

Tourism Festivals and Destination Promotion in India: An Empirical Study

¹Dr. Kakumanu Rajesh, ²Kakumanu Divya

¹Guest Faculty, ²Research Scholar

¹²Department of Tourism & Hospitality Management

¹²Acharya Nagarjuna University

Abstract—Background: Tourism festivals help destinations convert culture, food, heritage, craft traditions and seasonal celebrations into memorable visitor experiences. **Methods:** This study examines five Indian tourism festivals, namely the International Kite Festival, International Mango Festival, Desert Festival, Elephant Festival and Tea Festival, during 2020-2024. Primary data were collected from 197 respondents through convenience sampling, while secondary data were compiled from official tourism sources. Percentage analysis, weighted mean, one-sample t-test and chi-square goodness-of-fit test were used for analysis. **Results:** The findings show that festivals support destination visibility, cultural preservation, visitor satisfaction and local participation. The combined perception index recorded a mean score of 3.136, with t-value = 2.750 and p-value = 0.003, indicating a statistically significant positive perception. **Conclusion:** Festival tourism can strengthen destination promotion in India when it is supported by reliable visitor documentation, digital marketing, community participation and sustainable event management.

Index Terms—Tourism festival, destination promotion, cultural tourism, tourist perception, India.

I. Introduction

India's tourism appeal is closely connected with its living culture, festivals, food traditions, heritage spaces, landscapes and community practices. Tourism festivals bring these resources together in a fixed time and place, making destinations more visible and easier to promote. They also create opportunities for transport operators, accommodation units, guides, food vendors, artisans, performers and local communities. In this way, a festival is not only a celebration but also a destination-marketing tool.

The present study examines five selected festivals: the International Kite Festival of Gujarat, International Mango Festival of Delhi, Desert Festival of Jaisalmer, Elephant Festival of Jaipur and Tea Festival of Ooty. The period 2020-2024 is significant because it includes the pandemic disruption, the reopening of domestic travel, the gradual return of foreign tourists and the increasing use of digital media for tourism promotion.

II. Review of Literature

Event tourism studies explain that festivals can build destination image, reduce seasonality, encourage repeat visitation and support local economies. Cultural tourism literature further shows that festivals communicate intangible heritage through music, dance, food, craft, costume, rituals and community participation. Hallmark events are also useful in giving destinations a distinct identity in competitive tourism markets.

In India, state tourism departments and the Ministry of Tourism promote fairs and festivals through official portals and event calendars. Gujarat Tourism presents the International Kite Festival as part of Uttarayan, Rajasthan Tourism promotes the Desert Festival as a major cultural event, and the Utsav portal lists several festivals across the country. However, official sources do not uniformly publish festival-wise domestic and foreign tourist footfall for all events. This creates a research gap. Therefore, this study combines respondent perception data with state-level tourism statistics and official festival information.

III. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the role of selected tourism festivals in promoting tourist destinations in India.
- To analyse tourist perception towards the selected festivals using primary survey data.
- To assess the contribution of festivals to destination visibility, cultural preservation and visitor satisfaction.
- To study official secondary tourism statistics for the selected festival states during 2020-2024.
- To test whether tourists hold a significantly positive perception of festival tourism as a destination-promotion tool.

IV. Hypotheses of the Study

H0: Tourism festivals do not have a statistically significant positive role in promoting tourist destinations in India.

H1: Tourism festivals have a statistically significant positive role in promoting tourist destinations in India.

V. Research Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 197 respondents through convenience sampling because respondents were selected according to their availability, accessibility and willingness to share information about tourism festivals. Secondary data were collected from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Utsav portal, Gujarat Tourism, Rajasthan Tourism, Delhi Tourism and Tamil Nadu Tourism. The main tools used for analysis are percentage analysis, weighted mean, one-sample t-test and chi-square goodness-of-fit test. Percentage analysis is used for demographic and response patterns. Weighted mean is used to measure the overall level of agreement. The one-sample t-test is used to examine whether the mean perception score is significantly higher than the neutral value of 3. The chi-square goodness-of-fit test is used to understand whether the distribution of respondents across selected festivals is balanced. Respondents were informed about the academic purpose of the study, and the data were used only in aggregate form.

VI. Profile of Selected Festivals

The selected festivals represent different forms of tourism experience. The Kite Festival is a visual and cultural event linked with Uttarayan. The Mango Festival represents food and agro-tourism. The Desert Festival highlights folk culture and desert heritage. The Elephant Festival is associated with Jaipur's royal heritage and cultural identity. The Tea Festival reflects plantation culture and tea-based tourism experiences.

Table 1: Profile of Selected Festivals

Festival	Place	Festival information
International Kite Festival	Ahmedabad/Gujarat	Gujarat Tourism describes it as hosted in Ahmedabad since 1989 as part of Uttarayan; the 2025 official release reported 143 kite flyers from 47 countries and national/local participants.
International Mango Festival	Delhi	Delhi Tourism describes the Mango Festival as a regular annual event of DTTDC, displaying about 500 mango varieties and mango-based products.
Desert Festival	Jaisalmer/Rajasthan	Rajasthan Tourism lists Desert Festival at Jaisalmer, Folk music, dance, camel races, camel polo, handicrafts and food stalls.
Elephant Festival	Jaipur/Rajasthan	The Elephant Festival is a cultural tourism festival in Rajasthan that showcases decorated elephants, traditional processions, folk performances, and the royal heritage of Jaipur.

Tea Festival	Ooty/Tamil Nadu	Utsav portal describes Tea and Tourism Festival with tea varieties including Darjeeling, Assam and Nilgiris tea.
--------------	-----------------	--

VII. Secondary Data Analysis: Results and Discussion

Table 2: Domestic Tourist Visits in Selected Festival States, 2020-2024

Year	Gujarat	Delhi	Rajasthan	Tamil Nadu
2020	19.465	9.584	15.117	140.651
2021	24.525	10.642	21.989	115.337
2022	135.811	27.186	108.328	218.585
2023	178.067	39.415	179.052	286.012
2024	184.014	46.257	230.084	306.842

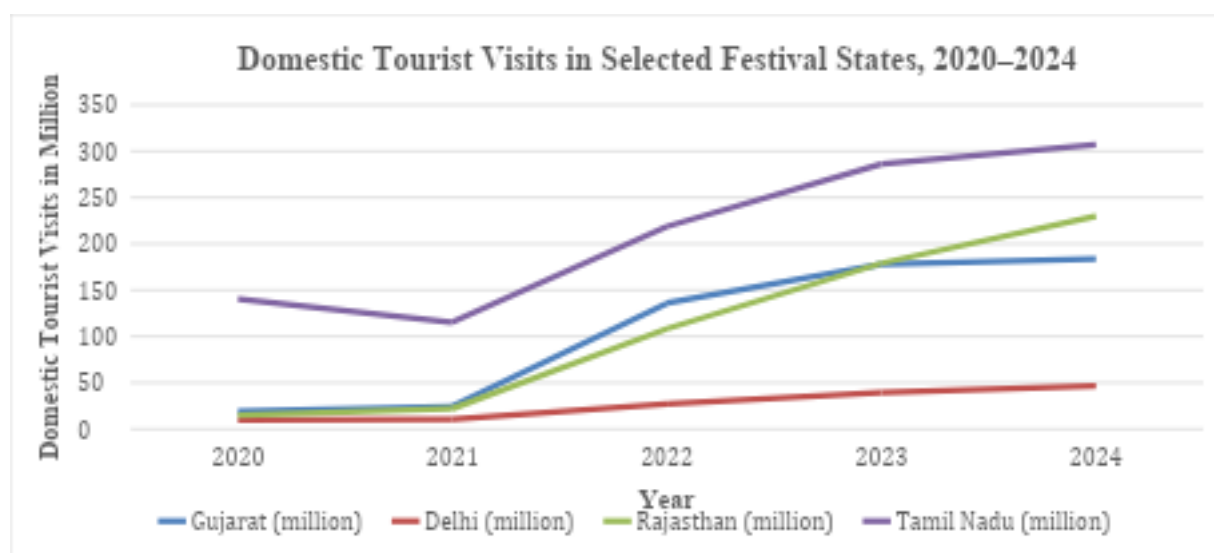
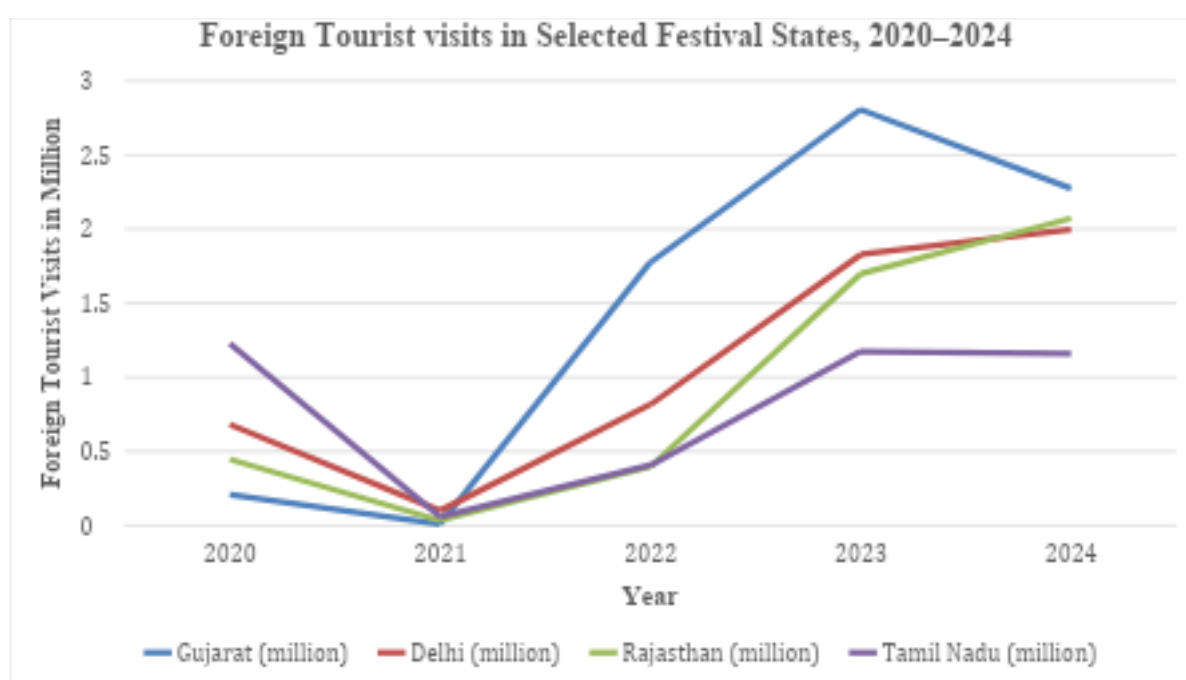


Figure 1. Domestic Tourist Visits in Selected Festival States, 2020-2024

Interpretation: Domestic tourist visits show a clear recovery after the COVID-19 slowdown in 2020 and 2021. Tamil Nadu remained the leading state throughout the period and reached 306.842 million domestic tourist visits in 2024. Rajasthan recorded a strong rise from 15.117 million in 2020 to 230.084 million in 2024, while Gujarat increased from 19.465 million to 184.014 million during the same period. Delhi also improved steadily, though its domestic visitor volume remained lower than the other selected states. The trend suggests that destination promotion, reopening of travel and festival-linked tourism activities contributed to the revival of domestic tourism from 2022 onwards.

Table 3: Foreign Tourist Visits in Selected Festival States, 2020-2024

Year	Gujarat (million)	Delhi (million)	Rajasthan (million)	Tamil Nadu (million)
2020	0.210	0.681	0.446	1.228
2021	0.011	0.100	0.035	0.058
2022	1.777	0.816	0.397	0.407
2023	2.807	1.828	1.700	1.175
2024	2.274	1.999	2.072	1.161

**Figure 2. Foreign Tourist Visits in Selected Festival States, 2020-2024**

Interpretation: Foreign tourist visits declined sharply in 2021 because international travel was severely restricted during the pandemic. From 2022 onwards, all selected states recorded recovery. Gujarat rose from 0.011 million in 2021 to 2.807 million in 2023, before declining slightly to 2.274 million in 2024. Delhi improved steadily and reached 1.999 million foreign tourist visits in 2024. Rajasthan also recovered strongly, increasing from 0.035 million in 2021 to 2.072 million in 2024. Tamil Nadu had a comparatively higher figure in 2020, but its post-pandemic recovery was slower than Gujarat, Delhi and Rajasthan. Overall, the data show that foreign tourism revived gradually, but the pace of recovery differed across states.

VIII. Primary Data Analysis: Results and Discussion

8.1 Demographic Profile

The primary survey included 197 respondents. The sample consisted of 104 male respondents (52.79%) and 93 female respondents (47.21%). The largest age group was 31-40 years with 50 respondents (25.38%), followed by 21-30 years with 44 respondents (22.34%) and 41-50 years with 42 respondents (21.32%). Occupation-wise, students formed 21.32%, self-employed respondents 20.81%, agriculture/labour respondents 20.30%, business respondents 19.29% and employees 18.27%. This profile indicates that the survey covered respondents from different age and occupation groups.

8.2 Festival Visitation Pattern

Festival Visitation Pattern	No. of respondents	Percentage
International Kite Festival	37	18.78%
International Mango Festival	35	17.77%
Tea Festival	45	22.84%
Elephant Festival	44	22.34%
Desert Festival	36	18.27%

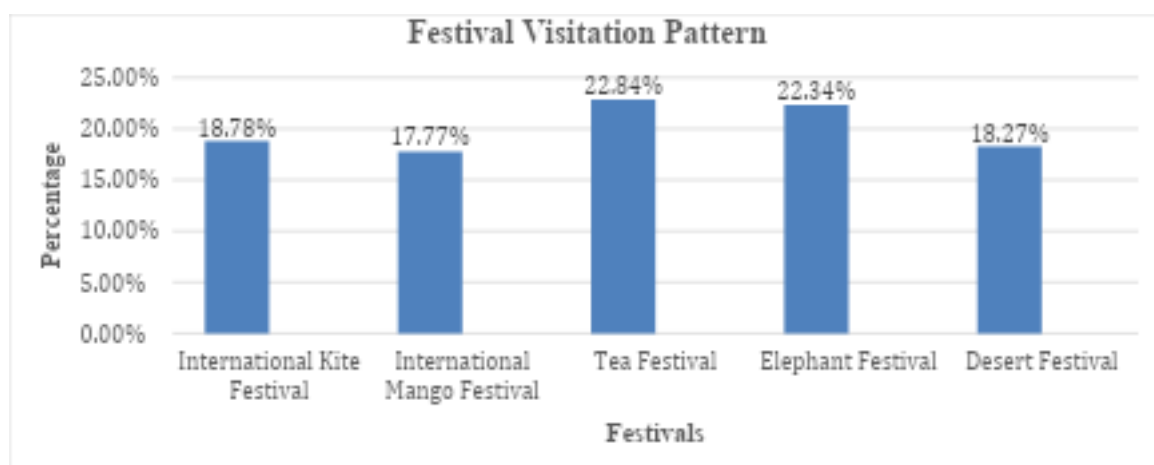


Figure 3. Festival Visitation Pattern

Interpretation: Tea Festival (22.84%) and Elephant Festival (22.34%) received the highest representation in the sample. They were followed by the International Kite Festival (18.78%), Desert Festival (18.27%) and International Mango Festival (17.77%). The difference among the five categories is not very high, which makes the sample broadly useful for comparing perceptions across the selected festivals.

8.3 Source of Awareness

Source of awareness	No. of respondents	Percentage
Social media	42	21.32%
Friends/Relatives	35	17.77%
Newspaper/Television	40	20.30%
Tourism Dept. Website	42	21.32%
Travel Agency	38	19.29%

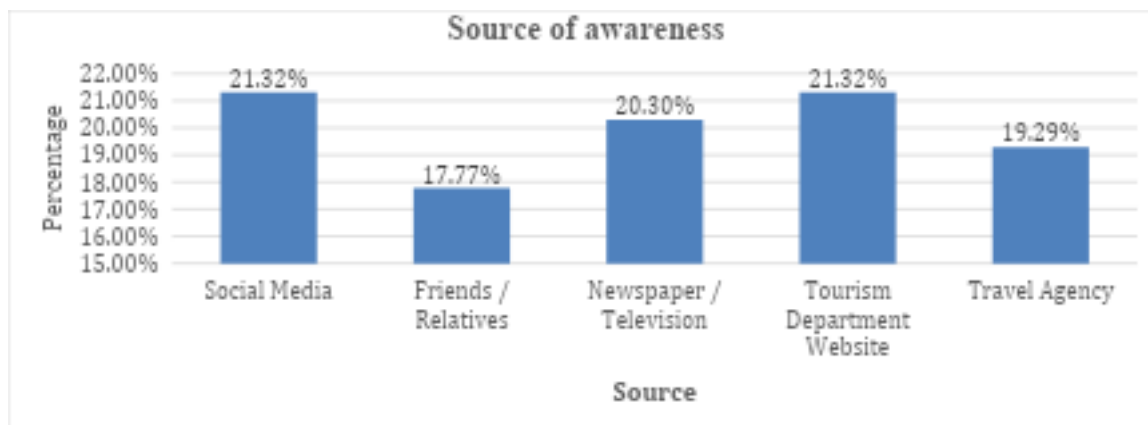


Figure 4. Source of Awareness

Interpretation: Social media and tourism department websites are the leading sources of awareness, each accounting for 21.32% of respondents. This shows the importance of digital communication and official online platforms in festival promotion. Newspaper/television (20.30%), travel agencies (19.29%) and friends/relatives (17.77%) also continue to influence tourist awareness. Hence, festival promotion should use both digital and traditional channels.

8.4 Perception Analysis

Statement	Positive responses	Neutral	Negative responses	Weighted mean
Destination promotion	82 (41.62%)	45 (22.84%)	70 (35.53%)	3.081
Tourist arrivals	86 (43.65%)	40 (20.30%)	71 (36.04%)	3.102
Culture/food/handicrafts	90 (45.69%)	40 (20.30%)	67 (34.01%)	3.198
Overall satisfaction	83 (42.13%)	48 (24.37%)	66 (33.50%)	3.162

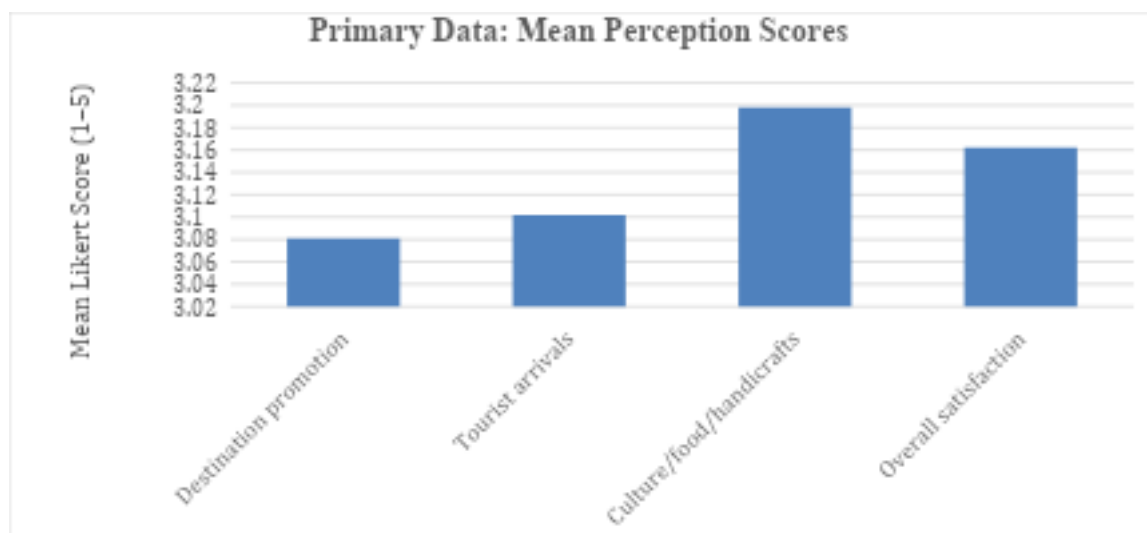


Figure 5. Mean Perception Scores

Interpretation: The mean values for all four perception statements are above the neutral score of 3. This indicates a mildly positive perception of tourism festivals among respondents. The highest mean score is recorded for the promotion of local culture, traditions, food and handicrafts (3.198), followed by overall satisfaction (3.162), tourist arrivals (3.102) and destination promotion (3.081). The results show that respondents associate festivals most strongly with cultural presentation and visitor experience.

IX. Hypothesis Testing

A one-sample t-test was applied to the Likert-scale responses. The neutral test value was fixed at 3. A result is considered statistically significant when $p < 0.05$. The statement-wise results show stronger evidence for culture, food and handicrafts, and overall satisfaction than for the individual statements on destination promotion and tourist arrivals. However, the combined perception index provides a stronger overall result.

Variable	Mean	t-value	p-value	Result
Destination promotion	3.081	0.807	0.210	Not significant
Tourist arrivals	3.102	1.023	0.154	Not significant
Culture/food/handicrafts	3.198	1.972	0.025	Significant
Overall satisfaction	3.162	1.704	0.045	Significant
Overall perception index	Mean	t-value	p-value	Decision
Combined four Likert statements	3.136	2.750	0.003	Reject H0; accept H1

Interpretation: The statement on culture/food/handicrafts is significant with t-value = 1.972 and p-value = 0.025. Overall satisfaction is also significant with t-value = 1.704 and p-value = 0.045. Destination promotion and tourist arrivals are positive in mean value but not significant individually. The combined perception index

has a mean of 3.136, t-value = 2.750 and p-value = 0.003. Since the combined p-value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This confirms that tourism festivals have a statistically significant positive role in destination promotion.

The chi-square goodness-of-fit test for festival visitation distribution produced chi-square = 2.264, df = 4 and p-value = 0.687. Since the p-value is above 0.05, the respondent distribution across the five selected festivals is not significantly uneven. Therefore, the sample provides a reasonably balanced representation of the selected festivals.

X. Major Findings

- The selected festivals promote destinations by connecting place identity with culture, food, folk arts, local skills, seasonal experiences and community participation.
- About 41.62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that tourism festivals help in destination promotion, while 22.84% remained neutral.
- For the statement that festivals increase tourist arrivals, 43.65% of respondents gave positive responses.
- The strongest perception is related to the promotion of local culture, traditions, food and handicrafts, with 45.69% positive responses and the highest weighted mean of 3.198.
- Digital channels are important because social media and tourism department websites together account for 42.64% of awareness sources.
- Official public sources do not consistently provide festival-wise domestic and foreign tourist footfall for all selected festivals during 2020-2024, which limits direct festival-level statistical analysis.
- The combined perception index is statistically significant at the 5% level; therefore, the main hypothesis that tourism festivals have a positive role in promoting tourist destinations is accepted.

XI. Recommendations

- State tourism departments should publish annual festival-wise visitor data by separating domestic tourists, foreign tourists, day visitors and overnight visitors.

- Official festival pages should provide post-event reports covering visitor statistics, participant profiles, expenditure estimates and sustainability indicators.
- Digital marketing should be strengthened through social media campaigns, official tourism websites, short videos, multilingual content and itinerary links.
- Festivals should be linked with nearby tourism circuits such as Ahmedabad heritage routes, Delhi food and heritage trails, Jaisalmer desert circuits, Jaipur heritage circuits and Ooty tea-garden experiences.
- Crowd management, sanitation, tourist safety, waste management, local transport, drinking water and tourist information centres should be planned before the event begins.
- Local artisans, food vendors, guides, women self-help groups and youth volunteers should be included so that festival tourism creates wider community benefits.
- Sustainable and ethical tourism practices should be followed, especially in animal-linked festivals and environmentally sensitive destinations.

XII. Conclusion

Tourism festivals are effective instruments for destination promotion in India. The selected festivals present different destination identities: kite flying and seasonal celebration in Gujarat, mango diversity in Delhi, desert culture in Rajasthan, royal heritage in Jaipur and plantation-linked tea culture in Ooty. The primary data show a generally positive perception of festivals in relation to destination visibility, cultural preservation and visitor satisfaction. The hypothesis test further confirms that the combined perception index is statistically significant. At the same time, the study identifies a serious data gap because official sources do not uniformly publish festival-wise domestic and foreign visitor footfall. Festival tourism will become more effective if promotion is supported by proper visitor documentation, sustainable destination management and stronger links with local tourism circuits.

XIII. Limitations of the Study

- The study is based on a sample of 197 respondents.
- The scope is limited to five selected tourism festivals in India.

- Festival-wise domestic and foreign tourist footfall data are not consistently available in official public sources.
- The study period includes pandemic and post-pandemic years, which affects year-to-year comparability.
- The primary data are based on respondent perceptions and not on ticketing, entry-gate or expenditure records.

XIV. Scope for Future Research

Future studies may conduct field surveys at festival venues, collect visitor expenditure data, compare pre-event and post-event destination arrivals, estimate local economic impacts and assess sustainability practices. Researchers may also examine how digital campaigns convert online interest into actual tourist visits. A longitudinal study will be more useful when official festival-wise visitor data become available.

References

- [1] D. Getz, *Event Management and Event Tourism*, 2nd ed. New York, NY, USA: Cognizant Communication Corporation, 2005.
- [2] D. Getz, "Event tourism: Definition, evolution, and research," *Tourism Management*, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 403-428, 2008.
- [3] D. Getz, "The nature and scope of festival studies," *International Journal of Event Management Research*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 1-47, 2010.
- [4] D. Getz and S. J. Page, *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, 3rd ed. London, UK: Routledge, 2016.
- [5] G. Richards, Ed., *Cultural Tourism: Global and Local Perspectives*. New York, NY, USA: Haworth Hospitality Press, 2007.
- [6] G. Richards and R. Palmer, *Eventful Cities: Cultural Management and Urban Revitalisation*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2010.
- [7] C. M. Hall, *Hallmark Tourist Events: Impacts, Management and Planning*. London, UK: Belhaven Press, 1992.
- [8] G. A. J. Bowdin, J. Allen, W. O'Toole, R. Harris, and I. McDonnell, *Events Management*, 3rd ed. London, UK: Routledge, 2011.
- [9] R. Raj, P. Walters, and T. Rashid, *Events Management: Principles and Practice*, 2nd ed. London, UK: SAGE Publications, 2013.
- [10] A. Shone and B. Parry, *Successful Event Management: A Practical Handbook*, 4th ed. Andover, UK: Cengage Learning, 2013.

- [11] Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, India Tourism Data Compendium 2024. New Delhi, India: Government of India, 2024.
- [12] Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Annual Report 2023-24. New Delhi, India: Government of India, 2024.
- [13] Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Monthly Tourism Statistics, December 2024. New Delhi, India: Government of India, 2024.
- [14] Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, India Tourism Data Compendium Key Highlights 2024. New Delhi, India: Government of India, 2024.
- [15] Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, "Utsav Portal: Events and festivals in India," Government of India, 2024.
- [16] Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, "Utsav Portal: Mango Festival, Delhi," Government of India, 2024.
- [17] Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, "Utsav Portal: Tea and Tourism Festival, Ooty," Government of India, 2024.