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Understanding Perceived Value of Cultural Fairs and Festivals through SEM: The Impact of Participation, Environment and Problems

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Abstract   Culture is prevailing on the earth surface since the dawn of human civilisation. Culture is that stronghold because of which various communities and societies have been able to thrive through thick and thin times. Culture has changed, is changing, modified with time and cultural fairs and festivals are integral part of it. Cultural fair and festivals are kind of events where people gather, participate, share their beliefs, and interacts. They also play a key role in keeping the community intact. In the current modern and busy world, people strive for real experiences of the nature and personal space. These regional or local cultural fairs and festivals holds a great potential to offer real experiences and space for spiritual and personal development. The present study tries to examine the impact of perceived value of participation, environment and problems on perceived value of cultural fair and festivals using factor analysis and structure equation modelling. For that, a total of 24 variables or items have been identified through extensive literature review and using principal component analysis components were extracted. Reliability statistics was analysed using Cronbach Alpha and finally 19 items were used for structure equation modelling. The model is acceptable and it brings out that perceived level of participation plays a significant role in perceived level of cultural values and personal development. It was concluded that cultural fair and festivals should be encouraged so that people can not only learn about local traditions, beliefs and customs but also participate and feel the essence of these cultural fairs and festivals.

Keywords   Cultural Values, Fairs and Festivals, Factor Analysis Using PCA, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Environmental Conservation, Personal Development, Community Building, Cultural Traditions

Introduction

Culture plays a crucial role in the development of society. Its importance can be understood by the fact that twenty-first century is known as "cultural era" or "the century of cultural war" (Cheon, 2016). Culture plays an important role in structuring the society and it contributes in bringing cultural paradigms as it changes and modifies with time (Lee, et al., 2012). In the present vibrant and modern world, local fairs and festivals provides the platform which not only allows one to remain intact with their ancestral roots but also helps in acquiring knowledge about each other's unique traditional culture. These local or regional cultural fairs and festivals helps in community building and developing the local economy as well. Culture and communities can never be separated. Culture provides the rural communities a sense of identity. It incorporates various traditions, values and beliefs which results in bringing solidarity in the community (Brennan, 2019).

Culture acts as invisible but strong and efficient system which holds communities together. Cultural fairs and festivals are the ways which gives members a sense of proud, keeps them rooted to their ancestral values and directly or indirectly helps in passing knowledge from one generation to other. These fairs and festivals are not new but they are the manifestations of arts, beliefs, and local tradition where people gather to enjoy the activity and to be a part of it (Negruşa, et al., 2016). Himalayas are hub for various cultural traditions. Be it their east-west extension or south to north ranges, they offer a spectrum of diversity in their belief systems, values, dresses, food, cuisines etc. There are thirteen states and union territories in India which forms the Indian Himalayan Region (Niti Aayog, n.d.). However, the present study is limited to one state, that is, Himachal Pradesh. There are four ranges in Himachal Pradesh namely Shiwalik range (350-1500m), Middle Himalayan range (1500-5000m), Great Himalayan range (5000-6000m) and Trans Himalayan range (above 6000m) (Gupta, 2016). All these ranges vary altitude-wise. With a change in altitude, one can readily observe discernible cultural differences.

More than 7 percent Gross Domestic Product of the Himachal Pradesh comes from tourism (Vasudeva, 2024). In fact, Culture provides an additional essence to the tourism of Himachal Pradesh. It attracts tourists in the state which directly or indirectly helps in socio-economic development of people living in remote areas specifically as they get opportunities in their doorsteps because of tourism. For example, women are often seen selling pickles, local cuisines in these cultural events which boosts their confidence and makes them financially independent. Many fairs and festivals of Himachal Pradesh are internationally and nationally recognised, for instance, Shimla Summer festival, Mandi Shivratri fair, Holi fair of Sujanpur Tihra (Balokhra, 1995)**.** Rampant increase in tourism, globalisation holds potential to impact these cultural events. Hence,an attempt has been made to analyse their impact on cultural events so that it could be known that how these cultural events could be sustainably carried further so that they do not impact the cultural events negatively. The present study is based on two cultural festivals that is Dhui fair of Kangra district and other is Dussehra fair of Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh. Both these festivals are devoted to deity.

Dhui Fair: It is the first fair that commences with the new year in January month. It is assumed that this fair has been celebrated for last more than 500 years. This fair is devoted to animal deity known as "*Lakh data"*. People from distant places offer fresh milk, butter of animals to the deity. Legends are also associated with finding of the place for deity worship. One of the legends as stated by the people is that there is a water project near to deity temple. When construction of the water project was going on, all the machines were covered by snakes. And then dream came to the head of the project about the idol and hence, this festival came into occurrence. This festival carries on for two days. On the first night, a huge fire is lightened up beneath sacred fig. However, not a single leaf has burnt up till this day. Also, it always rains during the festival. Ancestral instruments like "*tamak*" are played during the festival.

Kullu Dusshera: This festival is celebrated for a week in Himachal Pradesh. It is celebrated during the October month. This festival began with the installation of the idol of Lord Raghunath by Raja Jagat Singh in 17th century at Kullu royal shrine. This idol was brought from Ayodhya. About 300 deities take part on this occasion. They all honour Lord Raghunath.

The present study focuses on different aspects related to these cultural fairs and how they are acting as a bridge between traditional and modern ways and knowledge in the current scenario. Local cultural fairs and festivals are authentic and tourists in the present world are looking for real experiences along with meeting new people. These fairs and festivals help in promoting local culture on one hand and social, economic and personal development on the other (Stankova et al., 2015). It offers sustainable practices which do not harm the environment and encourages local and other people to be a part of it. In the present, globalised and busy world, people do not have time for their own. These cultural fairs and festivals hold great potential for preserving the ancestral knowledge and traditions on the

one hand and short-term break from busy life and closeness to nature to other. It has already been observed that when any living entity is close to the nature, it blooms, it grows. It rejuvenates and fills the people with positive energy and enthusiasm.

Himachal Pradesh is known as the land of Gods or *"Devbhoomi".* There are innumerable fairs and festivals celebrated in Himachal Pradesh. It provides a great platform to analyse that how these cultural events could be used for socio-economic development on the one hand and for the environment preservation on the other. There are various benefits which could be reaped from these cultural events. They also help in personal development as people finds themselves associated with the culture. Therefore, the present study tries to examine perceived level of cultural values and personal development, perceived level of environment conservation, perceived level of benefits from participation and perceived level of problems from cultural fairs and festivals on the people using factor analysis and structure equation modelling. This would help in understanding that how cultural events could contribute not only in personal development but also in maintaining sustainability. As, this cultural heritage should be passed on to future generations. It is so because they include the sustainable ways of living, which helps in building social harmony too.

Review of Literature

Literature review is backbone of any study. It helps in understanding what work has already been done and what other scopes are available to researcher. Some of the literature review for the study conducted has been described below:

S. S. B., et al. (2023) highlights the importance of cultural festivals, fairs as how they help in rejuvenating the lives of the people from their daily routines. However, they also draw the attention towards different kinds of pollution resulting because of these cultural events. They suggest in their study that social intervention is required so that people are made aware about the protection of the environment. **Stankova and Vassenska (2015)** tries to investigate in their study about the contribution of festivals and other cultural events in the conservation of cultural heritage and traditions. The study was conducted in South Bulgaria. They tried to identify and implement various opportunities for sustainable development so that existed heritage could be pass over to future generations. **Quinn, et al. (2020)** in their study tried to investigate that how cities are perceiving festivals so as to meet the objectives of cultural inclusion policy. The study was conducted in Barcelona, London, Gothenburg, Dublin and Glasgow. It was found out in the study that though festivals have a long history in these cities but they are far away from a proper policy domain. **Negruşa, et al. (2016)** discusses about the importance of cultural events in the socio-economic development of local people. He also discusses about the impact on environment of these cultural events. The study was conducted in Transilvania International Film Festival (TIFF). The result of the study was commendable as the cultural events in the study are were positively impacting the socio-economic development of local people. Apart from this, it was also found out that the cultural events were not harming the environment negatively. **Brennan, (2019)** converses about the importance of the perceptions of rural and urban areas for development in policy making. It is so because of the diversity of communities living there. However, this diversity has often been neglected in policy making. He stresses that development with cultural promotion and preservation is significant. He also says that culture and peoples' attachment to it can help against anti- local development.

Objectives

The study tries to achieve following objectives:

- To identify the important factors in context of cultural fair and festivals through dimension reduction using Principal Component Analysis.
- To analyse the relationship between perceived cultural values, perceived environment conservation, perceived problems and perceived participation using structure equation modelling.

Hypotheses

Following hypotheses have been created to be tested during the study:

- H_1: There is no significant impact of perceived level of participation on perceived level of cultural values and personal development.
- H_2: There is no significant impact of perceived level of environment conservation on perceived level of cultural values and personal development.

- H$_3$: There is no significant impact of perceived level of problems on perceived level of cultural values and personal development.
- H$_4$: There is no significant impact of perceived level of participation on perceived level of environment conservation.

Material and Methods

The study has been conducted using primary data. A total of 24 variables were selected for conducting the study based on extensive literature review as presented in table 1.1. These twenty-four variables or items were based on 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 where 1 presents the least agreement and 5 represents maximum agreement. Two cultural fairs from Himachal Pradesh were selected for the study. One is Dussherra fair of Kullu district and other is Dhui fair of Kangra district. Both the fairs are devoted to deity. After the worship of their respected deity, fair commences. Purposive sampling method under non probability sampling has been used for the study. 200 samples in total—100 from each location, were collected from the field. After the collection of data, firstly, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was done using principal component analysis (PCA). After deriving the components, reliability statistics was checked using Cronbach alpha. Finally, using SPSS Amos, Structural equation modelling was carried out. The results were presented using tables and flow diagrams. SPSS 25 and Amos 25 has been used to carry out the study.

Table 1.1: Sources used to identify the items/variables for conducting the study

Variables/Items	References
Products can be bought at comfortable prices in local fairs and festivals.	Toader, V., Rus, R. and et al. (2016), Stankova, Vassenska and Ivanka (2015), Sachin, B, Ramesh and C, Rajashekar (2023), Johnson, J. D., Snepenger, D. J. and Akis, S. (1994), Yolal, M., Rus, R. V., Cosma, S. and Gursoy, D. (2015).
Environment friendly products should be adopted and advertised during local fairs and festivals.	
The local fairs and festivals enable me to sense the unique characteristics of the region.	
It provides a platform to learn about social and physical environment.	
The venue of local fairs and festivals is accessible in terms of transportation.	
The information about the venue is properly disseminated.	
I feel joyful by participating in local fairs and festivals.	
Fairs and festivals act as a short-term recreation and fills me with positive energy.	
I feel comfortable by participating at the local fairs and festivals.	
The participation leaves a significant impression.	
Local fairs/festivals lead to overcrowding.	
They lead to unacceptable increase in vehicular/pedestrian traffic.	
They even lead to reduction in privacy.	
Often unacceptable noise levels have been noticed.	
They lead to littering of surroundings/ecological damage.	
Local fairs and festivals enable me to fully experience the season.	
It helps in personal development.	
Local fairs/festivals enhance social interaction.	
Local fairs and festivals help in community building.	
Local Fairs and festivals present people's faith and respect to their deity.	
It strengthens the people pride about their ancestral roots.	
The atmosphere of the local fairs and festivals was positive.	
They lead to exposure to new cultural experiences.	
It acts as a gravity point for coming together of people from various sections of society.	

Source: Compiled by authors using various secondary sources

Discussion and Results

Cultural fairs and festivals offer unique way to celebrate and experience the surroundings and natural regions. They allow people to take break from their daily routine and come close to the mother Earth. As discussed already 24 variables were listed. These 24 variables were selected with the aim to cover different aspects related to these cultural events. For example, in hilly regions, these events are source of peoples' interactions, buying new or different products at reasonable price, recreation for children and women etc. For tourists who visits from different states or physiographic regions, these cultural events provide the platform to notice different physiography, climate, belief systems, living styles of local people. After the collection and tabulation of data, exploratory factor analysis was carried out using principal component analysis with varimax method. Principal Component Analysis is a tool used for dimension reduction. It helps in extracting the important items or variables contributing in the study. It helps in reducing multidimensional data while retaining maximum information (Karamizadeh, 2013).

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is a measure which helps in determining that how appropriate the data is for factor analysis. It was found that the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is 0.86. KMO value lies between 0 and 1. If the value is close to 0, then data is not considered well for factor analysis. On the other hand, if the value is close to 1, it is considered good for factor analysis. Since, the KMO value for the data is 0.86 which is very close to 1. Hence, our data is well suited for factor analysis. On the other hand, Bartlett's test helps in determining whether correlation matrix is an identity matrix or there is significant difference between the variables. Ideally, correlation matrix should not be an identity matrix. The significance value of Bartlett test is 0.000 which is less than0.05 at 5% level of significance. Hence, it is evident that our correlation matrix is not an identity matrix and there is significant difference between the variables considered.

Communalities

Communalities presents that how well variance is shown by the variable that could be well explained by the factor. If the communality is closer to 1, it is considered that the variance is very well explained by the factor. It has been observed that the communalities ranged from 0.45 to 0.86 for all the variables. Since, no variable was less than 0.4, hence, no item was dropped as exhibited in table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Communalities

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
Local fairs and festivals enable me to fully experience the season.	1.000	.841
It helps in personal development.	1.000	.752
Local fairs/festivals enhance social interaction.	1.000	.792
Local fairs and festivals help in community building.	1.000	.700
Local Fairs and festivals present people's faith and respect to their deity.	1.000	.702
It strengthens the people pride about their ancestral roots.	1.000	.863
The atmosphere of the local fairs and festivals was positive.	1.000	.837
They lead to exposure to new cultural experiences.	1.000	.824
It acts as a gravity point for coming together of people from various sections of society.	1.000	.821
Products can be bought at comfortable prices in local fairs and festivals.	1.000	.727
Environment friendly products should be adopted and advertised during local fairs and festivals.	1.000	.561
The local fairs and festivals enable me to sense the unique characteristics of the region.	1.000	.583

It provides a platform to learn about social and physical environment.	1.000	.589
The venue of local fairs and festivals is accessible in terms of transportation.	1.000	.453
The information about the venue is properly disseminated.	1.000	.527
Local fairs/festivals lead to overcrowding.	1.000	.625
They lead to unacceptable increase in vehicular/pedestrian traffic.	1.000	.733
They even lead to reduction in privacy.	1.000	.657
Often unacceptable noise levels have been noticed.	1.000	.599
They lead to littering of surroundings/ecological damage.	1.000	.861
I feel joyful by participating in local fairs and festivals.	1.000	.638
Fairs and festivals act as a short-term recreation and fills me with positive energy.	1.000	.713
I feel comfortable by participating at the local fairs and festivals.	1.000	.831
The participation leaves a significant impression.	1.000	.793
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

Source: Compiled by authors based on the data collected through field survey using SPSS 25.

Components Extracted

Furthermore, after the communalities, it was noticed that six components have been extracted using PCA. Each variable has an Eigen value related to them. Eigen value helps in understanding the variance shown by measured variables. Only those components have been extracted, whose Eigen value is more than 1, so that the variables explain maximum variation.
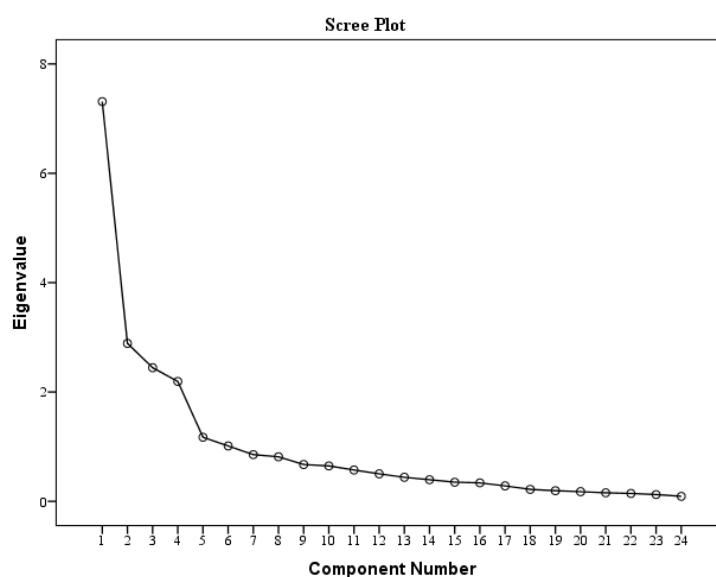

Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1 presents the six components whose Eigen value is more than 1. These six components explain the maximum variation. However, for efficiently conducting the study four components has been used and the remaining two were dropped as they hold either one or two variables. These four components are explaining 58% of the variations.

Table 1.3: Rotated Component Matrix and Reliability Statistics

	Variables	Factors	C1	C2	C3	C4	Reliability Statistics
Perceived Level of Cultural Values and Personal Development	V1	Local fairs and festivals enable me to fully experience the season.	0.83				0.942 (Excellent)
	V2	It helps in personal development.	0.82				
	V3	Local fairs/festivals enhance social interaction.	0.85				
	V4	Local fairs and festivals help in community building.	0.74				
	V5	Local Fairs and festivals present people's faith and respect to their deity.	0.87				
	V6	It strengthens the people pride about their ancestral roots.	0.81				
	V7	The atmosphere of the local fairs and festivals was positive.	0.84				
	V8	They lead to exposure to new cultural experiences.	0.83				
Perceived level of Environment Conservation	V9	Environment friendly products should be adopted and advertised during local fairs and festivals.		0.72			0.7 (Acceptable)
	V10	The local fairs and festivals enable me to sense the unique characteristics of the region.		0.52			
	V11	It provides a platform to learn about social and physical environment.		0.53			
Perceived level of Benefits from Participation in Cultural Fairs and Festival	V12	I feel joyful by participating in local fairs and festivals.			0.67		0.846 (Good)
	V13	Fairs and festivals act as a short-term recreation and fills me with positive energy.			0.82		
	V14	I feel comfortable by participating at the local fairs and festivals.			0.85		
	V15	The participation leaves a significant impression.			0.87		
Perceived Level of Problems from Cultural Fairs and Festivals	V16	Local fairs/festivals lead to overcrowding.				0.64	
	V17	They lead to unacceptable increase in vehicular/pedestrian traffic.				0.83	0.75 (Acceptable)
	V18	They even lead to reduction in privacy.				0.79	

	V19	Often unacceptable noise levels have been noticed.		0.74	

Source: Compiled by authors using PCA in SPSS 25

Table 1.3 presents the rotated component matrix. The table clearly depicts the probability of variables getting selected in each component but after rotation. The method used for rotation is varimax with kaiser normalization. Because of rotation, probabilities are more precise. Along with Principal Component Analysis, Reliability of the variables is also checked using Cronbach Alpha. One variable "*It acts as a gravity point for coming together of people from various sections of society*" from component 1, "*Products can be bought at comfortable prices in local fairs and festivals*" from component 2 and "*They lead to littering of surroundings/ecological damage*" from component 4 were dropped as they were disturbing the reliability. Finally, as presented in table 1.2, eight variables are under component 1, three under 2, four items each under component 3 and 4 were taken for further analysis. The component 1,2, 3 and 4 are named as Perceived Level of Cultural Values and Personal Development, Perceived level of Environment Conservation, Perceived level of Benefits from Participation in Cultural Fairs and Festival and Perceived Level of Problems from Cultural Fairs and Festivals respectively as the variables suits very well under these named categories.

Structure Equation Modelling (SEM)

One excellent multivariate method for assessing and testing multivariate causal relationships is structure equation modelling (Fan, et al., 2016). Structure Equation Modelling (SEM) is an effective tool to test association between variables. According to Kaplan, "structural equation modelling can perhaps best be defined as a class of methodologies that seeks to represent hypotheses about the means, variances and covariances of observed data in terms of a smaller number of 'structural' parameters defined by a hypothesized underlying model" (Nachtigall et al., 2003). In the social, behavioural, and cultural sciences, there are a lot of important characteristics that are difficult to assess directly. Several indicators are frequently used to measure those attributes, and measurement errors are common. In this scenario, investigating the connections between latent variables is successfully carried out through the use of structural equation modelling (Deng, et al.,2018).

The proposed equation model tries to explain the perceived level of cultural fair and festivals using four latent variables that is Perceived Level of Cultural Values and Personal Development, Perceived level of Environment Conservation, Perceived level of Benefits from Participation in Cultural Fairs and Festival and Perceived Level of Problems from Cultural Fairs and Festivals. Perceived Level of Cultural Values and Personal Development is an Exogenous (independent) latent variable and V1, V2, V3, V4, V5, V6, V7,V8 are observed variables. Similarly, Perceived level of Environment Conservation is an exogenous latent variable and V9, V10, V11 are observed variables. Correspondingly, Perceived level of Benefits from Participation in Cultural Fairs and Festival is an independent latent variable and V12, V13, V14, V15 are observed variable. Lastly, Perceived Level of Problems from Cultural Fairs and Festivals is an exogenous latent variable and V16, V17, V18 and V19 are observed variables. These variables have categorised after exploratory factor analysis and reliability checking as discussed above. There are certain measures which needs to be examined for efficient model. This includes X^2/df, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Residual (RMR), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and Normed Fit Index (NFI). Table 1.4 depicts the fit indices for the model.

Table 1.4: Fitness Indices of the Model

	X^2/df	RMR	RMSEA	TLI	GFI	NFI	CFI
Model	1.74	0.007	0.06	o.949	0.891	0.912	0.961
Accepted Value	<3	<0.05	<0.08	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9
Remarks on final model	Satisfactory*	Satisfactory*	Acceptable*	Satisfactory**	Acceptable**	Satisfactory**	Satisfactory**

*Lee, C. S. and Ma, L. (2012), **Ampofo, R.T., et al. (2022)

The model attempts to see the impact of perceived value of participation, problems and environment on the perceived value of cultural values of these cultural events. Also, an attempt is made to examine whether any impact is there of perceived value of participation on perceived value of environment.
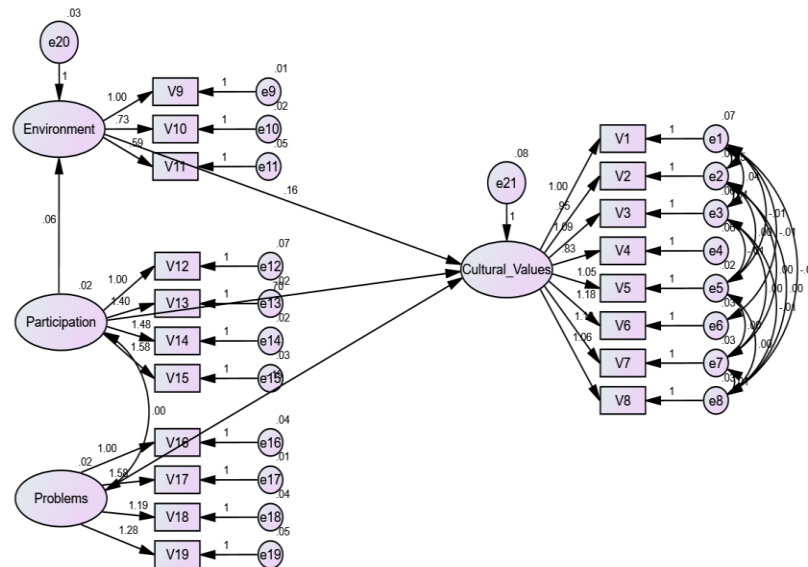

Figure 1.

Figure 1.2 presents the structure equation model showing the relationship between perceived cultural values, perceived participation, perceived problems, perceived environment conservation. Table 1.4 clearly exhibits that the model is acceptable as fit indices meets the eligibility criteria.

Table 1.5: Results of Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Standard Estimate	p-value	Result
H_1 (Participation→ Cultural Values)	0.70	0.00	Significant
H_2 (Environment→Cultural Values)	0.16	0.211	Not Significant
H_3 (Problem→Cultural Values)	-0.19	0.302	Not Significant
H_4 (Participation→Environment)	0.06	0.542	Not Significant

Source: Compiled by author on the basis of results derived from AMOS

Participation refers to the inhabitants' voluntarily attending these cultural fairs or events. It's an analysis of whether or not residents find delight and comfort in taking part in these events. Promoting biodegradable products and teaching people about the social and physical environments were endeavours to examine environmental issues in light of the cultural norms. Issues like as congestion, noise pollution, and crowding that arise during these events were also examined, as well as how they affect cultural values and individual growth. It was found that one hypothesis that is H_1 proves to be significant Participation has a major impact on both personal growth and cultural values. Cultural festivals and fairs support personal growth, collective renewal, and the acquisition of traditional knowledge and wisdom. Participation is the only way to really enjoy these cultural fairs and festivals. It is evident from standard estimates (0.70) from table 1.5. Based on table 1.4, it can be concluded that model is acceptable and participation do play a bigger and significant role in reaping the benefits of cultural fairs and festivals. Cultural fairs and festivals strengthen one's beliefs, help one stay true to their cultural roots, and promote social and personal growth.

It should be noted, nevertheless, that these cultural activities ought to continue in a sustainable manner. The environment, people's beliefs, and their faith should not be harmed. Although there are currently no significant

issues with these cultural events because residents report no harm being done to their customs or to the environment. But there should be sustainable measures taken, such as sharing information about these events and introducing environmentally friendly items during events. In the end, it will ensure that these cultural events are sustained over time.

Conclusions

It has been observed that cultural fairs and festivals are excellent platforms to learn about nature, natural regions, traditional knowledge. Also, they help in increasing social interactions and community building. They offer a venue where people of different communities proudly share their cultural beliefs, values, and knowledge. It has been seen during the study that the model is acceptable as fit indices meets the eligibility criteria as evident in Figure 1.2. The model clearly signifies that participation is important in these cultural fairs and festivals as there is impact of perceived level of participation on perceived level of cultural values and personal development. Only with participation, one can enjoy and can feel the essence of these local, regional cultural fairs and festivals.

Though there are some perceived levels of problems also exists but they could be minimised with government and associated authorities' intervention. These kind of cultural fairs and festivals should be encouraged so that harmony could be maintained and people can interact. These are authentic, close to the nature; hence, they do promote cultural tourism as well. In present modern and busy world, they are great escapes for personal and spiritual development. Their continued existence is crucial because they serve as a legacy that has been passed down through the ages and ought to be preserved for upcoming ones.

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