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CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS AND TOURISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF KARBI YOUTH FESTIVAL AND HORNBILL FESTIVAL

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Abstract: The northeastern region of India is known for its diverse cultures with unique traditions and festivals that preserve and promote their heritage while fostering tourism and economic growth. Cultural festivals can promote tourism by showcasing a region's unique heritage and traditions, attracting visitors from around the world. The Karbi Youth Festival in Karbi Anglong, Assam, and the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland are two such prominent festivals that celebrate the rich cultural diversity of the region. The Hornbill Festival, held during 1st - 10th December every year, promotes inter-ethnic interaction and cultural heritage. The Karbi Youth Festival held during 15th – 19th February, showcase the ethnic diversity of the Karbi tribe, promoting their rich cultural identity. These celebrations provide a platform for highlighting their regional customs, arts and crafts, music, traditional games, and culinary specialties, attracting tourists from different places and allowing them to communicate directly with the natives' communities, enhancing their travel experiences. The Hornbill Festival attracts both domestic and international tourists, with increasing inflows except during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Karbi Youth Festival has a lower influx of tourists and government funding. The Karbi Youth Festival is the oldest ethnic festival in India's north-eastern region, but it struggles to attract the same level of popularity and tourists from around the world as compared to Hornbill Festival, Nagaland. Tokbi's (2017) study on the tourism industry in Karbi Anglong, Assam, mentioned the need for coordination between public and private organizations for growth, highlighting the importance of a well-developed tourism area. Rongphar & Bhowal (2022) stated that the development of Karbi Anglong's tourist destination relies on the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC). Promoting the tourism sectors of a region can help to expand its economy and attract more visitors. Kro Nihang (2021) revealed that rural tourism and its allied activities have a positive impact on the income level of the local community involved in rural tourism in Karbi Anglong. This paper attempts to focus on the allotment of funds to Karbi Youth Festival and Hornbill Festival by their respective

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governments, the tourist influx during the period of these festivals and also conducted regression analysis for both the festivals to examine the causal relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The study relay on secondary data from various sources, and adopt descriptive statistical analysis. This paper gives an insight into the potentiality of tourism in Karbi Anglong, Assam and Nagaland through Karbi Youth Festival and Hornbill Festival as well as the funding provided by each government for organizing the event and the tourist influx to these festivals.

Keywords: Karbi Youth Festival, Hornbill Festival, Tourism, Tourist, Funds.

1. Introduction:

1.1 Cultural Celebration and Tourism

Cultural celebrations and tourism often go hand in hand, as cultural events and festivities can be major attractions for tourists. These celebrations provide visitors with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the local culture, experience traditions, and gain a deeper understanding of the destination. The UNWTO General Assembly at its 22nd session (2017) defined cultural tourism as a type of tourism activity where the visitor's primary motivation is to learn, discover, experience, and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions and products in a tourism destination. These attractions and products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries, and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs, and traditions." Cultural tourism provides a unique travel experience, allowing visitors to understand the people and places they are visiting. It involves visiting historical and heritage sites, art galleries, theatres, music concerts, and dance performances, as well as trying local dishes and culinary traditions. Tourists also participate in cultural celebrations, engage with the local community, and learn about customs and traditions. They often buy handicrafts, textiles, and other locally made products as souvenirs to support local artisans and remember their cultural experiences. Cultural tourism encourages interactions between tourists and locals, fostering cross-cultural understanding and exchange.

Haolai (2022) and Subadha (2013) both emphasize the northeast India region's natural beauty and cultural diversity as key attractions for tourists. They also highlight the potential for

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tourism to create employment opportunities and generate income. However, Duarah & Mili (2013) highlighted that tourism has the potential to bring economic opportunities to North East India by addressing challenges such as poverty and insurgency through strategic marketing and development efforts. Tourism in North East India has the potential to significantly boost the region's economy through sustainable development and infrastructure improvements, despite transportation challenges. Aprilani et al. (2021) highlighted the government's crucial role in community-based tourism development in Central Lombok. It emphasizes the importance of marketing, accessibility, and training in various aspects of tourism. Also highlighted the benefits of community participation in improving the standard of living, with factors such as opportunity, environmental demands, mutual respect, and perceived benefits driving participation. In New Zealand, public policy has shifted towards using tourism as a tool for regional development, with implications for both economic theory and social action (Shone, 2008). In developing countries, government involvement is key to tourism competitiveness, with a balance needed to avoid free riders (Kubickova, 2016). Tourism can be one of the pillars that should be supported by governments around the world as part of the solution to stimulate economic growth (Jucan & Jucan, 2013). (Chioma, 2023) reveals that increased income boosts government revenues through taxes, contributing to economic growth through government interventions, including direct levies on tourists, indirect taxes, and duties on goods and services. Deb Burman et al. (2007) emphasized the significant potential for both eco and cultural tourism in the N.E. states of India, positioning this activity as a safe means of preserving local and indigenous livelihoods, traditions, and cultural heritage, and also mentioned some of the important areas for culture and eco-tourism that have immense potential in the region. These are tribal cultures—traditional festivals and performing arts; eco-villages, palaces, and temples; Buddhist culture; traditional crafts; museums; and village cultural centres. These include both government and privately owned museums, and may also extend to reserved areas that promote tribal village centres.

Cultural festivals, which offer glimpses into a place's distinctive culture, intricately connect culture and tourism. The Karbi Youth Festival in Karbi Anglong, Assam, and the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland are notable events that commemorate the diverse cultural heritage of the area. The Hornbill Festival, held during 1st - 10th December every year, promotes inter-ethnic interaction and cultural heritage and the Karbi Youth Festival held during 15th – 19th February, showcase the ethnic diversity of the Karbi tribe, promoting their rich cultural identity since

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1974. These festivities highlight local traditions, artistic expressions, handicrafts, music, traditional pastimes, and gastronomic delights. They attract travelers from various regions, enhancing their travel experiences. Tokbi's (2017) study on the tourism industry in Karbi Anglong, Assam, mentioned the need for coordination between public and private organizations for growth, highlighting the importance of a well-developed tourism area. Rongphar & Bhowal (2022) stated that the development of Karbi Anglong's tourist destination relies on the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC). Promoting the tourism sectors of a region can help to expand its economy and attract more visitors. Kro Nihang (2021) revealed that rural tourism and its allied activities have a positive impact on the income level of the local community involved in rural tourism in Karbi Anglong. Tourism in Karbi Anglong, Assam has significant untapped potential, with its natural beauty, diverse culture, and unique cuisine (Ronghang 2022). This potential can be harnessed to generate income and employment opportunities, as seen in the case of Assam's rich biodiversity and wildlife sanctuaries (Das 2012). The development of tourism can also open up opportunities in transportation, accommodation, and consumption, as demonstrated in the case of the Erau traditional event in Tenggarong, Indonesia (Kurniawan 2015). Furthermore, the application of the Community Based Tourism (CBT) concept can empower local communities and increase their income through the development of tourist villages, as seen in the case of the Kabila Bone Subdistrict in Indonesia (Usman 2022). In the context of Kaziranga National Park, a World Heritage site in Assam, tourism has been found to contribute significantly to local livelihoods, with potential for further growth through interventions such as marketing local products and promoting nature trails (Hussain, 2012). As well as, the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland has the potential to promote tourism and bring economic opportunities to the region. Pongen (2021) found that tourists' satisfaction with the festival is influenced by their socio-demographic characteristics, suggesting that targeted marketing and services could enhance their experience. Longkumer (2013) highlighted the festival's role in providing a temporary respite from the region's conflict, making it an attractive destination.

This paper attempts to focus on the allotment of funds to Karbi Youth Festival and Hornbill Festival by their respective governments and the tourist influx during the period of these festivals. The study relay on secondary data sources obtained from various organizations, including the Ministry of Tourism, Tourism Statistics of India, Regional Tourism Satellite Account, Directorate of Tourism of Assam and Nagaland, Economic Survey of Assam and

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Nagaland, Directorate of Tourism, Department of Art & Culture under the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, and the Karbi Cultural Society office. The study has adopted mixed research methods and descriptive statistical analysis. The study also conducted regression analysis for both the festivals to examine the causal relationship between the dependent and independent variables. This paper gives an insight into the potentiality of tourism in Karbi Anglong, Assam and Nagaland through Karbi Youth Festival and Hornbill Festival as well as the funding provided by each government for organizing the event and the tourist influx to these festivals. The Hornbill Festival attracts both domestic and international tourists, with increasing inflows except during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Karbi Youth Festival has a lower influx of tourists and government funding. The regression model suggests that the number of activities that attract tourists during the Hornbill and Karbi Youth Festival is the most significant factor influencing tourist inflows. The other variables in the model do not appear to have statistically significant effects on tourist inflows. The paper also highlighted the adverse effect of Covid-19 pandemic into the tourism industry and some recommendations were also given for the improvement of tourism sector in these regions.

2. Review of Literature:

The literature on tourism in North-East India shows a clear progression from early emphasis on resource potential to more recent focus on experiential and culture-based tourism. Early work by Deb Burman et al. (2007) highlighted the region's vast eco-cultural potential, identifying tribal traditions, festivals, crafts, and natural landscapes as key strengths, while also noting structural weaknesses such as poor connectivity and limited awareness. Building on this foundation, Das and Acharjee (2013) expanded the scope by linking cultural tourism with both rural and urban communities, emphasizing that tourism development in the region is deeply embedded in its socio-cultural fabric. Later, Baruah and Bhattacharyya (2017) observed increasing tourist inflow, particularly among foreign visitors, attributing this growth to scenic beauty, nostalgia, and emerging policy frameworks such as the Act East Policy.

Subsequent studies shifted attention toward specific cultural dimensions and policy interventions shaping tourism. Baruah (2016) introduced culinary tourism as a vital component reflecting local lifestyles and contributing to socio-economic development. Similarly, Zou and Prasain (2017), along with Sarmah and Goswami (2020), emphasized the role of government

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initiatives, branding, and tour operators in promoting the region's diverse cultural resources. This evolution culminates in recent findings by Tushika (2025), who identifies cultural festivals and interactions with tribal communities as the most influential drivers of tourist attraction, indicating a transition from resource-based tourism to experience-oriented and participatory tourism.

Within this broader regional context, the Karbi Youth Festival (KYF) represents a localized example of how cultural events function as both heritage preservation tools and tourism assets. Dattaray (2019) traced its origin in 1974 as an initiative to conserve Karbi traditions, which later evolved into a major cultural platform. Further studies by Nath et al. (2019) and Rongphar (2018) highlight its role in fostering collective identity, youth participation, and continuity of eco-cultural practices through music, dance, crafts, and traditional sports. However, research on tourism potential in Karbi Anglong by Nihang (2021) and Ronghang and Sen (2022) reveals a gap between cultural richness and tourism development, citing limited community participation, inadequate infrastructure, and policy challenges as constraints to tourist inflow.

A comparable yet more commercially developed model is evident in the Hornbill Festival of Nagaland, illustrating the intersection of cultural preservation, commodification, and tourism growth. Early ethnographic insights by Chanchibemo (2015) provide the cultural foundation upon which the festival is built, while Patnaik (2020) critically examines its commodified nature. Empirical evidence from Pongen (2020) demonstrates its economic significance through increased tourist arrivals and contribution to the state economy. More recent studies by Kikon and Gala (2021), Keditsu (2023), and M.V. and Chupuo (2023) position the festival as a dynamic platform for inter-tribal unity, cultural pride, and reciprocal reinforcement between tourism and heritage. Overall, the literature reflects a coherent shift toward understanding festivals as complex spaces where culture, economy, and identity converge in the tourism landscape of North-East India.

3. Study Area

The study focuses on two festivals: the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland and the Karbi Youth Festival in Assam's Karbi Anglong District.

***Hornbill Festival*:** Every year in the first week of December, the Government of Nagaland sponsors the Hornbill Festival to foster intertribal interaction and promote Nagaland's cultural

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richness. Therefore, people commonly refer to it as the "festival of festivals." The event, which bears the name of the beloved and revered Hornbill bird and is held in the magnificent hills of Kohima, is a time of cheerful and colourful celebration in which all Naga tribes participate. Throughout this time, there are tribal representations and rites, as well as an exhibition of ethnic handicrafts, sports, food festivals, and games. Traditional Naga Morungs, arts and crafts exhibitions, food stalls, flower exhibitions, herbal medicine exhibitions, fashion shows, beauty pageants, traditional archery and wrestling, local games, music concerts, intricate dances, and popular songs are just some of the tourist attractions. This will provide tourists with a comprehensive glimpse at Nagaland's people and culture. Visitors will be able to meet the tribes, talk with them, see their villages, and be impressed by their exquisite hospitality and friendliness. Visitors celebrate the events by participating in drinking, eating, singing, dancing, and merrymaking.

Karbi Youth Festival: Every February, from the 15th to the 19th, the sleepy Taralangso valley outskirts of Diphu Town in the Indian state of Assam come alive with the celebrations of the Karbi Youth Festival (KYF), the state's oldest, largest, most colorful, and most vibrant youth festival. The Karbi Youth Festival slowly displays the ethnic diversity of the Karbi tribe during the observances of the Karbi Youth Festival in an effort to promote the rich cultural identity of the tribe. Established in the early 1980s, the Karbi Youth Festival has paved the way for other ethnic tribes to protect and promote their unique identity. Most of the ethnic festivals in north-east India originated in the later part of the 1980s. This makes the Karbi Youth Festival the oldest ethnic festival in India. With over 500 acres of mysterious land space, 5000 ethnic artists, and 800+ stalls and exhibitions, this tribal folk festival brings the folk culture of the Karbi tribe, which lives in various northeastern states of India, as well as other indigenous tribes, into the spotlight.

4. Statement of the Problem

Cultural festivals have the potential to attract tourists as they provide distinctive and captivating experiences that may enrich a traveller’s sojourn in a particular location. The Hornbill Festival in Nagaland and the Karbi Youth Festival in Karbi Anglong are prominent cultural gatherings in their respective areas. These events have the capacity for significant expansion in cultural tourism. It facilitates cultural immersion, boosts visitor numbers, brings economic advantages, encourages cultural interchange, promotes indigenous craftsmanship, provides opportunities

for adventure tourism, and preserves its culture. Both festivals have the capacity to draw tourists from across the globe. However, despite its recognition as one of the oldest ethnic festivals in the North-East area, the Karbi Youth Festival received fewer tourists than the Hornbill Festival. We can attribute this to a lack of extensive advertising and recognition. Furthermore, the Karbi Anglong region's poorly developed infrastructure, transportation, and accommodation facilities hinder its accessibility, similar is the case in Nagaland for Hornbill Festival. In order to enhance tourism, it is crucial to give priority to marketing efforts, secure recognition from the state government, allocate additional funds for festival organization, enhance infrastructure, and present the festival's distinctive cultural experiences to a wider audience. By prioritizing cultural authenticity, accessibility, cooperation, safety, and year-round tourism, both Karbi Youth Festival and Hornbill Festival has the potential to elevate its appeal and establish itself as a significant cultural event that draws tourists from all corners of the globe.

5. Objective of the Study:

1. To examine the fund allocated on karbi Youth Festival and Hornbill festival by the respective government.
2. To analyse the trend of tourist influx during Karbi Youth Festival and Hornbill Festival into the region.
3. To analyse the factors influencing tourist visits to the Hornbill and Karbi youth Festival.

6. Methodology:

The paper has adopted mixed research method. The study depends on secondary data sources such as the Ministry of Tourism, Tourism Statistics of India, Regional Tourism Satellite Account, Directorate of Tourism of Assam and Nagaland, Economic Survey of Assam and Nagaland, Directorate of Tourism, and Department of Art & Culture under the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, office of the Karbi Cultural Society (KCS), among others. The study employs descriptive statistical analysis, displaying the annual percentage change and calculating the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of fund allocation for both the festivals by the respective governments and the influx of tourists during these events. The study conducted regression analysis for both the festivals to examine the causal relationship between

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the dependent and independent variables. The dependent variable for Hornbill festival is number of tourists inflow during Hornbill festivals and independent variables are fund allotment for the Hornbill Festival by the government of Nagaland, number of hotels in Kohima, numbers of restaurants in Kohima, numbers of tourist spots in Nagaland, and numbers of villages in Nagaland that attract tourists. The dependent variable for Karbi Youth festival is numbers of tourist visited during Karbi Youth Festival and the independent variables are grant-in-aid for KYF from Dept. of Art & Culture (KAAC), fund allotment on the Department of tourism, Karbi Anglong, fund allotment on transports by the govt. of Assam, numbers of activity that attract tourist during Karbi Youth Festival, and numbers of tourist attraction spots in Karbi Anglong.

7. Data Analysis

7.1 (Objective:1) Fund allotment on Hornbill Festival and Karbi Youth Festival by their respective government

Table 1 and 2 shows the respective governments' allocation of funds for the Hornbill Festival and Karbi Youth Festival. The description of the table is given below. Additionally, a line diagram illustrates the comparison of financial allotments for both festivals.

Table:1 Fund allotment on Hornbill Festival.

Year	Fund Allotment for Hornbill Festival (Rs. In Crore)	% change	Average Mean (in crore)	Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)
2010-11	1.2		6.43 crore (approx.)	16.45%
2011-12	2.2	83%		
2012-13	3.1	41%		
2013-14	2.5	-19%		
2014-15	5.95	138%		
2015-16	5.582	-6%		
2016-17	10	79%		
2017-18	5	-50%		
2018-19	8	60%		
2019-20	11.52	44%		
2020-21	4.50	-61%		
2021-22	7.50	67%		
2022-23	9	20%		
2023-24	8.50	-6%		
2024-25	6.5	-24%		
2025-26	11.78	81%		

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Source: Nagaland Budget 2010-11 t0 2023-24, Department of Tourism, Nagaland

The above table:1 shows the yearly allocation of funds for the Hornbill Festival from 2010 till 2025. The allocation of funds for the Hornbill Festival has experienced substantial changes throughout the years, ranging from Rs. 1.2 crores in 2010–11 to Rs. 11.52 crores in 2019–20. In 2020–21, there was a significant decline in the allocation, with a drop to 4.50 crores, representing a 61% decrease from the previous year. However, it rebounded in the fiscal year 2021–22 to 7.50 crores, indicating a significant 67% surge. In the fiscal year 2022–23, the allocation increased further to 9 crores, reflecting a 20% growth but a slight decline occurred again in 2023–24 (-6%) and further in 2024–25 (-24%), indicating a temporary reduction in funding. However, in 2025–26, the allocation increased sharply by 81% to ₹11.78 crore, showing recovery and renewed emphasis on the festival. Overall, the Nagaland government's allocation of funds for the Hornbill Festival has a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16.45% over the specified period. The mean average of the fund allocation across the years is Rs.6.43 crores.

Table:2 Grant-in-aid to Karbi Cultural Society for conducting Karbi Youth Festival by the department of Art & Culture (KAAC)

Year	Grant-in-aid for Karbi youth Festival (In crore)	% change	CAGR	Average Mean (in crore)
2012-13	0.01	-	42.5%	0.7431 (approx.)
2013-14	0.004	-60%		
2014-15	0.02	400%		
2015-16	0	-100%		
2016-17	0	0%		
2017-18	0.05	-		
2018-19	0.5	900%		
2019-20	0.35	-30%		
2020-21	0.65	86%		
2021-22	0.5	-23%		

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2022-23	1.05	110%		
2023-24	1.27	21%		
2024-25	5	294%		
2025-26	1	-80%		

Source: Department of Art & Culture, KAAC

The table:2 shows the trend of grant-in-aid provided for the Karbi Youth Festival from 2012–13 to 2025–26, along with percentage changes, average mean, and CAGR. The data reflects a pattern of gradual growth with significant fluctuations, especially in the early and recent years.

In the initial phase (2012–13 to 2016–17), the grant amount was extremely low and inconsistent. It started at just ₹0.01 crore in 2012–13, then declined sharply by 60% in 2013–14. Although there was a temporary rise in 2014–15 (400%), the funding dropped to zero in 2015–16 and remained nil in 2016–17. This indicates a lack of consistent financial support during the early years. From 2017–18 onwards, the funding began to stabilize and increase. The allocation rose to ₹0.05 crore in 2017–18 and then saw a massive jump of 900% in 2018–19, reaching ₹0.5 crore. Between 2019–20 and 2021–22, the funding fluctuated moderately, with a decline in 2019–20 (-30%), followed by an increase in 2020–21 (86%), and another slight decrease in 2021–22 (-23%). Despite these variations, the overall level of funding remained higher than in the initial years. A strong growth phase is observed from 2022–23 onwards. The grant increased significantly to ₹1.05 crore in 2022–23 (110%), followed by a steady rise in 2023–24 (21%). The most notable spike occurred in 2024–25, where funding jumped to ₹5 crore (294%), indicating a major boost or special initiative for the festival.
However, this sharp increase was not sustained, as the grant dropped significantly by 80% in 2025–26, falling back to ₹1 crore. The average mean grant is ₹0.7431 crore, and the CAGR of 42.5% indicates a positive long-term growth trend. While the funding for the Karbi Youth Festival has increased over time, it has been highly irregular, with periods of no funding, sudden spikes, and declines. This reflects inconsistent policy support, though recent years show a stronger commitment towards promoting the festival.

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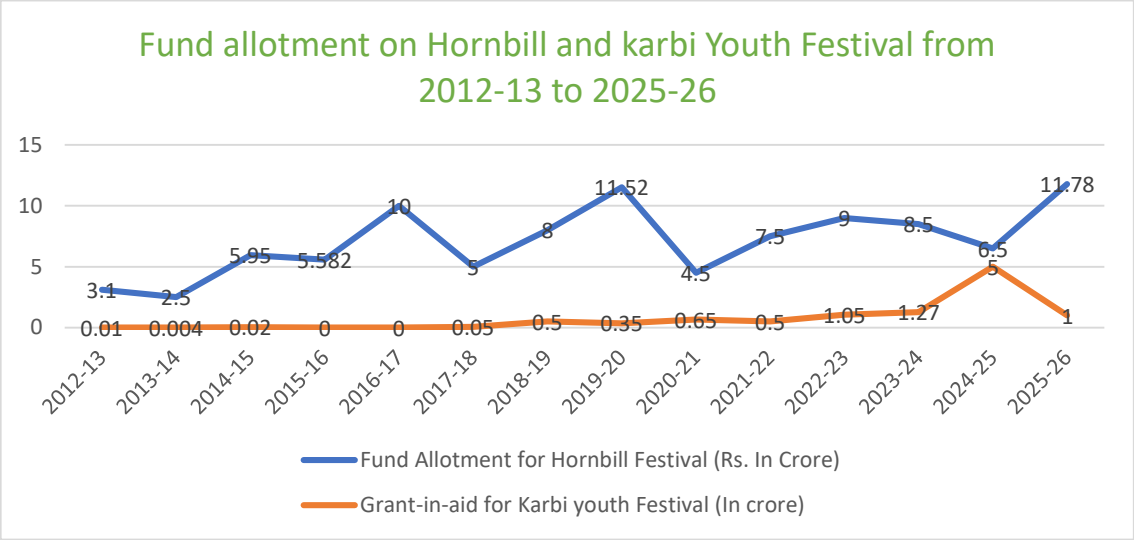


Fig:1 Fund allotment on Hornbill Festival and Karbi Youth Festival by their respective government from the year 2012-13 to 2025-26.

In the above figure 1, the x-axis corresponds to the years, while the y-axis indicates the fund allocation for the Hornbill Festival and Karbi Youth Festival in Indian rupees. The budget allocation's fluctuations throughout time are evident, offering a distinct visual depiction of the financial trends for the event. The grant-in-aid for KYF has a consistent upward trajectory over time, with occasional deviations in some years. The Department of Art and Culture's growing endorsement of the Karbi Youth Festival is evident. The funding for the Hornbill Festival, on the other hand, has undergone notable changes but has generally increased over time. The Hornbill festival received significant financial support in fiscal year 2019–20 and reached its highest point in fiscal year 2025–26. Both events seem to have had a rise in financial backing in recent years, potentially contributing to their expansion and popularity. Overall, the diagram reveals a clear disparity in financial support between the two festivals. While the Hornbill Festival maintains dominant and relatively consistent funding, the Karbi Youth Festival is emerging with growing but still unstable financial backing, especially marked by occasional sharp increases.

7.2 (Objectiv:2) Tourist inflow during Hornbill Festival and Karbi Youth Festival

The number of tourists attending the Hornbill Festival and the karbi Youth Festival is tabulated, interpreted, and compared using a line diagram.

Table:3 Domestic Tourist inflow during Hornbill Festival from 2010 to 2025

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Year	Domestic tourist visits (DTV[1]) in Hornbill Festival	% Change	CAGR	Mean
2010	4969		18%	25001.19
2011	6829	37.4%		
2012	19440	184.7%		
2013	15881	-18.3%		
2014	17044	7.3%		
2015	19969	17.2%		
2016	14962	-25.1%		
2017	38700	158.7%		
2018	37397	-3.4%		
2019	55584	48.6%		
2020	0	-100.0%		
2021	14538	-		
2022	4969	-66%		
2023	37089	646%		
2024	56217	52%		
2025	56431	0%		

Source: Department of Tourism, Nagaland

The table:3 presents the trend of Domestic Tourist Visits (DTV) to the Hornbill Festival from 2010 to 2025, along with percentage changes, mean, and CAGR. The data shows strong long-term growth, but with sharp fluctuations due to external factors. At the beginning of the period, tourist visits were relatively low, with 4,969 visitors in 2010. There was steady growth in the next two years, especially in 2012, which recorded a remarkable increase of 184.7%, indicating a rapid rise in the festival's popularity at the national level. However, this was followed by a decline in 2013 (-18.3%), showing that growth was not consistent. Between 2014 and 2016, the trend remained unstable, with moderate increases (2014 and 2015) followed by a significant drop in 2016 (-25.1%). A major turning point came in 2017, when tourist visits surged dramatically by 158.7%, reaching 38,700 visitors. This suggests improved promotion,

[1] DTV (Domestic Tourist Visit)

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infrastructure, or wider recognition of the festival. The growth continued into 2019, which recorded 55,584 visitors (48.6% increase), marking one of the highest pre-pandemic peaks. However, in 2020, tourist visits dropped to zero (-100%), clearly reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, when tourism activities were halted. Post-pandemic recovery is evident but uneven. In 2021, visits resumed (14,538), though still below pre-pandemic levels. The number again dropped in 2022 (-66%), possibly due to lingering restrictions or reduced travel confidence. A strong rebound occurred in 2023, with an extraordinary increase of 646%, followed by continued growth in 2024 (52%). By 2025, visits stabilized at 56,431, showing almost no change from the previous year, suggesting that the festival has regained and stabilized its tourist base. Over the entire period, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) is 18%, and the computed average (mean) is 25,001.19. Despite major disruptions and year-to-year volatility, particularly due to the pandemic, the general pattern shows that domestic tourism to the Hornbill Festival has expanded significantly over time and remains resilient.

Table:4 Numbers *of Domestic tourists' inflow during Karbi Youth Festival (KYF) from 2010 to 2026*

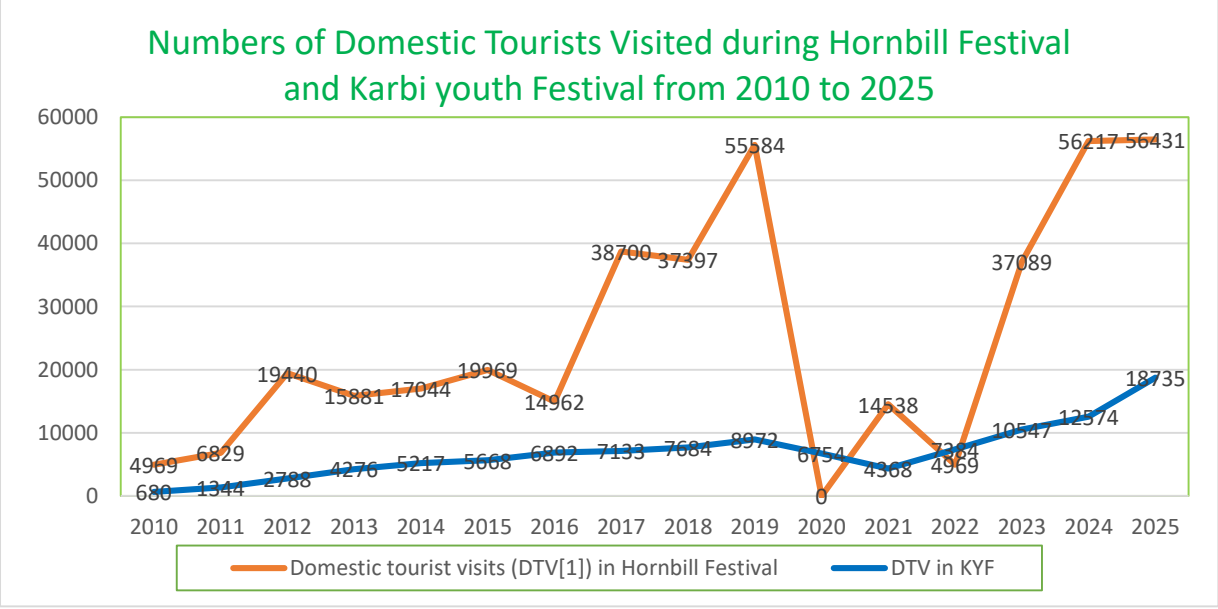
Year	**DTV in KYF[2]**	**%change**	**Mean**	**CAGR**
2010	680		7782.647	24%
2011	1344	98%		
2012	2788	107%		
2013	4276	53%		
2014	5217	22%		
2015	5668	9%		
2016	6892	22%		
2017	7133	3%		
2018	7684	8%		
2019	8972	17%		
2020	6754	-25%		
2021	4368	-35%		
2022	7384	69%		
2023	10547	43%		
2024	12574	19%		
2025	18735	49%		
2026	21289	13.6%		

[2] KYF (Karbi Youth Festival)

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Source: Directorate of Tourism, KAAC and Organization of Karbi Cultural Society, Taralangso

Table:4 shows the number of domestic visitors to the Karbi Youth Festival from 2010 to 2026, as well as the percentage change compared to the previous year. The domestic tourist visits to Karbi Youth Festival had substantial growth throughout the years, rising from 680 in 2010 to 21289 in 2026. The annual percentage change in tourist visits exhibits volatility, encompassing both positive and negative variations. We observed significant periods of increase in 2011 (98%), 2012 (107%), and 2019 (17%), indicating robust expansion during those years. There was a period of two years, 2020 and 2021, during which there was a drop in economic performance. The decline in 2020 was 25%, while in 2021 it was 35%. The COVID-19 pandemic had a direct impact on this decline. In 2022, there was a significant surge of 69% in visitor arrivals, possibly suggesting a rebound from the pandemic or heightened attraction to the region and continued to rise in 2023 (43%) and 2024 (19%). A major surge is seen in 2025 (49%), followed by a moderate increase in 2026 (13.6%), indicating stabilization at a higher level of tourist inflow. The average mean number of domestic tourist visitors is 7,782.65, which shows a substantial overall turnout over the years. The CAGR of 24% indicates a very strong long-term growth rate, highlighting that the festival has expanded rapidly despite temporary setbacks.



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Figure:2 Numbers of Domestic Tourists Visited during Hornbill Festival and Karbi Youth Festival from the year 2010 to 2025

In Figure 2, the x-axis shows the years, while the y-axis depicts the number of domestic tourist influxes during the Hornbill Festival and Karbi Youth Festival from 2010 to 2025. The data visualizations clearly illustrate the fluctuations in the number of domestic tourists over time, specifically highlighting the trends during festivals. Over time, both events have consistently seen a rise in domestic tourists, indicating a steady growth in popularity. The Hornbill Festival garners a greater influx of tourists in comparison to the Karbi Youth Festival. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry saw an enormous drop in the number of tourists for both events in 2020. The Hornbill Festival has routinely garnered a greater number of attendees in recent years compared to the Karbi Youth Festival. In 2019, both events experienced a remarkable year, with a substantial surge in visitor attendance. Overall, the data indicates that both the Karbi Youth Festival and the Hornbill Festival are well-liked by domestic tourists, with the latter being more favored and seeing a substantial increase in recent years.

Table: 5 Numbers of Foreign tourists visited during Hornbill Festival from the year 2010 to 2025

Year	**Foreign tourist visits (FTV)[3] in Hornbill Festival**	**% Change**	**CAGR**	**Average Mean**
2010-11	284	-	67%	1479.3751
2011-12	610	114.8%		
2012-13	808	32.5%		
2013-14	1457	80.3%		
2014-15	1360	-6.7%		
2015-16	1144	-15.9%		
2016-17	1646	43.9%		
2017-18	2401	45.9%		
2018-19	2702	12.5%		
2019-20	3015	11.6%		
2020-21	0	-100.0%		
2021-22	54	-98.2%		
2022-23	1026	1800.0%		
2023-24	2108	105%		
2024-25	2527	20%		
2025	2528	0%		

[3] FTV (Foreign Tourist Visit)

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Source: Department of Tourism, Nagaland

Table:5 indicates that the Hornbill Festival had a substantial rise in the number of foreign tourists visiting between 2010 and 2025. Specifically, there was a notable increase from 284 tourists in 2010 to 610 tourists in 2011. Nevertheless, the number of visitors declined to 1360 in 2014, then saw a 6.7% decrease in 2015, a 15.9% decrease in 2016, a 45.9% increase in 2017, and a 12.5% increase in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a complete cessation of guest visits, necessitating virtual events in 2020. In 2021, there was a little recovery with 54 international tourists, representing a significant decrease of 98.2%. The Oting massacre in 2021 reduced the festival's duration to four days. There was an extraordinary increase of 1800% in 2022, followed by strong growth in 2023 (105%) and 2024(20%). By 2025, the number of foreign tourists stabilized at around 2,528, indicating that the festival has nearly regained its pre-pandemic international tourist base. The average mean number of foreign tourists is 1,479.38, and the CAGR of 62% suggests a very high long-term growth rate. Despite temporary declines and the severe impact of the pandemic, the overall trend demonstrates that the Hornbill Festival has increasingly attracted international tourists and established itself as a significant global cultural event.

Table:6 Numbers of Foreign Tourist Arrival during Karbi Youth Festival (KYF) from 2010 to 2026

Year	**Foreign tourist visits (FTV) in KYF**	**%Change**	**Mean**	**CAGR**
2010	5		11.294	12%
2011	7	40%		
2012	10	43%		
2013	8	-20%		
2014	14	75%		
2015	17	21%		
2016	10	-41%		
2017	14	40%		
2018	19	36%		
2019	24	26%		
2020	0	-100%		
2021	0	0%		
2022	12	-50%		
2023	17	42%		
2024	13	-24%		
2025	15	15%		
2026	18	20%		

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Source: Directorate of Tourism, KAAC and Organization of Karbi Cultural Society, Taralangso

Table:6 above displays the number of foreign tourist visits (FTV) to KYF from 2010 to 2025, as well as the percentage change in comparison to the previous year, compound annual growth rate (CAGR) and average mean. The number of international visitor arrivals to KYF exhibits year-to-year variations, encompassing both positive and negative percentage movements. In both 2020 and 2021, there was a complete absence of international tourist visitors. This is a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Significant periods of increases in international tourist interest in KYF occurred in 2014 (75%), 2015 (21%), 2017 (40%), and 2018 (36%). There were two years of substantial decline in 2013 with a fall of 20%, and in 2016 with a decline of 41%. A variety of factors, including economic conditions or changing perceptions of the destination, contribute to the decline in overseas travel. A major disruption is clearly visible in 2020 and 2021, when foreign tourist visits dropped to zero. This is directly linked to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which halted international travel. Post-pandemic recovery begins in 2022, though the growth is uneven. The number rises again to 12 visitors in 2022, followed by an increase in 2023 (42%). However, fluctuations continue, with a decline in 2024 (-24%) and moderate increases in 2025 (15%) and 2026 (20%). This suggests that while recovery is underway, foreign tourist inflow is still not fully stable. The average mean of 11.29 visitors indicates that foreign participation remains relatively low compared to domestic tourism. The CAGR of 12% shows a positive but modest long-term growth rate.

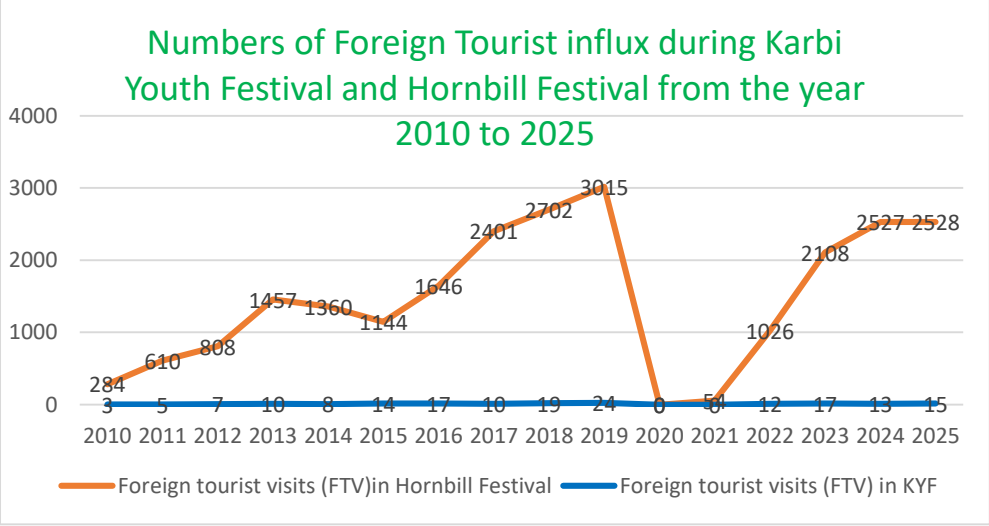


Figure:3 Numbers of Foreign Tourists influx during Karbi Youth Festival and Hornbill Festival 2010-2025

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The horizontal axis corresponds to the years in Figure 3, while the vertical axis shows the number of foreign tourists attending the Hornbill Festival and Karbi Youth Festival between 2010 and 2025. Both events saw a gradual increase in the number of international tourists over time, with occasional variations. The Hornbill Festival typically draws a much higher number of international tourists in comparison to the Karbi Youth Festival. Analysis of the data from 2020 and 2021 indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the tourism industry, resulting in a complete absence of foreign tourists attending the festivals in both years. After this disruption, the festival experiences a rapid recovery, with foreign tourist numbers rising again from 2022 and reaching around 2,528 by 2025, indicating a strong rebound in global interest. Comparatively, the gap between the two festivals is very wide in terms of foreign tourist inflow. The Hornbill Festival shows high growth, larger scale, and quicker recovery, while the Karbi Youth Festival remains limited in attracting international tourists, though it shows gradual improvement over time. The diagram indicates that the Hornbill Festival dominates international tourism with strong growth and resilience, whereas the Karbi Youth Festival is still developing in terms of global visibility, with slow but steady progress in attracting foreign visitors.

8. (objective:3) Regression Model and Analysis

Regression analysis is a statistical tool to investigate relationships among variables. Usually, the investigator seeks to ascertain the causal effect of one variable on another; here, the study tries to analyse the factors influencing tourists' inflows during the Hornbill Festival of Nagaland and the Karbi Youth Festival of Karbi Anglong district, Assam.

8.1 Hornbill Festival

The theoretical model for Hornbill Festival can be written as

$$Y_{HF} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \mu i \ldots\ldots. (1)$$

Were,

Number of Tourists Visited During the Hornbill Festival (Y_{HF})

X_1 = Fund allotment for the Hornbill Festival by the government of Nagaland

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X_2 = Number of hotels in Kohima

X_3 = Numbers of restaurants in Kohima

X_4 = Numbers of tourist spots in Nagaland

X_5 = Numbers of Villages in Nagaland that Attract Tourists

X_6 = Numbers of activities that attract tourists during Hornbill Festivals

μ_i = the noise or error term

where β_0 is a constant term (also known as an exogenous term). It represents the expected value for the dependent variable if all of the independent variables are 0. β_1, β_2, β_3……β_n are known as the coefficient of determination and measures the exact relationship among the variables under study (it also represents the correlation among the variables). The regression tool computes such coefficients. μ_i is known as the noise or error term.

Table:7 Multiple Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Tourist Visits to the Hornbill Festival

Table: 7.1 Model Summary

Statistics	**Value**
Multiple R	0.9217
R Square	0.8495
Adjusted R Square	0.7367
Standard Error	9815.08
Observations	15

Table: 7.2 ANOVA for Regression Model

Source	**df**	**SS**	**MS**	**F**
Regression	6	4,351,526,675	725,254,445.9	7.5284
Residual	8	770,686,166.4	96,335,770.81	
Total	14	5,122,212,842		

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Table: 7.3 Coefficients of Predictors on Number of Tourists Visited During the Hornbill Festival

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	-75079.52	25809.59	-2.909	0.0196
Fund allotment on Hornbill Festival	14.82	1454.05	0.010	0.9921
No. of Hotels at Kohima	1803.74	2204.81	0.818	0.4370
No. of Restaurants at Kohima	-190.58	246.47	-0.773	0.4616
No. of Tourist Spots in Nagaland	445.42	1119.37	0.398	0.7011
No. of Tourist Villages in Nagaland	730.03	2229.31	0.327	0.7517

According to the analysis, the multiple R is 0.9217, which shows a strong positive linear relationship between predetermine and the dependent variable, with approximately (R^2 = 0.8495) of the variances explained by the predictors. The adjusted R square is 0.7367 suggests that after adjusting for the number of predictors, the model still explains about 73.67% of the variation, indicating a reasonably good fit. The ANOVA results reveal that the regression model is statistically significant overall, with an F-value of 7.5284 and a Significance F value of 0.00595, which is less than the 0.05 significance level. This confirms that the independent variables jointly have a significant effect on tourist visits. Among all explanatory variables, only number of tourist activities in hornbill festival has a statistically significant positive effect on tourist visits, with a coefficient of 2692.13 and a p-value of 0.0018 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that an increase of one tourist activity is associated with an average increase of about 2692 tourist visits, holding other variables constant. This suggests that diversification and expansion of festival activities play a major role in attracting visitors. In contrast, other variables such as fund allotment on hornbill festival, number of hotels at Kohima, number of restaurants at Kohima, number of tourist spots in Nagaland and number of tourist villages in Nagaland were found to be statistically insignificant, as their p-values exceed 0.05. This implies that, within this model, these variables do not independently have a significant effect on tourist arrivals. The negative coefficient for number of restaurants at Kohima (-190.58) suggests an inverse relationship, but since the variable is statistically insignificant, no meaningful conclusion can be drawn from it. Thus, the regression model suggests that the number of tourist activities during the Hornbill Festival is the most significant factor influencing tourist inflows. The other variables in the model do not appear to have statistically significant effects on tourist numbers.

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However, it's crucial to take into account other factors like marketing efforts, accessibility, and cultural factors, which may not be part of this model but could potentially impact tourist inflows.

8.2 Karbi Youth Festival

The theoretical model for Karbi Youth Festival can be written as,

$$Y_{KYF} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X4_{\,4} + \beta_5 X_5 + \mu i \ldots\ldots. (1)$$

Were,

Y_{KYF}= Numbers of Tourist visited during Karbi Youth Festival

X_1 = Grant-in-aid for KYF from Dept. of Art & Culture (KAAC) in Lakhs

X_2 = Fund allotment on the Department of tourism, Karbi Anglong (in Lakhs)

X_3 = Fund allotment on Transports by the govt. of Assam in lakhs

X_4= Numbers of activity that attract tourist during Karbi Youth Festival

X_5 = Numbers of Tourist Attraction spots in Karbi Anglong

μi = The noise or error term

β_0 is a constant term (also known as an exogenous term). It represents the expected value for the dependent variable if all of the independent variables are 0. β_1, β_2, β_3.....β_n are known as the coefficient of determination and measures the exact relationship among the variables under the study (It also represents the correlation among the variables). These coefficients are computed by the regression tool. μi is known as the noise or error term.

Table:8 Multiple Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Tourist Visits to the Karbi Youth Festival.

Table:8.1 Model Summary

Statistics	**Value**
Multiple R	0.9692
R Square	0.9393
Adjusted R Square	0.8959
Standard Error	808.69
Observations	13

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Table:8.2 ANOVA for Regression

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	5	70,832,731.59	14,166,546.32	21.662	0.000398
Residual	7	4,577,879.18	653,982.74		
Total	12	75,410,610.77			

Table:8.3 Coefficients of Predictors on Numbers of Tourist visited during Karbi Youth Festival

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	-16392.05	3009.12	-5.447	0.00096
Grant-in-aid for KYF (KAAC)	-4.87	9.90	-0.492	0.6380
Fund allotment (Tourism Dept., Karbi Anglong)	0.279	4.82	0.058	0.9555
Fund allotment (Transport, Assam Govt.)	0.0047	0.0045	1.035	0.3351
No. of Tourist Activities (KYF)	**425.61**	91.08	**4.673**	**0.0023**
No. of Tourist Attraction Spots	138.25	137.00	1.009	0.3465

The regression analysis was conducted to examine the factors influencing tourist visits to the Karbi Youth Festival. The model shows a very strong fit, with a Multiple R value of 0.9692, indicating a strong correlation between dependent and independent variables. The R^2 value of 0.9393 implies that 93.93% of the variation in tourist visits is explained by the variables included in the model. The Adjusted R^2 (0.8959) further confirms that the model remains highly reliable even after adjusting for the number of predictors. The ANOVA results indicate that the model is statistically significant, with an F-value of 21.662 and a Significance F of 0.000398 $p < 0.05$. This confirms that the independent variables collectively have a significant impact on tourist visits. Among all variables, Number of Tourist Activities during the Karbi Youth Festival is the only statistically significant factor $p = 0.0023$. Its positive coefficient 425.61 indicates that an increase in tourist activities leads to a substantial rise in tourist visits. Specifically, one additional activity is associated with an increase of approximately 426 visitors, holding other variables constant. This highlights the critical role of event diversification and engagement in attracting tourists. Other variables such as Grant-in-aid for KYF, Fund allocation by Tourism Department, Transport funding, Number of tourist attraction

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spots are statistically insignificant $p > 0.05$. This suggests that these factors do not independently influence tourist visits within this model. The grant-in-aid variable shows a negative coefficient -4.87, but since it is statistically insignificant, it does not carry meaningful interpretation.

9. Major findings of the study:

The findings from the analysis are as follows:

(i) From the study it has been found that over the years, the number of foreign tourists increased at both festivals, with fluctuations. The Hornbill Festival consistently attracted a significantly larger number of foreign tourists compared to the Karbi Youth Festival. The data for 2020 and 2021 shows that the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on tourism, with no recorded foreign tourists for both festivals during those years. In 2022, there was a notable increase in the number of foreign tourists visiting both festivals, suggesting a potential rebound in international tourism. Overall, the data indicates that both the Karbi Youth Festival and the Hornbill Festival have been successful in attracting foreign tourists over the years, with the Hornbill Festival being more popular among international visitors. The data also shows the impact of external factors, such as the pandemic.

(ii) The grant-in-aid for KYF shows a general increasing trend over time, with fluctuations in some years. It indicates the Department of Art and Culture's increasing support for the Karbi Youth Festival. In contrast, the funds for the Hornbill Festival have also increased over the years, with significant fluctuations. The Hornbill festival received substantial funding in 2016–17 and reached its peak in 2025–26. Both festivals appear to have received increased financial support in recent years, which may have contributed to their growth and popularity. Overall, the data suggests that both festivals have received varying levels of financial support, and this funding has generally increased in recent years, indicating the importance of these festivals in the region and their potential for further development.

(iii) The regression model suggests that the number of activities that attract tourists during the Hornbill Festival is the most significant factor influencing tourist

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inflows. The other variables in the model do not appear to have statistically significant effects on tourist numbers.

(iv) According to the regression model, the number of activities that attract tourists during the Karbi Youth Festival is the most significant factor influencing tourist inflows. The other variables in the model do not appear to have statistically significant effects on tourist numbers.

10. Conclusion

Cultural celebrations are powerful expressions of a community's identity, values, and heritage. In a region as ethnically diverse as Northeast India, festivals do more than preserve tradition They create bridges between culture and tourism, offering visitors an immersive experience while generating livelihood opportunities for local communities (Das,2012). Among the many cultural events of the region, the Hornbill Festival of Nagaland and the Karbi Youth Festival of Karbi Anglong, Assam, stand out as flagship celebrations that showcase indigenous art, music, crafts, rituals, and community life to the wider world. This study undertook a comparative analysis of these two festivals to understand their role in promoting cultural tourism and to identify the factors that influence tourist inflow. Both festivals attract domestic and international tourists and serve as platforms for inter-ethnic interaction and cultural exchange. However, field observations and secondary data indicate that the Hornbill Festival enjoys stronger branding, higher footfall, and greater government support, while the Karbi Youth Festival, despite its rich cultural content, struggles with lower visibility and limited tourist participation. The key finding of this study is that the number and diversity of tourist activities during the festivals is the most influential factor in attracting visitors. Tourists are drawn to experiences. They come for live performances, hands-on workshops, ethnic food, adventure sports, craft bazaars, and community interactions. When festivals offer a wider variety of engaging activities, tourist numbers rise substantially. In contrast, factors such as grant-in-aid, tourism department funding, transport allocations, and the presence of nearby attraction spots did not show a direct impact on tourist visits. This suggests that financial investment alone cannot guarantee tourism growth unless it translates into meaningful, experience-based programming for visitors. For the Karbi Youth Festival in particular, this insight is crucial. The festival already has strong cultural depth and community participation. What it needs is strategic diversification of events to enhance tourist engagement. Curated activity calendars, interactive village experiences, youth-led cultural showcases, and better promotion of unique

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Karbi traditions could transform visitor experience and increase footfall. In essence, the study highlights that cultural tourism thrives on participation, not just preservation. Funding and infrastructure matter, but they must serve the larger goal of creating memorable, authentic experiences. By prioritizing innovative and inclusive tourist activities, festivals like the Karbi Youth Festival can achieve greater recognition, sustainable tourism growth, and stronger economic benefits for local communities while safeguarding their cultural heritage for future generations.

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