

Developing Rural Areas through Promoting Rural Tourism: Case Study of Pushkar

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ABSTRACT

The research paper has made sincere attempt to put Tourism in Pushkar town into limelight and also tries to explain how Rural Tourism in Pushkar is playing a significant role in Development of Pushkar and thus more and more efforts are also made to allure tourists from India as well as abroad. Quaint Pushkar, the epitome of spirituality and divinity which is the abode of Lord Brahma has been a very pious pilgrimage center for Hindus since ancient times. This picturesque town amidst Aravalli Range is 11km north west from Ajmer city of Rajasthan. Pushkar has majestic temples which attracts tourists and devotees worldwide.

Pushkar like any other city and town of India with its surging Tourism in particular Rural Tourism is experiencing positive effects on Employment, Industries, Foreign exchange, Handicrafts and thus there are various indicators of Development clearly visible viz more employment, growth in exports of local products, development of infrastructure etc.

The paper has made sincere efforts to highlight how Tourism is acting as an effective instrument of Development in Pushkar .. It is mainly the secondary data which has been employed to prepare the research paper in very meticulous way.

KEYWORDS

Pushkar, Ajmer, Heritage, Rural Tourism, Handicrafts, Employment, Tourism Industry, Foreign Tourist.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a booming industry of Rajasthan. It represents a major sector of the global economy and as such is considered by many to be an effective driver of economic growth and development in destination areas. "Definitions of tourism share a range of common elements" (Dowling 2001, p24). Mathieson and wall (1982) states that tourism is the temporary movement of people to destinations out of their normal home and work place. Tourism is travelling for pleasure or business, it may also be called business of attracting or alluring and entertaining tourists and it's the business of operating tours. The "world tourism organization" defines tourism more generally in terms which go beyond the common perception of tourism as being limited to holiday activity only, as people travelling and staying places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. Pushkar like other parts of rural India offers following kinds of products viz. historical, mythological, heritage, natural based, medication based, religious based, culturally based and man-made.

RURAL TOURISM

Rural Tourism stresses on actively participating in rural lifestyle. Many rural villages can facilitate tourism because villagers are hospitable and eager to welcome visitors. There is segment of urban population that is interested in visiting rural areas and understanding their lifestyle. Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefitting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interactions between the tourists and locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as "Rural Tourism". Rural Tourism takes place in countryside. It is multifaceted and may entail farm\ agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism and eco-tourism. As against conventional tourism, rural tourism has certain typical characteristics like its experience oriented, location is sparsely populated, its predominately in natural environment, it meshes with seasonality and events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and traditions.

STUDY AREA (The Pushkar Valley)

The Pushkar valley covers an area of 87.11 sq.km and lies between north 26°25'52" to 26°32'17" latitudes and east 74°33'15" to 74°42'06" longitudes. The Pushkar valley is situated in one of the headwater valleys of the Luni River. It is enclosed on the northwest and southwest by ranges of bare rocky hills, which consists of quartzite and biotite.

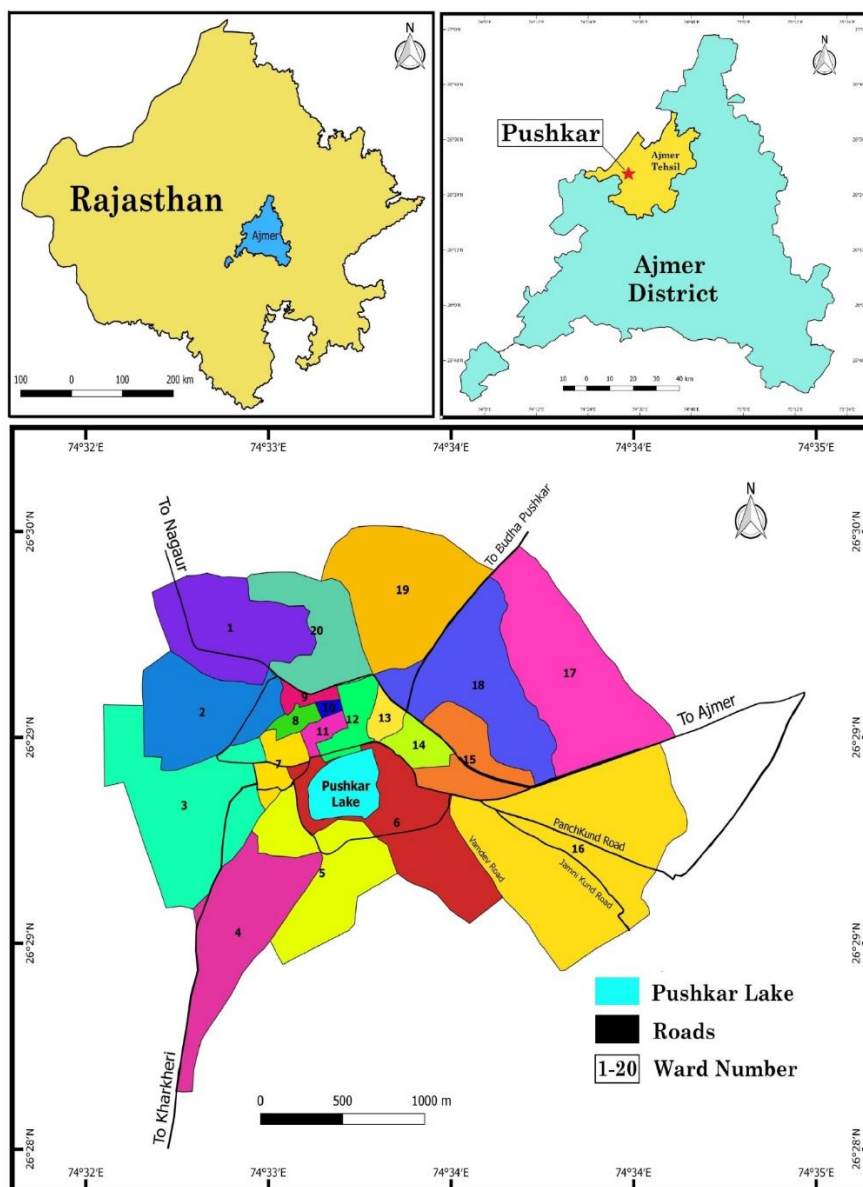


Fig 1: Location Map of Pushkar Town

According to Hindu mythology, the Pushkar Sarovar was created at the place where a lotus flower fell from the hands of Lord Brahma and touched the ground. The name Pushkar is derived from the word “*Pushp*” meaning flower and “*Kar*” meaning hand. According to Padma Purana, Lord Brahma was in search of a suitable place to perform a Vedic yagna (sacrifice). While contemplating, a lotus fell from his hand on the earth and water spurted from three places, one of them was Pushkar, and Brahma decided to perform his yagna there. After the yagna was performed by Brahma, Pushkar acquired the status of a sacred town. A dip in the holy Sarovar is believed to absolve man of all his sins. Pushkar is amongst the oldest pilgrimage centers in India however, its origins are unknown. The inscriptions found at Sanchi attest to its existence in late 2nd century BC.

Major Tourist Destinations in Pushkar:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Pushkar lake | 4. Varaha temple |
| 2. Brahma temple | 5. Savitri temple |
| 3. Gurudwara singh sabha | 6. Rangji temple |

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 7. Pap mochini temple | 9. Atmateshwar temple |
| 8. Sri panchkund shiva temple | 10. Man mahal |

TOURIST INSIGHTS

Earlier Tourism in Rajasthan was a small industry confined only to elites. However, in the last few decades due to the focused efforts of Rajasthan Tourism, Government agencies and travel agents, the Tourist industry has grown from the Elite and Pilgrim phenomenon to Mass Phenomenon in Rajasthan, the table clearly shows the growth of tourist in Rajasthan. The year 2019 and 2020 shows negative growth because of covid effect.

Table No. 1: Growth of Tourist in Rajasthan (2010-2021)

S. No.	Year	Tourist in Rajasthan			Growth Rate (in %age)		
		Domestic	Foreign	Total	Domestic	Foreign	Total
1	2010	25543877	1278523	26822400	-0.06	19.11	0.71
2	2011	27137323	1351974	28489297	6.24	5.74	6.21
3	2012	28611831	1451370	30063201	5.43	7.35	5.52
4	2013	30298150	1437162	30735312	5.89	-0.98	5.56
5	2014	33076491	1525574	34602065	9.17	6.15	9.03
6	2015	35187573	1475311	36662884	6.38	-3.29	5.96
7	2016	41495115	1513729	43008844	17.93	2.60	17.31
8	2017	45916573	1609963	47526536	10.66	6.36	10.50
9	2018	50235643	1754348	51989991	9.41	8.97	9.39
10	2019	52220431	1605560	53825991	3.95	-8.48	3.53
11	2020	15117239	446457	15563696	-71.05	-72.19	-71.09
12	2021	21988734	34806	22023540	45045	92.20	41.51

Source – Department of Tourism, Rajasthan.

TOURIST INFRASTRUCTURE IN PUSHKAR

There are 43 Dharamshala’s, 185 hotels, 39 ashrams, 37 guest house and 7 resorts available in Pushkar which can accommodate 9730 persons in it. During Cattle fair the number of tourists visiting town is more than the town can accommodate. When there is lack in tourist accommodation, residential houses act as guest house. A lot of new hotels, restaurants, and Dharamshala’s have shown up in last few years but none of them is regularized. No rules and regulations are being followed by them.

Table 3: Types and Number of Accommodation (2021)

S. No.	Type of Accommodation	Total Number	Rooms	Number of beds
1	Hotel	156	1705	5797
2	Guest house	37	401	722
3	Dharamshala’s	36	580	2575
4	Resort	7	119	236
5	Ashram	39	N.A.	400
Total		275	2805	9730

Source – Department of Tourism, Rajasthan.

Tents are provided by RTDC and other hotel chains like the Taj, Oberoi and Welcome Heritage. For example, during the annual Pushkar Festival, RTDC sets up a temporary tourist village consisting of huts (32), Swiss tents (150), standard tents (50) and dormitories (25). The village use to have a coffee shop and a dining hall, which can cater to 1500 guests at a time. In addition to this, private hotels also put up over 500 tents during

the same period. In year 2012 railway line was constructed passing through RTDC village, since then RTDC have stopped tent facility.

Temporary tented accommodations are also available particularly during specific events such as fairs and festivals, when there is a large influx of tourists. Presently such tented accommodation is available in Pushkar, Jaisalmer and Nagaur during their fairs and festivals and is very popular with all the tourists.

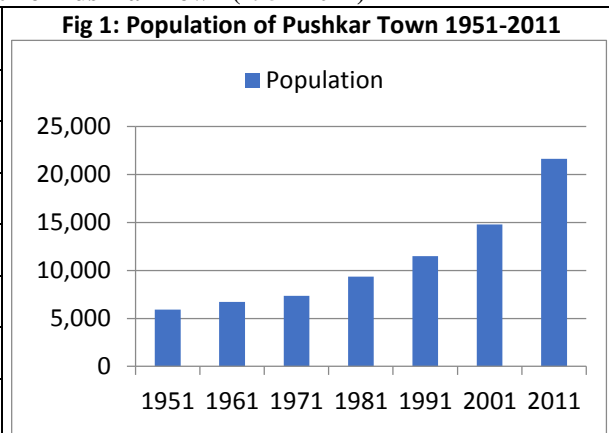
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

As per Master Plan of Pushkar 2011-2031, total area under planning jurisdiction was 336 hectares with a population of 21685 in year 2011. Owing to its rich tourism potential, the estimated daily flow of tourists and pilgrims to the city is 3000 – 4500.

Unlike other towns, population of Pushkar in the last five decades has grown very slowly from 5934 in 1951 to 14789 in 2001. This population growth of the town is largely due to natural growth, as there isn't any major economic activity to boost migration. The growth of the population can be seen from the table below. The population grew rapidly from 2001 to 2011, which is primarily because of the stability of economic condition of the people of Pushkar due to the rise in tourist inflow to the town.

Table 4: Decadal Population Growth of Pushkar Town (1951-2011)

Year	Population	Avg. Decadal Growth	Decadal Growth Rate (%)
1951	5,934	-	
1961	6,703	769	13.0
1971	7,341	638	9.5
1981	9,368	2,027	27.6
1991	11,506	2,138	22.8
2001	14,789	3,283	28.5
2011	21626	6837	46.3



Source: Census, 1951-2011

TOURISM AND ECONOMY OF PUSHKAR

The temple town of Pushkar in Rajasthan attracts tourist all-round the year. Apart from being a famous pilgrimage center, the city is also a center for many businesses and small-scale industries. The working population of Pushkar comprises 34.9% of the total population of the city, of which 84% population constitutes main workers whereas the rest 16% fall under marginal workers category.

OCCUPATIONAL PATTERN

Tourism is the main economic driver of the town, which promotes other key sectors such as trade and commerce, transportation and household industries. Pushkar has around 300 temples in majority, in which Brahmins are engaged in religious economic activities, which is their traditional occupation. However due to increase in foreign tourists, many young Brahmins have set up their own businesses. The trade and commerce are related to temple needs and caters to pilgrims and tourists. There are no wholesale activities in town. The cattle fair is the main economic activity in the region. Most of the local people make 80% of the annual income during the fair. Garment manufacture is the only significant industrial activity which employs around 5000 persons; most of these workers come from nearby villages. The household industries include traditional handicrafts and production of rose by-products e.g., gulkand, rose oil, rose water etc.

Table 4: Occupational Structure of Pushkar (1991-2011)

S. No.	Occupation	1991		2001		2011	
		No. of Persons	%age	No. of Persons	%age	No. of Persons	%age
1	Agriculture	326	9.9	360	6	282	4.00
2	Household	363	11.1	600	10	775	11
3	Construction	271	8.3	480	8	564	8
4	Trade Commerce	787	24.0	1140	19	1692	24
5	Transport	221	6.7	420	7	493	7
6	Others	1310	40.0	3000	50	3242	46
Total		3278	100	4641	100	7048	100

Source: Pushkar Master Plan 2011-2031

Unemployment rate has gone down in Pushkar due to development of tourist industry in Pushkar- Every resident of Pushkar has year-round occupation or source of livelihood. Interviews with stake holders corroborated this fact that during the peak season of tourism temporary migrants cater to the needs of increased work. Temples of Pushkar also have been source of livelihood for many since time and with increased Tourists coming in more and more temples other than the prime temple of Lord Brahma are gaining recognition and are providing source of livelihood. Younger generation has ventured into business. During the Pushkar fair its estimated that the local craftsmen earn 80% of their annual income. Around 5000 persons out of the total population of 14789 are employed in garment industries

INDUSTRIES IN PUSHKAR

Industries in Pushkar have got a boost due to rural tourism. Many industries have developed in Pushkar like -

- **TOURISM INDUSTRY**

With beginning of the 80's a large chunk of the revenue was drawn from foreign tourists visiting the city. this increased business of the hotels, restaurants, resorts, guest houses, beauty parlors, ayurvedic massage parlors, camel safari, horse riding, tourist guides, exchange agencies, jewelry shops, juice centers, tax business, courier services, taxi business and book shops.

- **ROSE INDUSTRY IN PUSHKAR**

Pushkar is very well known for its rose industry, majority of the flowers coming from the nearby villages. In the 70s, the rose growers were the only entrepreneurs who were into the Rose Flower business and the other related products such as rose petals, dry and wet rose petals, rose water, rose jam along with the rose flower. They operated business all through India and conducted export trade with exporters from Mumbai, Delhi, Jaipur and Ajmer. They also purchased sizable bighas of lands from Pushkar to grow rose flowers.

- **JEWELRY INDUSTRY**

Jeweler's makers of Pushkar are amongst the finest jeweler's makers of India. They have earned names in jewelers making because of their quality, brilliant designs and craftsmanship. Many tourists just come to Pushkar market to take jewelry in bulk at whole sale price for their business. Tourist find antique as well as modern jewelry, they also get option to get jewelry made of their choice on order.

PUSHKAR: A PILGRIMAGE CENTER

Pushkar, also known as the Tirth raj of India, is a predominantly a Hindu city. The city is bound to the Holy Lake or Sarovar as the focus of the city.

- Pushkar Sarovar is considered sacred as per Hindu Mythology and pilgrims visit the ghats daily for religious offerings, bathing, prayers, funeral pyres, etc.
- Hindi is the local and official language.
- Some of the major festivals celebrated in and around Pushkar include: - Kartik Purnima /cattle fair - Brahma Utsav - Ganesh Chauth - Guru Purnima - Maha Shivratri
- Daily aartis are offered on the ghats of the sacred Sarovar in evening.
- There are some specific days in the year when Hindus take dip in Sarovar. Important among them is Kartik Purnima and then Makar Sankranti in January, Mouni Amvasya, Basant Panchami and Magh Purnima in February and Mahashivaratri in March.

Apart from the rose industry, large number of pilgrim small traders was engaged in worship of the related items such as utensils, rosaries, neck-leads that were used for worshipping. Traders also deal related items like clothes made of grass blades, cushion, asan, sugar for offering Prasad, coconut shells and so on.

- **Potters and Clay Smiths**

Clay smiths and potters engage in small scale business by making earthen pots to drink tea, coffee, water. They also supplied to Halwais and the restaurants.

- **International Textile Market and Show Rooms**

The small town also has International Textile Market and Show rooms that has turned attention of plenty of billionaires. It has also generated employment for many labors like salesman, tailors, cooks, domestic helps and so on.

Pushkar is a very important center for handicrafts, readymade garments, embroidery, home furnishings and fine textiles. There are around 40 exporters involved in this business. Garments are exported to Singapore, Thailand, Canada, European countries and USA.

The garment industry's size can be assessed by the number of tailors that go up to 8000. The industry

offers facilities to export goods by postal parcels or air. You can get fresh clothes as well as seconds category garments made from recycled fabric. The recycled ones are generally lain, silk, cotton and so on.

- **Handicraft Shops in Pushkar**

Pushkar is an important city for ready-made garments, embroidered products, handicrafts and fine textiles. Some handicraft art forms has been carried from a long time, being completely made by hand or using very simple tools. It is the main livelihood of the locals in Pushkar and majority of the population of the city is engaged in making handicrafts. Pushkar has many great handicraft stores that sell beautiful handmade products at very reasonable prices in this part of Rajasthan.

- **Major Handicraft Dealers in Pushkar**

Radhika Handicrafts, Rajasthan Saree And Handicraft Emporium, Rajasthan Handicraft And Textile Corporation, Rajguru Emporium, Arun Art, Fine Handicraft Shop, Pathak Handicrafts, Raj Handicrafts, Lalita Handicrafts, Ram Craft, Parwati Handicrafts, Shiv Sakti Art and Handicraft, Rajasthan Art and Textiles, Madhu Handicrafts, Hemant Cloth Store, Shree Jaymal Handicrafts, GL Rajguru Handicrafts, Sanjay Handicrafts, Lucky Handicrafts, Star Handicrafts, Village Textiles and Handicrafts, Shiva Cloth Store, Kamna Handicrafts, Gordhan Handicrafts, Parasher Handicrafts, Laxmi Handicrafts.

II. CONCLUSION

Rural tourism in area has created a market appreciation for local products and is keeping them alive. It has given incentives to preserve some of old customs and traditions crats, traditional festivals, architecture, food, music, instruments and products unique to Pushkar region. Dance and music of Pushkar is appreciated worldwide which gives encouragement to local folk artists and many of the artists have reached the international platforms like Gulabo.

Residents of Pushkar who were earlier mainly dependent on farming, livestock, pastoralism are now switching to other secondary and tertiary sectors under influence of rural tourism which is evidence of development. Pushkar has been undergoing significant social and economic changes of development which have been induced by Rural Tourism.

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