

Exploring the Potential of Festival Tourism in Nepal: A Case Study of Trishul Jatra in Devapattan, Kathmandu

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Abstract

An alternative form of tourism, festival tourism is dedicated to participating in celebrations and special events of any culture, region or nation. Trishul Jatra is a kind of local festival which stands out as a potential festival tourism product for its uniqueness, symbolic rituals and stories. As only few studies on the Jatra and festival tourism potential in the Nepalese context have been found during the present study, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining Trishul Jatra from tourism perspective based on a framework provided by previous studies. The study also identifies challenges that hindered the potential of Jatra as a tourism product. Conducting qualitative research with in-depth interviews and non-participant observation, the findings reveal five major issues that prevent the festival's tourism potential including financial, socio-cultural, environmental infrastructural and other issues. These findings provide practical implications to tourism stakeholders, government authorities and communities of the region for better planning, policymaking and sustainability of the festival.

Key Words: Devapattan, festivals, festival, tourism, tourism potential, Trishul Jatra

Introduction

A popular nation among tourists, Nepal has mesmerised people around the world with its unmatched beauty not only in terms of natural landscapes, but also in terms of cultural diversity. The cultural diversity has resulted in a spectrum of cultures and traditions provoking development of cultural tourism in Nepal. Cultural tourism is defined as a form of tourism that concerns knowing language, customs of people in alien lands, exploring historical monuments, visiting art galleries, religious sites or enjoying any sort of art, music, dance and festival (Satyal, 1999). Cultural Tourism comprises four major elements that are tourism, use of cultural heritage assets, consumption of experiences and products, and the tourists (McKercher & Cros, 2002). Cultural tourism and Heritage tourism often overlap and thus can be defined as a branch of tourism involving a visit to heritage sites with interest in art, food, music, festivals, etc. distinctive from their home culture.

Festivals are public celebrations involving a set of rituals which always have a theme (Getz, 1991). Intangible heritage is manifested in five different forms, and one of them is social practices, rituals and festive events. A big part of Nepalese intangible cultural heritage is occupied by festivals, and these in most cases have a religious theme. Amatya (2014) classified Nepalese festivals into national, regional and local categories. At the local level the festivals celebrated in Kathmandu valley, particularly the Jatras celebrated, seems quite promising in the growth of cultural tourism. Jatra is a procession held in different parts of Nepal which has social and cultural significance. The Kathmandu Valley is renowned for its legacy of culture and traditional practices, mostly manifested

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in the form of Jatra. Biskaa (Bisket) Jatra, Indra Jatra, Mastyendranath Jatra, Gai Jatra, and so on attract a significant number of foreign tourists.

A discussion on Nepalese cultural tourism remains incomplete without a mention of Pashupatinath Area (will be dealt in following section). This major spot of cultural tourism has so much to offer than merely being a religious site but still has not been able to excel in its full potential. Therefore, deeming a need for product diversification in this area, this paper explores the potentiality of festival tourism through a comprehensive study of Trishul Jatra from a tourism perspective. The two aims of this research are: i) to see the possibility of Trishul Jatra as a festival tourism product, ii) to identify the challenges faced by Trishul Jatra in recent times.

This study has practical implications as it serves a blueprint on how a festival, or any historical event can be promoted as a tourism product. The findings of this research are certainly applicable to Pashupatinath Area but is not limited to this region. Furthermore, the findings are very useful for policy makers of Pashupati Area Development Trust (PADT), Department of Archaeology (DoA); tourism stakeholders; and community in tourism development and to identify the existing issues that are preventing growth of a tourist destination or attraction.

Pashupatinath Area: Around three kilometres northwest of Kathmandu lies Devapattan, Pashupatinath area that encompasses diverse landscapes, including holy river Bagmati, open spaces (dabali), ancient settlement, temple complexes, and the sacred hill Kailash. Pashupatinath area is renowned for the temple of lord Shiva, Pashupatinath which is believed to be even more fruitful than Kashi ([Poudel, 2020 B.S](#)). For Hindus, it is a must visit pilgrimage site, while for non-Hindus an ideal place for spiritual awakening. The unique religious and cultural heritage featuring temples, inscriptions, idols, festivals, rituals, and indigenous settlement that hold outstanding universal value led to the listing of Pashupatinath area as UNESCO World Heritage Cultural Site in 1979 A.D. Almost every month of the Nepalese calendar features a festival that is celebrated in the region like Shrawan Monday, Teej, Balachaturdashi and Shivaratri. These festivals being national events attract many visitors, but the same is not observed in local festivals with over 15 jatras celebrated here.

With the huge potential of the area in terms of cultural tourism, the area has not yielded as expected. Besides the river-side crematory being a point of tourist gaze, there is not much for a tourist to have an immersive experience. Some tourists also seek for meditation, and some opt to take photographs with the sages, but many tourists do not feel anything extraordinary about the site. In 2023, a total of 6,94,946 tourists visited Nepal excluding Indian tourists, and out of them only 1,18,531 tourists (excl. Indian tourists) visited Pashupatinath ([MOCTCA, 2024](#)). Distance decay theory suggests that the nearer destination tends to attract more visitors ([Mckercher, 2018](#)), but Pashupatinath despite being in the closest proximity to the International Airport of the capital city, shows no significant influence. The need to increase tourist numbers, length of stay is already realised, and suggestions of product diversification are also made ([Nyaupane, 2022](#)). Nonetheless, it is tough to choose one aspect of the region because of the many options available, so it seems better to introduce product diversification in the form of festival tourism.

Trishul Jatra: The Trishul Jatra is a one-day celebration, native to the Pashupatinath area and is not directly associated with Lord Pashupatinath. The Trishul, or trident, is an important symbol in Hinduism, mostly carried by Lord Shiva and goddesses 'Devi'. The three prongs of Trishul signifies the three gunas (sattva, rajas, tamas) and the cycles of creation, preservation, and destruction. Moreover, it is believed to dissipate the three sufferings: Adhyatmik, Adhibhautik, and Adhidaivik. However, these symbolic meanings do not have any connection with Trishul Jatra.

Trishul Jatra is a processional event in which five children are put on three chariots with a trident impaled on their bodies, creating the illusion of it stabbing the children lying on the chariot. Taking place annually in July, during Ashad Krishnashtami, also known as Bhalabhala Asthami, some believe it is celebrated as a plea to the God for rain (Tandon, 2053 B.S). The Jatra has several legendary accounts regarding its origin that dates to early 16th cent. Local tradition narrates a story of a demon and his children who were captured, killed and demonstrated in a chariot resembling a Trishul (Michaels, 2008). It is said that Trishul Jatra commemorates the death of the demon's child, and similar stories are available in work of many authors (Lamsal, 2023 B.S; Yogi, 2013 S.S; Wright, 1877; Tandon, 2053 B.S; Khanal & Pokharel, 2077 B.S). These chronicles and authors do not specifically use the name Trishul Jatra but rather refer to it as the Kumari Jatra (Wright, 1877). Historical records highlight the fact that it took place across nine villages in the Pashupatinath area with nine different chariots (Yogi, 2013 S.S; Wright, 1877), but at present three chariots procession takes place, from Jayabageshwori, Mangalagauri, and Bajraghar. It is believed that anyone who witnesses the Trishul Jatra in their lifetime is freed from the cycle of rebirth.

During Trishul Jatra a symbolic corpse wrapped in a special flower 'Muswa' is paraded along with three chariots. This tradition has a tragic legend which narrates a story of a priest of Bhuwaneshwori temple, Muni Achaju who accidentally slaughtered his own son upon being asked by a goddess to do so. But in hopes of saving his son's life the priest leaves in search of elixir, however upon returning he discovers his son was already cremated and his wife performed funeral rites. Knowing this he spilled the elixir on grass that was sipped by crow, thus granting grass and crow symbolic immortality. The priest being Tantric practitioner disappeared; nonetheless, King Amar Malla knew he was innocent so declared a parade in commemoration of the priest's deceased son be held every year during the same day Trishul Jatra is celebrated.

The rituals for jatra begins early in the morning with worship at Jayabageshwori, Bhuwaneshwori and Mangala Gauri. The five children (three boy-kumar/ two girls-kumari) from Maharjan/Dangol caste are chosen based on certain criteria few months prior to the jatra. On the day of jatra they (kumar/kumari) are bathed, have nails trimmed, participate in tantric rituals and then taken to Bhuwaneshwori temple where they are blessed with mantras to instil stability and overcome fear during parade. After this, they are fed and kept hidden from public until sunset. The procession for public begins at sunset, with chariot from Batsleshwori premise (one boy/kumar) another from Bajraghar (one boy/kumar), and third chariot from Jayabageshwori (two girls one boy/ two kumaris/ one kumar). A symbolic corpse and a Shivalinga brought from Bhuwaneshwori temple follow the three chariots. After completing the parade which lasts for around 2 hours, the corpse is taken to Bagmati river and cremated in riverbank, while the Shivalinga is returned to temple. The three chariots are rested in Bajraghar and children are taken

down, again fully covered and carried by priests to Bagmati river. The children are then spilled water from Bagmati but traditionally they were supposed to take bath which now is not feasible due to pollution. Finally, the children are changed in new clothes and fed the feast prepared. Then, other participants are served the traditional cuisine as 'prasad' marking an end to the jatra.

Festival Tourism: Festival tourism is an alternative form of tourism which is related to participating in special events and celebrations of a specific culture, region or nation. Festivals of any place are related to the built and conserved history which provide liminal experience and offer opportunities for social-cultural affirmation and personal transformation (Ma & Lew, 2011). Festivals with a long history tied to a specific local tradition are likely to generate tourist experiences around authentic experiences and locally distinct cultures (Kim & Jamal, 2007). Festival tourism is the movement of tourists driven by motivation to attend festivals (Dulal, 2022). Festival tourism is mostly associated with events, but it not limited within, so it is necessary to truly understand tourist-festival-culture relationship (Robinson et al., 2004). Festival tourism has become a complex topic of study as it is often employed as a 'catchall' term that includes any special event of various scales or organisational persuasion (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002). Developing a festival tourism product is therefore challenging not just in terms of sustainability concerns, but also in terms of community satisfaction. Tourism products are created to fulfil the needs of tourists, and festivals act as a catalyst in tourism development of a particular region through their potential of being a tourism product. Therefore, festival tourism offers a platform to responsibly share cultural traditions without compromising authenticity and provides opportunities for conservation and sustainable tourism practices.

Nepalese festivals provide an opportunity to experience authentic cultural practices, fostering community development and promoting tourism sustainability. Festival tourism is not influenced by travel seasons, thus balancing visitor flows throughout the year. Nepal can leverage this unique characteristic of festival tourism to attract tourists all year round as Nepal hosts many festivals almost every month. However, Nepal has not been able to attract tourists whose primary motivation is to participate in festivals. Carnival of Brazil, Holi of India, Ice festivals of China, Oktoberfest of Germany are some of the festivals that have attracted huge numbers of tourists every year, but Nepal has not been able to promote festivals as a core tourism product. Thus, the slow growth of tourist numbers in Nepal demands something innovative to attract visitors, and this could be achieved through festival tourism.

Literature Review

Trishul Jatra: Despite several attempts to study the diverse festivals of Nepal, only few researchers have shown interest in the jatras of Pashupatinath Area. Mary Anderson (1971) was one of the first person to explore jatras of Nepal emphasizing the behaviour of Nepalese who happily and unquestionably celebrate jatras despite having contradictory legends. Although efforts are made to cover prominent jatras, none of the jatra of Pashupatinath Area is brought forward in her work. The book by Koirala (2051 B.S) is completely dedicated to the study area with discussions of almost all the jatras celebrated here. The conflicting detail about the commencement of Trishul Jatra provided in the book is questionable. A very comprehensive and detailed work by Tandon (2053 B.S) is by far the most significant book written on Pashupatinath Area. It encompasses

almost all aspects of the region from history, culture, religion, social structure, geography, and management. Trishul Jatra is discussed in a detail, but the book remains silent in tourism of the area. Similarly, the work of [Michaels \(2008\)](#) is also quite thorough in terms of culture, heritage, and religion of Pashupatinath area, but has not communicated any aspects of tourism. [Bajracharya \(2072 B.S\)](#) highlights the importance of jatras in Newa community while pinpointing the prominent jatras of Kathmandu valley. Although this work emphasises the festivals of Newa indigenous nationality, the author has completely ignored jatras of Pashupatinath Area which is a core Newa settlement. Quite like [Tandon's \(2053 B.S\)](#) work is [Khanal and Pokharel's \(2077 B.S\)](#) book on Pashupatinath region. Except for studying the region from tourism perspective, all the other areas from history, culture to social formation is elaborately discussed here. Recent accounts of Trishul Jatra are also presented, but plenty of additions are required in it.

Festival Tourism: The literature on tourism is so vast and in such a large number that it is nearly impossible to select the literature for review. Therefore, only literature closely associated either with Nepalese tourism, or cultural and festival tourism are chosen for review. The primary motivator for people to travel is for escapism from routine life ([Kunwar, 1997](#)). Previous studies highlighting fundamentals of tourism including the types of tourists, forms of tourism, concept of authenticity, and impacts of tourism ([Kunwar, 1997](#)); as well as work on the history of Nepalese tourism ([Satyal, 1999](#); [Amatya, 2014](#)), cultural tourism destinations ([Amatya, 2014](#)), study on tourism trend and statistics ([Satyal, 1999](#)) have provided invaluable information.

However, none of these works have discussions on festivals or events tourism. The development of cultural tourism products involves several steps like storytelling, maintaining quality, retaining authenticity, and so on ([McKercher & Cros, 2002](#)). The research by [McKercher and Cros \(2002\)](#) provides insights on cultural tourism through management perspective. Although the book does not provide any information on festival tourism, but the model proposed by the authors on developing cultural tourism products is utilized to present Trishul Jatra as a tourism product. Festival tourism is believed to be the most sustainable form of tourism demanding a balanced approach with its link to community development and local environment ([O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002](#)). The study by [O'Sullivan & Jackson \(2002\)](#) reveals the potential of festival tourism in contribution to sustainable development across three festivals which was not directly aiding in sustainable local economic development. The study only covers environmental and economic aspects with no intervention on other vital aspects of festival tourism. Many festivals that are organised widely are merely tourist-oriented events that lack festival qualities, so the term festival tourism is considered problematic ([Quinn, 2006](#)). The study by [Quinn \(2006\)](#) focuses on two arts festivals of Ireland suggesting that the relationship between tourism and festivals is not simple. Festival induced tourism increased revenue and resulted in better infrastructure, but festivals engagement with tourism needs to be managed by applying sustainable approaches. However, the study has ignored religious festivals that cannot be duplicated nor is demand-driven like arts festivals or any such events which is common in Western world. The commodification and duplication of local festivals in China has led to excessive 'festivalisation' that is more acute here than in any part of the world ([Ma & Lew, 2011](#)).

The study by [Ma and Lew \(2011\)](#) proposed a festival tourism contextual framework underlying four major issues of local identity, uniqueness, authenticity, and liminality. The

framework is helpful in ensuring long-term success of festival tourism, but the study is more China focused and there are other problems beyond the four identified by them. Timothy (2020) notes that the earliest manifestation of travel in Asia was apparent in Hindu and Buddhist pilgrimages. Timothy's work is very deep and encompasses a broad field of tourism from demand shifters, authenticity, museums, tourism politics, zoning of sites to dark tourism. Nevertheless, this extensive book also has limitations as it lacks knowledge on festival tourism. Nyaupane's (2022) research throws light on the potentialities of cultural tourism in Pashupatinath area. His work identifies challenges and opportunities in strengthening cultural tourism in the area, while also proposing the concept of zoning the site. Nyaupane recommends creating a festival calendar to promote tourism, but still no detail is present regarding festival tourism.

Nepal Tourism Policy 2065 B.S outlines policies to establish Nepal as a sustainable tourism destination utilising natural, cultural, and historical heritage for economic growth and local government. It focuses on promoting Nepal in international and domestic markets; facilitating private investments; ensuring air safety; encouraging tourism diversification like mountaineering, trekking, sports tourism, cultural tourism, pilgrimage tourism, agriculture tourism, health tourism, and other; promoting public- private partnership; enhancing human resources; and so on. The policy although vaguely reflects promotion of local culture and religious activities, it does not specify any policy related to festival tourism or promotion of festivals in generating tourism.

Despite the cultural and religious importance of jatras in the Pashupatinath area, existing research has overlooked the tourism potential of such local festivals. The foundation works on Nepalese tourism have neglected festival tourism, leaving a gap on how Nepalese festivals could be developed and marketed as tourist attractions. Furthermore, existing research on festival tourism has fixated focus on commodification and authenticity while ignoring other possible areas that align with historical and religious festivals. Thus, this study in Trishul jatra can fill the knowledge gap by focusing on the unexplored festival tourism potential of Nepalese festivals and identify challenges in it.

Research Methods

Qualitative research seeks out answers by exploring diverse social settings and the groups or individuals who inhabit these settings (Berg & Lune, 2017). The study is based on a socio-cultural event, so using a qualitative research approach provides more holistic insights. This is descriptive research that utilizes data from interviews, observation and literary sources to provide understanding of the tourism potential of the festival and associated challenges.

Data Collection and Analysis: Being of qualitative nature, this study consults both primary and secondary data sources. For the primary data, semi-structured interviews with key informants are held. Semi-structured interviews are valuable in seeking views on focused topics or background information with key informants (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Interviewing serves as a basic method of inquiry and a powerful approach to gain deeper insights into significant social issues through an exploration of the experiences of individuals (Seidman, 2006). With purposive sampling, succeeded by the snowballing method led to identification of 15 key informants (does not include random general interview with locals taken during the event). Couple days after the event, interviews was taken with open-

ended questions to 15 key informants including organisers, locals, priests, and government officials. The interview for each participant lasted between 30-40 minutes, and a total of a month was required for data collection. The interviews began with general inquiry of the historical background of the Jatra, followed by more critical questions to identify the issues related to the event. Participants' response was recorded, transcribed and proceeded to thematic analysis. The thematic analysis followed steps provided by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#). After familiarizing with the data, initial codes are generated. The answer of the interview led to a set of these initial codes: historical background (oral tradition and legends), 'community involvement' (participation of locals and other local stakeholders), cultural significance (dress, ornaments, music, feast), 'authenticity' (retention of traditional practices and rituals), 'tourism infrastructure' (related to amenities, accommodation, accessibility, museum), 'environmental concerns', 'government aid', 'financial arrangements', 'research and documentation', and 'marketing and promotion'. These codes are further refined to identify specific themes by merging overlapping ideas like 'poor wire management' and 'lack of amenities' both relate to issues in infrastructure; thus, combined under infrastructure issues. Upon analysis, the issues are identified on 5 different themes: Socio-cultural, Financial, Environmental, Infrastructural and Other issues (elaborated in following section).

Observation during the event also contributed to the addition of primary data. A non-participant direct observation allows researchers to have an in-depth understanding of a social group from an independent point of view, as well as direct observation allows to witness events unfold naturally in their authentic context ([Ciesielska et al., 2018](#)). Through non-participant but direct observation of the jatra allowed researchers to identify key attractions of the festival like tangible and intangible assets of the festival, main stakeholders, and understand tourism-related components of the site (heritage trail, accommodation, accessibility, amenities). Lack of amenities in the heritage trail, reluctance of children to participate in the procession, missing traditional costumes and musical performance were some of the findings through observation. Literature on the study area and subject also supplied researchers with plenty of information. Books, journal articles, government reports (MOCTCA Statistics report, PADT report), and historical documents (chronicles) formed a foundation for secondary data.

Discussion and Findings

To examine the possibility of promoting Trishul Jatra as a festival tourism product, it is necessary to review the components that are vital for tourism. Along with the 4 A's of tourism, there are other elements that add value to the experience of tourism products.

Table 1

Tourism Products

Tourism Product Feature	Yes/No	Details
Tell a story	Yes	Story of demon, Story of priest
Make the asset come alive	Yes	Religious worships
Make the experience participatory	Yes	Culinary, Heritage trail
Make the experience relevant to the tourist	-	Depends on tourist type
Focus on quality and authenticity	Yes	No commodification

Note. Created using the concept provided by McKercher & Cros, 2002

Attraction: Trishul Jatra is an intangible cultural heritage that can act as a wonderful tourism attraction due to its simple yet dramatic presentation. The unique wooden chariot of Trishul jatra unlike the traditional temple style palanquin, main participants being children, a short evening event makes it a must visit attraction. For attraction to be converted to a tourism product they must have some common feature as illustrated in Table 1.

Based on the product feature provided by McKercher & Cros, Trishul jatra has a story behind it. The whole celebration is based on the story of a demon, his children and a priest. Similarly, the festival makes the tangible heritage (the three goddesses' shrine) come alive through rituals and worship. In addition, the experience is also participatory as visitors can attend the evening feast or just join the parade which passes through a designated heritage trail. Now about making the experience relevant to the tourist depends on the tourist type and the interpretation technique. Finally, quality and authenticity are maintained as the festival is not commodified just for tourist consumption. While some changes are experienced than before (see socio-cultural challenges below), the festivals largely retain authenticity.

Trishul Jatra has a unique selling point (USP) because it is entirely centred on children, distinguishing it from festivals like Gai Jatra where children are not the central focus although it features the children taking part in the cultural procession. The rarity of Trishul Jatra also makes it appealing to tourists as only few festivals globally put children in such a central and risky position. Not similar in religious or social theme, but comparable to the jatra is Spain's El Colacho, held during the Catholic feast of Corpus Christi in Castrillo de Murcia where man dressed as devil leap over babies born in previous year symbolizing cleansing of sins and offering protection from evil.

Accommodation: Pashupatinath area being a well-established tourist attraction has accommodation options in abundance. There are a variety of lodging facilities from traditional Dharamshala to modern hotels. During the event, visitors who want to spend overnight have plenty of options to choose from.

Accessibility: The region is easily accessible as it is near the international airport, while a ring road encircles the area providing road access. While it might get a little crowded in the main event site, getting there seems to be no problem.

Amenities: The main problem during the jatra is the lack of basic amenities. While crowd is expected on the day, the parking facilities is not enough to accommodate the vehicles that arrive in the area. Similarly, lack of resting places (waiting area), toilets, dustbins, and signposts along the parade route is quite distressing, and concerned authorities must divert attention to this aspect.

Activity: The jatra offers religious and general pleasure activities. Those interested in religious worship can join the early rituals to witness sacred Tantric worship and animal sacrifice. Those interested in socio-cultural activity may join the evening parade and explore the region as the chariot circumambulates around. Trishul jatra is a once-a-year event, however tourists throughout a year can explore the heritage trail of the procession with guided tours narrating its history and significance. The heritage trail:

Batsleshwori Temple Premise -- Bajraghar -- Bhuwaneshwori Temple -- Balkumari Temple -- Jayabageshwori Temple -- Siphel Ground -- Nawali Tole -- Jayabageshwori Temple -- Dathu Tole -- Pachu Tole -- Pode Pati -- Bajraghar -- Bagmati Riverbank

Besides this, visitors at the jatra can enjoy local Newa (Newari) cuisine with feasts held at three different spots.

Community engagement: The essence of Kathmandu valley lies in the togetherness of Newa people who are the culture bearers and have been working relentlessly in preservation of their heritage. Community participation is a prerequisite in tourism because without the community's active involvement none of the intangible heritage can come to life. Locals of Devapattan have tried in every way possible to safeguard Trishul Jatra which is known through their effort in giving continuity to the festival despite having financial obstacles.

Local heritage festivals face challenges of maintaining authenticity and preserving identity amidst tourism development and cultural commodification (Ma & Lew, 2011). Trishul Jatra has been going through rough phases lately with plenty of issues arising in the operation. The challenges faced by the jatra are described in the Table 2 and illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The 5 Major Issues in Trishul Jatra

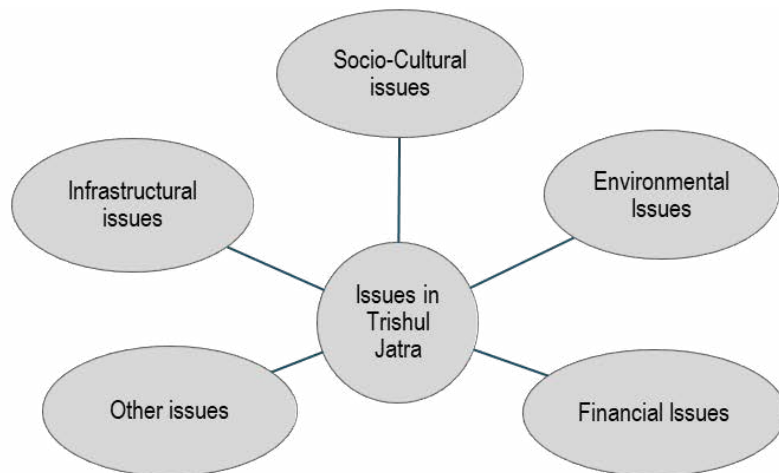


Table 2

Issues in Growth of a Festival Tourism Product

Issues	Category	Details
Financial	Government Fund	Complaints of insufficient fund from PADT, bargaining between jatra organisers and PADT
	Guthi Fund	Private guthi (Chutt Guthi) owners have sold the land for the festivals, so now are short in money but budget is supplied from Guthi Sansthan
Socio-Cultural	Children crisis	Reluctancy among parents to let their children participate in the event due to high risk factor Low birth rate in Maharjan and Dangol caste has caused other caste children to replace them. This raises question of authenticity Children are afraid to participate as they are scared to be lifted on the chariot. Children counselling is held every year but still children show least interest in participation
	Attire Change	Traditional clothes of men lifting the chariot 'kacchad' are replaced by modern clothes. Loss of traditional clothes poses a huge risk to loss of not only tangible heritage but the intangible heritage of traditional craftsmanship that was associated in making the clothes is also in danger
	Musical performance	Performing arts, which is an intangible heritage, is vital in tourism as well. But only few skilled musicians of Khadgi caste remain who know about musical performance and instruments played during the jatra.
Environmental	Polluted River	Stagnant Bagmati river prevents children from completing the full rituals. Traditionally after the procession came to an end, children took bath in Bagmati river, but this has almost become impossible due to the polluted water.
Infrastructural	Wire management	Unmanaged and tangled wire throughout the procession route not only pose safety risks to children but also obstruct the aesthetics of the heritage trail
	Amenities	Lack of amenities is causing a big hurdle in developing the jatra as a tourism product. Absence of toilets, dustbins, signposts, resting places hinder positive tourism experience

Issues	Category	Details
Other issues	Research and documentation	Inadequate research on the topic is clearly seen. Only few literatures have attempted to study this festival, and the historical facts has not been fully uncovered
	Museum Construction	Delay in museum construction has impacted the tourism potential with missing opportunities to attract tourists in off-seasons.
	Marketing	The jatra, despite having huge potential, is never promoted as a tourism attraction. Lack of interest in marketing and promotion presides heavily among the concerned authority

All the issues identified are directly related to tourism and demonstrate how these issues have hindered the potentiality of the festival to grow as a festival tourism product.

Conclusion

This study has examined Trishul Jatra as a festival tourism product, and identified challenges tied with it. Adapting a qualitative research approach, interviews with 15 key informants and direct observation of the festival yielded significant findings. This jatra complies with features of a tourism product proposed by [McKercher & Cros \(2002\)](#) and also shows strong foundation on the main elements of tourism except for amenities. Amenities of the area are lagging compared to other components. Furthermore, the findings reveal five major challenges faced by the jatra, that are: financial, socio-cultural, environmental, infrastructural, and other issues. While financial issues are more prominent within private guthi due to decrease in land revenue, there are also obstacles in PADT funding which is surrounded by constant bargaining among organisers and PADT authorities. Environmental issues are largely concerned with polluted rivers, and infrastructural issues lie in wire management along with lack of amenities. The socio-cultural issue is pressing among all as there are many challenges from raising concerns about authenticity due to replacement of traditional dress to loss of intangible heritage like musical performances. Socio-cultural issues also include the reduction in availability of children who have traditionally represented in the jatra. Lastly, other issues like delayed museum construction, lack of research and marketing have limited the potential of Trishul jatra to shine as a festival tourism product.

These findings are valuable to tourism stakeholders like the organisers, PADT officials, government bodies including the ward -8 and DOA, MOCTCA and other related parties to prepare plans and policies that promote tourism as well as ensure authenticity. The study is also significant in Nepalese tourism context because previous studies ([Kunwar, 1997](#); [Satyal, 1999](#); [Amatya, 2014](#); [Nyaupane, 2022](#)) have approached festival as a part of cultural tourism with no independent study on how a cultural asset can be converted to tourism product. Pashupatinath area is a major tourist destination, but the resources are not utilized, but the findings of the study help in product diversification of the area in the form of festival tourism. Moreover, past studies presented festival tourism as a demand-driven byproduct ([Quinn, 2006](#)), examined it based on sustainability framework ([O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002](#)), and only analysed four issues ([Ma & Lew, 2011](#)). However,

this research presents a suitable model to identify potential of a cultural asset examining the basic components of tourism and exploring the challenges beyond those identified by Ma & Lew (2011) that have limited the asset's potential to be promoted as a festival tourism product. This research has focused on a local festival of Pashupatinath jatra, but future research can be conducted in regional and national festivals exploring similar components provided in this paper.

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