

Impact of Provincial Culture on Coastal Karnataka Entrepreneurship

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Abstract:

Provincial culture shapes regional economic behaviour, social cohesion, and institutional adaptation within sub-national administrative boundaries. Culture shapes how we think, act, and relate to others by providing shared values, norms, and beliefs. The culture of India is not a single and each province (state and region) possesses its own distinct language, history, the long-standing customs, cooking methods, and recipes, attire, and art forms heavily influenced by its geography and historical migrations. Coastal Karnataka comprising the districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada, is widely recognized as one of India's most vibrant entrepreneurial hubs. The region's unique provincial culture shaped by its geography, diverse religious demographics, historical trade links, and socio-economic institutions which plays a foundational role in driving its distinct brand of entrepreneurship. This study sought to shed light on the impact of distinct language, history, the long-standing customs, cooking methods, recipes, attire on entrepreneurship. This study highlights the need for and impact of provincial culture on the region's entrepreneurial landscape. The aim of the present study is to understand the coastal culture which deeply shapes modern business and economic growth across coastal Karnataka. The present paper is based on the primary and secondary data. To have the understanding of provincial insight and opportunities in coastal Karnataka field study was conducted

Keywords: Provincial, Culture, Coastal, Entrepreneurship, Economic Development.

Introduction

The culture of India is not a single and each province (state and region) possesses its own distinct language, history, the long-standing customs, cooking methods, and recipes, attire, and art forms heavily influenced by its geography and historical migrations. Coastal Karnataka comprising the districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada, is widely recognized as one of India's most vibrant entrepreneurial hubs. Coastal development is instrumental in economic development of the nation. There are wide opportunities in coastal areas, by undertaking entrepreneurial initiatives, poverty, unemployment, regional imbalances can be reduced. There are various opportunities in coastal areas which can lead to economic,

social and psychological empowerment. Cottage industries have historically played a vital role in sustaining rural livelihoods and preserving cultural heritage in the coastal Karnataka. In coastal Karnataka, large industries along with small-scale industries such as coir production, cashew processing, pot making, tiles, beedi rolling, fishery, handlooms and wood carving continue to serve as significant sources of income and employment. Undertaking productive activities like starting up of industries in coastal area can be considered as coastal entrepreneurship which gives job opportunities to local people. There are solutions for coastal poverty, unemployment and regional imbalances by undertaking entrepreneurial activities in coastal areas.

Provincial culture shapes regional economic behaviour, social cohesion, and institutional adaptation within sub-national administrative boundaries. Culture shapes how we think, act, and relate to others by providing shared values, norms, and beliefs. The region's unique provincial culture shaped by its geography, diverse religious demographics, historical trade links, and socio-economic institutions which plays a foundational role in driving its distinct brand of entrepreneurship. The coastal Karnataka region (often referred to as Tulu Nadu and Uttara Kannada) serves as a unique example of how sub-national provincial culture directly drives a distinct, highly resilient brand of entrepreneurship and institutional adaptation.

Objectives of the study

1. To understand the various factors which affects the regional entrepreneurship in coastal Karnataka.
2. To analyse the coastal culture which deeply shapes entrepreneurship and economic growth across coastal Karnataka.
3. To study the impact of provincial culture on the coastal Karnataka entrepreneurship.

Methodology

The present paper is based on the primary and secondary data. To have the understanding of problems and opportunities in coastal entrepreneurship, field study was conducted. Primary data was collected through the interviewing the coastal entrepreneurs. The study was conducted in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada district. Secondary data was collected from various source.

Factors influencing entrepreneurial practices in coastal Karnataka

- 1. The Maritime Gateway:** Hemmed in by the Western Ghats on one side and the Arabian Sea on the other, the region was naturally pushed toward maritime trade.
- 2. Global Exposure:** Centuries of trade links with the Middle East, and Southeast Asia developed a culture that was comfortable with risk, cross-border negotiation, and diverse populations long before modern globalization.
- 3. Community Led Finance:** The region's high social cohesion and mutual trust gave birth to modern Indian banking. It is the birthplace of five major financial institutions: Canara Bank, Syndicate Bank, Corporation Bank, Vijaya Bank, and Karnataka Bank.

4. Chit Funds and Co-operative Societies: Before formal banking, indigenous financial institutions like Chit Funds and agricultural co-operatives flourished because of deep-rooted community norms regarding honor, financial obligation, and shared risk.

5. Mobility as a Norm: This geographic reality made migration (both internal and international, particularly to the Mumbai and Gulf countries) a core economic strategy, funneling capital and global business insights back into the local economy.

6. The "Hotelier" Phenomenon: The Tuluva and Konkani communities transformed Indian food culture by pioneering the ubiquitous "Udupi Hotels" and Mangalorean restaurants across India, turning a community-specific culinary tradition into a scalable, highly disciplined franchise-style business model.

7. Multicultural Synergy: The co-existence of Tuluva Hindus, Konkani Catholics, Navayath and Beary Muslims, and migrated diverse population created distinct but complementary economic niches.

8. Low-Cost Health and Education Hubs: Instead of relying solely on state machinery, local philanthropists and entrepreneurs built world-class educational and medical hubs.

9. The Education-Enterprise: Early cultural emphasis on literacy, matrilineal social structures and social reforms created a highly literate populace. This institutional adaptation turned human capital into the region's primary export.

10. High Literacy and the Academic Talent Hub: The twin coastal districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi boast some of the highest Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) and literacy rates in India.

Culturally shaped enterprise in the coastal Karnataka and its impact

- **Fisheries and Seafood Export**

Mangaluru serves as the historical fisheries hub of Karnataka, anchoring commercial fish landing, ice plants, cold storage networks, and marine export businesses. The deep-sea fishing operations are traditionally dominated by the Mogaveera community, who are indigenous Tulu-speaking Hindus. The Experts of the Sea known historically as the "Sons of the Sea," the Mogaveeras have centuries of experience navigating the Arabian Sea. They own and crew the majority of the deep-sea trawlers, purse seine boats, and traditional motorized vessels that stay out in the high seas for days to gather the catch.

Once the boats dock at major local ports like the Mangaluru, Malpe and Karwar fishing harbour (Dakke) in Bunder, the commercial trade and distribution network is heavily driven by the local people especially Muslim community in Mangalore, specifically the Bearys. They primarily act as the primary auctioneers, wholesale buyers, and bulk distributors. They manage the logistics of transport, operating refrigerated trucks that supply the fish to internal parts of Karnataka, neighboring states, and international export processing units. While Muslim traders lead the large-scale commercial wholesale side, the final local retail markets and doorstep selling feature both local Muslim vendors and traditional Mogaveera women, known locally for their prominent role in retail fish marketing. This economic interdependence creates a massive supply chain where the seafaring skills of Hindu fishermen and the commercial acumen of Muslim traders combine to fuel coastal region thriving blue economy.

This reflects the unique, traditional socio-economic synergy that drives the fishing industry in coastal Mangaluru and the broader Tulu Nadu region. The sector functions through a deep-rooted division of labor between two prominent local communities.

- **Jasmine (also known as Shankarapura Mallige)**

The history of this jasmine strain dates back to 1934. Reverend Basil Salvadore Peres, the parish priest of St. John Evangelist Church in Pangla, noticed that local families were struggling due to the infertile, laterite, and hilly soil. He brought jasmine saplings from Bhatkal and distributed them among local Catholic families to create a sustainable livelihood.

Today, thousands of Christian households still harvest these delicate buds before dawn every morning. Once the buds are hand-picked, they are traditionally bound tightly together using plantain (banana) plant fiber instead of ordinary cotton thread. This method was specifically chosen decades ago so the flowers would remain ritually pure and acceptable for Hindu religious practices. Local agents, wholesale merchants, and retail flower sellers comprising Muslim, Hindu, and Christian traders collect these bound units (chendus and attes) and distribute them across local markets, nearby cities like Udupi and Mangaluru, and even export them globally.

While the jasmine is used by all communities for weddings and personal adornment, its largest steady demand comes from Hindu temples and household pooja rituals. Because of its unusually strong, sweet fragrance and rigid bud structure that opens beautifully, it is the premier choice for offering to deities during grand festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi, Navratri, and local temple fairs.

This cross-community supply chain is often highlighted by sociologists and cultural commentators as a symbol of unity, demonstrating how distinct religious communities come together to sustain a thriving micro-economy. Describing the beautiful, real-world example of communal harmony in coastal Karnataka found in the cultivation of Udupi Mallige (also known as Shankarapura Jasmine). This unique geographical and cultural network spans across neighboring villages like Shirva, Shankarapura, Pangla, and Bantakal.

- **Beedi Rolling**

Coastal Karnataka is a major home-based cottage industry that traditionally supports over two lakh workers, primarily women in rural and semi-urban areas. Over 90% of the laborers are home-based women workers who roll beedis on a piece-rate basis using raw materials from local contractors. It serves as a crucial source of supplementary income for economically backward households. Individual workers typically roll between 800 and 1,000 beedis per day using tendu leaves and tobacco flakes. Operations are heavily concentrated in Dakshina Kannada (including Mangaluru and Bantwal) and Udupi districts. West Bengal), and stricter anti-tobacco regulations.

Workers face significant occupational risks, including musculoskeletal pain, respiratory issues like asthma and tuberculosis, and toxic exposure to unburnt tobacco. Many rollers are classified as unregistered workers, leaving them vulnerable to inadequate social security benefits and fluctuating market conditions. Although a significant percentage of workers view the occupation as economically insecure, many older

rollers find it difficult to transition to alternative careers due to age, lack of formal education, and limited vocational training options. Workers are divided into registered passbook holders (eligible for provident fund, pensions, and bonuses) and unregistered notebook holders (earning direct cash without statutory benefits).

The cultural impact of the industry is deeply tied to the financial independence it brought to backward, rural, and minority communities. For decades, women from diverse backgrounds gathered on a single veranda to roll beedis together. As their hands rhythmically cut tendu leaves and rolled tobacco flakes, the jagali (the open veranda of traditional coastal homes) became a space for sharing local folklore, community news, and family update.

- **Tile factory**

Mangalore tiles are traditional red clay roofing tiles made in Mangalore, India, that use an interlocking design to shed heavy rainwater and keep buildings cool. Traditional Mangalore tiles are interlocking red clay roofing tiles that became an architectural icon of coastal and southern India. Renowned for their distinct reddish-brown terracotta hue, eco-friendliness, and unique climate-responsive engineering, they have protected heritage homes, villas, and public structures for over a century. The industry was founded in 1865 by a German missionary named Georg Plebst. He belonged to the Basel Mission, a Swiss-German Christian missionary society operating on the Malabar Coast. The first factory, The Basel Mission Tile Factory, opened in Jeppu, Mangalore. The design became immensely successful and was exported worldwide to Sri Lanka, Myanmar, East Africa, Australia, and Europe. Traditional homes, known locally as "tile houses," feature pitched roofs clad in these red terracotta tiles, complemented by red oxide floors and thick laterite walls. Traditional handmade tiles often varied in size and quality. Heavy monsoon rains, strong winds, and moisture demanded more durable roofing solutions.

- **Agro-Processing & Food Products**

Coastal Karnataka is a thriving hub for agro-processing and food products, driven by its abundant plantation crops (coconut, arecanut, cashew) and rich marine resources. Rural and semi-urban entrepreneurs capitalize on local agricultural yields, producing niche packaged goods like instant spice mixes (masala powders), traditional snacks, and catering services. Agro-based and marine crafts **which** Includes historical mainstays like cashew processing, coir production, handlooms, and fisheries-based crafts. Major food crops grown here include black gram, green gram, sugarcane, cocoa, pepper and vanilla. Coastal Karnataka is an agro-processing and food production powerhouse that thrives on its unique geographic and agricultural advantages. Local entrepreneurs and traditional industries leverage both land and marine resources to drive the region's economy. Rural and semi-urban entrepreneurs focus on high-demand items like instant spice mixes (masala powders).

. In 1920, the Maiya brothers left their hometown of Parampalli (a small village near Udupi in Coastal Karnataka) and migrated to Bengaluru in search of employment. They initially worked as cooks before founding what would eventually become the iconic MTR culinary empire.

- **Pottery**

Pot making entrepreneurship in coastal Karnataka (spanning the Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada districts) is currently undergoing a structural transformation. Pot making culture in coastal Karnataka is deeply rooted in the hereditary traditions of the Kulala or Kumbara community, who have practiced pottery and shaping clay for generations. Pottery serves as a flexible, home-based enterprise that supports women's economic participation and self-reliance. Artisans and modern micro-enterprises are expanding beyond traditional cooking vessels to high-demand lifestyle goods like garden pots, designer tableware, and home décor. Long before industrialization, traditional potters in Tulu Nadu and surrounding coastal areas crafted basic domestic utensils and semi-cylindrical roofing tiles (kavelu) to withstand heavy monsoons. Driven by green consumerism and the "Vocal for Local" movement, the region's pottery ecosystem has shifted from a struggling cottage industry into a viable modern entrepreneurial landscape.

- **Glass bangles**

The traditional occupation of the Balegar Jogi community in the coastal Karnataka is selling glass bangles. In the Kannada language, the word "Bale" means bangle, and "Balegar" refers to a bangle-seller. Historically, because they did not own permanent shops, members of this community (such as the Balegar Jogis or Balegarthis) would travel door-to-door or visit local village fairs, markets, and temple festivals to sell their bangles. Every year ahead of prominent regional festivals like the Uppunda and Koteshwara Kodi festivals members of the community go door-to-door dressed in traditional attire, sounding their instruments, offering spiritual invitations. While the ritualistic selling of glass bangles is preserved during annual temple fairs, most modern members of the community have shifted away from nomadic trade into agriculture, local businesses, or modern corporate employment.

- **Areca leaf plate making business**

Arecanut leaf plates in coastal Karnataka are eco-friendly, biodegradable disposable tableware made from the naturally fallen leaf sheaths of the areca palm. Individual plates generally range from ₹1.25 to ₹10 depending on the size, depth, and design (such as round, square, or partitioned plates). Traditionally, these fallen sheaths specifically the leaf sheath or covering of the areca flower were gathered to serve large crowds during temple festivals, traditional rituals, and in many events. Today, traditional utility has transitioned into a modern green movement. Artisans and small-scale units across Shivamogga, Dakshina Kannada, and surrounding districts use heat-moulding machines without chemicals or glues to shape the rigid sheaths into durable, water-resistant, and 100% biodegradable plates and bowls.

- **Coconut oil mills**

Often historically and culturally referred to as the karavali region, is one of India's most prominent hubs for high-quality coconut oil production. Abundant rain, fertile coastal soil, and dense coconut plantations supply this thriving agro-industry. Factories in this region span from highly automated, modern industrial facilities to traditional wood-pressed (Gaana) micro mills. In the coastal belt, coconut oil serves

as the primary cooking medium, and consumers rely on traditional aroma and purity standards. Mills produce regular milled oil (from dried copra), roasted copra oil and premium wood-pressed/virgin coconut oil variations. Coastal Karnataka's coconut oil industry thrives on local agriculture, traditional cold-pressing methods, and a deep cultural reliance on the coconut palm across Tulunadu and the Konkan belt.

- **Cashew factory**

The cashew business in coastal Karnataka began when the Portuguese introduced the tree to the Konkan coast in the 16th century primarily to stop soil erosion. Initially planted along farm borders and forest edges in South Kanara (present-day Dakshina Kannada and Udupi), the hardy crop thrived in the region's heavy monsoons and laterite soil. For the first century after its arrival in Mangaluru, kernels were shipped raw to European ports without any organized local processing. Organized processing took root in the early decades of the 20th century, evolving from small family units doing hand-roasting, hand-shelling, and hand-grading. Mangaluru became the birthplace of large-scale, labor-intensive cashew processing in India and cashew culture in coastal Karnataka is a vital economic and agricultural pillar, contributing nearly 70% of the state's total cashew production. The industry serves as a vital engine for rural employment, with women making up roughly 95% of the processing workforce. Premium whole cashew kernels from the region are exported globally, with key destination markets. Processing extracts valuable Cashew Nut Shell Liquid (CNSL), a critical raw material used in paints, varnishes, and industrial applications.

Cultural and Cottage Businesses

In coastal Karnataka, small-scale industries such as coir production, cashew processing, fisheries-based crafts, handlooms and wood carving continue to serve as significant sources of income and employment. Coir Production as small-scale extraction and weaving of coconut fiber sustain rural incomes and local manufacturing. Handlooms and Weaving artisans produce traditional fabrics, preserving textile heritage alongside modern adaptations.

Conclusion

The provincial culture of Coastal Karnataka comprising the districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada acts as a foundational catalyst for its distinct entrepreneurial landscape, balancing strong socio-economic networks with deeply rooted regional traditions. This cultural ethos shapes everything from grassroots cottage industries to world-class hospitality and technology networks. The regional culture has transformed local culinary heritage into a global business model. Driven by community-based knowledge sharing, the "Udupi Hotel" phenomenon established a decentralized network of vegetarian restaurants across India. The social fabric of the coastal belt leverages tight-knit community cooperatives and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to mitigate financial risk and combat rural unemployment.

Businesses built around indigenous coastal resources such as cashew processing, coir weaving, floriculture, and fisheries rely heavy on intergenerational skill transfer. Cultural and cottage businesses in

coastal Karnataka thrive on traditional craftsmanship, local ecosystems, and active community participation. Comprising the districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada, this coastal region has a strong agricultural heritage but is also dealing with a number of challenges, such as land degradation, market instability, climate change, and sociocultural changes.

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