

Innovative Approaches for Transformative Urban Governance In India, A Case of Ujjain Maha Kumbh

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Abstract

India, one of the economies with the highest rate of growth in the world, is confronted with serious issues related to urbanization, especially about effectively managing public goods and services. Urban governance comprises a wide range of work systems, including formal and informal governmental actions that collectively govern the development of cities. This study dives into urban governance difficulties in India, emphasizing gaps in planning, resource allocation, and service delivery that contribute to uncontrolled urban growth. Governance changes, economic liberalization, and globalization have all had an impact on urban development, but inefficiency and corruption persist to be significant challenges. The research underlines the importance of innovative governance tools and smart technologies in addressing these difficulties, especially in the context of large-scale events like the Ujjain Mahakal Kumbh Mela. The study explores strategies for enhancing communication, optimizing resource allocation, and improving decision-making through smart governance by examining the evolution of infrastructure and event management in Ujjain's Kumbh Mela. The research aims to provide actionable recommendations for leveraging technology to effectively manage urban events, ensuring sustainable and resilient urban growth.

Keywords: Urban governance, Digital transformation, Mega-events

1 Introduction

India has been one of the world's fastest-growing economies for nearly or more than two decades. Increased growth has obvious consequences on the rate and type of urbanization. The combination of rising aspirations and growing middle classes on the one hand, and inadequate planning for the inevitable expansion in urbanization on the other, creates a scenario that is socially, fiscally, and environmentally unsustainable (Gore, 2015). Cities in developing countries face difficulty in providing and maintaining public goods and services due to a lack of preparation for transition. The world is watching how this process unfolds (Dasgupta, 2004). Focusing solely on short-term planning and meeting immediate needs can lead to overlooking long-term challenges, neglecting the deployment of resources (physical, financial, and manpower) to achieve higher levels of service delivery, and lack of continuous improvement. (Mathur, 1999). Efforts to generate and spend resources were hindered by inefficiency, corruption, and deteriorating managerial capacity within governmental organizations.

The perception that cities are declining has led to a focus on improving urban management and service delivery (Hebdriks, 2013). Governance reforms have been implemented to address these issues.

Demographers argue that urbanization pressures continue to increase during demographic transitions. However, countries' economies and relationships with the rest of the world are also changing rapidly. Several countries have liberalized their economies and integrated into the global economy, resulting in increased economic liberalization and globalization.

In the 1990s, India implemented policies to liberalize its economy and integrate with the rest of the globe. Economic factors, namely markets, have had a significant role in influencing the geographical and functional organization and growth of cities. Efficient infrastructure, including public goods and services, is crucial for economic growth in cities. As a result of policy changes in the 1990s, there has been an increase in pressure to deliver these services in urban areas, where economic activities and market forces concentrate (Sebastian, 2002). Cities in developing countries not only provide cost-effective inputs like land and labour, but also prioritize providing a high-quality living environment. Cities with traditional urban administration may struggle to provide competitive services, leading to a lack of investment. Efficient distribution of public goods and services not only improves living conditions but also supports local economic development in cities. Thus, the relevance of urban management has increased since it involves working to combine and coordinate both private and public efforts to address the main issues that residents face and create a more sustainable, competitive, and progressive city (Meine Pieter van Dijk, 2002). Now, Urban governance is becoming more important for improving service delivery due to its broader scope and involvement of stakeholders.

1.1 Governance Structure in India

Over the last three decades, the term governance has grown widely used across sectors and specialties. Governance, defined as the process of discovering the extent of interrelations around us and determining how to best connect them in the city/urban environment, is critical to achieving a city's sustainability (Abdel-Razek, 2021). The Indian Constitution assigns responsibility for urban governance to provincial governments (states). The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1992 granted constitutional legitimacy to rural and urban local governments, which were previously just legislative creations.

The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) mandated regular elections for urban local bodies (ULBs) and listed functions that provinces could delegate to them. However, this did not prescribe any specific functions, resulting in varying functional domains among states. As of June 30, 2023, the Government of India released ₹38,581 crore (\$4.76 billion), while State Governments/Union Territories (UTs) also released funds. The matching share of ₹34,411 crore (\$4.16 billion) resulted in a total release of ₹72,992 crores (about \$9 billion out of an estimated \$12 billion), with 90% utilized (CPR, 2023). Today, governance is crucial for accomplishing societal development goals. Governance refers to the management of public affairs by government constituents, including legislation, executive, and judiciary. It can also refer to processes that ensure delivery, participation, justice, respect for rights, innovation, and networking.



Figure 1 Governance structure in India

The concept of good governance has been interpreted in various ways by developed and developing nations, including administrative reforms, process re-engineering, decentralization of powers, transparency and accountability mechanisms, and e-governance initiatives. (Worldbank, 2000) Urban planning is crucial for local governments to allocate land for housing and provide basic infrastructure services like transportation, water, sanitation, health, education, and recreation. This work involves strategic vision and the deployment of organizational, financial, and technical skill sets. However, it is often overlooked and physical and financial estimations are unrealistic to achieve (Rakeshmohan, 2006). However, the planning process needs to guarantee strategic visioning and public involvement in the plans; additionally, the plans' execution needs to demonstrate adherence to the good urban governance principles—transparency, accountability, equity, efficiency, recognition of rights, rule of law, etc.

Table 1 presents a brief overview of traditional and modern strategies used to improve governance in Indian cities.

Table 1 Overview of traditional and modern strategies for governance

Reform Domain	Reform action
Private sector involvement	Outsourcing municipal government functions to private parties.
Management enhancement	Contracts for routine and non-core operations include service, management, and delivery services.
More Effective Financial Management	Reforms in accounting and budgeting that take into account contemporary methods, such as double-entry bookkeeping
Improved accountability	Certain municipal administrations have implemented citizens' charters as a means of public accountability.

Procedure enhancements	Establishing ways to improve present service delivery. Implementation of e-governance models in selected services.
Effective resource planning and mobilization	Assessing service resource needs, mobilizing resources internally, and accessing markets.

1.2 Urban Challenges and Issues in India

From 2022 to 2047, the urban population is expected to grow by 328 million. This substantial rise emphasizes the urgent need to solve the infrastructure gap in critical areas such as transportation, sewage, drainage, and solid waste management systems. However, urban governance has significant obstacles due to corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies, which frequently impede effective growth and cause delays in decision-making.

To achieve sustainable urbanization and mitigate the effects of climate change, all levels of government must work together, with active engagement from civil society. In India, urban government is especially hampered by a lack of data openness, which is required for informed decision-making and accountability. Inadequate data storage and handling methods hinder successful urban management, as does the lack of integrated technological platforms able to improve coordination and efficiency across multiple urban services.

Also, a lack of strategic planning for technology adoption and implementation limits the ability to effectively handle urban concerns. Data fragmentation, which results from various sources and contradictory information, impedes comprehensive urban planning and administration. Furthermore, a lack of qualified human resources makes it difficult to manage and operate urban infrastructure and services effectively. Addressing these difficulties necessitates a holistic approach that includes increasing data transparency, investing in strong data infrastructure, integrating technological platforms, and strategic tech planning. Developing skilled human resources is also essential. With such comprehensive initiatives, India's urban governance difficulties can be effectively addressed, establishing up possibilities for sustainable and resilient urban growth.

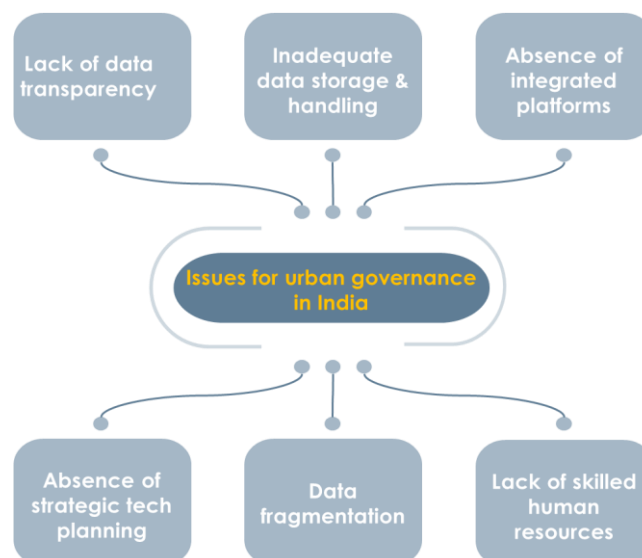


Figure 2 Issues for urban governance in India

1.3 Innovative Governance

The structural definition of governance may not always be sufficient, especially when aiming to improve governance in innovative ways, often referred to as 'good governance'. Good governance has been interpreted in various ways by both developed and developing nations, including administrative reforms, process re-engineering, decentralization of powers, transparency and accountability mechanisms, and e-governance initiatives (Worldbank, 2000). Indian cities, like those in poor nations, struggle with service delivery and are not responsive to requirements. Urban governance changes and innovations are becoming increasingly important. City governance is complex due to the constantly shifting spatial arrangements. Governance reforms are necessary to hold agents accountable and monitor progress towards development goals.

The World Bank and other financing agencies have been instrumental in promoting governance improvements. Institutions play a crucial role in driving change through internal collaborations, in addition to governance reforms that strengthen government service delivery capacities. Institutional innovations in governance can address gaps caused by government failures or the absence of initiatives (Virmani, 2004). Institutional innovations are worth monitoring and replicating but with distinct structures, objectives, and techniques.

2 Research Aim and Objective

Research Aim: This research aims to identify innovative ways in which smart governance tools and technologies can be leveraged to streamline communication, resource allocation, and decision-making processes.

Research Objective: The objective is to explore how smart tools and technologies can be developed and implemented to enhance communication, optimize resource allocation, and facilitate decision-making during large-scale events such as the Ujjain Mahakal Kumbh Mela.

Firstly, to enhance communication, the research focuses on developing smart tools and technologies that improve the interaction between organizers, participants, and visitors.

The goal is to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of information during the Ujjain Mahakal Kumbh Mela. One proposed strategy is to develop a centralized mobile application or website. This platform would provide real-time updates, event schedules, transportation information, and emergency alerts, ensuring that participants and visitors have access to the most current and relevant information. The data required for this initiative includes event schedules, transportation routes, crowd density, and emergency contact numbers.

Secondly, the research aims to optimize resource allocation by effectively utilizing current governance systems to distribute resources such as medical facilities, security personnel, and infrastructure.

The objective is to ensure seamless operations throughout the event. The strategy involves implementing an integrated system for monitoring crowd movement, resource usage, and security incidents. This system would identify areas needing additional resources and enable their redistribution as necessary. Data needed for this aspect includes real-time data on crowd size and movement, parking capacity, resource utilization (such as tents, medical supplies, and security personnel), and historical data from past events.

Lastly, the research seeks to facilitate decision-making by integrating smart governance technology to enable quick and efficient responses to challenges during the Ujjain Mahakal Kumbh Mela.

The goal is to ensure that organizers can swiftly address difficulties and capitalize on opportunities as they

arise. This can be achieved through the implementation of an IoT platform for real-time monitoring systems, command and control centers, and the use of drones and aerial surveillance for comprehensive event management. The necessary data for this strategy includes event data, population gathering information at different event locations, and traffic patterns.

3 The Mega-events

Mega Events are short-term events that have long-term effects on host cities. These events attract global attention and have significant repercussions. These events can refocus the city's urban agenda and stimulate development (Dimopoulou, 2009). Mega Events provide opportunities for socializing, celebrating achievements, marking time, and political maneuvering (Smith, 2012). They promote economic change, improve urban infrastructure, enhance municipal image, and accelerate policy implementation. These initiatives engage many aspects of life and administration, resulting in benefits across various areas such as infrastructure, services, culture, environment, education, and the economy.

Mega events have emerged as a solution to urban challenges and limited local resources. Globally, event-led urban development is becoming increasingly important. Mega Events enforces stringent schedules to ensure the successful completion of urban development projects, which typically require long periods. (UNDP, 2010)

3.1 The Kumbh Mela

Kumbh Mela, which commemorates the Samudra Manthan or ocean churning, has been held since ancient times. The Kumbh Mela is celebrated according to the configuration of the planets. The Ardh Kumbh Mela is held in Haridwar and Prayag every six years, while the Purna Kumbh is held in four locations: Prayag (Allahabad), Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik every twelve years. The Maha Kumbh Mela, held every 144 years after the 'Purna Kumbh Melas', is held in Allahabad (ICRA, 2012). The Kumbh mela in Ujjain is known as Simhashta because of a unique planetary alignment that occurs every twelve years, with the Sun in Aries and Jupiter in Leo.- Sinha Rashi.

The study of the Kumbh Mela in Nashik (2003, 2015) and Allahabad (2013) shows how the event's budget and planning have changed over time. Allahabad, a pilgrimage destination, is situated at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati rivers. During the Kumbh Mela, Allahabad has the highest number of visitors among the four cities. To accommodate the enormous number of visitors, temporary preparations for pilgrims are necessary, as permanent facilities are not feasible.

3.2 History of Kumbh: An Evolution of Infrastructure and Management

The history of the Simhashta Kumbh Mela at Ujjain demonstrates a considerable progression in infrastructure and event management, with growing sophistication and scope over time.

In 1992, the Simhashta Kumbh Mela encompassed 1367 hectares and was divided into three zones for optimal management. During this occasion, approximately 7.5 million tourists and pilgrims came to Ujjain, which had a population of 362,000 according to the 1991 census. The major goal was to improve city connectivity and handle the drinking water problem. A request of ₹5023.53 lakhs was submitted to the State Government, with a total expenditure of ₹6322.24 lakhs for the event. This iteration of the Kumbh Mela resulted in several important permanent infrastructure developments for the city.

By 2004, the Kumbh region had expanded to 2151 hectares and was split into five zones. The number of tourists and pilgrims increased to 25 million, while the city's population reached 431,000. The 2004 event focused on more than just temporary arrangements, including the development of roads, bridges, water

supply, and electrical provision. Notably, expenditure on permanent infrastructure projects rose from 39.64% in 1992 to 54.55% in 2004, indicating a rising emphasis on long-term urban improvements. The 2016 Simhashta Kumbh Mela saw the Kumbh region grow to 2200 hectares. The population of Ujjain was 515,000, and the number of pilgrims attending the Kumbh Mela grew to about 50 million. For this event, over 174 permanent infrastructure projects were suggested, representing a considerable investment in the city's long-term development. For the first time, permanent parking areas were established, meeting a major requirement for visitor management. Despite these developments, there was no provision for pedestrian pathways and footpaths, which are required for safe and efficient mobility during large crowds. The Simhashta Kumbh Mela's history, taken together with the demands of hosting one of the biggest religious gatherings in the world, points to a progressive approach to infrastructure development and urban design. Each consecutive event has built on prior years' lessons, resulting in more comprehensive and long-term solutions to handling the large number of pilgrims and tourists.

4 Case Study – Ujjain Maha-Kumbh Mela

Ujjain, a valued holy city lying within the center of Madhya Pradesh, holds A sacred function along the banks of the sacred river Kshipra. Ujjain, located on the southern edge of the Malwa Plateau, is the proud district headquarters. Located 190 kilometers from the kingdom's capital, Bhopal. Ujjain is the administrative center of the Ujjain district and has a rich cultural and historical significance. According to the 2011 census, Ujjain has a population of around 5.15 lakhs, making it Madhya Pradesh's fifth-largest city. The metropolis has a 92.68 km² municipal boundary and a 152 km² planning boundary. This demarcation highlights the metropolis's geographical scope and administrative jurisdiction.

Ujjain is connected to major metropolitan centers and transit hubs via significant arterial highways such as Aagar Road, Indore Road, Badnagar Road, and Maksi Road. Although Ujjain lacks a national highway, the adjoining National Highway NH-3, located about 35 km distant, is a crucial route for local and inter-state transport. The Bhopal-Ratlam rail community passes through Ujjain, increasing its connectivity to nearby towns and areas. State Highway 27 connects Ujjain and Indore, boosting accessibility and facilitating seamless transit between the two large cities.

Ramghat is notable for the 'Kumbh Mela', which is conducted every 12 years in Ujjain and is also referred to as 'Simhashta Kumbh Mela'. More than 2000 temples can be found in this city. Ujjain receives a considerable influx of floating people, which ranges from an average of 30,000 tourists on routine days to approximately 3 to 5 lakh pilgrims on big festivals like Nagpanchmi and Mahashivratri.

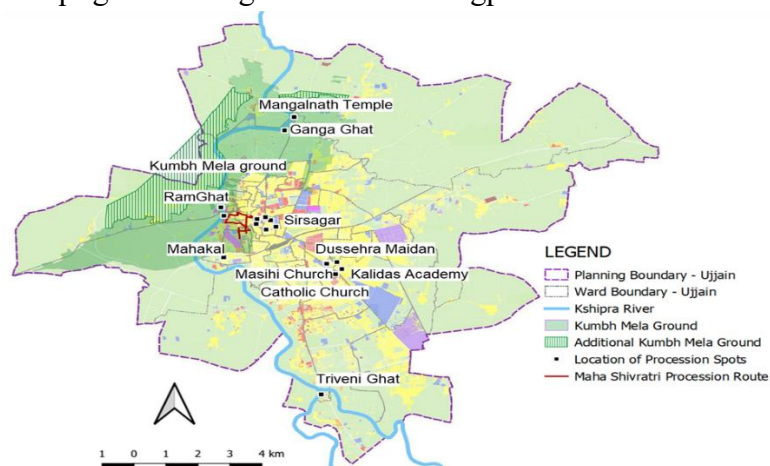


Figure 3 Location of Procession spots

4.1 Events and Tourists footfall

Ujjain, known for its cultural and religious significance, conducts numerous regular events that showcase the city's rich legacy. The Simhashta Kumbh Mela, a Hindu celebration held every 12 years, attracts millions of pilgrims to the Shipra River. The festival features complex ceremonies, spiritual speeches, and spectacular processions, creating a spectacle of faith and devotion.

Table 2 Simhashta Data

Year	Panch kroshti Yatra (118km)	Simhashta	Sahi Snan
2004	1.5 lakh	3 Cr	60 lakh
2016	5 lakh	7 Cr	1.1Cr

In 2023, Ujjain saw a considerable increase in tourists during the Saavan season and on special occasions, with a total of 23.7 million people visiting the city. On normal days, the average number of visitors varied, with Mondays drawing between 150,000 and 200,000 people. This pattern remained from Tuesday to Friday, but weekends witnessed an uptick, with 200,000 to 300,000 visits on Saturday and Sunday.

To accommodate this large number of visitors, Ujjain has approximately 950 registered hotels, which include homestays. The total capacity of these hotels is projected to be over 570,000 guests. This estimate is based on an average hotel with 15 rooms, each of which can accommodate around 40 guests. This considerable housing capacity is critical in managing the massive number of people that gather during peak hours. The city's ghats, particularly the one from Triveni to Kaliadeh Palace near Ganga Ghat on the Kshipra shore, are also essential for accommodating visitors. These ghats have a combined capacity of around 84,627 persons at any given moment, assuming one person per square meter of accessible area. This capacity is required to handle the large number of pilgrims and visitors who visit the ghats for religious rituals and celebrations.

Ujjain's infrastructure, including its hotels and ghats, is well-equipped to accommodate huge numbers of visitors, ensuring that both tourists and pilgrims have a comfortable and meaningful stay in the city. The city's capacity to manage such a large number of people demonstrates its preparedness and commitment to meeting the demands of its tourists, particularly during peak traffic periods such as the Saavan and special days.

4.2 Phases of planning for Simhashta Kumbh Mela in Ujjain

The Simhashta Kumbh Mela at Ujjain is planned in three parts to ensure thorough preparation and good event management.

In the first phase, the city concentrates on completing the necessary infrastructure and facilities within a set timeline. These changes are permanent and contribute to the general growth of Ujjain. Road construction, the establishment of a strong water supply and sanitation network, the development of ghats along the Shipra River, and the conservation and maintenance of the city's temples are all priority projects. This phase incorporates multiple essential departments, including the Public Works Department, Public Health Engineering Department, Ujjain Municipal Corporation, Water Resource Department, and Ujjain Development Authority, all working together to improve the city's infrastructure.

The second phase entails creating extra infrastructure and services tailored to the event, with a special emphasis on disaster management. This phase includes the development, financing, and construction of a variety of projects customized to the Kumbh Mela's specific needs. During this stage, the Police

Department, Health Department, and Ujjain Municipal Corporation play critical responsibilities in guaranteeing the event's readiness and safety.

In the third phase, a combination of permanent and temporary measures is employed to manage the peak demand during the event. This includes the erection of temporary structures and the provision of ad-hoc services. To oversee this comprehensive preparation, the Urban Administration and Development Committee has established the Simhastha Fair Authority. This authority is responsible for the meticulous planning, coordination, and implementation of all aspects of the Kumbh Mela, ensuring a seamless experience for the millions of visitors. Through these structured phases of planning, Ujjain ensures that both the city's infrastructure and the specific needs of the Kumbh Mela are addressed, providing a well-organized and successful event.

4.3 Parking and Crowd Management in Ujjain

The Kumbh Mela is the world's largest religious and spiritual gathering, attracting millions of Hindus from across the globe. The 2019 Kumbh Mela, attended by almost 240 million pilgrims, presents enormous concerns in terms of crowd control and security. This research aims to identify risk variables and management solutions in this scenario and explores the roles and duties of stakeholders in crowd management, addressing difficulties such as knowledge gaps on crowd size, psychology, and behavior patterns. The purpose is to reduce incidents and improve user experience during spiritual mass gatherings through a design thinking approach. India's growing population and tendency to gather for religious reasons have resulted in ever-increasing crowds. Crowds include both viewers and performers. Religious activities can attract more than just performers.

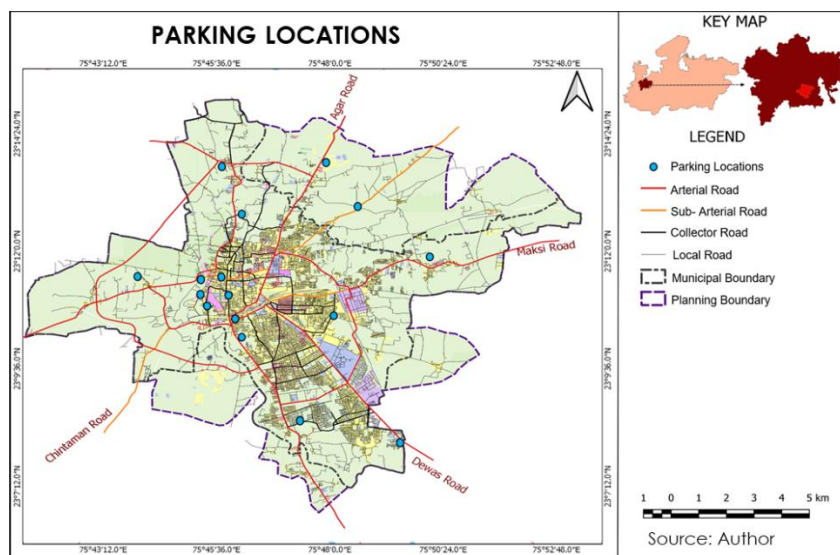


Figure 4 Parking Locations

The Mahakaal Corridor boasts a parking capacity of 2000 Equivalent Car Spaces (ECS) spread across six parking lots.

Table 3 Satellite Town parking Space during Simhasth 2016

Road	Parking Capacity (2W+4W)
Indore Road	19450 ECS
Dewas Road	13700 ECS

Makshi Road	10000 ECS
Agar Road	15000 ECS
Unhel Road	11000 ECS
Badnagar Road	10500 ECS
Total ECS	79650 ECS

Table 4 Railway station- 3 section

Section	Routine Train (Up/Down)	Extra Train (Up/Down)	Total (Up/Down)	Passengers (Approx. 1000 pass/train)
Ujjain-Nagda	19	27	46	46000
Ujjain- Makshi/Bhopal	17	28	45	45000
Vikram-mhow	22	10	32	32000
Total	58	65	123	123000

Table 5 Crowds from 6 different roads

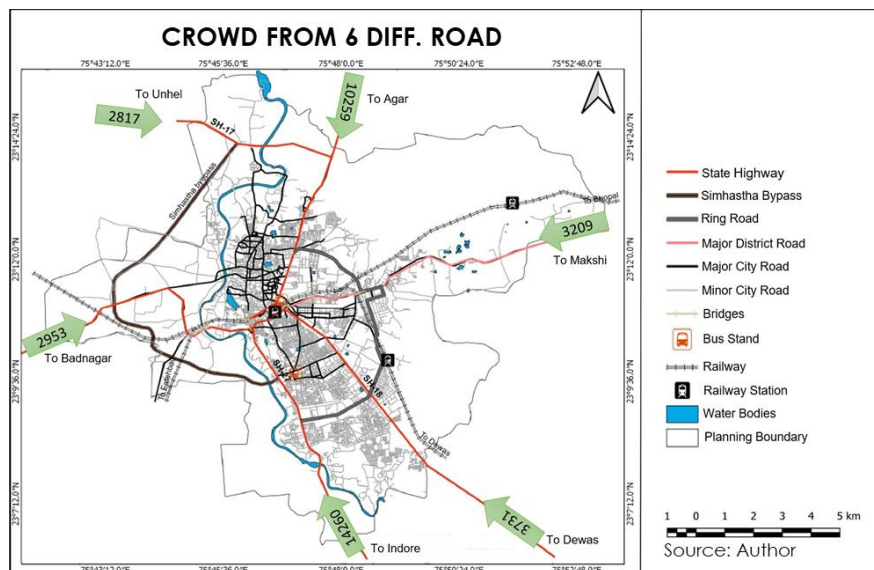


Table 6 Crowd movement from six different road

Route	Vehicle	Person
Indore	14260	85560
Agar	10259	61554
Dewas	3731	22386
Makshi	3209	19554
Badnawar	2953	17718
Unhel	2817	16902
Total	37329	223674

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, most visitors to Ujjain are there for religious reasons, especially to see the numerous temples. To retain the city's religious character and attract more tourists, there must be a concerted effort to promote religious tourism. Ujjain now lacks sufficient dharamshalas and hotels in all categories, necessitating the development of new lodgings to meet the flood of devotees. Furthermore, the city is experiencing a serious lack of parking places. The creation of walkways alongside roadways is critical, especially as 23% of the population relies on non-motorized modes of transportation, predominantly pedestrian mobility. To accommodate this huge portion of the population and ensure safe pedestrian circulation, well-maintained walkways are required. By addressing these issues, Ujjain can increase its appeal as a religious tourism destination while also improving the entire experience for inhabitants and visitors.

In anticipation of the expected population of 12 crores for the 2028 Simhashta, these suggestions are made to ensure efficient management and a great experience for all attendees:

1. Integrated Communication Platforms –

Implementing integrated communication platforms is vital for improving communication and information dissemination. Visitors should be encouraged to use mobile applications that provide them with real-time updates, emergency notifications, and other information. Furthermore, using Internet of Things (IoT) devices can considerably improve the management of critical infrastructure components. Crowd sensors and real-time data, for example, can help with traffic management, parking, and public safety decisions. Augmented reality solutions should be incorporated to help guests navigate the event environment, locate facilities, and access key information.

2. Smart Tent City Development –

To improve the visiting experience, tent cities should be designed and managed using smart technologies. Prioritize sustainable practices, such as the use of environmentally friendly materials, energy-efficient solutions, and waste reduction initiatives. Implementing smart booking systems and mobile applications will help to speed the reservation process, allocate camping spaces more efficiently, and improve the overall pilgrimage and tourism experience. These solutions will not only increase the operational efficiency of tent cities but will also encourage environmental sustainability.

Incorporating these recommendations would allow the 2028 Simhashta to properly manage the expected population, ensuring that all participants have a safe, organized, and pleasurable experience.

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