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Impact of Engagement in Local Tourism Activities on Tourists' Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine how engagement in cultural and other forms of local tourism activities impacts tourists' well-being by considering different dimensions such as Physical, Mental & Emotional, Intellectual, spiritual, Social & Environmental Well-being. This study examined the extent to which participation in particular tourism activities affects specific dimensions of well-being. The differentiation of gender and age regarding tourist participation levels in activities and well-being was also examined. This study provides new insights for policymakers and industry stakeholders to create more effective tourism experiences that enhance holistic well-being from the tourists' viewpoint. This study uses a quantitative approach and a convenience sampling technique. The data were collected from 284 tourists utilizing a self-constructed questionnaire with the items taken from prior research on tourists' well-being. Out of 284 sample taken, 263 samples were considered for analysis. The surveys were conducted by visiting popular tourist locations across Kerala and meeting tourists. The study also collected data online with the help of a questionnaire-linked QR code given to tourists' who chose the online participation option, peer groups, and social media platforms. The research analyzed well-being across 23 items within five dimensions, utilizing a Likert scale and tourists' participation in 12 local tourism activities. Data were analyzed using statistical software MS Excel and SPSS. Tourists' participation in local tourism activities positively impacts different dimensions of well-being according to their participation. But the engagement in each tourism activity not only contributes to improve some aspects of well-being, it is also more active, which is another way to do so. Interestingly, this study results reveal that religious tourism doesn't impact participants' spiritual well-being. This study was conducted to understand tourists' well-being from different dimensions taking the local tourism activities more related with the local culture than merely the wellness activities as the view point of this study in the current tourism scenario, which offers new insights into well-being studies from tourists' perspective.

Keywords: Tourists' Well-being, Tourism Activities, Well-being Dimensions, Engagement, Physical well-being, Mental well-being

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the important sectors for the local and national economies of the world. Tourism represents an act of self-expression, self-reflection, education or indulgence. According to Smith and Puczkó (2009, p.9), tourism is a process that is "enhanced by regular breaks from routine, periods of relaxation, fantasy, and escapism, even the mere pleasure of planning and anticipating a trip."

The benefits of tourism are predominantly psychological and relaxation for the tourist. Previous studies have well documented the link between tourism and wellbeing. Tourism activities and experiences have proven to have important impacts on tourists' well-being on various levels (Lee, 2018; Lin, 2014; Uysal et al., 2016). Wellness activities are generally considered a way to improve one's well-being. Apart from engaging in wellness activities, other tourism activities at a destination might also help tourists achieve well-being to different extents.

In the field of the studies about tourist well-being, there exists a significant gap in research related to the fact that the examination of the effects of specific culturally immersive tourism activities on tourists' well-being is very limited and focuses only on the direct impact of certain activities on tourists' well-being directly. Whereas previous research has examined tourist satisfaction and motivation within cultural tourism contexts (e.g., Kim & Ritchie, 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2016), most studies concentrate on the immediate emotional or psychological satisfaction derived from these experiences. A constrained number of studies have explored the significant, lasting impacts of these culturally enriching experiences on the overall well-being of tourists, including factors such as personal growth, social relationships, and enhanced cultural awareness.

Research Problem

In the setting of Kerala, where tourism is deeply connected with its distinct cultural traditions, arts, and food heritage, the impact of these genuine engagements on the well-being of tourists over time has not been thoroughly investigated. Moreover, although studies have indicated that engaging with local communities can enhance tourists' experiences (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007), there is insufficient research on how each type of local activity significantly impacts well-being. Filling this out could offer essential perspectives for product development in Kerala and other places rich in culture, enabling them to create tourism experiences that are more significant and lasting and centred around Well-being.

Objectives of the study

To fill the identified gaps, we conducted this study by examining how local tourism activities impact tourists' well-being, setting this as the study's primary aim. The objectives of the study are the following;

- Identify the overall and gender & age-based participation levels of tourists in different local tourism-related activities.
- Examining how participation in local tourism activities impacts tourists' overall well-being dimension.
- To Examine whether engagement in specific tourism activities significantly impacts specific well-being dimensions.

For this study, the data were collected from various regions of Kerala using a self-structured questionnaire based on the review literature and tailored to the unique tourism context of the region because the state has been innovative in combining various tourism attributes to offer unique experiences to visitors (Balakrishnan Nair, B., & Dileep, M. R., 2021) where is attracts tourists by offering a variety of activities such as wellness (Ayurveda, yoga), Adventure activities (Canoeing, Kayaking, Nature Walk), Houseboat activities, village life experiences, and ultimately it is a hub for many festivals, events, and ceremonies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourist Well-being

Various studies have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between wellness experiences derived from participation in diverse activities offered at a destination and the overall well-being of individuals involved. This study investigates ways of improving wellbeing, concentrating on wellness

therapies and practices such as Ayurveda, Yoga and meditation. Besides, various activities of tourism that are associated with the culture can effect on human health including engaging in traditional ritual ceremonies, attending local fairs and festivals, enjoying the local food, visiting local holy spots, and observing local art and craftsmanship. Payini et al. (2021) examined the engagement at cultural festivals and how it is associated with the personal well-being of the participants. Participants provided insights during the cultural festival "Virasat" in India. Their investigation examined aspects including music, ambiance, social dynamics, and the experience of escaping the routine of daily life. Applying structural equation modeling and hierarchical regression analysis identified a significant relationship between experiences at cultural festivals and subjective well-being. In particular, experiences related to music and separation emerged as the most significant indicators of well-being. Based on the information they gained in their research, we adapted the questions to include "I went to fairs and festivals" and "Attended local performances (such as Dances/Theatre performances/Music concerts)". Mundet-Bolos et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of art in facilitating a person's well-being by improving their emotional, social and cognitive development. Mundet-Bolos et al. (2017) propose that partaking in artistic activities enhances personal well-being by aiding an authentic and immediate connection with one's emotions. Further evidence suggested by Liu et al. (2023) indicates that wellness tourism experiences, including entertainment, aesthetics, and escapist elements, significantly affect tourists' well-being. Hilbers (2006) highlighted that celebrations help to improve individual health and well-being through exploring identity, fostering social connections and a sense of belonging. Devereux, C., Carnegie, E. (2006) highlighted the important role of pilgrimage experiences which can enhance physical health, deepen self-awareness and promote renewal.

Various elements that play a role in comprehensive wellness are often emphasized in research concerning the well-being of travelers. Hilton's (2023) travel report states that fifty percent of travelers look for trips to enhance either physical or mental well-being. So, studying whether tourism can fulfil these needs in the current tourism paradigm is essential. Studies by (Jia et al., 2023) state that participating in activities that foster relaxation and health improves physical well-being. Bayighomog and Arasli (2022) examine the relative mental and emotional factors and their impact on stress relief, mental clarity, and personal happiness. Innovative experiences in nurturing settings usually promote these. A notable benefit of tourism is its enhancement of social well-being, evidenced by the development of positive relationships and interactions that foster a sense of community and belonging (Morgan et al., 2015). The study by Dillette et al. (2021) also supports the benefits of tourism, where spiritual wellness enables travelers to partake in deep introspection and self-exploration, frequently associated with religious or nature-focused journeys. Moreover, cultural exposure and learning opportunities foster intellectual well-being, fostering curiosity and the acquisition of knowledge (Pocinho et al., 2022). Integrating sustainable practices and the psychological advantages of natural settings enhances environmental and tranquillity awareness, thus substantially benefiting one's overall environmental health (Hassan et al., 2023). The interrelated components reveal how tourism can amalgamate emotional, social, intellectual, and environmental development to forge a holistic experience that excels in pleasure and improves overall quality of life.

To measure tourists' well-being, the study used 23 items to measure five domains namely: Physical Well-being (4 items), Mental and Emotional Well-being (6 items), Intellectual Well-being (4 items), Spiritual Well-being (3 items), and Social and Environmental Well-being (6 items). The items are derived from insights obtained from prior literature (Dillette et al., 2021; Morgan et al., 2015; Hassan et al., 2023; Bayighomog & Arasli, 2022; Uysal et al., 2016; Jia et al., 2023; Pocinho et al., 2022).

Wellness and Local Tourism Activities in Kerala

Kerala, a significant wellness tourism locale in India, draws visitors with its Ayurvedic treatments, yoga, meditation, and spa services (Sukumar, B. S., & Balagopal, A., 2023). The beauty and green landscapes of the state, the serenity of its backwaters and beaches, add to its attraction. As per the interest in the field, after the covid pandemic, there has been a rise in interest in the field of Ayurveda and wellness tourism, with a global focus on immunity and health align with a observation done by German tour operator Claudia Wagner years back (Haseena & Kodungallur, 2015). The data shows that 3.58% of the overseas visitors opt for Ayurveda or complementary therapy during their visit (Vasudevan, 2021). The wellness tourism industry in Kerala is a stark contrast to the other sectors that are affected by cost, as it is authentic, professional, and has a reputation overseas. Yoga retreats, meditation centres, and top-notch spa facilities are widely available at luxury resorts, along with ayurvedic treatments, which include massages and detoxification programs (Maitra & Joseph, 2022). There is growing interest in Ayurveda among Arabs and Europeans, and Kerala's tourist department has announced plans to further develop the tourism industry. Apart from the wellness treatments, Kerala offers a range of holistic experiences like backwater cruises, trekking, cultural festivals like Onam and Diwali, promoting a deep sense of heritage (Kop, 2024). These celebrations provide tourists with an opportunity to immerse themselves in the cultural and spiritual heritage of Kerala, making wellness tourism in Kerala a holistic experience of physical rejuvenation, spiritual healing, and cultural enrichment (Meera & Vinodan , 2019).

The study focused on the 12 activities which are often indulged by the tourists, especially in Kerala tourism. The activities were then grouped into categories based on different domains of well-being with an emphasis on the most pertinent parts of personal wellness. The activities are:

Tourism Activities	***Dimensions***
Engage in Wellness Practices (ayurveda/yoga/other)	Physical WB
Experience local Food and Culinary Delights Attend Local Performances Attend Festivals/Fairs	Mental/Emotional WB
Explore Natural Landscapes Visit Historical Sites Learn Native Culture, Beliefs, and Customs	Intellectual WB
Visit Religious/Pilgrimage Centres Attend Traditional Rituals and Ceremonies	Spiritual WB
Explore Local Art and Craftsmanship Visit Local Markets Purchase Traditional Products	Social/ Environmental WB

Tourist Engagement and Experience

Tourist experiences and values are closely connected with the interaction that tourists have with the local community (Bimonte & Punzo, 2016; Sharpley, 2014). The interactions then offer opportunities for tourists and the locals to create value together, particularly if the tourism development has positive economic and socio-cultural outcomes (Lin, Chen, & Filieri, 2017). Tourism offers guests a 'feelgood experience,' along with growth and transformative benefits for mental health and shared experiences,

fostering a wellness-friendly environment together (Dillette et al., 2021). These aspects are directly linked to tourists' quality of life and happiness. Zucco et al. (2020) examined how wellness tourism activities relate to tourists' happiness and quality of life, revealing that participating in these activities can enhance well-being factors like happiness and overall quality of life. Apart from engaging in wellness activities, one can have more feel-good and memorable experiences through the local communities by immersing oneself in their lifestyle, culture, and customs. Culture is a part of society and performs as one of the most essential social values for the residents (Nuksunova, 2009; Sabloff, 2008). Tylor (1871) defined culture as "the system of shared beliefs, knowledge, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society."

Experiential or immersion travel is a type of tourism where individuals concentrate on experiencing a destination by actively and meaningfully engaging with its history, populace, culture, cuisine, and environment. This kind of travel is the best way to engage in cultural exchange, and it is also a way to create another level of experience for tourists by engaging with the locals, taking part in their customs and traditions, and learning about the language, food, rituals, ceremonies, and social and historical backgrounds that make up their culture to grasp and appreciate its intricacies properly. It can foster an appreciation for cross-cultural experiences and personal growth while also strengthening connections with the local community of the destination. Kerala provides numerous cultural experiences for visitors to engage with the destination fully. There are homestays, village tours, opportunities to experience and learn local cuisine, traditional arts and performances, and festivals and cultural ceremonies.

Tourist Engagement and Well-being

The connection between how tourists engage in different activities and their overall well-being includes several essential dimensions, each crucial for improving tourists' well-being across physical, mental, social, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual areas. A thorough examination of the literature regarding tourist well-being from a positive psychology perspective showed that tourism positively affects various aspects of well-being, suggesting opportunities for marketing and management strategies to enhance tourists' experiences (Vada et al. 2020). However, Filep (2014) points out that tourists' happiness and mental health can be significantly improved if they participate in tourism activities, which suggests the need for alternative approaches to subjective well-being theory in order to better understand tourists' experiences in tourism.

Previous studies show that perceptions of destinations have a significant influence on tourists' psychological well-being in discussing destination-based experiences. The understanding and discovery traits affect well-being, reinvolving, and recommending well (Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2017). A subjective well-being approach using indices indicated that there is a strong relationship between tourists' levels of satisfaction and their level of well-being, highlighting the importance of their cultural and emotional engagement (Saayman et al. 2018). Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin (2017) found that certain characteristics of a region can have a significant impact on visiting visitors' psychological well-being. They prove that travellers' perceptions of the place, such as ease of access, facilities, attractions and interactions with locals, have a strong impact on their wellbeing.

According to Liu et al. (2023), the positive impacts of wellness tourism on tourists' hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing have been confirmed, and satisfaction is found to be a mediating variable that is influenced by demographic variables such as age and gender. Research indicates that wellness tourism has a significant effect on emotional and spiritual health, primarily through the activities that tourists participate in, such as relaxation and emotional healing (Bagheri et al., 2024). The social aspect of

wellbeing, which is enhanced through positive interactions with other travellers, plays a key role in life satisfaction, and is highly significant in terms of social connections (Liu et al., 2022). On the other hand, Lee (2020) found that studies on volunteer tourism showed that meaningful interaction can positively impact the social and emotional wellness of travelers and the local community. Additionally, the development of tourism has significant impacts on the environment's health. By conducting research on community support in tourist destinations, it is found that the interaction between the community and tourists can improve the psychological well-being of tourists, which is crucial for promoting sustainable tourism development (Wang et al., 2022). The interplay of intellectual and cultural elements can be seen in special contexts, such as cultural tourism, where experiences at such unique sites have shown moderate to high gains in subjective well-being, as in the case of the Museum of Broken Relationships (Jelinčić & Matečić 2021).

The literature in the field of Tourist Engagement and Wellbeing shows that tourist engagement is multidimensional, affecting well-being in physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual dimensions; each of these dimensions affect the tourists' satisfaction, their loyalty and the tourists' overall life satisfaction, which in turn affect their well-being. An in-depth study of the relevant literature to our research uncovered that there are many studies that have shown the potential impact of involvement in touristic activities on tourists' wellbeing. These activities include physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and social well-being. Drawing from these insights, we propose the following hypotheses to examine whether engagement in specific tourism activities has a significant impact on specific well-being dimensions;

H0a Wellness activities (Ayurveda/Yoga) do not enhance physical well-being.
H1a Wellness activities (Ayurveda/Yoga) enhance physical well-being.
H0b Cultural tourism activities (festivals/performances) do not enhance mental well-being.
H1b Cultural tourism activities (festivals/ performances) enhance mental well-being.
H0c Religious tourism activities do not enhance spiritual well-being.
H1c Religious tourism activities enhance spiritual well-being.
H0d Social and environmentally sustainable tourism does not enhance social and environmental well-being.
H1d Social and environmentally sustainable tourism enhances social and environmental well-being.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative methodology using the Convenience sampling technique. For data collection, the researchers prepared a self-structured questionnaire based on the previous literature on tourists' well-being. The target population for this study was tourists outside Kerala (both foreigners and from other states of India) who engaged in twelve tourism-related activities/products listed by researcher. The study collected 284 data during the period of January to September 2026; 113 were collected directly from tourists visiting popular destinations, hotels, wellness centres, etc. across Kerala. The rest of the data were collected online by sharing cards (contain QR code to scan & fill out the questionnaire) with tourists who wished to do it online. The questionnaire links are also shared on social media platforms and peer groups. Apart from the demographic, the 12 listed local tourism activities engaged by respondents are recorded in binary format (Yes=1, No=0), and the 23 well-being measurement items under five dimensions were given on a 5-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree). MS Excel and SPSS 22.0 were used for the data analysis.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

For data analysis, we mainly depended on quantitative analysis tools, with the support of SPSS and MS Excel. After collecting data from 284 respondents, processed the data cleaning stage with the support of MS Excel by removing incomplete responses and respondents whose standard deviation of responses is zero, assuming they didn't read the questionnaire well. After the data-cleaning process, the study removed 21 responses and selected the remaining 263 for analysis. Next, the ready-to-use data exported to the SPSS data sheet for analysis.

The demographic details and travel-related profile data were analyzed using frequency and descriptive analysis tools in SPSS. The same was done to get the engagement level of total tourists in each activity. To understand gender & age-based participation in activities and well-being differentiation, the researchers did a cross-tabulation using MS Excel. The study also used chi-square to analyze the significance of the relation between the activities and well-being dimensions. Independent samples T-tests were employed to test the hypothesis. The bar chart was prepared using MS Excel.

5. RESULT & FINDINGS

Demographic of respondents

The dataset (Tables 1 & 2) presents a comprehensive demographic and travel-related profile of 263 respondents, detailing their characteristics, travel preferences, and behaviours. 58.6% of respondents were male, while 41.4% were female, with the predominant age groups being 25-34 years (31.6%) and 18-24 years (28.5%). The proportion of the 35-44 age group is smaller (23.6%), and older people (45 years old and above) are in minority. Marital status shows that 71.9% of them are married or in a partnership and 28.1% are unmarried. Geographically, 90.9% of the respondents are Indian participants from states other than Kerala taking care to ensure that the sample was diverse. There are a few international participants (9.1%). When it comes to education, around 46.0 per cent of respondents hold a bachelor's degree and around 30.4 per cent a master's degree in their schooling. Some 12.9% have a doctorate or professional qualification, and 10.6% have matriculated as their highest qualification. Employment indicates different work positions: 34.6 per cent of them are employed full-time and 22.8 per cent are unemployed. Self-employment represents 18.6%, part-time employment constitutes 8.7%, and retirement comprises 6.5%.

Demographic Variables	Respondents' Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	154	58.60
	Female	109	41.40
Age	18-24	75	28.50
	25-34	83	31.60
	35-44	62	23.60
	45-54	30	11.40
	55-64	6	2.30
	Above 64	7	2.70
Country	India	239	90.90
	Other	24	9.10
Education	Matriculation	28	10.60
	Bachelor's Degree	121	46.00
	Master's Degree	80	30.40

	Doctorate/Professional	34	12.90
Marital Status	Unmarried	74	28.10
	Married/Partnership	189	71.90
Employment Status	Full-time	91	34.60
	Part-time	23	8.70
	Self-employed	49	18.60
	Retired	17	6.50
	Unemployed	60	22.80
	Other	23	8.70

Table 1

Travel preferences of respondents

Table 2 shows the data regarding tourists' travelling preferences, which mainly shows that the tourists' travelling motive is in leisure activities. The main reason for leisure travelling is to seek out places for leisure (44.9%), while health and relaxation is at 18.3%. Cultural experiences (8.7%), medical purposes (5.7%) and religious/ pilgrimage travel (8.7%) are other objectives that are considered as supplementary. A small fraction takes part in travel for educational purposes (3.4%), functions or events (3.0%) and business (0.8%). As for accommodation choices, the main choice is hotel accommodation (39.2%) followed by resort accommodation (23.6%) and homestay accommodation (14.4%). There are a smaller but significant group of people who stay at eco-lodges (8.7%), villas (8.0%) and alternative accommodation (6.1%). The average length of the trips is brief, with 57.4% choosing less than one week and 30.0% choosing one to two weeks. Fewer than 12.5% of trips last longer than two weeks, indicating that they tend to be short duration trips, probably due to work or other commitments. This analysis highlights a youthful, educated, and dynamic demographic from various Indian states, distinguished by diverse employment circumstances and a significant interest in leisure travel. This group's tendency for short journeys, traditional accommodation, and leisure-focused travel underscores current tourism trends, establishing them as an essential focus for future research in domestic and international travel behaviours.

Travel preferences	Respondents' Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Travel Purpose	Vacation Trip	118	44.90
	Wellness/Relaxation	48	18.30
	Medical Purpose	15	5.70
	Cultural Experience	23	8.70
	Religious/Pilgrimage Trip	23	8.70
	Visit Family/Friends	12	4.60
	Business	2	0.80
	Education/Academic Purpose	9	3.40
	Attend function/Event	8	3.00
	Other	5	1.90
Accommodation Type	Hotel	103	39.20
	Resorts	62	23.60
	Eco-lodges	23	8.70

	Homestays	38	14.40
	Villa	21	8.00
	Other	16	6.10
Trip Duration	Less than a week	151	57.40
	1-2 weeks	79	30.00
	More than 2 weeks	33	12.50

Table 2

Tourists' Engagement in Activities

The bar chart (Figure1) describes the tourists' participation in 12 activities. The most favoured activity is natural landscapes, with 189 (71.9%) participation. Experience local food is the second most participated activity, with 147 participants (55.9%), and Native Culture, which had 177 participants (67.3%). These activities showcase an apparent preference for outdoor adventures and cultural discovery.

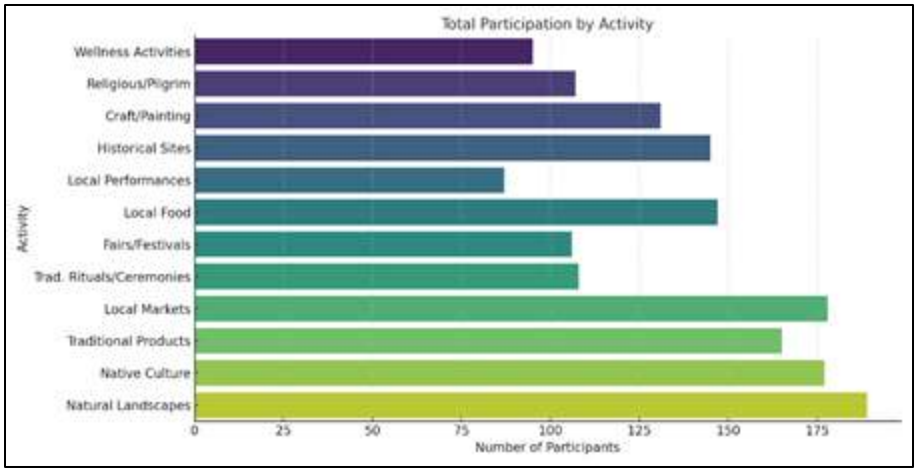


Figure.1 Participation in Activities by Tourists

Local Performances had the lowest level of participation with only 87 participants (33.1%), suggesting limited reach which may be due to accessibility or limited interest by visitors. Moderate participation was seen for Wellness Activities (95, 49.8%) and Craft/Painting (49.8%, 131). Interest was steady in the number of tourists visiting Historic Sites, which was 145 (55.1%), suggesting a strong interest in this category for many age and gender groups.

The findings confirm significant differences in the level of interest in each activity, highlighting the need for tourism operators to focus on Natural Landscapes, Food and Cultural Heritage amongst others and develop actions to increase interest in less popular activities like Local Performances and Wellness Activities.

Engagement across Activities based on Tourists' Gender & Age

The analysis of tourists' participation in different activities based on gender and age reveals significant trends. As concerns gender gaps, males were more involved than females in most of the activities. The largest gender differences were exhibited in the Local Markets (114 male, 64 female) and Explore Natural Landscapes (112 male, 77 female) categories. Common interests, however, included Religious/Pilgrim Tourism (56 males and 51 females) and Purchase Traditional Products (87 males and 78 females) where

there was a relatively equal participation of both sexes. The gender gap was found to be smaller in other activities such as Local Food and Craft/Painting, as females were actively engaged in those activities (65 females, 82 males) as compared to males.

		Activities Engaged by Tourists											
Gender	Age	Wellness Activities	Religious/ Pilgrim	Craft/ Painting	Visit Historical Site	Local Performances	Local Food	Attend Fairs/ Festivals	Traditional Rituals/ Ceremonies	Local Markets	Traditional Products	Engage Native Culture	Natural Landscapes
Male	18-24 (38)	4	8	24	21	16	23	23	22	27	22	31	31
	25-34 (45)	15	19	23	28	17	28	20	21	38	28	30	35
	35-44 (37)	14	15	15	15	8	19	11	15	26	23	25	27
	45-54 (21)	13	7	7	10	4	6	4	5	14	11	11	16
	55-64 (6)	4	3	1	4	0	2	0	0	4	2	4	2
	Above 64 (7)	7	4	2	5	1	4	2	0	5	1	5	1
	Total (154)	**57**	**56**	**72**	**83**	**46**	**82**	**60**	**63**	**114**	**87**	**106**	**112**
Female	18-24 (37)	11	15	24	21	12	26	16	15	26	26	23	26
	25-34 (38)	11	15	20	23	15	23	20	15	23	32	31	30
	35-44 (25)	14	15	12	12	12	14	6	11	12	17	12	15
	45-54 (9)	2	6	3	6	2	2	4	4	3	3	5	6
	55-64 (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Above 64 (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total (109)	**38**	**51**	**59**	**62**	**41**	**65**	**46**	**45**	**64**	**78**	**71**	**77**
Age	18-24 (75)	15	23	48	42	28	49	39	37	53	48	54	57
	25-34 (83)	26	34	43	51	32	51	40	36	61	60	61	65
	35-44 (62)	28	30	27	27	20	33	17	26	38	40	37	42
	45-54 (30)	15	13	10	16	6	8	8	9	17	14	16	22
	55-64 (6)	4	3	1	4	0	2	0	0	4	2	4	2
	Above 64 (7)	7	4	2	5	1	4	2	0	5	1	5	1
	Total (263)	**95**	**107**	**131**	**145**	**87**	**147**	**106**	**108**	**178**	**165**	**177**	**189**

Table 3

Table 3 shows that young tourists (ages 25 to 34) participated in nearly all activities, with age 25 to 34 being the most active in both Natural Landscapes (65 participants) and Local Markets (61 participants) and Native Culture (61 participants). The 18-24 age group also had notable involvement with Craft/Painting (48 participants) and Natural Landscapes (57 participants) indicating a preference for creative and nature based activities. Activity levels dropped across the older age bands (Above 55) with little uptake of activities such as Local Performances and Fairs/Festivals. We were unable to recruit females from the >55 age group. Although there was a decline in the older age groups, there was a strong interest in Wellness Activities (7 participants) and Religious/Pilgrim Tourism (4 participants) among those

aged 64 and above which represented relaxation and spiritual experiences. The data shows that younger age groups (18-34) are interested in adventure and cultural experiences, including Natural Landscapes, Native Culture, and Craft/Painting, as a result of curiosity and an adventurous spirit. The middle-aged group (35–44) continued to show a high interest in cultural activities, especially Traditional Rituals/Ceremonies and Historical Sites, demonstrating a high sense of the heritage. There was a significant number of those age 55 and older who were not participating, pointing to a possible void in the tourism industry around the need for more inclusive and accessible tourism geared towards the older population.

Tourists Well-being Score

Results of the analysis (Figure 2) show that the major contribution of tourism is in enhancing the overall wellbeing, especially in social and environmental wellbeing contributing to 3.8473, which indicates the role of tourism in promoting social interaction and greater appreciation of the environment. Mental and emotional well-being (3.7699) follows closely, suggesting that tourism is a good stress reliever, and contributes to relaxation and emotional balance. Travel is also good for spiritual well-being (3.7607): diverse cultures, nature and introspective experiences contribute to personal growth. Tourism's impact on cognitive development is further highlighted by its ability to foster intellectual well-being (3.6625), which is enhanced through cultural exploration and new learning experiences. However, the lowest score is for physical well-being (3.5105), indicating that whilst tourism has many positive features, it has not necessarily been seen to promote physical activity or health related lifestyles.

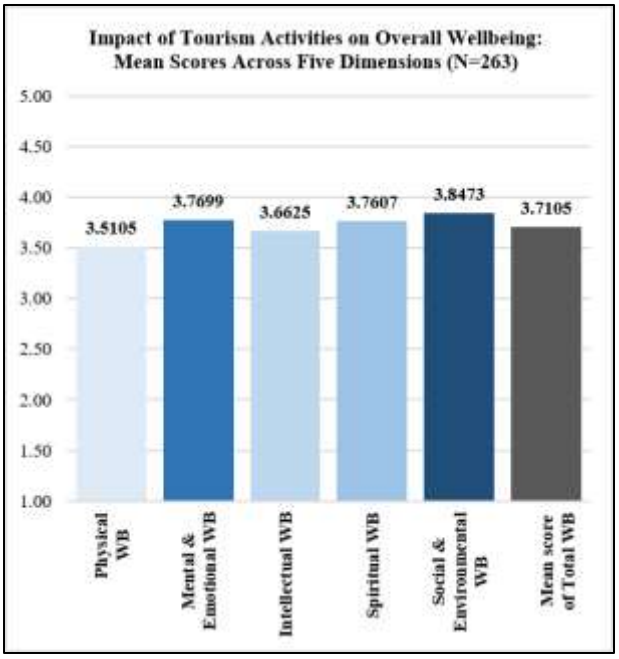


Figure 2

The overall mean well-being score (3.7105) is an integrated score that is a balanced average of the benefits across these dimensions. The tourism strategies should be further strengthened to include more active experiences, mindfulness practices and sustainable involvement in local communities to improve well-being even more, as this will help make it as effective as possible.

Gender & Age differentiation on Tourist Well-being score

Table 4, the mean well-being scores analysis of tourist participation activities reveals some noteworthy differences between the two genders and age groups.

	Mean Score of Tourists' Well-being from Activities						
		Physical WB	***Mental & Emotional WB***	***Intellectual WB***	***Spiritual WB***	***Social & Environmental WB***	***Overall WB***
Gender	Male (154)	3.69	3.84	3.62	3.77	3.89	3.76
	Female (109)	3.42	3.65	3.53	3.76	3.74	3.62
Age	18-24 (75)	3.48	3.76	3.76	3.73	3.88	3.72
	25-34 (83)	3.45	3.89	3.77	3.92	3.93	3.79
	35-44 (62)	3.57	3.64	3.65	3.60	3.70	3.63
	45-54 (30)	3.33	3.54	3.11	3.68	3.67	3.46
	55-64 (6)	3.92	3.83	3.46	3.94	4.11	3.85
	Above 64 (7)	4.29	4.14	3.79	3.86	3.83	3.98
Table 4							

Male tourists (n=154) reported higher mean well-being scores across all dimensions than females (n=109). Males scored highest in Social & Environmental Well-being (3.89) and the lowest in Intellectual Well-being (3.62). Female tourists scored highest in Social & Environmental Well-being (3.74) and lowest in Physical Well-being (3.42). Overall, males had a higher well-being score (3.76) than females (3.62).

The age group above 64 had the highest overall well-being (3.98), with top scores in Physical (4.29) and Mental & Emotional Well-being (4.14). The 55-64 group followed (3.85), excelling in Social & Environmental Well-being (4.11). Among younger groups, 25-34-year-olds had the highest overall score (3.79), with substantial Social & Environmental (3.93) and Spiritual Well-being (3.92). The 45-54 group had the lowest well-being (3.46), particularly Intellectual Well-being (3.11). Overall, well-being tends to improve with age, with older tourists feeling the most fulfilled, and males consistently report higher well-being than females.

Impact of Tourism Activities on Well-being Dimensions: Key Insights

The chi-square analysis (Table 5) reveals significant associations between various tourism activities and dimensions of well-being. Engaging in wellness practices such as Ayurveda and yoga strongly impacted physical well-being ($\chi^2 = 42.856$, $p = 0.000$). Similarly, visiting religious or pilgrimage centres is significantly associated with physical well-being ($\chi^2 = 26.710$, $p = 0.031$) and spiritual well-being ($\chi^2 = 21.539$, $p = 0.028$). The results showed that activities related to learning and experiencing native culture, beliefs, and customs were significantly related to mental/emotional well-being ($\chi^2 = 34.393$, $p = 0.011$), intellectual well-being ($\chi^2 = 36.690$, $p = 0.001$) and spiritual well-being ($\chi^2 = 26.119$, $p = 0.006$), which means that cultural immersion is significant for several aspects of tourist well-being.

Additionally, attending traditional rituals and marriage ceremonies significantly influenced physical well-being ($\chi^2 = 25.498$, $p = 0.044$) and social/environmental well-being ($\chi^2 = 29.423$, $p = 0.043$). Similarly, purchasing traditional products and souvenirs was strongly associated with intellectual well-being ($\chi^2 = 25.359$, $p = 0.031$) and social/environmental well-being ($\chi^2 = 31.832$, $p = 0.023$). The strongest association noted was between visiting local markets and interaction with vendors, with a significant association and relationship with social/environmental well-being ($\chi^2 = 41.132$, $p = 0.001$). This relationship highlights the significance of local engagement and interaction with vendors in promoting social/environmental well-being.

Activities	Physical Well-being			Mental/Emotional Well-being			Intellectual Well-being			Spiritual Well-being			Social Environmental WB		
	χ² Value	*df*	*p-value*	*χ² Value*	*df*	*p-value*	*χ² Value*	*df*	*p-value*	*χ² Value*	*df*	*p-value*	*χ² Value*	*df*	*p-value*
I engaged in Wellness Practices (ayurveda/yoga/other) during my trip	42.856	15	**0.000**	19.563[a]	18	0.358	15.260[a]	14	0.361	13.570[a]	11	0.258	18.551[a]	18	0.420
I experienced Local Food and Culinary Delights	17.675[a]	15	0.280	27.338[a]	18	0.073	16.773[a]	14	0.268	14.021[a]	11	0.232	20.681[a]	18	0.296
I attended Local Performances like Dances/Theatre Performances/ Music Concerts.	22.322[a]	15	0.100	23.178[a]	18	0.184	13.810[a]	14	0.464	5.735[a]	11	0.890	19.413[a]	18	0.367
I have attended Fairs and festivals (Onam/Vishu/Christmas/Eid/Boat Race/Thrissur Pooram/etc.	18.400[a]	15	0.242	19.235[a]	18	0.378	18.146[a]	14	0.200	9.801[a]	11	0.548	22.603[a]	18	0.206
I have explored natural landscapes and scenic spots in Kerala	13.783[a]	15	0.542	24.435[a]	18	0.141	20.705[a]	14	0.109	15.446[a]	11	0.163	28.800[a]	18	0.051
I got a chance to visit and learn about Historical Sites during my trip	10.820[a]	15	0.765	38.552[a]	18	**0.003**	12.703[a]	14	0.550	7.788[a]	11	0.732	21.582[a]	18	0.251

I learned and experienced the native culture, beliefs, and customs during my time with the local community	15.893[a]	15	0.389	34.393[a]	18	**0.011**	36.690[a]	14	**0.001**	26.119[a]	11	**0.006**	24.939[a]	18	0.127
I visited Religious/Pilgrimage Centres during my trip	26.710[a]	15	**0.031**	15.419[a]	18	0.633	10.653[a]	14	0.713	21.539[a]	11	**0.028**	21.515[a]	18	0.254
I have attended traditional rituals and marriage ceremonies in the local culture.	25.498[a]	15	**0.044**	24.098[a]	18	0.152	22.663[a]	14	0.066	16.509[a]	11	0.123	29.423[a]	18	**0.043**
I explored local art and craftsmanship, such as paintings, sculptures, and handicrafts.	15.556[a]	15	0.412	10.296[a]	18	0.922	18.199[a]	14	0.198	3.230[a]	11	0.987	8.307[a]	18	0.974
I have visited Local Markets and interacted with vendors	13.542[a]	15	0.560	25.084[a]	18	0.123	20.156[a]	14	0.125	17.563[a]	11	0.092	41.132[a]	18	**0.001**
I purchased traditional products and souvenirs	19.666[a]	15	0.185	19.899[a]	18	0.339	25.359[a]	14	**0.031**	8.383[a]	11	0.679	31.832[a]	18	**0.023**

Table 5

Others, including experiencing local food, attending local performances, visiting historical sites, exploring art and craftsmanship, and exploring natural landscapes, had no significant links with any dimension of well-being, meaning that these activities are likely to have more widespread impacts or to be more personalised.

The results of our chi-square analysis of activities v/s well-being dimensions draw us to the following insights:

- Wellness practices and traditional rituals showed a positive impact on physical well-being.
- Social/environmental well-being is strongly influenced by local interactions such as visiting markets, attending rituals, and purchasing traditional products.
- Intellectual well-being is significantly enhanced through cultural learning and engagement with local customs and traditions.
- Spiritual well-being is closely tied to religious visits and cultural immersion.

The results from our chi-square test underlined the role of cultural and social engagement in enhancing tourists' overall well-being, suggesting that destination planners should prioritize immersive and interactive experiences.

Hypothesis Testing Results

H0a Wellness activities (Ayurveda/Yoga) do not enhance physical well-being.

H1a Wellness activities (Ayurveda/Yoga) enhance physical well-being.

From the T-Test results (Table 6), it can be concluded that the null hypothesis for the physical aspect of wellness (H0a) was rejected because the engagement in wellness activities (Ayurveda/Yoga) had a significant impact on the physical aspect of wellness. The mean physical well-being score for those that engaged in wellness activities (M = 3.8105) is higher than those that did not (M = 3.3408), and the mean difference is 0.46975 (t = 4.412, p = 0.000). Since the p-value is well below 0.05, we accept H1a, confirming that wellness activities positively impact physical well-being.
However, no significant differences were found in other well-being dimensions between the two groups, where all p-values exceed 0.05, suggesting that wellness activities do not strongly impact other dimensions.

Well-being Dimension	Group Engaged in Wellness	Group Not Engaged in Wellness	Mean Difference	p-value
Physical WB	3.8105	3.3408	0.46975	**0.000**
Mental/Emotional WB	3.7631	3.7738	-0.01076	0.908
Intellectual WB	3.5737	3.7128	-0.13911	0.161
Spiritual WB	3.7051	3.7922	-0.08715	0.407
Social/Environmental WB	3.7873	3.8813	-0.09399	0.281

Table 6

H0b Cultural tourism activities (festivals/performances) do not enhance mental well-being.
H1b Cultural tourism activities (festivals/ performances) enhance mental well-being.

The analysis tested that cultural tourism activities, such as festivals and local performances, enhance mental-emotional well-being. T-test results (Table 7) show there is no significant difference between those who attended local performances (mean = 3.8486) and those who did not (mean = 3.7310), with a p-value of 0.214. Likewise, for festivals, the mean for attendees is 3.8024; for non-attendees, it is 3.7218, with a p-value of 0.375. Both p-values exceed the 0.05 significance level, so the null hypothesis failed to be rejected. Therefore, the response of tourists does not support the claim that cultural tourism activities enhance mental and emotional well-being.

Activity	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	p-value
Local Performances	Attended	3.8486	0.66227	0.071	0.214
	Not Attend	3.731	0.74792	0.05638	
Fairs and Festivals	Attended	3.8024	0.73112	0.05835	0.375
	Not Attend	3.7218	0.7079	0.06876	

Table 7

H0c Religious tourism activities do not enhance spiritual well-being.
H1c Religious tourism activities enhance spiritual well-being.
To test hypotheses H0c and H1c, we considered activities closely related to spirituality: Visiting religious/pilgrimage centres and attending traditional rituals and ceremonies. The analysis to assess the

impact on the spiritual well-being of tourists who engaged in those activities showed (Table 8) that both activities have no significant differences in any well-being dimensions, including spiritual well-being. 'Visiting religious/pilgrimage centres' shows no significance in all five dimensions where p-values are below 0.05 (Spiritual well-being= 0.140, Mental-emotional= 0.442, intellectual= 0.385, social-environmental= 0.150, and physical well-being= 0.701. 'Attending traditional rituals and ceremonies' also shows no significance in all those five dimensions where p-values are again below 0.05 (Spiritual well-being= 0.706, Mental-emotional= 0.133, intellectual= 0.975, social-environmental= 0.075, and physical well-being= 0.813).

Based on our results, visiting religious/pilgrimage centres and Attending Rituals/Ceremonies did not enhance tourists' spiritual well-being, leading to the failure to reject the null hypothesis (H0c).

Activity	Well-being Dimension	Mean (Yes)	Mean (No)	p-value
Visiting Religious/Pilgrimage Centres	Spiritual Well-being	3.8506	3.6991	0.140
	Mental-Emotional WB	3.8113	3.7415	0.442
	Intellectual Well-being	3.7126	3.6282	0.385
	Social-Environmental WB	3.7745	3.8972	0.150
	Physical Well-being	3.535	3.4936	0.701
Attending Rituals/Ceremonies	Spiritual Well-being	3.7379	3.7766	0.706
	Mental-Emotional WB	3.6897	3.8258	0.133
	Intellectual Well-being	3.6644	3.6613	0.975
	Social-Environmental WB	3.7581	3.9094	0.075
	Physical Well-being	3.5255	3.5000	0.813

Table 8

Earlier, researcher did not consider the activity of exploring natural landscapes for the test. Interestingly (see Table 9), this activity significantly impacts spiritual and intellectual well-being, suggesting that engagement with nature fosters tourists' spirituality and a deep sense of intellectual enrichment. However, no significant differences were observed in other dimensions.

Activity	Well-being Dimension	Mean (Yes)	Mean (No)	p-value
Exploring natural landscapes	Spiritual Well-being	3.8327	3.5769	**0.022**
	Intellectual Well-being	3.7288	3.4932	**0.026**
	Physical Well-being	3.5489	3.4122	0.246
	Mental-Emotional WB	3.8121	3.6622	0.13
	Social-Environmental WB	3.897	3.7204	0.058

Table 9

H0d Social and environmentally sustainable tourism does not enhance social and environmental well-being.

H1d Social and environmentally sustainable tourism enhances social and environmental well-being.

The T-test results (Table 10) indicate that exploring local crafts and paintings had no significant impact on any well-being dimension ($p > 0.05$), and this activity fail to reject the null hypothesis.

However, visiting local markets improved Spiritual Well-being of respondents significantly ($t = 3.05$, $p = 0.002$) and Social/Environmental Well-being ($t = 3.18$, $p = 0.002$) as well, while purchasing traditional products positively influenced Mental/Emotional Well-being ($t = 2.80$, $p = 0.005$) and Social/Environmental Well-being ($t = 4.04$, $p < 0.001$). In these cases, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that active participation in tourism enhances specific well-being dimensions.

Tourism Activity	Well-being Dimension	Mean (Engaged)	Mean (Not-Engaged)	value	lue
Exploring Local Crafts & Paintings	All Dimensions (No significant effect)	-	-	-	.05
Visiting Local Markets	Social/Environmental WB	3.94	3.66	3.18	**002**
	Spiritual Well-being WB	3.87	3.54	3.05	**002**
Purchasing Traditional Products	Social/Environmental WB	3.97	3.63	4.04	**.001**
	Mental/Emotional WB	3.86	3.61	2.8	**005**

Table 10

6. DISCUSSIONS

The research points toward the growing importance of micro-vacations as a result of digital lifestyles and work obligations (Dolnicar & Leisch, 2021) and indicates a tendency toward fast-paced travel for most short trips and leisure travel.

Our study's observations of travel behaviour also confirm previous findings regarding gender variations in travel. In line with our findings, Yang et al. (2017) showed that adventure and the outdoor activities are more attractive to men while cultural and gastronomic tourism is more appealing to women. Our findings also confirm that, while men's engagement with most activities is higher, the gap is smaller for certain activities like local cuisine exploration and craft-related activities, which shows how women are also playing a growing role in tourism decision making (Bui, H. T., & Wilkins, H. C., 2017).

The results of the age-based involvement of tourists align with the theory that younger age groups (18-34) are inclined to participate in adventure activities, exploring and getting involved with local culture, which corresponds with studies focusing on millennials' experience-oriented travel (Jin et al., 2022). Likewise, the high decline in participation of older tourists (55+) reinforces the notion that accessibility and comfort continue to be important constraints for this age group (Patuelli & Nijkamp, 2016). The lack of women older than 55 in our study could suggest a gender bias in travel opportunities or maybe a social and family role effect (McCabe & Diekmann, 2015).

Our findings validate previous studies in the area of impact on well-being due to tourism. Cohen et al. (2019) suggest that tourism has a significant positive impact on social, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing through cultural engagement and nature based activities, as with our study. Our findings are in line with the previous studies that have shown that wellness activities like Ayurveda and yoga have positive effects on physical well-being (Voigt et al., 2011). In contrast, our study found that cultural tourism (festivals and performances) had no significant effect on mental wellbeing, contradicting previous research by Richards (2020) which showed that cultural experiences have a positive effect on emotional wellbeing. The differences can be attributed to differences among tourists in their perception and processing of cultural experiences.

The connection between visiting local markets and the improvement of social/environmental well-being have led to theories about sustainable tourism and community involvement (Scheyvens, 1999). Interestingly, despite the fact religious tourism is often linked to spiritual well-being (Collins-Kreiner, 2018), our study did not find significant changes in spiritual well-being among those who engaged in religious/pilgrimage travel, signifying that current spiritual experiences may not be as much of tied to religious centres and more deep-rooted in personal reflection. If this is the case, we suggest religious tourism centres focus on improving the spiritual well-being of the visitors.

7. CONCLUSION

This study offers significant insights into tourists' demographics, travel preferences, and well-being outcomes, highlighting the dynamic nature of tourism behaviour. The findings of this research suggest that younger and educated tourists are the main participants in leisure tourism, and opt for short trips and cultural enriching experiences. Although there are gender differences in participation in activities, women should increasingly be involved in activities that are typically male dominated in the tourism sector. The findings highlight the importance of cultural and environmental engagement for boosting the wellbeing of tourists, mainly through local engagement, wellness activities, and experiences with nature. Some traditional beliefs, however, are challenged by the least impact on mental well-being of cultural and spiritual on religious, which calls for a deep understanding of the individual tourist. Future research should investigate the fundamental factors driving these variations and determine strategies to enhance inclusivity in tourism, especially for older demographics and women over 55. Future research should investigate the well-being of tourism participants by considering the destinations of entirely different cultures and customs, which might yield more insightful results. Policymakers and industry players can leverage these insights to create more effective tourism experiences, fostering overall well-being and sustainable tourism efforts.

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