

Exploring the Influence of Sustainable Tourism on the Growth of the Handicraft Sector: A Socio-Demographic Study of Rajasthan

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[Abstract] Rajasthan is one of India's most well-liked travel locations because of its magnificent forts, palaces, artwork, traditions, and cultural history. Many foreigners visit Rajasthan while visiting India due to its famous art, culture, and craftsmanship. Handicrafts are valuable souvenirs that form a vital part of the tourism experience; they symbolize local traditions and communities. Many countries benefit from the handicrafts business, providing the local population with earnings and employment prospects. Tourists from all over the world admire Rajasthan's handicrafts because of their simplicity and elegance. These handicraft items generated foreign revenue and earned the state and country a wide acclamation. This paper aims to assess the relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of local handicraft workers and their perception of sustainable tourism and the role of government. An exploratory study was conducted across the four districts of Rajasthan - Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, and Udaipur to gain insight into the handicraft business through surveys with individuals involved in it. For this study, a structured questionnaire has been used, which consists of statements related to the role of tourism and government.

[Keywords] handicraft tourism, tourism, sustainable tourism, Rajasthan tourism, local community development

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Introduction

The tourism industry has been growing expeditiously and contributing considerably to nations' GDPs. This rapid development comes with the problems of the asymmetrical distribution of benefits. The motto of the sustainability of tourism is to minimize the damaging impacts of mass tourism on the environment, economy, society, and culture and to create sustainable living for host communities. For the justifiable growth of tourism, appropriate consideration is necessary for the factors like local economic growth, host community development, and environmental protection.

With the growth of tourism, new forms of tourism, like sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, ecotourism, etc., evolved, giving more importance to the environment and well-being of the host community (Pataskar, 2005). As per UNDESA, tourism is one of the businesses with the fastest growth rates worldwide. It provides significant employment and foreign exchange and profoundly influences the economy and ecology of host destinations. Developing economies receive more significant influence of tourism on their economy, community, culture, and ecology; therefore, the sustainability of tourism is imperative to support tourism expansion in the upcoming year. The essential components of sustainable tourism development are the environment, economic, and socio-cultural factors. One of the SDG Agenda for Sustainable Development targets is to create more jobs in the tourism industry and bring local culture and products on a broad platform. Local population support is crucial for the sustainable growth and development of the tourism industry (Ryan, Zhang, & Zeng, 2011).

Literature Review

The tourism industry has become more significant to communities worldwide, so sustainably promoting tourism is a top priority. Local communities are a significant source upon which tourism depends, and their presence in a certain location at a specific period can be used to validate the industry's growth (Richards & Hall, 2002). Tourism is very important for developing nations like India, as it provides employment and contributes so much to the economy in different forms. It provides various entrepreneurial and service opportunities to host communities (Gombu, 2021). The government's role in fostering and advancing the handicraft industry is crucial, and the government should create and implement policies for the economic benefit of vulnerable people (Abisuga-Oyekunle & Fillis, 2016). There exists a positive relationship between sustainable development and tourism industry growth. The effort towards maintaining more benefits for the local population over costs contributes to both sustainable tourism and tourism industry growth (Creaco & Querini, 2003). Tourism improves the standard of living of the local population by providing employment. It also supports and promotes local dances, events, festivals, folk traditions, and fine arts and provides a market for local handicrafts and manufacturing (Kumawat & Kumar, 2021). Handicrafts are the most significant part of the tangible cultural heritage of the state. They are one of the major factors that attract tourists, and a relationship exists between tourism and handicrafts. The expansion of the tourism industry shows a significant growth in the production and sale of handicrafts. They contribute considerably to the culture and tourist experience of tourist destinations and significantly to the state's economy by employing crafters and artisans who, while preserving cultural heritage, generate income through the informal sector (Baskaran, 2021). Tourism is of great economic and social significance to the host destination. It provides income and employment opportunities. The tourism sector consists of numerous businesses offering tourists various goods and services, with handicrafts ranking as one of the most well-known attractions that capture Rajasthan's rich cultural past. These crafters and artisans work in different environments. Some work in more formal creative industries, while others work in travel, leisure, and event services.

Tourism provides a huge export opportunity for many handicrafts. For instance, hotels, restaurants, and tour organizers require varied handicrafts to decorate and furnish their premises. Rajasthan is home to a wide range of ethnic communities and crafters. Most of them still maintain their cultural tradition in the form of handicrafts, including jewelry, beadwork, woodwork, wooden furniture, paintings, blue pottery, marble work, terracotta work, embroidery, puppet shows, carpets and rugs, leather goods, etc. (Saxena & Gupta, 2020). These crafters and artisans face major obstacles and challenges in their development and struggle hard to survive. As with the advent of industrialization, some handicrafts gradually lost their relevance, and the industry is currently stigmatized with inferiority and backwardness. To solve this problem, the collective efforts of government and stakeholders are a must. (Dash, 2015).

Methodology

The representative sample of participants for the current study was chosen based on the following factors. Respondents must belong to an ethnic minority community residing in Rajasthan; respondents must have handicrafts as their source of income; the sample size should be between 100 and 120. The study was conducted in the four districts of Rajasthan: Udaipur, Jodhpur, Jaipur, and Jaisalmer. Thirty handicraft workers were selected from each district, thus, making the total sample size 120. The information for this study was gathered from primary data. To collect data, a structured questionnaire comprising statements related to the role of sustainable tourism in the growth of the handicrafts sector and the role of government

in the sustainable development of the handicraft sector and tourism industry with dichotomous rating scales was used. The raw data collected was carefully checked, verified, and properly organized. After coding, data entry was carefully done, and statistical tools like SPSS (version 26.0) and MS Excel were then used to analyze the data. Data analysis techniques, such as descriptive and inferential statistics, were used further. To study the distribution of perception of local residents involved in the handicraft industry across socio-demographic factors, a non-parametric test was used—the Mann-Whitney U test for gender and the Kruskal-Wallis test for education and age.

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables*

Demographic Variables		Count	Percent
Gender	Male	86	71.7%
	Female	34	28.3%
Age group	Up to 30 years	37	30.8%
	31-40 years	49	40.8%
	41-50 years	23	19.2%
	Over 50 years	11	9.2%
Highest level of Education	Up to matric	43	35.8%
	Up to higher secondary	56	46.7%
	Over higher secondary	21	17.5%

The details about the demographic profile show that 71.7% were male respondents who participated in the study; in contrast, 28.3% were female respondents. Thus, the gender ratio of the respondents in this study is 2.5:1, indicating a domination of the male perspective in research findings. The majority (40.8%) of participants surveyed were 31-40 years, followed by 30.8% aged up to 30 years, 19.2% between the ages of 41 and 50, and 9.2% beyond 50. The mean age of respondents was 36.4 years, with an SD of 5.74. As per the respondents' education profiles, 46.7% had a higher secondary education, followed by 35.8% with a secondary education or less, and 17.5% with a higher secondary education.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics of Perception of Locals Involved in the Handicraft Industry Regarding the Influence of Sustainable Tourism on the Growth of the Handicraft Business*

Influence of Tourism	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Increase in Demand	120	1.05	.219
Employment generation	120	1.24	.430
Growth of small-scale businesses	120	1.44	.499
Growth of Supporting industries	120	1.33	.473
Commercialization of customs & traditions	120	1.22	.414
Increased benefits to locals	120	1.09	.290
Improved standard of living	120	1.31	.464
Valid N (listwise)	120		

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Perception of Locals Involved in the Handicraft Industry Regarding the Role of Government in the Growth of the Handicraft Sector and Tourism Industry

Role of Government	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Subsidies to crafters	120	1.54	.500
Development of Hotels & Resorts	120	1.23	.425
Development of Heritage Sites	120	1.33	.470
Training and support to crafters	120	1.42	.496
Organized various exhibitions	120	1.36	.482
Valid N (listwise)	120		

Hypothesis Testing

H1: The perception of handicraft industry workers regarding the influence of sustainable tourism on the growth of the handicraft business is the same across gender, age group, and the highest level of education.

H2: The perception of handicraft industry workers regarding the role of government in the growth of the handicraft sector and tourism industry is the same across gender, age group, and the highest level of education.

Analyses of Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis H1a: The perceptions of men and women regarding the influence of sustainable tourism on the growth of the handicraft business are not significantly different.

A non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was used to investigate the null hypothesis, which states that perceptions of the influence of sustainable tourism on the growth of the handicraft business did not vary by gender. The null hypothesis is maintained after a U test, demonstrating that gender has no bearing on how craftspeople perceive sustainable tourism's influence.

Hypothesis Test Results

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Result
Across all gender categories, the division of the influence of sustainable tourism is the same.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.634	Maintain the null hypothesis.

The significance level is .050

Null Hypothesis H1b: The perceptions of the various age groups about sustainable tourism's influence on the handicraft business's growth are not significantly different.

The Kruskal-Wallis Test is used to test the null hypothesis, which states that perceptions of the influence of sustainable tourism on the growth of the handicraft business are consistent across age groups. The null hypothesis is dismissed, demonstrating that age difference impacts the perception of craftspeople.

Hypothesis Test Results

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Result
Across all categories of Age Groups, the division of the role of tourism is the same.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.001	Dismiss the null hypothesis.

The significance level is .050

Null Hypothesis 1c: The perceptions of the categories of respondents having different education levels regarding the influence of sustainable tourism on the growth of the handicraft business are not significantly different.

The Kruskal-Wallis Test is used to test the null hypothesis, which states that perceptions of the influence of sustainable tourism on the growth of the handicraft business are consistent across people of different educational levels. The null hypothesis is rejected, demonstrating that difference in education level impacts the perception of craftspeople.

Hypothesis Test Results

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Result
In all categories at the highest level of education, the role of tourism is divided uniformly.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Dismiss the null hypothesis.

The significance level is .050.

Null Hypotheses 2a: Male and female perspectives on the role of government in the growth of the handicraft sector and tourism industry do not differ much.

To test the null hypothesis of the perception of the role of government in the growth of the handicraft sector and tourism industry is the same across gender, the Mann-Whitney U Test is conducted, and the null hypothesis is dismissed, which shows gender influences the perception of artisans.

Hypothesis Test Results

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Result
Across all gender categories, the division of the role of government is the same.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.004	Dismiss the null hypothesis.

The significance level is .050

Null Hypotheses 2b: The perceptions of different age groups about the role of the government in the growth of the handicraft sector and tourism industry are not significantly different.

The Kruskal-Wallis Test is used to test the null hypothesis that perceptions of the craftspeople regarding the role of government in the growth of the handicraft sector and tourism industry are consistent across age

groups. The null hypothesis is rejected, demonstrating that age differences have an impact on the perceptions of artisans.

Hypothesis Test Summary

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Result
Across different Age Groups, the division of the role of government is the same.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.037	Dismiss the null hypothesis.

The significance level is .050

Null Hypotheses 2c: The perceptions of the categories of respondents having different education levels regarding the role of government in the growth of the handicraft sector and tourism industry are not significantly different.

The Kruskal-Wallis Test is used to test the null hypothesis that perceptions of the role of government in the growth of the handicraft sector and tourism industry are equal across different categories of education level. The null hypothesis is rejected, demonstrating that differences in education level impact the perceptions of craftspeople.

Hypothesis Test Summary

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Result
Across all categories of different levels of education, the division of the role of government is the same.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.001	Dismiss the null hypothesis.

The significance level is .050

Conclusion

For the sustainable development of host communities, the growth of the handicraft sector is a win-win situation, as it provides a boost to the local economy and attracts tourists worldwide. To make the handicraft industry economically viable, tourism and the government play big parts. This research highlights the importance of sustainable tourism and government policies in developing the handicraft industry. This study sought to determine how local handicraft industry workers' perceptions of the roles of sustainable tourism and the government in the growth of the handicraft sector were influenced by socio-demographic factors. The findings of this study reflect that both age group and education level have influenced the perceptions of the influence of sustainable tourism in the growth of the handicraft sector. The influence of government in the growth of tourism and the handicraft sector is perceived variably by all socio-demographic factors selected for the study. The results of perception of the influence of sustainable tourism in the growth of the handicraft sector across males and females show no variance that is there is no significant difference in their opinion regarding it.

Today, sustainable and economic development in any sector is impossible unless it generates employment and revenue along with skill enhancement in its human resources (Hosseinnia & Shoja, 2017).

The research results indicate a significant role of tourism in generating demand for handicraft products, creating employment, and economic benefits for locals through sustainable tourism development. This implies that tourism development can have sustainable financial implications for the handicrafts sector due to preserving and transmitting local ethnic culture (Saad, 2020). Additionally, the government's contribution to developing the handicraft sector is essential for the long-term growth of both tourism and handicraft businesses. The involvement of the state government and local authorities is vital in initiating, implementing, promoting, monitoring, and sustaining tourism programs and developing the handicraft industry. As such, the programs must satisfy the expectations of ethnic communities by involving local people and institutions.

Tourism in Rajasthan contributes significantly to the state's GDP and provides economic benefits, such as regional development, infrastructure development, employment, foreign exchange earnings, and promoting local handicrafts. Handicrafts symbolize local traditions and the local communities. However, the industry is currently stigmatized with inferiority and backwardness, and the locals face various challenges. Undoubtedly, the promotion of sustainable tourism will give a boost to the handicraft industry (Dash, 2015).

Future Scope

This study was conducted in four districts of Rajasthan, and three factors of socio-demographic variables were considered. Future researchers are urged to perform thorough research from the standpoint of workers in the handicraft business, which covers a wide geographical area and includes additional socio-demographic factors.

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