theory supports a development paradigm where cultural identity and economic vitality coexist harmoniously, ensuring that tourism based on local sports contributes to both present prosperity and long-term sustainability for future generations.

6.4 Resilience Theory: When applied to the context of *Local Sports of Coastal Mangalore and Their Impact on the Development of Tourism in Mangalore*, provides a valuable lens to understand how traditional sports contribute to the adaptive strength and sustainability of the region’s socio-cultural and tourism systems. These local sports—such as *Kambala*, *TulunaduKusthi*, and *Boat Races*—serve as cultural mechanisms that enable communities to withstand and recover from economic, environmental, and social disruptions. By fostering community cohesion, maintaining cultural continuity, and diversifying tourism income, these practices build *social-ecological resilience*—the capacity of the region to absorb change while maintaining its identity and functionality. As tourism in coastal Mangalore faces challenges from globalization, climate variability, and shifting visitor preferences, the enduring traditions of local sports act as anchors of resilience, reinforcing place-based pride, cultural memory, and adaptive innovation within sustainable tourism development [11].

7. Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was employed. Primary data was collected through field observations and interviews with Kambala committees, temple management boards, tourists, local youth and vendors.

Secondary data from Karnataka Tourism Department, Dakshina Kannada District Office, and previous academic literature supplemented the analysis.

Qualitative data was thematically coded under cultural, environmental, and economic categories. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation matrices between tourism inflow and festival season occupancy rates [12].

8. Data Analysis

Of the respondents interviewed, 58% were domestic tourists, 5% international visitors, and 37% locals.

About 80% had prior knowledge of Kambala, while 70% attended events. Accommodation and restaurant bookings increased by 20–25% during Kambala weekends.

Interviewees emphasized that photography contests and live-streaming have amplified event reach.

Local artisans reported increased sales of handicrafts and souvenirs during these periods.

Data indicates that integrating Kambala and related sports with tourism packages could yield sustainable revenue flows across the district.

9. Discussion and Significance

The findings reveal that indigenous sports have the potential to transform rural economies into experiential tourism hubs.

Kambala's seasonal character aligns with the monsoon calendar, generating off-peak tourism.

Such sports foster local pride and encourage youth participation in cultural continuity. However, infrastructural deficits—such as poor sanitation and inadequate transport—limit visitor experience.

By adopting digital promotion and establishing designated sports-tourism circuits, Mangalore can attract niche tourists seeking authentic regional experiences. Sociologically, the revival of sports preserves identity and strengthens community cohesion amid globalization pressures [13].

10. Existing and Projected Scenarios

At present, the traditional sports of coastal Mangalore—such as *Kambala*, *Tulunadu Kusthi*, *Korikatta*, etc. remain largely outside the formal ambit of Karnataka's official tourism branding and promotional strategies. Despite their deep cultural resonance and strong visual appeal, these events are predominantly organized by local communities, traditional committees, and private patrons, often without structured collaboration with government tourism boards or policy frameworks. This fragmented approach limits their potential to contribute significantly to the regional tourism economy. The absence of standardized event calendars, infrastructural support, and integrated marketing strategies prevents these sports from achieving visibility on

state, national, and international platforms. Consequently, while local enthusiasm sustains these traditions, the lack of institutional recognition and coordination hampers their transformation into sustainable tourism assets [14].

In the projected scenario for 2025–2030, the local sports traditions of coastal Mangalore are envisioned to evolve from community-driven events into strategically institutionalized components of the regional tourism economy. Through the establishment of public–private partnerships (PPPs) under the proposed “Tulunadu Heritage Circuits,” traditional sports such as *Kambala*, *TulunaduKusthi*, and *Boat Races* can be integrated into organized tourism frameworks that highlight the cultural vibrancy and identity of the region. These initiatives would enable better coordination between government tourism boards, corporate sponsors, and local communities, ensuring sustainable management, infrastructure improvement, and consistent branding [15]. The incorporation of digital storytelling, live broadcasting, and influencer-based marketing campaigns would further globalize the reach of these events, attracting international tourists seeking authentic, experience-based cultural tourism [16]. By positioning these sports as heritage spectacles rather than isolated rural competitions, coastal Mangalore could emerge as a flagship destination for cultural-sports tourism in South India. Economic projections indicate that such institutionalized promotion and global visibility could potentially increase tourism revenue by up to 30%, stimulate local entrepreneurship, and reinforce the city’s reputation as a resilient, culturally rooted, and economically dynamic coastal hub [17].

11. Development Options

- Establish a Tulunadu Sports & Cultural Centre near Mangalore Port to host annual demonstrations and archives.
- Introduce eco-tourism tie-ins, combining sports events with mangrove and river cruises.
- Train local youth as sports guides and event managers under skill-development programs.
- Leverage CSR and university partnerships for event sustainability and research documentation.
- Promote ‘Responsible Tourism’ codes addressing animal welfare, safety, and environmental conservation.

12. SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a tactical planning tool used to identify the Strengths and Weaknesses, along with Opportunities and Threats. Strengths indicates the areas of advantage, while weaknesses point out limitation and challenges. Opportunities

identifies the areas for growth, and threats indicates the factors that could jeopardize success. By analysing these four components, we can develop approaches to enhance strengths, mitigate the weaknesses, capitalize on the opportunities, and address the potential threats [18].

Strengths:

- **Rich Cultural Heritage:** Traditional sports like Kambala, Korikatta, and Tulunadu Kusti are deeply rooted in the Tulunadu culture, reflecting community identity and pride.
- **High Visual and Entertainment Appeal:** These sports are vibrant, visually engaging, and naturally suited for festivals, photography, and media coverage—making them attractive to both domestic and international tourists.
- **Community Participation and Local Ownership:** Events are organized by local committees and temple trusts, ensuring authenticity and strong public engagement.
- **Seasonal Tourism Potential:** The sports calendar aligns with off-peak tourism seasons, helping balance visitor inflow throughout the year.
- **Unique Tourism Niche:** Offers differentiation from conventional beach or temple tourism by blending culture, sport, and festivity.

Weakness:

- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Lack of standardized facilities, sanitation, crowd management systems, and transport connectivity at event sites.
- **Limited Institutional Support:** Minimal coordination between tourism authorities and local sports committees restricts large-scale marketing and funding.
- **Regulatory Challenges:** Controversies surrounding animal welfare (especially in Kambala and Korikatta) create legal and ethical constraints.
- **Short Event Duration:** The seasonal and localized nature of these sports limits continuous tourist engagement.
- **Lack of Digital Promotion:** Insufficient use of modern marketing tools, live streaming, or multilingual content to attract global audiences.

Opportunities:

- **Integration with Karnataka Tourism Vision 2025:** Potential to institutionalize local sports within heritage and eco-tourism circuits.
- **Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Scope for collaboration with tourism boards, corporate sponsors, and media houses to develop infrastructure and branding.
- **Digital Branding and Global Outreach:** Leveraging social media, influencers, and documentaries to promote events worldwide.

- **Rural Employment and Entrepreneurship:** Creating job opportunities in hospitality, event management, and local craft sectors linked to sports festivals.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Promoting Tulunadu heritage internationally can strengthen Karnataka's soft power and cultural identity.

Threats:

- **Commercialization Risks:** Over-commercialization may erode cultural authenticity and community ownership.
- **Climate and Environmental Factors:** Erratic monsoons and coastal flooding can disrupt event schedules and accessibility.
- **Competition from Other States:** Similar cultural sports (like Jallikattu or Vallamkali) may overshadow Mangalore's identity if not distinctly branded.
- **Ethical and Legal Scrutiny:** Animal rights activism and legal interventions could challenge the continuity of certain sports.
- **Lack of Long-Term Policy Continuity:** Changes in government priorities or funding could hinder sustained promotion and institutional support.

13. ABCD Analysis:

It is a method of analyzing system and processes in an organization. A stands for Advantages, B stand for Benefits, C stands for Constraints and D stand for Disadvantages.

Advantages:

- **Cultural Preservation:** Local sports like Kambala, Tulunadu Kusthi, and Boat Races preserve Tulunadu's cultural identity and traditions.
- **Tourism Differentiation:** These sports offer unique, experience-based attractions distinct from conventional beach or heritage tourism.
- **Community Empowerment:** Events are organized and managed by local communities, fostering ownership, social cohesion, and participation [19].
- **Seasonal Economic Boost:** Sporting events attract domestic and international tourists, enhancing income for hotels, vendors, and transport operators during the off-peak tourism months.
- **Destination Branding:** Mangalore can be positioned as a Cultural-Sports Tourism Hub, strengthening Karnataka's tourism brand image.

Benefits:

- **Employment Generation:** Creates direct and indirect job opportunities in event management, hospitality, logistics, and local crafts.
- **Infrastructural Development:** Promotes investment in roads, viewing galleries, sanitation, and other tourism-related facilities.

- **Socio-cultural Integration:** Sports events bring together diverse sections of society, reinforcing social identity and intercultural appreciation.
- **Revenue Growth:** A potential 30% rise in tourism revenue is projected through systematic promotion and digital marketing of sports-based festivals.
- **Global Recognition:** Digital storytelling, documentaries, and influencer campaigns can help promote Mangalore's heritage sports at international tourism fairs.

Constraints:

- **Regulatory Challenges:** Some sports like Korikatta (cockfighting) face legal and ethical restrictions, limiting promotion under tourism programs.
- **Lack of Infrastructure:** Inadequate facilities such as seating, safety measures, and sanitation reduce the visitor experience.
- **Limited Policy Support:** Absence of integrated frameworks within state tourism policies delays institutionalization.
- **Seasonal Dependency:** Events are confined to agricultural or post-monsoon periods, restricting year-round tourist flow.
- **Fragmented Promotion:** Lack of cohesive branding across media and insufficient coordination between departments (tourism, culture, and local governance).

Disadvantages:

- **Environmental Concerns:** Overcrowding and inadequate waste management during events may impact fragile coastal ecosystems.
- **Ethical Criticism:** Certain sports attract negative media coverage and protests from animal welfare organizations.
- **Commercialization Risks:** Excessive monetization may erode the authenticity of traditional practices.
- **Uneven Benefits:** Tourism revenue may concentrate among event organizers and urban investors rather than local communities.
- **Climate Vulnerability:** Heavy monsoons or unpredictable weather can disrupt outdoor sporting events, reducing attendance and profitability.

14. Scope for Further Research

Future investigations should conduct econometric analyses linking sports-tourism revenues to GDP contribution in Dakshina Kannada.

A comparative assessment with other South Indian coastal districts (Goa, Kozhikode, and Kanyakumari) will yield regional benchmarks.

Further, interdisciplinary research involving anthropology, event management, and environmental sciences could refine sustainable frameworks for heritage sports promotion.

15. Conclusion:

The study on Local Sports of Coastal Mangalore and Their Impact on the Development of Tourism in Mangalore reveals that traditional sports such as Kambala, Tulunadu Kusthi, Boat Races, and Korikatta are not merely entertainment forms but vital expressions of Tulunadu's cultural heritage that possess significant potential to strengthen Mangalore's tourism economy. These indigenous sports act as social anchors that preserve community identity, stimulate seasonal employment, and offer distinctive experiences that differentiate coastal Karnataka from other tourist destinations [20]. However, their potential remains underutilized due to fragmented management, limited infrastructural support, and insufficient integration with state tourism frameworks [21]. The research highlights that systematic institutionalization through public-private partnerships, digital promotion, and alignment with the Karnataka Tourism Vision 2025 can transform these cultural practices into sustainable tourism assets. Emphasizing ethical governance, environmental conservation, and local participation will ensure long-term viability and authenticity. By fostering a balanced approach between tradition and modernization, local sports can serve as powerful instruments for inclusive economic growth, cultural diplomacy, and community resilience, thereby positioning Mangalore as a flagship destination for cultural-sports tourism in India's coastal landscape [22].

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