


Chapter 10


Role of Sustainability in Religious Festival and Event Tourism in Rajasthan: Insights From Pushkar Fair, India

Aruditya Jasrotia

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8274-5609>

Amity University, India

Kuldeep Singh

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7999-1585>

Amity University, India

ABSTRACT

This chapter seeks to highlight the untouched tourism opportunities in Pushkar, Rajasthan and also to maintain sustainable practices. Many studies have been investigated on religious festivals in the Pushkar region, but there is a need for research that focuses on sustainability with event tourism. Therefore, this study aims to discover the potential and challenges of the Pushkar Fair in Rajasthan. The main objectives of this study are to identify diverse tourism opportunities in the Pushkar region of Rajasthan and to maintain sustainability at the time of such an event. This study is based on a detailed literature review, and data will be collected from reputed journals, Government documents, reports, and edited books published at national and international levels. The study concludes that despite the massive potential of religious and event tourism in Pushkar, Rajasthan, the role of sustainability and preservation of destinations have yet to be wholly harnessed.

INTRODUCTION

The role of sustainability in religious festivals is increasingly recognized as communities around the world strive to balance cultural and religious traditions with environmental responsibility (Thomas, 2023). The number of events and festivals is increasing in tourist destinations, especially rural areas, but sustainability is needed. There are minimal studies on sustainability in religious tourism; still, some

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studies explicate the influence of sustainable tourism development on events and festivals (Sharpley, 2020). Therefore, this study focuses on sustainable practices in religious festivals and events in Pushkar, Rajasthan, India.

Events are crucial in developing the tourism industry and economic benefits (Seraphin, 2020). Mohanty et al . (2020) discussed the global events during COVID-19. They focused on the systematic review while describing the implications of COVID-19 on event tourism. The New Zealand Tourist and Publicity Department (1987) reported: ‘Event tourism is an important and rapidly growing segment of international tourism’. Lopez (2013) noted that resources should be preserved in religious and pilgrimage tourism, and growth in sustainability should create memorable experiences for visitors. According to Rowen(2020), festivals are an essential segment of the tourism industry and provide a rich heritage and culture for tourists. The event provides a platform for promoting and creating awareness regarding the host region.

Tourism generated by festivals and fairs in India significantly influences cultural practices, often leading to both positive and negative impacts. While these events attract large numbers of visitors, they can also result in the commercialization of traditions, altering their authenticity to cater to tourist expectations (Chhabra, 2010). Sacred rituals may be shortened or modified for convenience, and traditional attire, music, and performances may be adapted to appeal to a broader audience (Singh, 2014; Bhuda, & Koitsiwe, 2022). Additionally, overcrowding and increased demand for souvenirs can lead to the commodification of cultural artifacts, sometimes reducing them to mere attractions rather than meaningful traditions (Cohen, 1988). Cultural heritage events in India are diverse, encompassing traditional music, dance, art, craft, cuisine, and folklore, in addition to religious activities (Ministry of Tourism, 2020). These events serve as platforms for preserving and showcasing the country's rich heritage while also promoting tourism. Each cultural heritage event is organized with careful planning, involving various stakeholders such as local communities, government bodies, tourism departments, and private organizations (UNESCO, 2011).

CONCEPTS OF EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

Getz (2008) defined an *event* as a planned and organized occurrence, typically scheduled at a specific time and location, involving a gathering of people. They are often designed to fulfil specific goals like celebration, education, promotion, entertainment, or networking. It is to be noted that event management has a vast potential market for tourists all over the globe, and it is essential to focus on sustainability. The role of stakeholders becomes crucial in this regard.

Der Wagen (2001) described the events as given below:

- Offer participants of tourists and locals and create a memorable experience
- Need proper planning and organizing in costing
- Be prepared for a short period
- Need careful and extensive planning and strategy
- It should be planned once in a year
- Need coordination of many stakeholders and event manager.

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