

Cultural Tourism Development in Himachal Pradesh Emphasizing Local Festivals, Fairs, and their Promotion

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Abstract

A tourist destination's culture is a synthesis of various aspects such as belief, art, morals, dialect, music, dances, and cuisines. Local festivals and fairs are essential cultural aspects that every tourist wants to experience during his or her tour to any destination. This research study focuses on Himachal Pradesh's various festivals and fairs, as well as promotional measures to be implemented as part of the state's cultural tourism growth. The study has utilized both primary data (personal observation) as well as secondary information (Books, journals, magazines and online sources). During the research, it was discovered that there are more than 200 festivals and fairs held around the state which can be promoted to develop cultural tourism in Himachal.

Keywords: *festivals, fair, promotion, destination, culture & tourism*

1 Introduction

Himachal Pradesh is a popular hilly state in India's northwestern region. It is also known as dev bhoomi. People here are extremely devoted to their gods and goddesses. The state is divided into 12 districts Shimla, Sirmour, Solan, Una, Kangra, Kinnaur, Kullu, Lahaul & Spiti, Mandi, Bilaspur, Chamba, Hamirpur. Each district celebrates their own local fair and festival. Hindus make up the majority of the population in Himachal Pradesh, with Hindus accounting for 98 percent of the state's population. As a result, local festivals and fairs have their roots in religion as well as popular faith myths and tales. People in Himachal Pradesh often refrain from performing routine tasks on festival days. They prepare local foods, bathe, dress neatly and cleanly, and worship in the temple in a traditional manner. On such occasions, Traditional songs and dance are most common. These festivals and fairs have the potential to represent whole of the culture of Himachal Pradesh under a single roof. Cultural festivals and trade fairs in Himachal are sold not only in major tourist attractions (Shimla, Manali, Dharamsala, Chambers, etc.) However, in smaller towns and villages, as well. Promotion of Himachali festivals and trade fairs requires the promotion initiative from the Ministry of Tourism. So that people get aware about the local festivals and show their interest in them. Events such as festivals are a potentially powerful means of gaining a competitive advantage by promoting and strengthening the unique "sense of place" of a destination.

Cultural events and festivals encourage the cross cultural communication which helps in promoting proper understanding between the guest and the host.

The ancient festivals are associated with religion and are observed in unusual ways. A festival may end in a fair, but most festivals are celebrated in homes. Several festivals are held throughout the state. Himachal Pradesh hosts nearly 200 fairs and festivals. Cultural tourism is a type of tourism in which visitors can

participate in local cultural activities such as festivals and rituals. As a result, tourists can engage in genuine cultural exchanges with locals. It also allows local communities to accept their culture, which is a major driver of growth. As a result, communities go out of their way to celebrate and promote their culture because it distinguishes them from other communities. Where as a festival is an event that is usually celebrated by a community and focuses on some aspect of that community's religion or culture. It is frequently observed as a local or national holiday. A festival is an example of globalization as well as the interrelationship between high and low culture. Aside from religion and folklore, agriculture is a significant origin. Because food is such an important resource, many festivals are associated with harvest time. Religious commemoration and thanksgiving for bountiful harvests are combined in autumn events such as Halloween in the northern hemisphere and Easter in the southern.

Festivals frequently serve specific communal purposes, particularly when it comes to commemorating or thanking the gods, goddesses, or saints: They are known as patronal festivals. They may also provide entertainment, which was especially important in local communities prior to the introduction of mass-produced entertainment. Festivals that focus on cultural or ethnic topics also aim to educate community members about their traditions; the participation of elders sharing stories and experiences fosters family unity. In general, a fair is a gathering of people for various entertainment or commercial activities. A fair combines commerce, trade, festivals, religious feasts, and holidays. Some common types of fairs include Trade Fair, Street Fair, State Fair, Country fair. The villagers organise folk drama and wrestling matches. Swings, giant wheels, singing parties, folk dramas, dances, and other forms of entertainment are popular among pilgrims and visitors during the fair.

Difference between Festivals and Fairs

Although the terms fair and festival are frequently used interchangeably, there is a distinction between the two. The main distinction between a fair and a festival is that festivals are associated with religion and culture. They have their own traditions and rituals because they are typically associated with these elements.

The purpose of this paper is to consider the trade fairs and festivals of Himachal Pradesh as tourist attractions, and the role of the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation to promote local fairs and festivals and attract more tourists. Finally, the report provides some policy recommendations.

2 Literature Review

Homestay accommodation is a lodging facility that includes full board and allows tourists to learn about indigenous language, culture, and social structure. (Agyeiwaah et al., 2013)

Rural tourism is a type of tourism in which the tourism takes place in the countryside. Lane (1994)

In its broadest sense, culture is cultivated behaviour; that is, the sum of a person's learned, accumulated experience that is socially transmitted, or, more succinctly, behaviour through social learning. (Hofstede, 1997)

Cultural tourism encompasses urban tourism, particularly in historic or large cities, as well as cultural facilities such as museums and theatres. It can also include rural tourism showcasing indigenous cultural communities' traditions, such as festivals and rituals, as well as their values and way of life, as well as niches such as industrial tourism and creative tourism. (wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_tourism,2015).

Tourists can learn more about the local skills, expertise, traditions, and unique characteristics of the places they visit by participating in creative tourism activities. (Richards & Wilson, 2006).

So far, research on fairs and festivals has focused on tournament rituals. (Anand and Watson,2004)

This led to the anthropological proposition that no social relation, institution, or set of institutions was 'economic' in and of itself. (Sahlins 1974: 185).

The objective of the study

- 1 To identify the potential of cultural tourism in Himachal Pradesh.
- 2 1.To investigate Himachal Pradesh's fairs and festivals as a tourism draw.

3 Research Methodology:

While the required secondary information/data was collected from the Department of Tourism-Himachal, Himachal Tourism Development Corporation, Directorate of Planning and Statistics-Himachal, Directorate of Information and Publicity Himachal , Tourism Master Plan articles published in newspapers, Tourism and Travel Hospitality journals, as well as related books and literature in this field, both in print and electronic form, for research purpose. Besides this the researcher being an resident of Himachal,is himself aware about the cultural tourism potential of Himachal Pradesh.

Data Analysis

Table showing list of Fairs/Festivals of Himachal Pradesh

| State Fairs/ Festivals, District Fairs/Festivals & Others | | |
|---|-------------------|--|
| Buffalos Fair | Shimla (Mashobra) | Celebrated in the month of September |
| Sippi Fair | Shimla (Mashobra) | Celebrated in the month of May |
| Stone Fair/Pather ka Khel | Shimla (Halog) | Celebrated in the month of October, November |
| Shand Fair | Shimla | ----- |
| Faag Fair | Shimla (Rampur) | District Level Fair |
| Bharmaur Yatra | Chamba | Celebrated in the month of August |
| Phool Yatra | Chamba (Pangi) | Celebrated in the month of October |
| Suhi Fair | Chamba | Celebrated by women and children in the fond memory of Rani Naina Devi |
| Manimahesh Yatra | Chamba | State level Fair |
| Piplu Fair | Una | Celebrated in the month of May, June |
| Baba Badbhag Singh Fair | Una (Maidi) | Celebrated in the month of June |
| Chintpurni Fair | Una | Celebrated in the memory of Goddess Sati |

| State Fairs/ Festivals, District Fairs/Festivals & Others | | |
|---|------------------------|--|
| Shoolini Fair | Solan | Celebrated in the month of June |
| Saarhi Fair | Solan (Arki) | Celebrated in the month of July. This fair is famous for buffalo's fight |
| Trilokpur Fair | Sirmaur | Dedicated to Goddess Bala Sundari, celebrated during Navratras. |
| Mahunaag Fair | Mandi | ----- |
| Chhechshu Fair | Mandi (Riwalsar) | State level Fair |
| Shitla Devi Fair | Mandi (Sundernagar) | Celebrated in the month of April. This festival has a religious importance to Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists. |
| Nalwari Fair | Mandi (Sundernagar) | ----- |
| Nalwari Fair | Mandi (Sandhol) | Celebrated in the month of April |
| Kamrunaag Fair | Mandi (Rohanda) | State level Fair, also called as animal fair |
| Triloknath (Pauri Mela) | Lahaul-Spiti (Udaipur) | Celebrated in the month of April at Bador Sehar Pattan |
| Ladarcha fair | Lahaul-Spiti (Kaza) | District Level Fair |
| | | State Level Fair |

| State Fairs/ Festivals, District Fairs/Festivals & Others | | |
|---|---------------------|---|
| Fair/Festival | District | Details |
| Nalwari Fair | Bilaspur | Started by W. Goldstein in 1889 during the reign of Raja Amar Chand of Kehlur. This fair is celebrated in the month of March. |
| | | State level Fair. |
| | | Also called as Animal Fair |
| Naina Devi Fair | Bilaspur | This fair is celebrated in the month of August. |
| Gugga Festival | Bilaspur & Hamirpur | This fair is celebrated in the month of August and September respectively. |
| Markanda Fair | Bilaspur (Jukhala) | Celebrated in the month of April |
| Dungri Fair | Kullu (Manali) | This fair is dedicated to Goddess Hidimba |
| Saarhi Yatra | Kullu | Celebrated in the month of May |
| Dal Fair | Kangra | Celebrated in the month of August |
| Jwalamukhi Fair | Kangra | Celebrated in the month of October |
| Nagini Fair | Kangra | District Level Fair |
| Kaleshwar Fair | Kangra | State Level Fair |
| Dyot-Sidh Fair | Hamirpur | Celebrated in the month of June |
| Gasota Festival | Hamirpur | Celebrated in the month of May |
| Losar Festival | Kinnaur | This festival starts on new year |
| Phulech Festival | Kinnaur | Celebrated in the month of September. |
| | | District level Festival |

| International Fairs and Festivals of Himachal Pradesh | | |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| Fair/Festival | District | Details |
| Kullu Dussehra | Kullu | Started in 1651 at Dhalpur Ground |
| Minjar Fair | Chamba | Started by Raja Sahil Varman, held at Chaugan in the month of August |
| Renuka Fair | Sirmaur | Held in the month of November |
| Shivratri Fair | Mandi | Started by Raja Ajbar Sen. Held at Paddal Ground, Mandi |
| Holi Fair | Sujanpur Tihra, Hamirpur | Started by Raja Sansar Chand |
| Lavi Fair (Oldest Fair) | Rampur, Shimla | Started by Raja Kehri Singh |
| Winter Carnival (Manali) | Kullu | ---- |

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<https://hpgeneralstudies.com/fairs-festivals-himachal-pradesh/>

The above mentioned tables shows the list of local as well as international festivals which are celebrated across the state at different districts. These include Buffalo fair, sippi fair; Stone fair; Shand fair; Faag fair in district Shimla .

Phool Yatra ; Suhi Fair ; Manimahesh Yatra in district Chamba.

Piplu fair; Bba Bad Budbhag Singh Fair; Chintpurni fair in district Una.

Shoolini fair ; Saarhi fair in district Solan.

Trilokpur fair Sirmaur.

Mahunaag fair ; Chhechs fair; Shitla devi fair; nalwari fair ; Kamrunaag fair District Mandi.

Triloknath fair ; Ladaracha fair District Lahaoul-Spiti

Nalwari fair; Naina Devi fair ; Gugga Festival ; Markanda fair in district Bilaspur

Dungri Fair Saarhi fair in district Kullu .

Dal Fair ; Jawalamukhi fair ; Nagini fair; Kaleshwar Fair in district Kangra.

Dyot Sidh fair; Gasota festival in district Hamirpur.

Losar Festival; Kinnaur Festival Kinnaur .

Phulech festival

4 Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is obvious that Himachal Pradesh has a variety of local festivals and fairs, each of which is unique in its own right. The best part about these festivals and fairs is that they showcase the entire culture of the districts/states on a single platform. People who enjoy exploring culture or religious sites may be drawn to these, which may aid in the growth of various cultural destinations throughout the state, including tribal destinations. All we need to do is promote them in the best way possible, which can be accomplished through any medium. The government and travel agencies can both play important roles in the development of these. The Tourism Department may place a specific emphasis on the State's Tourism Calendar and construct it in such a way that tourists (domestic and international) can both experience and enjoy the Festivals, Fairs, and Food created during these occasions, as well as live them.

Promotion of such fairs and festivals would also assist in raising awareness of the diversity of the state's culture among outsiders while also assisting in the preservation of the culture. It can also be viewed as a source of employment with the potential to provide employment to a large number of people. During the research it has been observed that Himachal Pradesh hosts nearly 200 fairs and festivals.

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