



Original Article

Assessing Transportation, Accommodation Facilities and Major Problems of Tourist Places in Raigad District

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Abstract

Tourism is a significant driver of socio-economic development, employment generation, and cultural exchange. Raigad district in Maharashtra, India, possesses a rich combination of natural beauty, historical forts, coastal landscapes, and cultural heritage that positions it as a potentially prominent tourist destination. However, despite its intrinsic assets, Raigad struggles to convert potential into sustained tourism growth due to infrastructural gaps, uneven distribution of accommodation, and a range of problems affecting tourist satisfaction. This study examines two key dimensions of the tourism ecosystem in Raigad: transportation infrastructure and accommodation facilities, and explores the major problems encountered by tourists at significant destinations such as Raigad Fort, Alibaug, Murud-Janjira, and Elephanta Caves. The research employs a mixed-methods approach including structured questionnaires administered to 150 tourists, interviews with 20 stakeholders (hoteliers, transport operators, guides), and review of secondary sources including government reports and scholarly literature. Findings indicate that poor internal road connectivity, underutilized rail and waterway options, uneven accommodation availability, sanitation deficits, safety concerns, and lack of coordinated marketing are major constraints. The paper concludes with a set of strategic recommendations encompassing infrastructure upgrades, integrated transport planning, regulation and standardization of accommodation (including homestays), community-based tourism initiatives, and targeted marketing to position Raigad as a sustainable tourism destination. These recommendations aim to balance economic development with environmental protection and community welfare.

Keywords: Tourism, Raigad District, Transportation Infrastructure, Accommodation Facilities, Tourist Problems, Sustainable Tourism.

Introduction

Tourism is a dynamic industry that exerts profound effects on economic growth, social change, and cultural preservation. In India, tourism contributes substantially to GDP and livelihoods across urban and rural communities. The state of Maharashtra has leveraged its coastal stretches, hill stations, wildlife sanctuaries, and cultural sites to develop a diversified tourism sector. Raigad district, positioned in the Konkan belt south of Mumbai, is endowed with a variety of attractions: historical forts such as Raigad and Pratapgad; coastal settlements including Alibaug, Murud, and Kashid; and archaeological sites like the Elephanta Caves. The district's proximity to Mumbai grants it strategic advantage for both day-trippers and longer-stay tourists. The concentration of heritage and coastal resources provides opportunities for cultural tourism, heritage circuits, beach tourism, and eco-tourism.

Despite these inherent assets, Raigad's tourism faces significant challenges. Fragmented infrastructure, limited last-mile connectivity, inadequate visitor services, and seasonal demand fluctuations have reduced the capacity of local stakeholders to monetize tourism sustainably. For instance, while the Konkan Railway serves as a corridor for long-distance travel, last-mile transfers from stations to sites are frequently unreliable. Road links on internal stretches are narrow, subject to monsoon damage, and congested during peak seasons. Water transport, which can alleviate road congestion and create experiential travel options, remains underdeveloped except for limited ferry services. Accommodation provision is skewed: coastal towns such as Alibaug host a cluster of resorts and boutique hotels, while inland heritage sites lack standardized lodging and hospitality services. Polarization of investment in certain zones contributes to uneven economic benefits across communities. Tourist satisfaction is multifaceted: beyond attractions, it is determined by accessibility, accommodation quality, safety, sanitation, information availability, and local hospitality.

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Deficiencies in any of these dimensions can degrade visitor experience, reduce repeat visitation, and harm destination reputation. Moreover, unmanaged tourism pressure may lead to environmental degradation, undermining the long-term viability of destinations. Therefore, a diagnostic study focusing on transportation and accommodation and the array of problems encountered by tourists can reveal systemic constraints and policy entry points for sustainable interventions.

This study aims to (i) assess the current status of transportation and accommodation facilities in Raigad district and (ii) explore major problems experienced by tourists. Using a mixed-methods approach combining survey data, stakeholder interviews, and secondary source analysis, the paper seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations to improve Raigad's tourism competitiveness while preserving its environmental and cultural resources. Ultimately, the research contributes to a framework for integrated destination management that aligns infrastructure development with community welfare and environmental stewardship.

Literature Review

Scholarly literature underscores the centrality of infrastructure—especially transportation and accommodation—to destination competitiveness. Gunn (1994) asserted that transportation constitutes the physical backbone of tourism development; without efficient mobility, attractions remain underutilized. Later, Prideaux (2000) developed a model linking transport and tourism development, arguing that transport network improvements often precede significant increases in visitation and can shape spatial patterns of tourism. Lohmann and Duval (2011) emphasized that transport accessibility influences not only visitor numbers but also the profile and expectations of tourists. Research focusing on accommodation highlights its role in shaping tourist experiences and local economic linkages. Goeldner and Ritchie (2011) observed that quality accommodation expands tourism demand and encourages longer stays. Conversely, Sharma (2020) and Kulkarni (2018) documented that rural heritage sites suffer from a dearth of standardized accommodation, which constrains diversification of tourist markets. In the Indian context, Batra (1990) flagged infrastructural deficits as primary obstacles to regionally balanced tourism.

Sustainability scholars like Hall (2010) and Bramwell and Lane (1993) argue that tourism infrastructure development must be compatible with environmental limits and community needs. Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (1980) warned that without reinvestment and management, destinations can stagnate. Additionally, studies by Banerjee (2017) and MTDC (2021) specifically on Maharashtra indicate that while tourism potential exists in districts such as Raigad, constraints in marketing, coordination, and funding limit growth.

Empirical studies on coastal and heritage tourism provide contextual insights. Patil (2019) analyzed the Konkan coastal belt and noted sanitation, waste management, and seasonal crowding as recurrent issues. Kumar (2020) examined transport infrastructure in developing regions and recommended multimodal integration—combining road, rail, and waterways—to enhance accessibility. Sharma (2020) provided evidence that regulation and certification of homestays can improve service quality and local income generation. Furthermore, community engagement literature (e.g., Tosun, 2006; Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011) highlights that local involvement in tourism planning and benefits-sharing is crucial for social acceptance. Training local youth as guides, promoting micro-entrepreneurship, and implementing community-based tourism models can distribute benefits and improve service provision. Finally, digitalization and marketing strategies are increasingly recognized as tools to raise destination awareness; Banerjee (2017) and Smith (2018) argue that targeted digital campaigns can attract niche markets such as cultural tourists and eco-tourists. In sum, the literature suggests four interrelated pillars for destination development: integrated transport systems, diversified and standardized accommodation, sustainable resource management, and community participation. Raigad's development strategy should therefore align with these pillars to address current deficits and unlock the district's tourism potential.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To assess the transportation and accommodation facilities available in Raigad district.
2. To explore the major problems affecting tourist places in Raigad district.

Research Methodology:

This research adopts a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative survey techniques with qualitative stakeholder interviews and secondary data analysis. The rationale for mixed methods is to triangulate findings and capture both measurable trends and contextual insights.

Sampling and Data Collection: Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to 150 tourists across key sites: Raigad Fort (n=40), Alibaug and Kashid beaches (n=60), Murud-Janjira (n=30), and Elephanta Caves (n=20). Respondents were selected using convenience sampling during peak and off-peak periods to capture temporal variation. The questionnaire included closed-ended items on satisfaction with transportation modes (road, rail, and water), accommodation quality and availability, sanitation, safety, and information services. Open-ended questions solicited qualitative feedback on perceived problems and suggestions. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 stakeholders (hoteliers, transport operators, guides, and MTDC officials) to obtain operational perspectives.

Secondary Data: Government reports (District Statistical Handbook), MTDC publications, academic journals, and credible online resources provided contextual background, visitor statistics, and policy documents. **Data Analysis:** Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, mean scores) and cross-tabulations to identify patterns. Qualitative responses were coded thematically to extract recurring issues. Where possible, triangulation was used to validate findings across data sources.

Validity and Reliability: Pilot testing of the questionnaire with 15 respondents ensured clarity and reliability of items. While convenience sampling limits generalizability, the sample size provides sufficient insight for exploratory analysis. Ethical Considerations: Respondents provided informed consent; identities were anonymized and data used solely for research purposes.

Limitations: The study's limitations include seasonal bias (data collection occurred over limited months), reliance on self-reported data susceptible to respondent bias, and logistical constraints preventing a fully randomized sample. Despite these limitations, the mixed-methods framework offers robust diagnostic insights for planning interventions.

Analysis and Discussion:

Transportation Analysis:

Transportation is a critical determinant of accessibility and visitor satisfaction. In Raigad, roads are the primary mode for accessing most attractions. The Mumbai-Goa highway provides a regional artery, but internal roads often suffer from narrow cross-sections, inadequate maintenance, and susceptibility to monsoon-related damage. Survey data indicate that 68% of respondents rated road access as 'fair' or 'poor', with complaints centering on potholes, lack of proper signage, and insufficient parking near sites. The Konkan Railway provides intercity connectivity; however, last-mile connectivity from stations to attractions is limited. Only 30% of survey respondents reported satisfactory rail-based access. Water transport is an underutilized mode despite Raigad's coastline adjacency; ferry and catamaran services could offer relief to congested roads and create scenic transit experiences. However, limited schedules, lack of terminals, and safety concerns (especially in monsoon) constrain waterborne options. Policy Implication: Multimodal integration—linking road, rail, and water services—is essential. Investments in all-weather internal roads, strategically located parking, shuttle buses, and terminal development for ferries could substantially improve accessibility.

Accommodation Analysis:

Accommodation distribution in Raigad is skewed toward coastal towns like Alibaug and Kashid, where luxury resorts and boutique hotels are concentrated. Conversely, inland heritage sites and rural villages lack standardized lodging options, with visitors relying on basic lodges or commuting from coastal hubs. Respondents highlighted issues of hygiene, inconsistent service standards, and seasonal price surges during festivals and peak months. Homestays offer a promising alternative, but the absence of regulation, inconsistent quality, and lack of marketing limit their potential. The hospitality ecosystem suffers from a shortage of trained personnel, particularly in frontline customer service and multilingual guide services. Policy Implication: Encouraging mid-range hotel investment, regulating and certifying homestays, and initiating capacity-building programs for local hosts could improve lodging quality and broaden distribution.

Sanitation and Waste Management:

Sanitation emerged as a recurrent issue. Beaches and fort precincts suffer from littering, inadequate toilets, and poor waste segregation. Survey feedback indicated that 72% of visitors noticed littering at least 'occasionally' at popular sites. Poor waste management not only degrades visitor experience but also threatens coastal ecosystems and heritage conservation. Existing municipal services are often overstretched during peak seasons. Policy Implication: Deploying decentralized waste management systems, installing adequate public toilets with maintenance contracts, and community-led beach clean-up programs can mitigate sanitation challenges.

Safety and Information Services:

Safety concerns include absence of lifeguards at beaches, lack of first-aid facilities, and insufficient crowd management during festivals. Additionally, visitors noted inadequate signage, absence of interpretive panels at heritage sites, and limited information centers. Digital information via mobile apps and QR-coded guides are limited despite high smartphone penetration among domestic tourists. Policy Implication: Establishing basic safety infrastructure, emergency response protocols, and multilingual information centers (both physical and digital) can improve visitor confidence and experience.

Environmental and Community Concerns:

Unregulated tourism growth can strain natural resources. Locals voiced concerns about seasonal overcrowding, disruption to fisheries, and rising land prices due to tourism-driven real estate demand. Sustainable practices, including carrying capacity assessments, zoning, and eco-friendly infrastructure, are required to safeguard ecological integrity while enabling tourism revenues. Community-based tourism models, wherein residents participate in guiding, homestays, and local handicraft promotion, can ensure equitable benefit sharing.

Economic and Marketing Considerations:

Economic gains from tourism have been concentrated in specific pockets. The absence of coordinated marketing and destination branding for Raigad results in low visibility beyond the Mumbai day-trip market. Leveraging digital platforms, creating curated heritage circuits, and hosting off-season events can diversify visitation and extend length of stay.

Integrated Approach:

The analysis suggests that piecemeal interventions are insufficient. An integrated destination management plan that synchronizes transport upgrades, accommodation development, waste management, safety protocols, community engagement, and marketing is essential. Public-private partnerships can mobilize investments while ensuring accountability and alignment with sustainability goals.

Findings:

The study's key findings are as follows:

1. **Accessibility Constraints:** Internal road networks are inadequate, last-mile connectivity from rail stations is limited, and water transport remains underdeveloped, collectively reducing accessibility to attractions.
2. **Uneven Accommodation Landscape:** Accommodation supply is concentrated in a few coastal towns, with heritage and rural sites lacking standardized lodging, resulting in commuting and reduced local economic capture.
3. **Sanitation and Environmental Pressure:** Littering, inadequate toilets, and weak waste management systems are prevalent, threatening both visitor satisfaction and ecological health.
4. **Safety and Information Gaps:** Absence of lifeguards, emergency medical facilities, and information centers undermines tourist confidence and site interpretation.
5. **Capacity and Skills Deficit:** Shortage of trained hospitality personnel and certified guides restricts service quality and visitor experience.
6. **Marketing Deficit:** Limited destination marketing and lack of curated products restrict Raigad's visibility to niche and international tourists.

Collectively, these findings indicate that addressing infrastructural, managerial, and institutional bottlenecks simultaneously is necessary for sustainable development.

Recommendations and Policy Suggestions:

Based on empirical evidence and literature synthesis, the following recommendations are proposed to advance sustainable tourism in Raigad:

Short-term (0-2 years):

- Improve maintenance of critical internal roads leading to major attractions and implement temporary parking solutions to reduce roadside congestion.
- Deploy mobile tourist information booths and install multilingual signage at key nodes. Initiate targeted waste collection drives during peak seasons.
- Pilot shuttle bus services connecting major rail stations to tourist sites during peak periods.

Medium-term (2-5 years):

- Develop integrated multimodal transport hubs that connect rail, road, and water transport. Invest in safe and regulated ferry terminals to expand waterborne tourism.
- Implement a homestay certification scheme to ensure hygiene and service standards, along with training programs for hosts and local youth in hospitality and guiding.
- Establish basic safety infrastructure (lifeguards, first-aid points) at beaches and emergency response protocols for major events.

Long-term (5+ years):

- Formulate a Raigad Destination Management Plan (DMP) in consultation with local communities, private investors, and government agencies to guide phased investments aligned with carrying capacity and conservation goals.
- Foster public-private partnerships to finance mid-range hotel development in underserved inland areas and co-fund conservation-linked visitor facilities.
- Launch a sustained digital marketing campaign focusing on heritage circuits, eco-tourism, and experiential products (culinary trails, village homestays) targeted at niche domestic and international segments.

Cross-cutting Measures:

- Strengthen institutional coordination by creating a district-level tourism coordination cell to align MTDC, local municipalities, and community organizations.
- Integrate community-based tourism models to ensure local ownership and benefit-sharing, including micro-credit facilities for local entrepreneurs.
- Monitor indicators of environmental health (waste volumes, water quality) and visitor satisfaction to adapt management strategies through periodic reviews.

These recommendations aim to balance infrastructural investment with capacity building and environmental stewardship to create a resilient tourism economy for Raigad.

Conclusion

Raigad district possesses a compelling array of attractions that, if effectively managed, can generate substantial socio-economic benefits for local communities while preserving natural and cultural assets. This study underscores that the core impediments to Raigad's tourism development are infrastructural and managerial: weak internal connectivity, uneven accommodation availability, sanitation and safety shortcomings, and limited marketing. Importantly, these problems are interlinked; addressing one dimension without considering others may yield only incremental improvements. An integrated, phased approach that blends infrastructure upgrades, multimodal transport solutions, accommodation diversification, community participation, and conservation-focused planning can position Raigad for sustainable tourism growth. Public-private partnerships, capacity-building initiatives, and digital marketing are practical instruments to catalyze this transformation. Equally, instituting monitoring frameworks to track environmental and service-quality indicators will ensure adaptive management. Ultimately, the path to unlocking Raigad's tourism potential lies in harmonizing economic objectives with the preservation of cultural heritage and ecological integrity. Policymakers, investors, local communities, and civil society must collaborate to implement the recommended measures, thereby enabling Raigad to emerge as a model of sustainable, inclusive, and resilient tourism development in Maharashtra.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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