

The Heritage Potential of Western Rajasthan

“An Analysis of Desert Tourism”

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Abstract

This paper highlights the role of heritage in the tourism industry. The sector in the state of Rajasthan is a major source of economic growth, and a generator of employment of various kinds. Moreover it has immense potential to lead the state in the domestic and foreign tourist map of the country. The main aim of this paper is to investigate the heritage potential of three cities of Rajasthan namely Bikaner, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer in the growth and development of tourism in the desert area of Rajasthan. The study includes two-way methodological approach; primary and secondary as well. The primary study involves the in-depth interviews with the limited key stakeholders owing to the prevalent covid-19 and secondary part is based on the existing literature and portal of Department of Tourism (DoT), Rajasthan. Findings facilitate various challenges of heritage tourism and the ramifications due to non serious attitude towards the tangible heritage of the studied area. Moreover the socio-economic, political and environmental significance of the heritage tourism along with the government measures in the sustainability of this sector have been deeply analysed in the research paper.

Keywords: Heritage, GDP, Tourism, Potential, Stakeholders.

Introduction

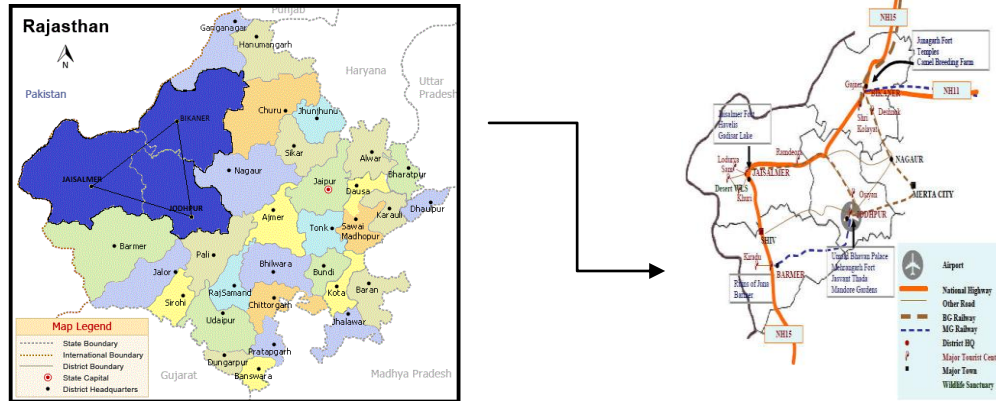
Heritage tourism is often seen as synonymous with cultural tourism, historical tourism, arts tourism, nature tourism or attractions-related tourism (Nurse, 2004). It is the branch of tourism oriented towards the cultural heritage (both the tangible and the intangible) of the location or destination in which the tourism occurs. Heritage tourism encompasses natural heritage, such as caves, nature reserves, gardens and marine parks, as well as built heritage, like museums, monuments and historical buildings. It also observes cultural events, festivals, performing arts and other forms of popular culture

Department of Tourism, Rajasthan has identified nine tourist circuits based on geography and attractions. The objective is to increase share of tourism into state GDP and promote state's tourism destinations with unique features. Proposals of tourist circuit related to state's heritage based on forest, rivers, lakes, temples, handicrafts, monuments, cuisine, forts, festivals and other religious places were incorporated in various circuits. The study area is a close knit desert circuit that includes three districts in western Rajasthan rising out of the golden sands of the Thar Desert. The circuit is woven around the prominent tourist locations in these districts, namely, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Bikaner (commonly referred to as the Desert Triangle)

Location Map:

The area of study is lying between 26°.20' –28°.01' North parallel and 69°.20' –73°.18'43" East Meridians. This area contains the largest district of Rajasthan and one of the largest in the country. The area has an average elevation of 229 metres. It is situated near the border of India and Pakistan in West Rajasthan, and covers an area of 26.73% .Total area of desert triangle is 91,490km².

Figure:1
Desert circuit map



Not to Scale

Source: 20 Year perspective plan for sustainable tourism in Rajasthan, Department of Tourism, Government of India

Review of Literature

Gupta V.K.(1987) pointed out that Heritage tourism in our country has developed rapidly and because of this old monument, palaces, hawelies are being repaired, maintained nicely to use these as tourist attractions. Along side artificial tourist attractions have been developed either by public sector or by joint venture of public and private sector for the amusement of tourists. Tourism corporations of different states have started to invest large amounts on the tourist destinations and on infrastructure in order to provide the comfort and other model amenities to attract comparatively greater part of global tourist traffic.

Urry (1990) *Rajasthan's emergence as India's Heritage State* is the imaginary counterpoint to the India of the high tech enclaves such as Bangalore, India's Silicon Valley, or the exploding urban centers of Delhi, Mumbai and Calcutta . Rajasthan epitomizes The "real" India, where – tourism marketing says- "the cultures and lifestyles of the past have been transmitted intact, unchanged and available to the tourist gaze"

Shackley (1996) explains that tourism in Thar desert begins to blossom because of camel safari. The tourist from around the globe starts visit here because of camel safari. Considerable profits are generated for camel owners and safari operators but these are directly returned to the local community either to finance a larger family or to buy more camels. This industry now controls the desert economy but poor regulation threatens its sustainability with worrying implications for employment and environmental management.

Gupta S.P., et; al(2002) "*Cultural Tourism in India*" aimed at the impact of cultural tourism upon regional culture from the communication perspective. Often communication considered as a tool for understanding and enrichment up to some extent but some time it becomes an obstacle then an aid.

Trikha P.(2008) attempt to analysis cultural heritage of tourist interest as suggested or claimed in tourist browsers, websites, newsletter, travel guides, advertisements and score of the sources. Apart from giving information, these sources have a stereotypical agenda to be fulfilling which involves politics and language and other issues.

Lokeshevar & Ashok (2012) noted that RTDC is working as wholly owned govt. organization in Rajasthan state and comes out with the conclusion that RTDC has not been able to fulfil the satisfaction level of guests.

Dr. Sharma Anukrati (2013) A SWOT Analysis of Rajasthan Tourism Spectrum; A Journal of Multidisciplinary Research.

World Travel and Tourism Council India 2014. (Literature review for the concerned research area has been taken due care till year 2014)

Objective of the Study

In order to enumerate and evaluate the growth, development and prospects of Heritage potential in desert area of Rajasthan to develop as tourist destination.

Data and Methodology

The study on heritage specific tourism in desert triangle has been carried out on primary and secondary data

Table:1

S. No.	Data	Source	Uses
Primary data			
1	Primary Questionnaire & Schedule survey	Scholar face to face Interview & Telephonic survey	Impact Assessment
Secondary Information / data			
2	Published data of Govt. of India & Govt. of Rajasthan.	The Statistical Abstract (GOI & GOR)1981-2011	Spatial distribution of sites
2	Foreign Tourist Survey Report(GOI) 1981,1991,2001,2011.	Govt. of Rajasthan	To compare the immigration of Indian tourists with Rajasthan
3.	Data records of the three destinations. (Jodhpur,Bikaner&Jaisalmer)	Tourist Reception Centres.	For significance analysis.

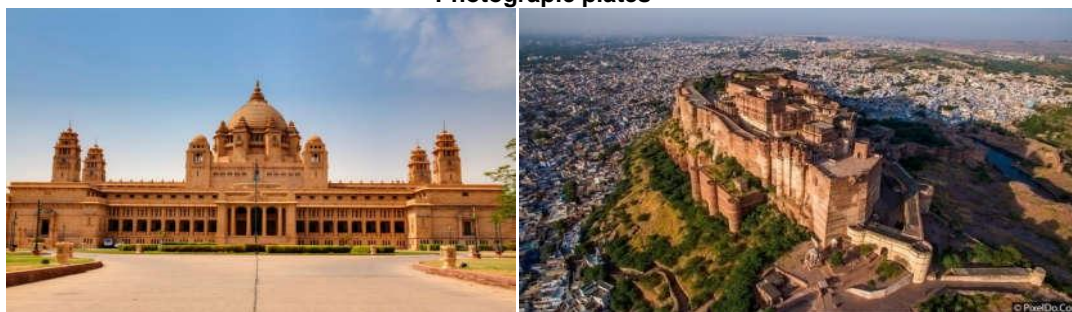
Moreover no probability sampling method was incorporated which involves the sample being drawn from the part of the population that is close to **Tangible Heritage sites of the studied area**

hand, and willing to cooperate the cause of research. The covid -19 pandemic has been taken care of in the collection of information.

Table: 2

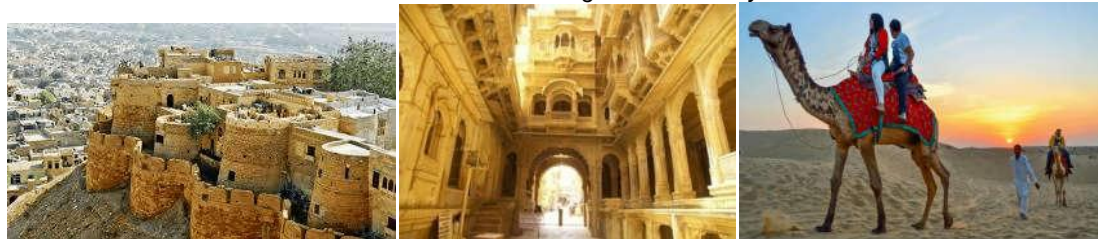
City	Major tourist spot	Major events
Jodhpur	Mehrangarh fort, Umaid Bhavan palace, Jasvant Thada, Mandore, Osian, Jain and Brahmanical temples.	Marwar festival
Jaisalmer	Jaisalmer fort, Jain temples, Patwon ki Haveli* and the Salim Singh ki Haveli, Gadisar Lake, Lodurva Jain temples, Sam sand dunes, the Desert National Park and the Khuri village safari.	Desert festival
Bikaner	Junagarh fort, museum, the Lallgarh palace. The Karni Mata temple in Deshnok, the Gajner Palace and wildlife sanctuary and Shri Kolayat temples.	Camel festival

Photographic plates



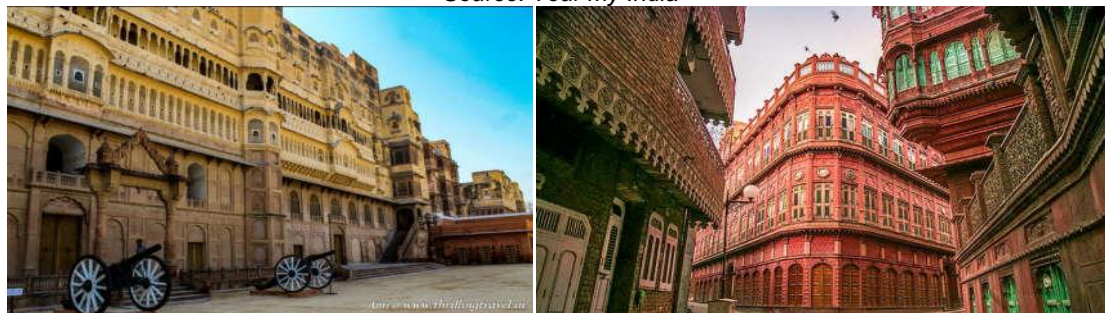
Umaid Bawan Palace (Left) and Mehrangarh fort of Jodhpur (Right)

Source: India Travel Blog and travel for you



Jaisalmer fort (Left), Patwon ki haveli (middle) and Sam sand dunes (Right)

Source: Tour my India



Junagarh fort (Left) and Rampuria haveli (Right)

Source: Thrilling travel and Thrillofilia

Data Analysis and Conclusion

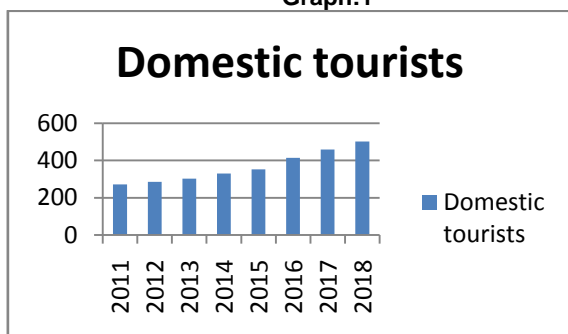
Table: 3
Tourists Arrival in Rajasthan (2011-2018)

(in-lacs)

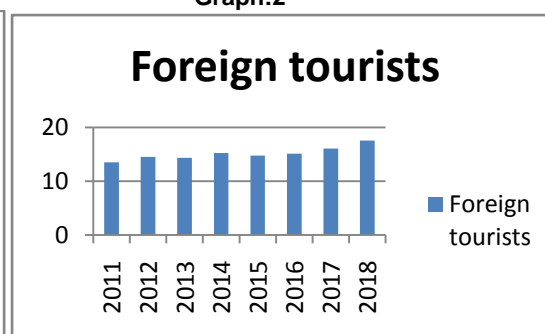
Year	Domestic tourists	Foreign tourists
2011	271.37	13.52
2012	286.12	14.51
2013	302.98	14.37
2014	330.76	15.26
2015	351.88	14.75
2016	414.95	15.14
2017	459.17	16.10
2018	502.36	17.54

Source: Rajasthan tourism annual report 2018

Graph:1

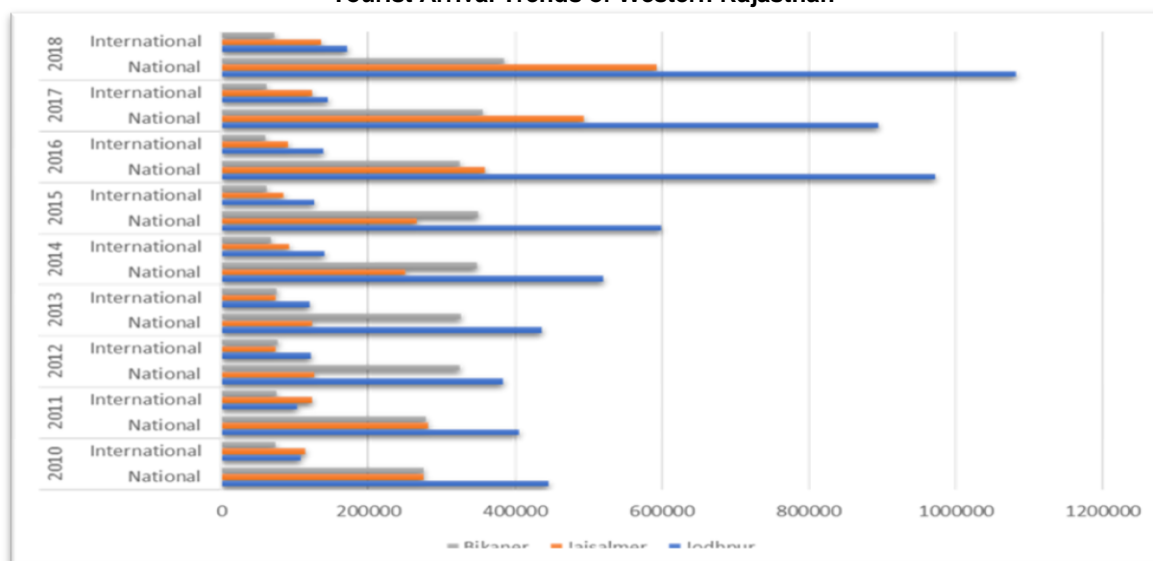


Graph:2



Graph:3

Tourist Arrival Trends of Western Rajasthan



(Source: Department of Tourism, Rajasthan)

It is depicted in the above mentioned table and graphs that there has been a gradual rise in the domestic tourists since 2011. Whereas the foreign tourists in 2015 were less in comparison to the year of 2014. According to the Ministry of Tourism, Rajasthan accounted for 2.7% in Gross State Domestic Product and 1.9% in state employment during 2015. Rajasthan accounted for 7.2% of the total international tourist arrivals in India in the same year. It is observed through the data that there has been a consecutive rise in the tourists' movement since 2011. The graphical representation of national and

international tourists has been depicted in the cities of Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Barmer clearly reveals that Jodhpur for the last five years has been gaining the credit to be the forerunner in terms of tourists inflow both national and international. Moreover the potential of heritage in the studied area based on criterion viz, carrying capacity, existing infrastructure, connectivity, tourist season, diversity and number of unique attractions etc, has been found to be high and attractive.

Survey Method

Asian Resonance

In order to understand and to compare the respondents' preference and awareness on heritage potential of the desert cities of Thar i.e, Jodhpur ,Jaisalmer and Bikaner, the survey is conducted using structured interview method. This method is adopted to mitigate the problem of non-response due to illiteracy in English as most of the residents in the survey area are either elderly or educated in Hindi medium school. In addition to the structured questions, photographs are used extensively to ensure that the research perspective of heritage is conveyed accurately to the respondents. For primary data Convenient sampling method will be used for data collection. It is a type of no probability sampling which involves the sample being drawn from the part of the population that is close to hand, and willing to cooperate. The response rate obtained was 66% (132 from 200). This response rate is considered satisfactory because the focus of the survey is only to

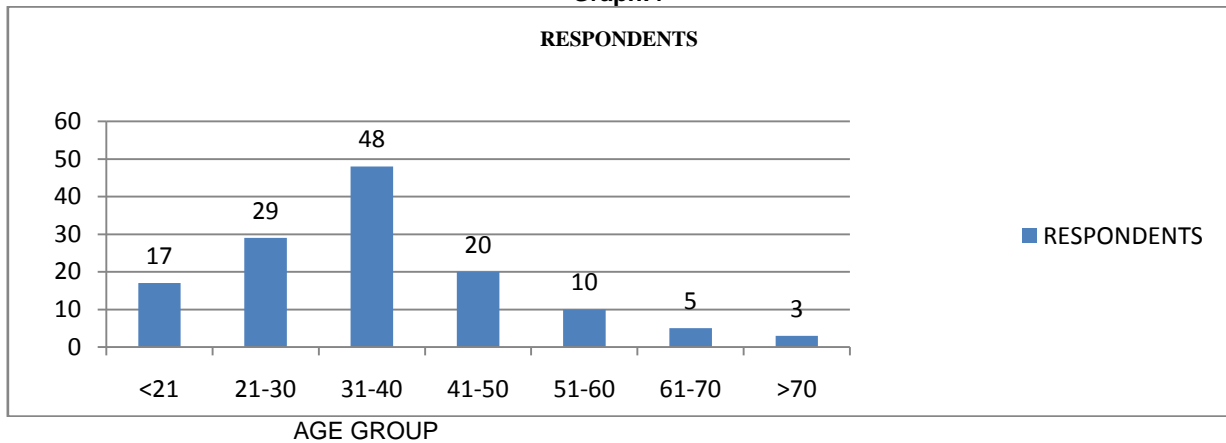
gain insight into the residents' preferences on inclination of stakeholders towards heritage potential of desert cities and is not to generalise the findings for a larger population The following reasons are the cause for unsuccessful interviews with the selected samples.

- i. Refusal (16%)
- ii. Respondents not at home (11%)
- iii. Unaware about the subject matter (7%)

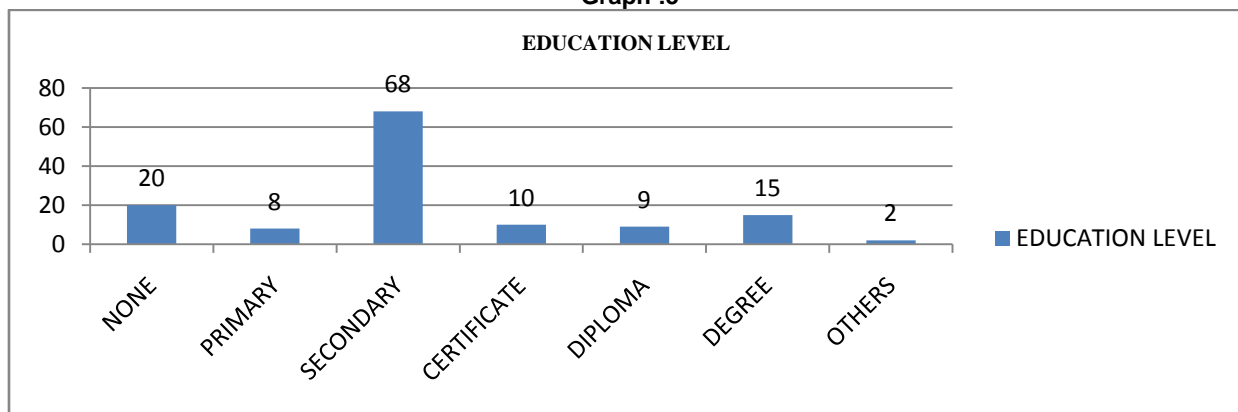
Respondents' Background

The respondents consisted of four main groups, i.e Local respondents (30), Tourists (Domestic and International)(60), Tourist guides(24) Private tourist cab drivers.(18). Majority of the respondents are in the 41-50 age group with the average age of 43 years (Figure). The respondents' educational background varied greatly with the majority having attained secondary school education (Figure).

Graph:4



Graph :5



Satisfaction Factor of The Visitors

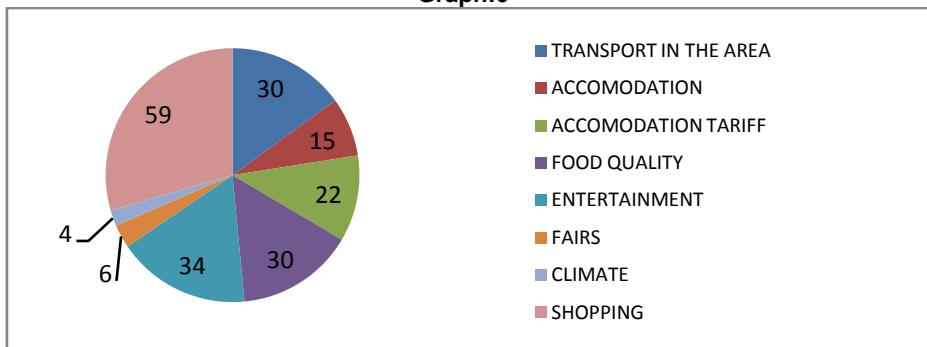
The respondents through questionnaire and telephonic interviews shown keen interest towards the satisfactory attributes for the visitors in the Desert circuit. Shopping has been the most important and sought after purpose for visitors which generally is done for souvenirs. The different festivals like, camel,

desert, marwar etc has remained remarkable attraction for the visitors in the studied area. Though a comprehensive satisfaction over some factors like transportation, affordable accommodation, food quality entertainment etc were quantified by the respondents and depicted in percent values in table: 4

Table:4

	(%)
Transport In The Area	30
Accomodation	15
Accomodation Tariff	22
Food Quality	30
Entertainment	34
Fairs	6
Climate	4
Shopping	59

Graph:6



Area that requires more attention:

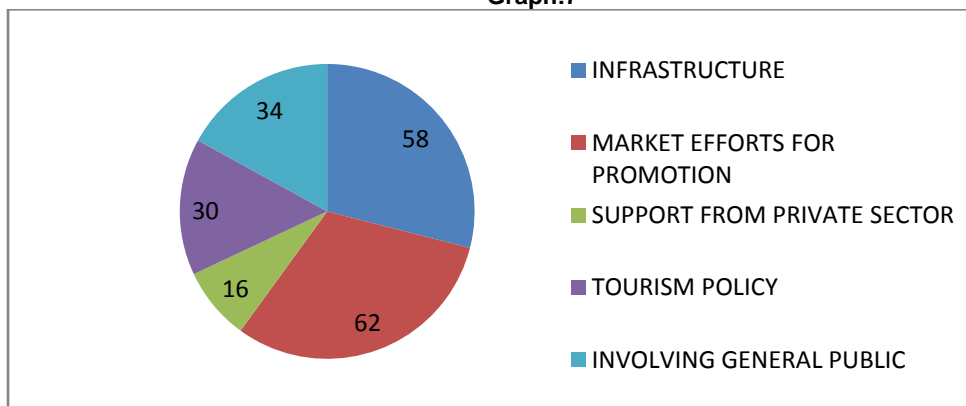
The Desert cities of Thar i.e, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Bikaner in order to be more visitors'

friendly some important areas need to be worked upon like: infrastructure, private involvement , upgraded tourism policy etc.

Table:5

	(%)
Infrastructure	58
Market Efforts For Promotion	62
Support From Private Sector	16
Tourism Policy	34
Involving General Public	30

Graph:7



Full Potential of The Desert Circuit Has Been Realised or Not

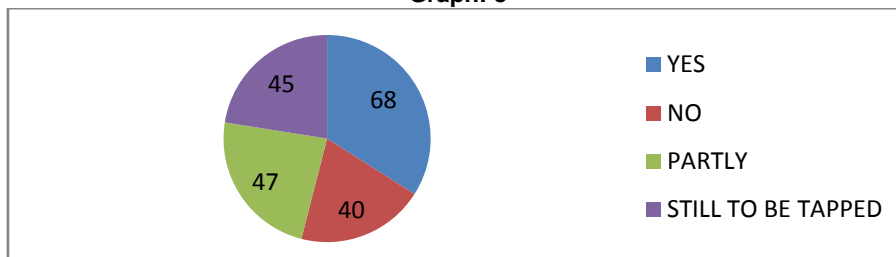
When the curiosity arises to grade the Desert circuit in the tourism map of Rajasthan at the backdrop of heritage potential it contains and whether

the same has been exploited and nurtured with the sustainability outlook. The respondents valued the Tourist destinations in the Desert circuit and along with some suggestions for further development seem to be satisfied in this regard.

Table:6

Yes	68
No	40
Partly	47
Still to be tapped	45

Graph: 8



Findings

1. Few tourist places, sites or forts need more development and maintenance.
2. Poor marketing efforts.
3. Maintenance of old monuments, forts etc are less and are becoming vulnerable.
4. The government has not been able to leverage the India Incredible to campaign and carry it forward.
5. Most of the respondents have heard about various festivals like Teej festival in Jaipur and are interested to be a part of them; therefore this can be used for marketing promotion.
6. Maximum respondents wish to come back to Rajasthan for leisure and visit to other places which are left by them in this visit due to shortage of time.

Suggestions

Tourism must be given the status of priority sector wherein the preservation of heritage and greater involvement of private sector should be allowed. It must have better connectivity between the various tourist centres in the state. All effort should be done in making the overall experience of the tourist wonderful so that they become the brand ambassador of the state. The staunch action regarding maintenance of tourist spots and properties with the help of urban local bodies and tourism department should be performed. For promotion of ancillary activities infrastructure around the tourist sites to be developed.

Conclusion

Apart from tourist safety, security, public convenience, cleanliness, registered guides; infrastructure, safeguard of heritage properties which is a specific problem in developing countries where tourism is often considered the primary source of economic growth and the reduction of poverty etc. are some of the core areas to be worked upon. • The potential of tourism of Rajasthan is yet to be tapped fully. This requires combination of efforts on both policy and marketing side. The basic infrastructure road, rail and air connectivity needs to be strengthened

The Desert circuit is one of the most popular circuit amongst the tourists (especially foreign tourists) coming to Rajasthan who seek the wilderness,

architecture, history, culture, religion and desert lifestyle in and around the popular locations of Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Bikaner. Although the tourist potential of Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Bikaner in the circuit has been well exploited, there is further scope for development of Osian, Barmer and Nagaur, which are presently less explored. Also, a greater thrust on desert sports or adventure tourism and rural tourism is necessary to fully exploit the inherent tourist potential. Internet marketing is another area which needs to be focus of marketers for promotion. Overall the desert circuit offers high potential for future growth given its uniqueness (only desert in India) for foreign and domestic tourists and its strong potential for linkage with adventure tourism, desert sports and rural tourism. Rajasthan tourism in general and desert circuit in particular offer plethora of opportunities to make the state a tourist hot spot.

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