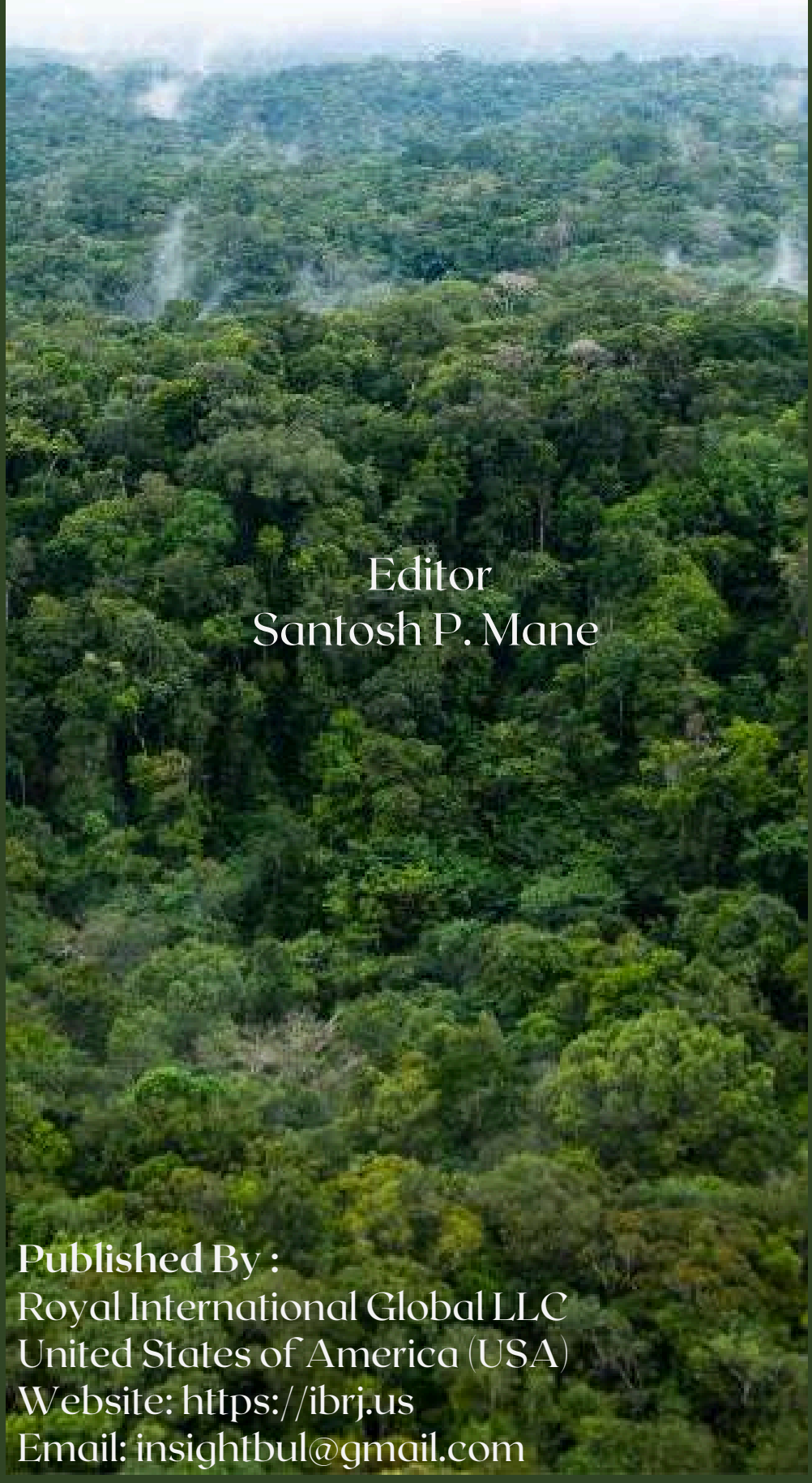
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Regional Patterns of Landholding Inequality in Maharashtra

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Abstract:

The present study examines the regional patterns of landholding inequality among farmer households in Maharashtra. Inequality in the distribution of land constitutes a significant structural issue within the agricultural sector, as it has direct implications for productivity, income distribution and the overall process of rural development. The study is based on secondary data derived from official sources such as the Agricultural Census and related government publications. For the purpose of analysis, statistical techniques including percentage analysis and the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index are employed to measure the extent and nature of inequality in land distribution. The findings reveal notable regional variations in landholding structures across different parts of the state. A higher concentration of marginal and small landholders is observed in certain regions, indicating an uneven distribution of land resources. Such disparities are found to influence regional differences in agricultural outcomes and the economic conditions of farmer households. The study, therefore, emphasises the need for region-specific policy interventions aimed at reducing landholding inequality and promoting balanced agricultural development in Maharashtra.

Keywords: *Landholding Inequality, Regional Disparities, Farmer Households, Agricultural Structure, Land Distribution, Marginal and Small Farmers, Rural Economy, Maharashtra etc.*

Introduction:

Agriculture continues to occupy a central position in the rural economy of Maharashtra, providing livelihood support to a substantial proportion of the population. Within this agrarian structure, the distribution of landholdings plays a crucial role in determining access to resources, levels of agricultural productivity and the economic well-being of farmer households. However, the pattern of land distribution in the state is far from uniform and reflects significant disparities across regions. Landholding inequality has long been recognised as a structural constraint affecting agricultural development. Unequal access to land not only limits the productive capacity of small and marginal farmers but also contributes to disparities in income, investment and technological adoption. In the context of Maharashtra, regional variations in agro-climatic conditions, historical land policies and socio-economic factors have led to distinct landholding patterns across regions such as Western Maharashtra, Vidarbha, Marathwada and Konkan. The persistence of a large proportion of marginal and small landholders, alongside a relatively smaller number of medium and large farmers, indicates a skewed distribution of land resources. Such imbalances have important implications for rural livelihoods, as smaller holdings often face constraints related to scale, access to credit and risk-bearing capacity. Consequently, regional inequality in landholding structures may lead to uneven agricultural growth and widening socio-economic disparities within the state. In this context, a systematic examination of regional patterns of landholding inequality becomes essential. The present study seeks to analyse these patterns by comparing the distribution of landholdings across different regions of Maharashtra and assessing the extent of inequality using appropriate statistical measures.

Objectives of the study:

1) To study how land is distributed among farmers in different regions of Maharashtra.
2) To find out the level of inequality in landholding across these regions.
3) To understand how land inequality affects farmers' livelihoods and agriculture.

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Hypothesis of the study:

- H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant regional difference in landholding inequality in Maharashtra.
- H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant regional difference in landholding inequality in Maharashtra.

Research Methodology: This study is based on secondary data collected from sources such as the Agricultural Census and government reports. It covers different regions of Maharashtra. Farmers are classified into marginal, small, medium and large categories. Percentage analysis and the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI) are used to measure landholding inequality. The results are presented in tables and analysed accordingly.

Data Collection: The study is based on secondary data collected from reliable and published sources. The main sources include Agricultural Census reports, government publications and other official statistical records related to landholding patterns in Maharashtra.

Regional Distribution of Land among Farmers in Maharashtra: The distribution of land among farmers in Maharashtra shows clear regional variations, reflecting differences in historical development, irrigation facilities and agro-climatic conditions. Farmers are generally classified into marginal (below 1 hectare), small (1–2 hectares), medium (2–10 hectares) and large (above 10 hectares) categories and their distribution differs significantly across regions.

In Western Maharashtra, the proportion of medium and large farmers is relatively higher due to better irrigation facilities and more developed agricultural infrastructure. At the same time, marginal and small farmers are also present, but the overall distribution is comparatively more balanced.

In Vidarbha, a large share of farmers belongs to the small and medium categories, while marginal farmers also form a significant portion. The presence of larger holdings is comparatively limited and the region reflects moderate inequality in land distribution.

In Marathwada, marginal and small farmers dominate the agrarian structure. Due to limited irrigation and frequent drought conditions, landholdings are more fragmented, resulting in a higher concentration of smaller farms and greater inequality in access to land resources.

In Konkan, the geographical conditions and hilly terrain lead to very small and fragmented landholdings. The majority of farmers fall under the marginal category and large landholdings are rare. This results in a highly skewed distribution, with very limited scope for expansion of farm size.

Overall, the analysis indicates that marginal and small farmers constitute the majority across all regions of Maharashtra, though their proportion is particularly high in Marathwada and Konkan. In contrast, Western Maharashtra shows relatively better distribution with a higher presence of medium landholders. These regional differences highlight the uneven nature of land distribution and its implications for agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods in the state.

Table No. 1.1

Landholding Distribution in Maharashtra (2024-25)

Category	Size Class (Hectares)	Number of Holdings (in Lakhs)	Share (s_i)	$(s_i)^2$	Total Area (In Lakh Hectares)
Marginal	Below 1.0	78.16	0.511	0.261	34.49
Small	1.0 – 2.0	43.39	0.284	0.081	57.71
Semi-Medium	2.0 – 4.0	23.27	0.152	0.023	60.25
Medium	4.0 – 10.0	7.34	0.048	0.002	40.99
Large	10.0 and above	0.69	0.005	0.00002	11.62
Total	All Classes	152.85	-	-	205.06

Source: Economic Survey of Maharashtra and Agriculture Census data 2024-25

The share is calculated as: $s_i = \frac{\text{Individual Category Value}}{\text{Total Value}}$

Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI) Calculation=$HHI = \sum(s_i^2)$

Where: s_i= share of each category in total holdings

$$\text{HHI} = 0.261 + 0.081 + 0.023 + 0.002 + 0.00002$$
$$\text{HHI} = 0.3670$$

The distribution of landholdings in Maharashtra was analysed using the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI) based on the number of operational holdings across different size classes. The total number of holdings was 152.85 lakh, of which marginal farmers accounted for 78.16 lakh (0.511), small farmers 43.39 lakh (0.284), semi-medium farmers 23.27 lakh (0.152), medium farmers 7.34 lakh (0.048) and large farmers 0.69 lakh (0.005). By squaring these proportional shares and summing them, the HHI value was calculated as 0.367 (or 3670 in standard form). This relatively high HHI value indicates a significant degree of concentration in landholding distribution, suggesting that a large proportion of holdings is concentrated within the marginal farmer category. The predominance of marginal and small landholdings reflects a highly fragmented agrarian structure, which may adversely affect agricultural productivity, economies of scale and income levels of farmers. Thus, the findings clearly highlight the existence of substantial inequality in land distribution in Maharashtra, with important implications for rural development and agricultural sustainability.

Regional Inequality in Landholding across Maharashtra: Regional inequality in landholding in Maharashtra reflects a deep spatial and socio-economic imbalance rooted in historical, agrarian and developmental differences across its regions. Western

Maharashtra (Pune–Satara–Kolhapur belt) generally shows comparatively larger and more productive landholdings due to better irrigation facilities, sugarcane-based cooperative agriculture and stronger market linkages, which have contributed to relatively higher land concentration among dominant farming communities. In contrast, regions such as Vidarbha, Marathwada and parts of Khandesh exhibit a higher proportion of marginal and small landholdings, coupled with greater landlessness and lower productivity due to dryland farming, irregular rainfall and weaker irrigation infrastructure. These structural constraints have intensified agrarian distress, particularly in Vidarbha, where dependence on rain-fed agriculture has limited both land productivity and income stability. Studies on Maharashtra also indicate that regional disparities are reinforced by unequal access to credit, technology and public investment, leading to a concentration of economic benefits in more developed regions while backward regions remain largely agrarian and resource-constrained. Thus, landholding inequality in Maharashtra is not only a matter of farm size distribution but also reflects broader regional development gaps, where spatial imbalance in infrastructure and economic opportunities has translated into persistent agrarian inequality across districts.

Impact of Landholding Inequality on Farmers' Livelihoods and Agriculture in Maharashtra: Landholding inequality in Maharashtra has a direct and significant influence on the livelihood conditions of farmers as well as on the overall structure of agriculture. When land is unevenly distributed, a large proportion of farmers particularly marginal and small landholders operate on very limited land resources. This restricts their ability to achieve adequate agricultural output, invest in modern inputs and adopt improved farming technologies. As a result, their income levels remain low and often unstable, making them more vulnerable to economic stress and rural indebtedness.

On the other hand, farmers with relatively larger landholdings are better positioned to benefit from economies of scale, mechanisation and access to institutional credit. This creates a clear gap in productivity and income between different categories of farmers. Such disparities further widen rural inequality and limit inclusive agricultural growth. Land fragmentation also affects the overall agricultural system by reducing efficiency and making it difficult to implement advanced irrigation, mechanisation and commercial farming practices on a larger scale. In regions where small and marginal holdings dominate, agriculture tends to remain subsistence-oriented rather than market-driven. Thus, landholding inequality not only affects individual farmer livelihoods but also influences the broader agricultural development pattern in Maharashtra. It leads to uneven growth, reduced productivity in small farms and persistent rural economic disparities across regions.

Table No. 2.2

Productivity and Cost Differences by Farm Size

Crop Type	Projected Yield (Quintals/Ha)	Cost A2+FL (₹/Quintal)	Comprehensive Cost C2 (₹/Quintal)	MSP (₹/Quintal)
Paddy (Common)	43.73	₹1,533	₹2,008	₹2,300
Soyabean	12.15	₹3,261	₹4,291	₹4,892
Cotton (Long Staple)	15.29	₹4,747	₹6,230	₹7,521
Tur (Arhar)	10.81	₹4,761	₹6,504	₹7,550
Jowar (Hybrid)	13.56	₹2,247	₹2,958	₹3,371
Maize	38.02	₹1,447	₹1,863	₹2,225
Groundnut	16.17	₹4,522	₹5,664	₹6,783

Source: Economic Survey of Maharashtra (ESM) 2024-25, Price Policy Report for Kharif Crops (Marketing Season 2024-25), Agriculture Census of India

Note: Cost A2+FL = (Actual Paid Expenses) + (Value of Unpaid Family Labor)

The table shows that there is a clear variation in yield, cost of production and profitability across different crops in Maharashtra. Cereals like maize and paddy are relatively more cost-efficient, as their MSP is close to or slightly higher than their production costs, resulting in better or stable returns. In contrast, oilseeds such as soyabean and groundnut show higher production costs with only marginal profit margins, indicating limited economic advantage. Cash crops like cotton and pulses such as tur involve high input costs and relatively narrow profit margins, making them more-risky and cost-intensive for farmers.

Table No. 2.3

Average Monthly Income by Farm Size
(Maharashtra 2024-25)

Land Possessed (Hectares)	Total Monthly Income (₹)	Wages (₹)	Cultivation (₹)	Livestock (₹)	Non-Farm Business (₹)
< 0.01 (Landless/Marginal)	₹10,230	₹6,432	₹102	₹3,211	₹485
0.01 – 0.40	₹11,460	₹6,312	₹2,118	₹2,154	₹876
0.40 – 1.00	₹12,420	₹5,524	₹4,510	₹1,784	₹602
1.00 – 2.00	₹15,730	₹4,021	₹9,114	₹2,012	₹583
2.00 – 4.00	₹21,680	₹2,814	₹15,412	₹2,841	₹613
4.00 – 10.00	₹36,820	₹1,514	₹31,211	₹3,412	₹683
Above 10.00	₹64,210	₹1,202	₹58,410	₹3,980	₹618

Source: Official Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) 2024-25

The table shows a clear positive relationship between landholding size and monthly income in rural households. Small and marginal farmers earn lower total income and depend mainly on wages for survival, while their income from cultivation is limited. As land size increases, dependence on wages decreases and income from cultivation rises significantly. Large landholders earn the highest income, mainly from farming activities and show better economic stability with minimal dependence on non-farm sources. Overall, the data highlights that higher landholding size leads to higher and more stable income, while smaller holdings are associated with economic vulnerability and wage dependence.

Conclusion: The present study on regional patterns of landholding inequality in Maharashtra reveals that the distribution of agricultural land is highly uneven across different regions as well as across farm size categories. The analysis based on available secondary data shows a clear dominance of marginal and small landholders, while medium and large landholders constitute only a very small proportion of total operational holdings. This fragmented structure of land distribution reflects a persistent form of agrarian inequality in the state. The study further indicates that landholding inequality varies across regions, with relatively better distribution in Western Maharashtra and higher concentration of small and marginal holdings in regions such as Marathwada and Konkan. Such regional disparities highlight the uneven nature of agricultural development within the state. The findings also establish a strong link between landholding size and household income, where larger landholders enjoy higher and more stable incomes, while smaller landholders remain dependent on wage labour and low-return activities. Overall, the study concludes that landholding inequality significantly influences rural livelihoods, agricultural productivity and income distribution in Maharashtra.

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Original Article

Wellness Tourism and Corporate Retreat Framework for Tamil Nadu Police Force - A Five-Year Strategic Plan (2026–2031)

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Abstract

Police personnel experience some of the highest occupational stress levels due to long working hours, shift duties, exposure to crime, accidents, violence, family separation, public scrutiny, and increasing cyber and law-and-order challenges. Tamil Nadu Police has already initiated mental wellness efforts such as the ***"Magizhchi" Mental Well-being Program****, which recognizes the need for structured psychological support for police personnel and their families. The next step should be the creation of a comprehensive* ***Tamil Nadu Police Wellness Tourism and Resilience Program (TNP-WTRP)*** *that integrates wellness tourism, mental health support, physical fitness, family welfare, leadership development, and preventive healthcare.*

Keywords: *Wellness Tourism, Organizational Resilience, Police Welfare, Workplace Well-being*

Introduction

The **Tamil Nadu Police Wellness Tourism and Resilience Program (TNP-WTRP)** is a comprehensive well-being initiative designed to enhance the mental, physical, emotional, and social health of police personnel and their families through structured wellness tourism, preventive healthcare, resilience-building, and holistic wellness interventions. Police personnel operate in one of the most demanding professions, characterized by long working hours, irregular shifts, exposure to traumatic incidents, high public expectations, and constant operational pressures. These challenges often result in occupational stress, burnout, lifestyle diseases, family strain, and reduced overall well-being. Research on police personnel in Tamil Nadu and South India has consistently highlighted the need for structured stress-management and resilience-building mechanisms. Recognizing these challenges, Tamil Nadu Police has already pioneered innovative mental health initiatives such as the **Magizhini (Happiness) Program**, which provides psychological support, counselling, and mental health interventions for police personnel and their families. The program has demonstrated positive outcomes and has been expanded across multiple regions of the state. Building upon this foundation, the proposed TNP-WTRP seeks to institutionalize wellness tourism as a strategic human resource and welfare intervention. By utilizing Tamil Nadu's unique strengths—such as hill stations, spiritual destinations, Siddha and Yoga traditions, wellness resorts, heritage centres, and medical infrastructure—the program aims to create a healthier, happier, and more resilient police force capable of delivering superior public service while maintaining personal well-being.

Vision

"To create India's healthiest, happiest, and most resilient police force through wellness tourism, preventive healthcare, and holistic well-being."

Mission

To provide every Tamil Nadu Police officer and family member access to:

- Mental health support, Physical fitness programs, Stress management interventions, Wellness retreats, Family counselling, Lifestyle disease prevention, Leadership and resilience training

Why Tamil Nadu Police Needs Wellness Tourism

1. Current Challenges Police personnel face

1 Mental Challenges

- Occupational stress, Burnout, Compassion fatigue, Anxiety, Depression, PTSD-like symptoms after traumatic incidents

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2 Physical Challenges

- Obesity, Diabetes, Hypertension, Sleep disorders, Musculoskeletal disorders, Cardiac risks

3 Social Challenges

- Family separation, Marital stress, Limited recreation, Transfer-related disruptions

Tamil Nadu Police has already recognized mental wellness as a critical issue through initiatives like Magizhchi.

2. Tamil Nadu Police Wellness Tourism and Resilience Program (TNP-WTRP)

The Tamil Nadu Police Wellness Tourism and Resilience Program is envisioned as a state-wide, multi-dimensional wellness framework that integrates tourism, healthcare, psychology, fitness, leadership development and family welfare into a single structured program. The initiative seeks to move beyond reactive treatment of stress-related issues and adopt a preventive and proactive approach to police well-being.

3. Tamil Nadu Police Wellness Tourism Mission (TNPWTM)

Target Group

- IPS Officers, DSPs, Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors, Head Constables, Constables, Women Police Personnel, Special Units, Families of Police Personnel

4. Wellness Tourism Retreats / Destinations

A unique feature of the program is the use of Tamil Nadu's tourism assets as wellness destinations. These retreats would provide opportunities for relaxation, self-reflection, stress reduction, team building, and personal development in environments conducive to healing and rejuvenation.

Zone 1: Spiritual and Mental Wellness

a.) Rameswaram

Programs: Meditation, Spiritual rejuvenation, Mindfulness, Family retreats

Duration: 3–5 days

Target: High-stress officers, Officers nearing retirement

b.) Kanyakumari

Programs: Yoga, Sunrise meditation, Leadership reflection camps, Family wellness retreats

Zone 2: Nature-Based Stress Relief

c.) Ooty

Programs: Forest therapy, Digital detox, Leadership retreats, Team-building

d.) Kodaikanal

Programs: Nature immersion, Stress recovery camps, Executive wellness programs

e.) Yercaud

Programs: Weekend rejuvenation retreats, Physical fitness camps

Zone 3: Coastal Wellness Tourism

f.) Mahabalipuram

Programs: Beach wellness, Yoga retreats, Leadership development

g.) Chennai

Programs: Medical wellness, Preventive health screening, Corporate-style executive retreats

Zone 4: Heritage and Cultural Wellness

h.) Thanjavur

Programs: Art therapy, Music therapy, Cultural immersion

i.) Madurai

Programs: Heritage walks, Family bonding retreats

5. TNP-WTR Program Structure

Level 1: Annual Wellness Retreats

Program Coverage

Year 1: 5,000 personnel

Year 2: 15,000 personnel

Year 3: 30,000 personnel

Year 4: 50,000 personnel

Year 5: Entire police force

6. TNP-WTRP Retreat Model

3-Days Program

Day 1: Health screening, Psychological assessment, Yoga, Team activities

Day 2: Stress management, Nature therapy, Counselling, Leadership development

Day 3: Family engagement, Personal wellness planning, Follow-up scheduling

7. Mental Health and Psychological Resilience

The program strengthens and expands the existing Magizhchi framework by providing regular psychological assessments, counselling services, peer-support networks, crisis intervention mechanisms, trauma recovery programs, and resilience-building workshops.

Dedicated wellness centres established in major cities can function as regional hubs for psychological support and follow-up care. Existing evidence from the Magizhchi program demonstrates the effectiveness of multidisciplinary mental health interventions involving psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers.

8. Mental Health Strategy for Tamilnadu Police Force

1 Police Wellness Centres

Establish wellness centres in:

Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai, Trichy, Salem, Tirunelveli

Services: Counselling, Psychiatric consultations, Family therapy, Stress management

2 Police Happiness Index

Develop annual measurements for:

Stress levels, Job satisfaction, Work-life balance, Physical health, Family well-being

3 Peer Support Program

Train: 1 Wellness Officer per district, 10 Peer Counsellors per district

Role: Early identification of stress, Crisis intervention, Referral support

9. Physical Health and Preventive Care for Tamilnadu Police Force

TNP-WTRP promotes annual health screening, fitness benchmarking, nutrition counselling, yoga, physical conditioning, and preventive healthcare. Lifestyle diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disorders, and sleep-related problems can be identified and managed through structured wellness programs. Regular health monitoring will ensure operational readiness and improve long-term health outcomes.

1 Physical Health Strategy

Mandatory Annual Health Screening

Every police personnel should undergo:

ECG, Blood sugar tests, Cholesterol tests, BMI assessment, Sleep assessment, Mental health screening

2 Fitness Benchmark Program

Categories:

- **Below 30 Years:** Running, Strength training, Agility assessment
- **30–50 Years:** Functional fitness, Cardiac fitness
- **Above 50 Years:** Mobility, Flexibility, Preventive health programs

3 Family Wellness Strategy

Police well-being is closely linked to family stability and support. The program therefore includes family counselling, parenting workshops, marital support services, financial planning sessions, and family wellness retreats. By involving spouses and children, the program aims to strengthen family resilience and improve overall quality of life.

4 Police Family Retreats

Objective: Strengthen family support systems

Activities:

Parenting workshops, Marriage counselling, financial planning, Youth mentoring

10. Women Police Wellness Program

Tamil Nadu Police has already introduced welfare measures for women personnel.

Additional programs: Women's wellness retreats, Maternal health support, Leadership training, Stress management

1 Role of Siddha, Yoga and Ayurveda

Tamil Nadu possesses unique wellness assets.

a.) Siddha-Based Programs

Locations: Chennai, Madurai, Coimbatore

Programs: Lifestyle disease prevention, Stress management, Detoxification

b.) Yoga Integration

Daily: 20-minute yoga sessions

Weekly: Department yoga classes

Monthly: Wellness camps

Annual: State-wide Police Yoga Festival

11. Digital Wellness and Continuous Monitoring

A dedicated **Tamil Nadu Police Wellness Portal and Mobile Application** can provide:

Mental health self-assessment tools, Tele-counselling services, Fitness tracking, Nutrition guidance, Wellness scorecards, Follow-up reminders, Emergency psychological support.

Artificial Intelligence-based analytics can help identify early warning signs of stress, burnout, and health risks, enabling timely interventions.

12. TNP-WTRP Implementation Framework

The program can be implemented over a five-year period:

Phase I (Year 1): Pilot Implementation

- Chennai, Coimbatore, and Madurai.
- Baseline wellness assessments.
- Pilot retreats and wellness centres.

- Training of wellness officers.

Phase II (Years 2–3): Expansion

- Rollout to all police commissionerates and major districts.
- Integration with police welfare schemes.
- Establishment of regional wellness hubs.

Phase III (Years 4–5): Full Institutionalization

- Coverage of the entire Tamil Nadu Police force.
- Annual wellness participation for all personnel.
- Integration into police training and career development systems.
- Improved operational efficiency

1 TNP-WTRP Funding Model

Estimated Budget with Annual Allocation: ₹100–150 Crore

Sources:

State Government, Police Welfare Fund, CSR partnerships, Health insurance collaborations, Tourism Department partnerships

13. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of TNP-WTRP

Indicator	Baseline	Year 3	Year 5
Wellness Retreat Participation	0%	40%	100%
Stress Reduction	Baseline	20%	40%
Physical Fitness Compliance	40%	70%	90%
Family Satisfaction	Baseline	25% improvement	50% improvement
Sick Leave Usage	Baseline	15% reduction	30% reduction
Employee Satisfaction	Baseline	30% improvement	60% improvement

Expected Outcomes by 2031

1. Tamil Nadu becomes India's first **Wellness-Oriented Police Force**.
2. Reduction in stress-related health issues.
3. Better physical fitness and operational readiness.
4. Stronger family support systems.
5. Improved public service delivery.
6. Lower healthcare expenditure.
7. Enhanced morale and retention.
8. A replicable model for other Indian police organizations and central armed police forces.

Conclusion

The **Tamil Nadu Police Wellness Tourism and Resilience Program (TNP-WTRP)** represents a transformative approach to police welfare and organizational development. By integrating wellness tourism, mental healthcare, preventive medicine, fitness promotion, family support, and digital wellness technologies, the program addresses the root causes of occupational stress and lifestyle-related health challenges faced by police personnel.

The initiative aligns with the progressive welfare vision already demonstrated through Tamil Nadu Police's Magizhchi mental well-being program and expands it into a comprehensive, state-wide wellness ecosystem.

If successfully implemented, TNP-WTRP can position Tamil Nadu as the first state in India to establish a fully integrated police wellness and resilience model. The program would not only improve the health, morale, and productivity of police personnel but also enhance public service delivery, strengthen community trust, reduce healthcare costs, and create a benchmark that can be replicated by police forces across India. Ultimately, a healthier and more resilient police force will contribute significantly to safer communities, stronger institutions, and a more compassionate and effective system of policing.

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Original Article

Digital Transformation of India's Tourism Industry: Opportunities and Challenges for Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract:

The tourism industry has emerged as one of the most significant contributors to India's economic growth, employment generation, and cultural promotion. In recent years, rapid advancements in digital technologies have transformed the tourism landscape by enhancing operational efficiency, improving tourist experiences, and strengthening destination competitiveness. This study examines the role of digital transformation in India's tourism industry and explores its opportunities and challenges in the context of the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design based entirely on secondary data collected from research articles, government reports, policy documents, books, journals, and other credible sources. The findings reveal that technologies such as artificial intelligence, online booking platforms, digital payment systems, social media marketing, virtual reality, augmented reality, and smart tourism applications have significantly contributed to the modernization of tourism services. Digital transformation has created opportunities for improved tourist experiences, enhanced accessibility, entrepreneurship development, employment generation, and global promotion of Indian destinations. Furthermore, digital tourism supports sustainable and inclusive growth by enabling broader participation of local communities and tourism enterprises. However, several challenges continue to hinder effective digital adoption, including the digital divide, cybersecurity and data privacy concerns, inadequate technological infrastructure, digital skill deficiencies, high implementation costs, and resistance to technological change. The study concludes that digital tourism can serve as a strategic catalyst for achieving the objectives of Viksit Bharat 2047 by fostering innovation, sustainability, and economic development. Strengthening digital infrastructure, promoting digital literacy, enhancing cybersecurity measures, and supporting tourism innovation are essential for maximizing the benefits of digital transformation. The study provides valuable insights for policymakers, tourism stakeholders, researchers, and industry practitioners seeking to develop a resilient, inclusive, and globally competitive tourism ecosystem in India.

Keywords: *Digital Transformation, Digital Tourism, Smart Tourism, Tourism Development, Artificial Intelligence, Sustainable Tourism, Digital India, Tourism Innovation, Viksit Bharat 2047, Economic Growth.*

Introduction

India's tourism industry is undergoing a remarkable transformation driven by rapid advancements in digital technologies. The emergence of artificial intelligence, big data analytics, cloud computing, mobile applications, virtual reality, and digital payment systems has significantly reshaped the way tourism services are produced, marketed, and consumed. Digital transformation has become a key enabler for enhancing tourist experiences, improving operational efficiency, and promoting sustainable tourism development. As India progresses toward the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, the tourism sector is expected to play a crucial role in economic growth, employment generation, cultural preservation, and global competitiveness. The Government of India has launched several digital initiatives, including Digital India, Smart Cities Mission, BharatNet, and Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which have strengthened the digital ecosystem and accelerated technology adoption across industries. The tourism sector has particularly benefited from these initiatives through online travel booking platforms, digital marketing strategies, smart tourism applications, virtual destination experiences, and data-driven decision-making processes.

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These developments have enhanced accessibility, convenience, transparency, and customer satisfaction in tourism services. Despite significant progress, the digital transformation of India's tourism industry faces various challenges. Issues such as digital inequality, cybersecurity concerns, inadequate digital infrastructure in rural destinations, limited technological skills among stakeholders, and data privacy risks continue to hinder the full realization of digital tourism potential. Addressing these challenges is essential for ensuring inclusive and sustainable tourism development across the country.

As India aspires to become a developed nation by 2047, digital transformation is expected to serve as a strategic catalyst for strengthening tourism competitiveness and supporting long-term national development goals. Therefore, understanding the opportunities and challenges associated with digital transformation in tourism has become increasingly important for policymakers, tourism businesses, researchers, and other stakeholders. This study examines the role of digital transformation in India's tourism industry and evaluates its contribution toward achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Background of the Study

The global tourism industry has experienced profound changes due to rapid technological advancements and increasing digitalization. Information and communication technologies have transformed traditional tourism operations by enabling real-time information access, online reservations, digital payments, and personalized travel experiences. Across the world, tourism destinations are adopting smart technologies to improve visitor engagement, operational efficiency, and destination management. India, one of the world's most diverse tourism destinations, has also embraced digital transformation through various government-led and private-sector initiatives. The growing penetration of smartphones, internet connectivity, and digital platforms has significantly altered tourist behavior and expectations. Digital tools have become essential for destination promotion, customer relationship management, travel planning, and service delivery. As India moves toward the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, understanding the impact of digital transformation on tourism development becomes increasingly relevant. This study is therefore situated within the broader context of technological innovation and tourism modernization.

Digital Transformation in Tourism

Digital transformation in tourism refers to the integration of advanced digital technologies into tourism operations, services, and customer interactions. Technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, cloud computing, virtual reality, augmented reality, blockchain, and the Internet of Things have revolutionized the tourism ecosystem. These technologies facilitate seamless travel experiences through smart bookings, personalized recommendations, digital navigation, virtual destination tours, and automated customer support services. Tourism organizations increasingly utilize digital platforms to enhance marketing effectiveness, improve customer engagement, and optimize resource utilization. Digital transformation also supports data-driven decision-making and sustainable destination management by providing valuable insights into tourist preferences and behavior patterns. In the Indian context, digital tourism initiatives have expanded market reach and improved service accessibility. However, successful digital transformation requires adequate infrastructure, technological competence, cybersecurity measures, and stakeholder collaboration to maximize its benefits and ensure long-term sustainability.

Tourism Sector in India

The tourism sector is a significant contributor to India's economy, generating employment opportunities, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development. India's rich cultural heritage, historical monuments, diverse landscapes, religious destinations, and vibrant traditions attract millions of domestic and international tourists annually. Government initiatives such as Incredible India, Dekho Apna Desh, Swadesh Darshan, and PRASHAD have strengthened tourism promotion and infrastructure development. The increasing adoption of digital technologies has further enhanced destination visibility and tourist accessibility. As India advances toward Viksit Bharat 2047, the tourism sector is expected to emerge as a key driver of inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Need for the Study

The increasing digitalization of tourism services has created new opportunities for improving tourism competitiveness, operational efficiency, and customer satisfaction. However, the pace and effectiveness of digital transformation vary across regions and tourism stakeholders in India. While urban destinations have benefited substantially from technological advancements, many rural and emerging tourism destinations continue to face infrastructural and technological challenges. Additionally, concerns related to cybersecurity, digital literacy, and data protection remain significant barriers to digital adoption. Given the strategic importance of tourism in achieving the objectives of Viksit Bharat 2047, there is a need to critically examine both the opportunities and challenges associated with digital transformation. This study seeks to provide comprehensive insights that can support evidence-based policy formulation and sustainable tourism development strategies.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on digital transformation and tourism development in India. It provides valuable insights into how digital technologies can enhance tourism competitiveness, improve visitor experiences, and support sustainable destination management. The findings may assist policymakers in designing effective digital tourism strategies aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Tourism businesses can utilize the study's recommendations to strengthen technological adoption and innovation capabilities. Furthermore, the research highlights challenges that require immediate attention, including infrastructure gaps, digital skills development, and cybersecurity preparedness. By examining both opportunities and constraints, the study offers practical implications for stakeholders seeking to create a resilient, inclusive, and globally competitive tourism ecosystem in India.

Review Of Literature

1 Global Studies on Digital Tourism

Digital transformation has emerged as a significant research area in tourism studies. Ulrike Gretzel, Marianna Sigala, Zheng Xiang & Chulmo Koo (2015) highlighted that smart tourism integrates information and communication technologies (ICTs), big data, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things (IoT) to enhance tourist experiences and destination management. Similarly, Gutierriz, Ferreira, and Fernandes (2023) conducted a systematic review of 167 studies and found that digital transformation significantly improves tourism competitiveness, customer engagement, and operational efficiency. Furthermore, Restrepo-Sarmiento et al. (2023) observed that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital adoption in tourism through online booking systems, virtual tourism, and contactless services. Recent bibliometric research by Peter Madzík, Lukas Falat, Lukas Copus and Marco Valeri (2023) identified artificial intelligence, data analytics, and smart destinations as dominant themes in tourism digitalization research. These studies collectively indicate that digital transformation is reshaping tourism globally by creating innovative service models and enhancing destination sustainability. Ashish Kumar and Chandran (2025) demonstrated that smart tourism tools such as AR, VR, and digital heritage technologies improve destination attractiveness and tourist engagement in emerging tourism circuits of India. Saurabh Singh Chandel and Gautam Uttam Kamble (2024) reported that social media platforms, travel applications, and e-tourism technologies significantly influence travel planning and tourist decision-making in India. Johnpaul M. and Jaya Prakashnarayana G. (2022) found that tourists' acceptance of digital tourism services in India is strongly influenced by perceived usefulness, ease of use, and trust in technology.

2 Digital Technologies in Tourism

Several scholars have examined the role of emerging technologies in tourism development. Smart technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and big data analytics have revolutionized tourism operations and customer experiences. Lee, Zach, and Chung (2021) emphasized that smart tourism technologies facilitate personalized travel experiences and efficient destination management. Borges-Tiago et al. (2021) identified smart ecosystems, technology-enabled experiences, and value creation as major dimensions of digital tourism. Recent studies have also highlighted the role of digital twins, machine learning, and predictive analytics in improving destination planning and tourist satisfaction. These technologies enable tourism stakeholders to make data-driven decisions while enhancing service quality and sustainability.

3 Smart Tourism Initiatives

Smart tourism has become an essential strategy for modern tourism destinations. Ulrike Gretzel, Marianna Sigala, Zheng Xiang & Chulmo Koo (2015) described smart tourism as the integration of technological infrastructure, human capital, and destination governance to create intelligent tourism ecosystems. Otowicz, Macedo, and Biz (2022) identified accessibility, sustainability, mobility, and innovation as key dimensions of smart tourism destinations. Yap et al. (2025) conducted a systematic review of 88 studies on Smart Tourism Technologies (STTs) and found that traveler satisfaction is influenced by technological, social, psychological, behavioral, economic, and destination-related factors. The study proposed a comprehensive framework for understanding tourist satisfaction and highlighted future research opportunities in emerging smart tourism technologies. Research also indicates that smart tourism initiatives improve tourist satisfaction, strengthen destination competitiveness, and support sustainable resource management. Consequently, many countries are investing in smart tourism frameworks to achieve long-term tourism growth and resilience.

4 Research Gap Identified

Existing literature extensively discusses digital transformation, smart tourism technologies, and destination management. However, limited studies specifically examine how digital transformation can contribute to India's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Most research focuses on developed economies and smart city destinations, while comparatively less attention has been given to developing countries such as India. Additionally, the challenges of digital inclusion, rural tourism digitalization, cybersecurity preparedness, and policy alignment remain underexplored. Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive study that evaluates both opportunities and challenges of digital transformation within the Indian tourism sector and its potential contribution to sustainable national development goals.

Objectives Of the Study

The present study aims to examine the transformative impact of digital technologies on India's tourism industry and their contribution to the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. The study focuses on understanding how digital transformation enhances tourism development, improves visitor experiences, and strengthens destination competitiveness. It also seeks to explore the opportunities created by emerging technologies and assess the challenges faced by tourism stakeholders in adopting digital solutions. Furthermore, the study aims to provide strategic recommendations for promoting sustainable, inclusive, and technology-driven tourism growth in India.

3.1 To examine the role of digital technologies in tourism development.

3.2 To identify opportunities created by digital transformation in tourism.

3.3 To analyze challenges faced by the tourism industry in digital adoption.

3.4 To suggest measures for achieving Viksit Bharat 2047 through digital tourism.

Research Methodology

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature and is based entirely on secondary data. The research examines the opportunities and challenges associated with the digital transformation of India's tourism industry and its contribution toward achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Relevant data were collected from authentic and reliable secondary sources, including research articles, government reports, policy documents, books, journals, conference proceedings, websites, and industry

publications. The collected information was systematically analyzed to draw meaningful conclusions and provide practical recommendations for tourism stakeholders.

1 Nature of Research

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design based exclusively on secondary data. It seeks to understand the role of digital transformation in the tourism sector by analyzing existing literature, reports, and policy documents. The research evaluates various digital technologies, opportunities, and challenges influencing tourism development in India. The analytical approach helps in interpreting available information and identifying trends, patterns, and strategic implications for achieving sustainable tourism growth and the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

2 Sources of Data

The study relies entirely on secondary sources of data. Information has been collected from peer-reviewed journals, research papers, books, government publications, Ministry of Tourism reports, NITI Aayog reports, Digital India documents, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) publications, websites, conference proceedings, and industry reports. These sources provide comprehensive information regarding digital transformation, smart tourism technologies, tourism development, and policy initiatives. The use of authentic and credible sources enhances the reliability and validity of the study findings.

3 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through an extensive review of existing literature and published documents related to digital tourism and technological innovations in the tourism industry. Relevant information was gathered from online databases, academic journals, government portals, institutional repositories, and official reports. The collected data were carefully screened, categorized, and analyzed to identify major opportunities, challenges, and future prospects of digital transformation in India's tourism sector. A thematic analysis approach was used for interpreting the information.

4 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the digital transformation of India's tourism industry and examines its opportunities, challenges, and future prospects. It covers digital technologies, smart tourism initiatives, and policy interventions contributing to the achievement of Viksit Bharat 2047.

5 Limitations of the Study

The study is based solely on secondary data and does not include primary survey findings. The conclusions are dependent on the availability, accuracy, and interpretation of published information collected from various secondary sources.

Digital Transformation In India's Tourism Industry

Digital transformation has become a driving force behind the modernization of India's tourism industry. The integration of advanced technologies has significantly improved service delivery, destination promotion, tourist engagement, and operational efficiency. Government initiatives such as Digital India, Smart Cities Mission, and BharatNet have accelerated the adoption of digital technologies across the tourism ecosystem. From artificial intelligence and online booking systems to digital payments and immersive technologies, digital innovation has transformed the way tourists plan, experience, and share their journeys. These advancements have enhanced accessibility, convenience, transparency, and customer satisfaction while supporting sustainable tourism development. As India progresses toward the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, digital transformation is expected to play a crucial role in strengthening tourism competitiveness and creating a globally connected tourism economy.

1 Artificial Intelligence in Tourism

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming tourism by enabling personalized travel recommendations, intelligent chatbots, virtual assistants, and predictive analytics. AI helps tourism businesses understand customer preferences, improve decision-making, and enhance service quality. Travel platforms use AI algorithms to recommend destinations, accommodation, and travel packages based on user behavior. AI-powered customer support systems provide instant assistance and improve tourist satisfaction. The adoption of AI also contributes to efficient destination management, demand forecasting, and resource optimization, thereby improving the overall tourism experience.

2 Online Booking Platforms

Online booking platforms have revolutionized travel planning by providing convenient access to transportation, accommodation, and tourism services. Digital platforms enable tourists to compare prices, read reviews, and make reservations from anywhere at any time. These systems increase operational efficiency, transparency, and customer convenience. The growing popularity of mobile applications and travel websites has significantly expanded market reach and improved accessibility to tourism services across urban and rural destinations.

3 Digital Payment Systems

Digital payment systems have simplified financial transactions within the tourism sector. Platforms such as UPI, mobile wallets, internet banking, and contactless payments provide secure and efficient payment solutions for travelers. Digital payments reduce dependency on cash, improve transaction transparency, and support financial inclusion. The widespread adoption of digital payment technologies enhances tourist confidence and convenience while promoting seamless travel experiences across destinations throughout India.

4 Social Media and Tourism Marketing

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for tourism marketing and destination promotion. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and X enable tourism organizations to engage with potential travelers through interactive content, videos, and user-generated experiences. Social media influences travel decisions by providing real-time information, reviews, and destination insights. It also allows tourism businesses to build brand awareness, target specific customer segments, and enhance customer engagement. Consequently, social media has become an essential component of modern tourism marketing strategies.

5 Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies provide immersive tourism experiences by allowing travelers to explore destinations virtually before their visit. VR enables virtual tours of historical sites, museums, and attractions, while AR enhances on-site experiences through interactive digital content. These technologies improve destination interpretation, customer engagement, and travel planning. VR and AR also support cultural heritage preservation and innovative tourism marketing, making destinations more attractive to domestic and international tourists.

6 Smart Tourism Applications

Smart tourism applications integrate technologies such as GPS, IoT, artificial intelligence, and big data analytics to enhance tourist experiences and destination management. These applications provide real-time information on transportation, accommodation, attractions, weather conditions, and emergency services. Smart tourism solutions improve convenience, accessibility, and safety while enabling data-driven decision-making by tourism authorities. Their growing adoption supports sustainable tourism development and contributes to the creation of intelligent, connected, and competitive tourism destinations.

Opportunities Of Digital Tourism

Digital transformation has created numerous opportunities for the growth and development of India's tourism industry. The integration of advanced technologies has enhanced service quality, improved operational efficiency, expanded market reach, and strengthened destination competitiveness. Digital tourism enables seamless interactions between tourists and service providers while facilitating data-driven decision-making and innovative business models. The rapid adoption of smartphones, internet connectivity, artificial intelligence, social media, and digital payment systems has transformed tourism experiences and created new avenues for economic development. As India moves toward the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, digital tourism presents significant opportunities for sustainable growth, employment generation, entrepreneurship development, and global tourism promotion.

1 Improved Tourist Experience

Digital technologies have significantly enhanced the overall tourist experience by providing personalized, efficient, and convenient services. Artificial intelligence, mobile applications, virtual assistants, and smart tourism platforms enable travelers to access real-time information and customized recommendations. Tourists can easily plan itineraries, make reservations, and explore destinations through digital tools. Virtual reality experiences and interactive applications further enrich travel experiences. These innovations increase customer satisfaction, strengthen destination attractiveness, and encourage repeat visits, thereby contributing to the growth of the tourism sector.

2 Increased Accessibility and Convenience

Digital tourism has improved accessibility and convenience for travelers by providing instant access to tourism-related information and services. Online booking platforms, digital maps, mobile applications, and contactless payment systems simplify travel planning and execution. Tourists can access transportation schedules, accommodation options, local attractions, and emergency services through digital devices. These technologies reduce travel uncertainties and save time and effort. Enhanced accessibility also promotes inclusive tourism by enabling wider participation among domestic and international travelers.

3 Growth of Tourism Start-ups

The digital revolution has created a favorable environment for the emergence of tourism start-ups in India. Entrepreneurs are developing innovative solutions in areas such as online travel services, destination marketing, hospitality management, travel technology, and tourism analytics. Digital platforms reduce entry barriers and provide access to broader customer markets. Start-ups contribute to innovation, competition, and service diversification within the tourism ecosystem. Their growth supports technological advancement and strengthens the overall competitiveness of India's tourism industry.

4 Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities

Digital tourism generates substantial employment and entrepreneurship opportunities across various segments of the tourism value chain. The growing demand for digital marketing professionals, content creators, software developers, tourism consultants, data analysts, and customer service specialists has created new career prospects. Additionally, local entrepreneurs can promote tourism products and services through digital platforms, reaching customers beyond geographical boundaries. Rural tourism enterprises, homestays, cultural tourism initiatives, and handicraft businesses can benefit significantly from digital visibility and online marketplaces. These opportunities contribute to income generation, skill development, youth empowerment, and inclusive economic growth while supporting India's broader development objectives.

5 Global Promotion of Indian Destinations

Digital platforms enable effective promotion of India's diverse tourism destinations to a global audience. Social media, websites, virtual tours, and digital marketing campaigns showcase India's cultural heritage, natural attractions, and unique travel experiences. Online engagement helps attract international tourists and enhances destination visibility in competitive global markets. User-generated content, influencer marketing, and digital storytelling further strengthen destination branding. These initiatives improve India's tourism image and contribute to increased tourist arrivals and foreign exchange earnings.

6 Contribution to Economic Growth

Digital tourism contributes significantly to economic growth by increasing tourism demand, enhancing productivity, and improving service efficiency. Technology-driven innovations attract greater tourist spending and stimulate investments in tourism infrastructure and related industries. The growth of digital tourism supports employment generation, entrepreneurship development, and regional economic development. Increased tourist arrivals also contribute to foreign exchange earnings and government revenue. Therefore, digital tourism serves as an important catalyst for sustainable economic development and the realization of the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

Challenges Of Digital Transformation

While digital transformation has created numerous opportunities for India's tourism industry, it has also introduced several challenges that may hinder its effective implementation. The successful adoption of digital technologies requires robust infrastructure, skilled human resources, cybersecurity measures, and stakeholder readiness. Significant disparities in digital access, technological capabilities, and financial resources continue to affect tourism development across different regions. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure inclusive, secure, and sustainable digital tourism growth. Overcoming these barriers will enable India to maximize the benefits of technological innovation and strengthen its tourism sector in alignment with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

1 Digital Divide

The digital divide remains a major challenge in India's tourism sector. Many rural and remote tourism destinations have limited access to high-speed internet and digital services. This disparity restricts the participation of local communities and small tourism enterprises in the digital economy. Unequal access to technology creates barriers to information, marketing opportunities, and online transactions. Bridging the digital divide is crucial for promoting inclusive tourism development and ensuring equal opportunities across all regions.

2 Cybersecurity and Data Privacy Issues

The increasing use of digital platforms has raised concerns regarding cybersecurity and data privacy. Tourism businesses collect and process large volumes of customer information, making them vulnerable to cyberattacks, data breaches, and online fraud. Unauthorized access to personal and financial information can damage customer trust and business reputation. Strengthening cybersecurity frameworks, implementing data protection measures, and enhancing digital awareness are essential for safeguarding sensitive information and maintaining confidence in digital tourism services.

3 Technological Infrastructure Gaps

Inadequate technological infrastructure continues to limit the growth of digital tourism in several parts of India. Many destinations face challenges related to internet connectivity, network reliability, digital equipment, and technological support services. Infrastructure deficiencies affect the delivery of smart tourism solutions and reduce the effectiveness of digital initiatives. Investments in broadband connectivity, digital infrastructure, and technology-enabled services are necessary to support seamless tourism experiences and strengthen destination competitiveness.

4 Digital Skill Deficiency

The shortage of digital skills among tourism stakeholders poses a significant obstacle to successful digital transformation. Many tourism employees, entrepreneurs, and local service providers lack the technical knowledge required to effectively use digital tools and platforms. Limited digital literacy reduces the adoption of innovative technologies and affects service quality. Regular training programs, skill development initiatives, and capacity-building efforts are essential to enhance digital competencies and support technology-driven tourism growth.

5 High Implementation Costs

The adoption of advanced digital technologies often requires substantial financial investment. Small and medium-sized tourism enterprises may face difficulties in acquiring and maintaining digital infrastructure, software systems, and technological solutions. High implementation costs can discourage innovation and limit technology adoption, particularly among resource-constrained businesses. Financial assistance, government incentives, and public-private partnerships can help reduce these barriers and encourage wider participation in digital transformation initiatives.

6 Resistance to Technological Change

Resistance to technological change is another challenge affecting digital transformation in tourism. Some tourism businesses and employees may hesitate to adopt new technologies due to fear of complexity, uncertainty, or job displacement. Traditional operational practices and lack of awareness can further slow digital adoption. Effective change management strategies, awareness campaigns, stakeholder engagement, and continuous training programs are necessary to encourage acceptance of technology and foster a culture of innovation within the tourism sector.

Digital Tourism and Viksit Bharat 2047

Digital tourism is expected to play a transformative role in achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 by fostering innovation, sustainability, economic growth, and global competitiveness. The integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, virtual reality, smart applications, and digital payment systems has enhanced operational efficiency, improved tourist experiences, and strengthened destination management. As India aspires to become a developed nation by 2047, digital tourism can significantly contribute to employment generation, entrepreneurship development, foreign exchange earnings, and regional economic development. Government initiatives such as Digital India, BharatNet, Smart Cities Mission, Swadesh Darshan, PRASHAD, Dekho Apna Desh, and the proposed National Digital Tourism Mission are creating a robust digital ecosystem for tourism growth. Furthermore, the widespread adoption of UPI and other digital payment platforms has enabled seamless and secure travel experiences for domestic and international tourists. Digital tourism also aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting inclusive growth, innovation, sustainable communities, responsible consumption, and environmental sustainability. By leveraging digital technologies effectively, India can strengthen its position as a leading global tourism destination while ensuring sustainable, inclusive, and technology-driven development in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015).

1 Government Initiatives

The Government of India has introduced several initiatives, including Digital India, BharatNet, Smart Cities Mission, Swadesh Darshan, PRASHAD, Dekho Apna Desh, and the proposed National Digital Tourism Mission. These initiatives strengthen digital

connectivity, tourism infrastructure, destination promotion, and technological innovation, thereby accelerating tourism development and enhancing global competitiveness.

2 Digital India and Tourism

The Digital India programme has significantly improved internet penetration, digital literacy, and online service delivery throughout the country. Enhanced digital infrastructure supports online bookings, virtual tourism experiences, digital payments, and e-governance services. These developments improve accessibility, convenience, and efficiency while facilitating the modernization of India's tourism sector.

3 Smart Destination Development

Smart destination development involves the integration of artificial intelligence, big data analytics, IoT, and smart infrastructure into tourism management. These technologies improve visitor services, safety, resource utilization, and decision-making processes. Smart destinations create intelligent tourism ecosystems that enhance tourist satisfaction, operational efficiency, and destination competitiveness.

4 Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism

Digital tourism promotes sustainable and inclusive development by supporting responsible tourism practices and reducing resource wastage. Digital platforms provide market access to rural communities, local entrepreneurs, artisans, and small tourism enterprises. This ensures equitable distribution of tourism benefits, fosters regional development, and strengthens socio-economic inclusion.

5 Future Prospects of Digital Tourism

The future of digital tourism in India is highly promising with the growing adoption of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, blockchain, machine learning, and smart tourism applications. Continued investment in digital infrastructure, innovation, and policy support will enhance tourism competitiveness and contribute significantly to achieving the goals of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Findings And Discussion

The study reveals that digital transformation has emerged as a key driver of growth and innovation in India's tourism industry. The adoption of technologies such as artificial intelligence, online booking platforms, digital payment systems, social media marketing, virtual reality, and smart tourism applications has significantly improved tourist experiences, operational efficiency, and destination competitiveness. Government initiatives, including Digital India, BharatNet, Smart Cities Mission, and tourism-specific digital programs, have further accelerated the digitalization of tourism services.

Major Findings

1. Digital technologies have enhanced tourist convenience, accessibility, and satisfaction through personalized and technology-enabled services.
2. Online platforms and digital marketing tools have expanded the global visibility of Indian tourism destinations and strengthened destination branding.
3. Digital tourism has created new opportunities for entrepreneurship, employment generation, innovation, and regional economic development.
4. Smart tourism solutions support sustainable destination management and contribute to the achievement of Viksit Bharat 2047 objectives.

Analysis Of Opportunities and Challenges

a. Opportunities

• Improved tourist experiences through personalized and real-time services.
• Increased accessibility, convenience, and digital connectivity.
• Growth of tourism start-ups and technology-driven business models.
• Enhanced employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.
• Greater global promotion of Indian destinations.

b. Challenges

• Digital divide between urban and rural tourism destinations.
• Cybersecurity threats and data privacy concerns.
• Inadequate technological infrastructure in emerging destinations.
• Limited digital skills among tourism stakeholders.
• High implementation and maintenance costs of advanced technologies.

Implications for Tourism Development and Economic Growth

The findings indicate that digital transformation can significantly contribute to tourism development, economic growth, employment generation, and global competitiveness. Strengthening digital infrastructure, promoting digital literacy, encouraging innovation, and ensuring cybersecurity will be essential for maximizing the benefits of digital tourism. A balanced approach toward technology adoption and sustainability can help India establish a resilient, inclusive, and globally competitive tourism ecosystem aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Suggestions And Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen digital transformation in India's tourism industry and support the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047:

• **Strengthening Digital Infrastructure:** Expand high-speed internet connectivity and digital facilities, particularly in rural and emerging tourism destinations.

• **Promoting Digital Literacy:** Organize regular training and capacity-building programs for tourism stakeholders to enhance digital competencies and technology adoption.
• **Enhancing Cybersecurity Measures:** Implement robust cybersecurity frameworks, data protection policies, and awareness initiatives to ensure secure digital tourism services.
• **Supporting Tourism Innovation and Start-ups:** Encourage innovation through financial assistance, incubation centers, public-private partnerships, and policy support for tourism technology start-ups and entrepreneurs.
These measures will contribute to a sustainable, inclusive, and globally competitive digital tourism ecosystem in India.

Conclusion

1 Summary of Findings

The study examined the opportunities and challenges associated with the digital transformation of India's tourism industry in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047. The findings reveal that technologies such as artificial intelligence, online booking platforms, digital payment systems, social media marketing, virtual reality, and smart tourism applications have significantly enhanced tourist experiences and destination competitiveness. Digital tourism has created opportunities for entrepreneurship, employment generation, destination promotion, and economic growth. However, challenges including the digital divide, cybersecurity concerns, infrastructure gaps, digital skill deficiencies, and high implementation costs continue to affect the pace and effectiveness of digital adoption within the tourism sector.

2 Policy Implications

The findings suggest that policymakers should prioritize the development of a robust digital tourism ecosystem through strategic investments in digital infrastructure and connectivity. Special attention should be given to rural and emerging tourism destinations to ensure inclusive deveopment. Capacity-building initiatives and digital literacy programs are essential for enhancing technological readiness among tourism stakeholders. Furthermore, stronger cybersecurity frameworks and data protection measures are required to build trust and safeguard digital transactions. Government agencies, tourism enterprises, technology providers, and local communities should collaborate to promote innovation, sustainable tourism practices, and technology-driven tourism development aligned with national growth objectives.

3 Concluding Remarks

Digital transformation has emerged as a powerful catalyst for reshaping India's tourism industry and strengthening its global competitiveness. The effective integration of digital technologies can improve service quality, enhance destination management, and create sustainable tourism opportunities for diverse stakeholders. As India advances toward the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, digital tourism will play a critical role in driving innovation, economic growth, employment generation, and social inclusion. By addressing existing challenges and leveraging emerging technologies, India can establish a resilient, smart, and sustainable tourism ecosystem that contributes significantly to national development and positions the country as a leading global tourism destination.

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Original Article

The Role of Libraries and Information Centers in Promoting Tourism Development in India: Vision for Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the major engines of socio-economic growth in India which contributes significantly to socio-economic development of India by creating jobs, cultural exchange, fostering the exchange of heritage & well-balanced regional economy tourism is a necessary catalyst for growth, a major source of livelihoods, culture and the regional development of economies in every corner of that nation. Libraries/information-centers make their mark in this sector and have a huge contribution to the sector providing credible sources on travel and safe access to travel resources and knowledge. They contribute to the conservation of its cultural and historical heritage by documenting and archiving India's complex heritage through systematic recording and archiving. They take the information relating to the sites, traditions and heritage places and bring it up to date by sorting through it in a coherent manner that increases tourism experience quality. Digital libraries and online databases offer even more information about tourism outside of the physical territory's reach. Similar associations also support the academia, policy-makers and planners with data about sustainable tourism development. From a national development point of view, modern libraries are becoming knowledge hubs according to Viksit Bharat's vision for the year 2047 where they are also linked to national progress. They encourage cultural awareness and participation in tourism projects. Contemporary libraries are embracing information-enhancing digital solutions like the use of digital technologies to provide better information and to engage users. AI and similar technologies are enabling personalised information services and intelligent recommendations to be made for tourists. This is where Geographic Information Systems (GIS) come in useful in both mapping and planning touristic routes. Digitised archives protect ancient manuscripts, photos and historical documents useful for tourism research. Libraries will also support local storytelling and indigenous knowledge sharing for cultural tourists. Joint programmes between libraries, tourism and education institutions increase outreach initiatives. All in all, libraries and information centers are the new important enablers in promoting smart, inclusive and sustainable tourism development in India.

Keywords: *Libraries, Information Centers, Tourism Development, Viksit Bharat 2047, Digital Libraries, Cultural Heritage, Smart Tourism, India*

Introduction.

It ranks as one of the fastest-growing sectors in the tourism market in India, with the country's wealth of cultural diversity, ancient history, spiritual attractions and diverse natural environments as the foundation for a major growth. It is an important source of employment and income for the country. Tourism becomes successful to a large extent only if correct, timely and organized information exists. Here's where libraries and information centres are really crucial! They act as formal forms of knowledge that collect and maintain information from tourist cities, heritage monuments from places of significance, cultural traditions, and travel routes. They serve as a safeguard of India's identity and identity of its traditional civilization by preserving the historical records and culture. Libraries will also help tourists with some secure travel guides, maps or references. The library's rich datasets offer researchers the ability to research tourism trends and, for that matter, culture evolution.

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Library resources help policymakers decide which strategies and development strategies can best serve the tourism sector. Information centers can also support local communities to get aware of tourism opportunities for the community with the benefit of information. As technology has advanced, so too have libraries evolved into cyberspaces where information can be shared. Internet access to tourism information is available all at once and all over the web thanks to the digital library. It's brought easier, safer travel arrangements. As such, India envisages a knowledge-driven and digitally empowered society under the framework of Viksit Bharat 2047. Today's libraries have become intelligent information hubs that drive national development objectives. They help to promote sustainable tourism for responsible travel and environmental awareness. Contemporary libraries incorporate multimedia tools (photos, videos, virtual tours of heritage sites, etc.). Personalized information services for the user are introduced via Artificial Intelligence (AI). GIS is essential for the mapping of places to visit during tourist travels and the travel analysis. Such rare manuscripts, historical documents and other tourism related artifacts or cultural artifacts are preserved in digital archiving systems. Furthermore, libraries have encouraged the public to participate as they record local customs and indigenous wisdom. They work with tourism boards and educational institutions to reach more local people. Libraries run information literacy programs where travelers learn how to make informed decisions. Libraries bridge the gap between customers and information and therefore make tourism more enjoyable as a whole. And they are integral to developing lesser-known destinations and rural tourism. This is good for balanced regional development on the country level. Via innovation and digital transformation, libraries have become vital in the growth of the tourism ecosystem. The results indicate that they make a substantial contribution to sustainable, inclusive, and knowledge-based tourism development in India.

Objectives of the Study.

1. To examine the position of the libraries and information centers on tourism promotion
2. To understand their contribution to cultural and heritage preservation
3. To study digital transformation in library services as aid for tourism
4. To see how they are contributing towards tourism goals of Viksit Bharat 2047
5. To recommend measures to promote integration of library-tourism

❖ **Libraries as Knowledge Infrastructure for Tourism.**

. • Repositories of tourism information.

Libraries themselves remain great wealth of information about tourism by having a large library of books, journals, atlases, guides, brochures, government publications and statistical data. These resources assist people to be knowledgeable about different points of travel as vocationally, in terms of culture and history, and the background of tourist places. Many also build and maintain up-to-date databases or digital libraries that provide travel information, destination reviews and tourism statistics. Such structured information systems help tourists to plan their trips more effectively and help scholars to carry out studies on tourism trends in an in-depth way. By systematically arranging data, libraries will help users easily obtain accurate information.

• Cultural and Heritage Documentation.

For the development and preservation of tourism in India, cultural heritage is the mainstay, and libraries are a key player in that role. They preserve precious manuscripts, historic documents, aged maps, photographs, inscriptions and audio-visual materials reflecting the identity of the geographical areas. Oral history and local customs are recorded as well to prevent indigenous knowledge systems from vanishing. Preserved materials of this nature can bring the past importance of monuments, festivals, arts, traditions and forms into the spotlight, and through them, heritage tourism becomes a source of strength. Digital methods for preservation provide additional accessibility by helping global internet users interact with India's cultural resources through online archives and virtual exhibitions.

• Support for scholars and policymakers.

Libraries have an important role to play in academic research and policy in the domain of tourism and hospitality. They are sources for academic journals, research papers, conference papers, and government policy documents (favoring evidence-based policy). Libraries can be used by researchers to study tourism development statistics, tourism economic implications, and sustainability issues. Policymakers draw on these information centers to inform strategy in infrastructure construction, destination planning and cultural conservation. By providing knowledge and knowledge-based information, library services contribute to informed policy development, which in turn helps to develop sustainable and responsible tourism practices.

❖ **The role of Information Centers in Tourist Promotion**

By facilitating travelers to access and receive timely, accurate, and user-friendly information, information centers such as digital libraries, tourism bureaus, or knowledge kiosks have a crucial, direct effect on the development of tourism through tourists. They serve as the first point of contact for tourists, informing them of destinations, arranging tourist plans, and helping them discover uncharted regions with ease. Information centers significantly enhance the tourism experience by integrating traditional information aid with new technological knowledge tools; they make a significant contribution to tourism promotion.

- **Tourist Guidance Services**

Information centers provide tourists with the information needed to organize tour guidance optimally. To guide tourists on their journey, they introduce the best and most popular travel routes, common destinations to travel through, as well as estimated travel times. They also provide current information on accommodations, including

hotels, guest houses, home stays, and budget lodging based on tourists' tastes and budgets. Local-agency-oriented information, such as available buses, proximity to train stations, taxi services, and metro requirements, is also readily available.

In addition to logistical support, the centers promote tourist safety by disseminating relevant advice about health measures, emergency contacts, local regulations, and area-specific advisories. This detailed advice ensures a safer and smoother travel experience, whether you are a local or global traveler.

- **Digital Access to Tourism Data**

On the new front, digital platforms have evolved with technological advancements and have become modern information centers that provide real-time access to tourism-related information. Tourists can access online destinations, check service availability, and use virtual travel guides to get information anywhere in the world through official websites, mobile applications that connect directly to their devices, or online portals. Interactive maps, virtual tours, and multimedia content like images and videos are provided by digital systems to enhance destination understanding ahead of real travel. This digital transition has facilitated more accessibility, efficiency, and user-friendliness of tourism information. It's made easy and convenient for tech-savvy travelers to use, eliminating reliance on physical visits to information counters for time-saving and enhanced user convenience.

❖ **Multilingual Information Services**

India's high level of linguistic diversity means that multilingual communication is critical in tourist services. Information centers bridge this gap by supplying materials and support in many languages to be inclusive and make all guests feel understood. Such information is generally published in commonly spoken languages (e.g., Hindi, English) and regional languages in some cases. This ensures the availability of information for both domestic and foreign visitors without linguistic barriers. Furthermore, with the help of multilingual brochures, signage, audio aids, audio guides, and digital translation, communication with potential users is improved. Information centers that promote linguistic integration make tourism services more inviting, efficient, and culturally competent, promoting an inclusive approach to services.

❖ **Digital Transformation of Libraries and Tourism Development.**

The quick progress of digital technologies has made it possible for libraries to become intelligent yet interactive media centers. This has transformed them from static data storage repositories into lively platforms who actively contribute to tourism promotion. By applying digital tools and smart systems, libraries have contributed to better accessibility to tourism-related information, better user interaction, driving new tourism experiences. This metamorphosis is also in line with the wider vision to form a knowledge-driven, digital society.

• Digital Libraries and E-Resources.

Digital libraries bring travel materials anytime, anywhere, with digital tools providing the 24/7 support for such resources regardless of location. Visitors may browse e-resources from digital books, scientific articles, travel guides, heritage material sources, photographs, or multimedia material pertaining to tourist destinations. One of the key benefits of digital libraries is the access to virtual tours of historical monuments, museums and cultural sites. Moreover, GIS-based maps are also used by travellers to gain a better appreciation of the route, location and spatial relationship amongst destinations due to the assistance of Geographic Information System (GIS). These digital systems don't just help a tourist arrange for how to travel (for he or she will take his or her trip), they also aid scholars and planners in studying travel trends and how a region is developing.

• AI in Tourism Data.

AI has brought new capabilities to tourism-based information services in terms of the personalized, efficient and engaging format. AI-driven solutions are able to analyze user preferences and browsing behavior to suggest tailored travel recommendations linked to preferences, budget, and past travel experience. In the context of libraries and tourism portals, chatbot-help tools are employed to provide instantaneous aid for questions about travel, accommodation, transport, and local events. AI-powered predictive analytics technology also helps to predict future tourist trends, during peak travelling seasons and for the patterns in tourism, helping officials plan and manage available resources effectively. Together, these technologies provide enhanced accessibility and usability of travel information.

• Virtual Heritage Tourism.

Virtual heritage tourism is one of the most innovative solutions to be developed by digital libraries as well as information centers. The implementation of technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) enables users to experience the sites and cultural landmarks in VR-enabled digital environments. This offers physical travel-impaired people a place to visit a site, so monuments, museums, heritage institutions can be encountered in a realistic and participatory way. By promoting cultural tourism, libraries also play the secondary role of preserving digital archives, 3D models and multimedia documentation of cultural heritage sites across the world. These virtual experiences not only promote the rich heritage of a nation but they also aid education, research work on heritage issues and tourism promotion worldwide. Because virtual heritage tourism offers visitors remote access to cultural treasures, in a spirit that is both very comprehensive and inclusive the effect of tourism goes up.

❖ **Sustainable Tourism Research and Development of Libraries.**

The concept, together with the vision of balanced economic growth, environmental conservation, and cultural conservation in the framework of the Viksit Bharat 2047 or the global vision for sustainable tourism development, "sustainable tourism", is progressively being recognized as the key aim for present development efforts. Libraries

hold a very important contribution role in this regard, acting as a learning site, and raising awareness on responsible tourism practice. Involving them in the information resources and in outreach activities assists library in developing attitudes and behaviors which affect long-term sustainability of the tourism sector. Libraries and the Sustainable Tourism

Libraries promote sustainable tourism through:

• Promoting eco-tourism.

Additionally, through their promotion of eco-tourism and environmentally sensitive travel behavior, libraries promote and educate individuals about sustainable tourism. They provide access to books, journals, case studies and digital content that highlight the importance of protecting natural resources, reducing pollution and protecting biodiversity in tourist destinations. Libraries share this information with travelers and the local communities that realize the environmental impacts of unplanned, or too much tourism.

• To teach communities to keep their heritage

Libraries are also an important resource for educating the communities on heritage conservation. They also protect and share knowledge about historical buildings, cultural traditions, archaeological sites and inspire people to appreciate their own cultural works, and preserve them. Libraries also promote public action to save heritage from loss and destruction through programs like awareness, exhibition and workshop programs.

• Supporting research

Environmental effects of tourism Libraries support studies of the environmental impacts of tourism both academically and practically. Library institutions play a necessary role in study on waste management in tourist destinations, carrying capacity of destinations, carbon footprint of travel, the ecological impacts of tourism and so on and students or researchers rely on libraries resources to get what they need. In summary, the research findings will be valuable to generate policies and strategies for sustaining the environmentally sustainable development of the sector.

• Encouraging responsible travel habits.

Moreover, libraries encourage responsible travel behaviors by presenting instructions and information materials to promote responsible travel behaviors. As well as respecting their cultures and protecting the environment, but as much as they can, they also contribute to the economy at the places where people work, and they take care of local customs, are not harmful or degrading the environment and the local economy should you like. Libraries use information literacy efforts so that people are not doing the same kind of harm to their destinations that bad decisions can have in these locations. Community Participation:

❖ **Community Participation and Local Tourism Development.**

Public libraries that act as active local tourism sites are directly involved in transmitting knowledge about community members and have an essential part to play in sharing information, not simply the transfer of information. The latter act as part of a continuum of interlinked services, and through them different communities come together to both learn and share, and to act as cultural and educational community spaces. Librarians link local heritage and traditions and skills with tourism and regional economic and social development in their community focused work. Libraries are focal points for which there are significant growth and development opportunities in local tourism through.

• Cultural exhibition organization

Cultural exhibitions are one of the largest achievements of libraries that helps showcase and promote the history, art, crafts, and culture of particular cultures. The exhibitions demonstrate to visitors and residents, that a region's cultural identity is also exceptional. To help raise awareness of the more obscure tourist attractions, while at the same time to display the photography of local heritage sites through the presentation of artifacts and works. A significant portion of these processes are lecturing or workshops, telling stories or having a discussion that addresses the responsibility of securing cultural resources to make a better life. Such programs are designed to promote national pride and responsibility for their heritage.

• Support to the artisans and traditions of those places.

Libraries are also promoters of local artisans and craftspeople, of traditional materials and of skills by sharing the culture and skills they showcase. This could mean anything from conducting craft fairs, skill workshops, business events that create connections between artisans, potential buyers and tourists. So libraries indirectly protect native artistic culture and bring income from which the local communities benefit.

• Tourism sector and employment information.

Many public libraries provide valuable job-specific information for the tourism profession. They help by giving workers job-help material, job ads, training resources, or information about skill development projects available in hospitality, travel and cultural services. This can be a great way to help local youth discover future work in this hot tourism sector. In doing so, libraries not only promote rural and regional tourism economies via community-involvement development and cultural heritage preservation but also by establishing new socio-economic horizons. With regards, we suggest that they act as community engagement nodes to help develop more equal, sustainable, and beneficial tourism for local residents.

❖ **Problems at Libraries' Information Centers.**

Although libraries and information centers play an essential role as a critical tool, providing assistance towards tourism development, they have several operational, technological and structural challenges to their full effect. They

are thus not a full potential with regard to providing advanced information facilities, and operating as modernization of the knowledge centers of the tourism sector. Some difficulties do exist, however:

• Lack of fund and infrastructure.

One of those is funding and infrastructure. With a huge proportion of libraries – including many located in rural and semi-urban areas – there are insufficient funds available for the continued supply of new technologies, services and the upkeep of their collections. This scarcity of resources often limits the spread of digital platforms and infrastructure of specialized tourism information systems.

• No dedicated LIS for digital tourism systems.

The issue is aggravated by a lack of trained and equipped LIS practitioners, particularly in the LIS field, to operate digital tourism systems. However, the unprecedented digitization of libraries and applications enabled by artificial intelligence technologies and data-driven solutions that depend more and more on AI to drive data-driven solutions requires specialist expertise in this field. However, most are under resourced and not used to advanced technologies like digital archiving, digital networks, GIS tools and tourist information systems as well as GIS solutions.

• Uncoordinated digitization of historical documents.

Unsupervised digitization of historical documents. Now this has led to very bad digitization of heritage records. Libraries save an invaluable repository of historical texts, manuscripts, and cultural artefacts, but most resources are maintained in the physical world. Limited digitization efforts restrict accessibility and increase the risk of loss or damage to important heritage data. It also limits reach over the world of India's burgeoning cultural and tourist goods.

• Rural libraries with technology deficits.

An issue made worse by the technological divide in rural libraries. Not many of these have high-speed Internet and modern hardware and digital infrastructures and this may hinder their ability to deliver a contemporary form of tourism information services. This leaves rural users less able to access the information their urban counterparts have been provided for as long as they have lived in cities.

• Little collaboration between libraries and tourism departments.

Also lack of collaboration in the tourism departments, government offices and libraries reduces a lot in information exchange. Good partnerships are necessary for the establishment of integrated systems on tourism information but coordination is in general very low and lax. Lack of synergy can have effects to data sharing, planning efficiency, and promotional activities.

❖ **Viksit Bharat 2047 VISION: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN TOURISM**.

This will enable knowledge-driven, digitally literate and world class society in India as per vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. In this setting, the transformation of libraries should be profound and libraries should become advanced knowledge institutions that actively engage with tourism, culture and sustainable development. Their future roles will go far beyond traditional information services, and will become strategic partners in national development.

• Smart Tourism Knowledge Centers.

This may mean that libraries are more intelligent, more technology-driven on the ground, and become a hub for knowledge driven tourism research in the future. These are the facilities that in the process will be fully digitized in the light of new developments in technology like Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine-learning and big data analytics. They'll offer real-time tourism information, personalized travel recommendations, and intelligent search functions to facilitate a seamless journey to destinations. Smart libraries will be single-window solutions for travel information by linking to the national and regional tourism databases for better access, availability and satisfaction and will also work to make access to the literature and experiences of visitor as a single front-facing solution.

• Heritage Digitization Hubs.

Libraries will also form the backbone of the digitization of India's heritage by systematically translating India's wide cultural and historic resources into digital platforms. Rare manuscripts, archival works, ancient writings, photographs, inscriptions, and audio-visual material will be digitized and stored in secure holdings. Technology like 3D scanning, virtual archiving and cloud storage will enable long-term preservation and worldwide access. This will not only protect fragile heritage materials but also the cultural benefits of Indian on international scale thus supporting the heritage tourism.

• Integrated T&T networks.

Future libraries will be key nodes in integrated tourism information networks which connect the various stakeholders with the tourism ecosystem. The networks will connect libraries along with tourism departments, travel agencies, cultural organizations, museums, universities and research institutions. This will allow for seamless sharing of data, research outputs and insights in the tourism industry. It will also enhance the coordination of tourism planning, destination management and promotional campaigns. Libraries serve as an information bridge, and so knowledge will be fast flowing and fresh in all those sectors which contribute to tourism development. Universities

• Innovation and Research Centers.

Moreover, libraries will evolve into innovation and research institutions that actually contribute towards new ideas and solutions in tourism and related fields. They will enable research in sustainable tourism development, smart city planning, cultural economics, and rural tourism enhancement. Libraries become innovation platforms where students, researchers and policymakers from different streams of innovation will have access to new datasets, analytical tools and resources. Through advanced databases, tools for data analysis as well as information, in addition to cutting-edge

tools, advanced data mining and interdisciplinary resources, libraries will contribute to the growth of innovative solutions in development of students, researchers, and policy makers. Libraries will implement collaborative research efforts to inform the development of environmentally sensitive, economically sustainable tourism models that contribute to national development priorities.

❖ **Recommendation**.

If the effectiveness of libraries and information centers in promoting the development of tourism is to be enhanced, a variety of strategic measures could be adopted. These recommendations concern the development of new technologies, infrastructure and systems for building up capacity of personnel which means making a modern and efficient tourism information ecosystem.

• Enhancing digital infrastructure in libraries.

Modern libraries require digital infrastructure such as high-speed internet, modern computers, cloud storage solutions, software applications, etc. This also allows them to take better care of tourism data, provide smooth digital services to the users, and thus access both urban and rural areas more readily. Robust infrastructure would be needed to support e-resources, virtual tours and online tourism platforms.

• Education of librarians in tourism information handling.

Specialization in tourism information systems, digital archiving, GIS applications and data analytics should be offered to librarians. Skill development programs will enable them to grapple with such latest technologies as AI-based search tools and tourism databases and new ways of doing things as well as access. Well trained professionals can greatly enhance the quality and precision of tourism information services.

• Developing national tourism databases for national tourism information.

Centralized national database for tourism information would also integrate information obtained from libraries and tourism departments, cultural institutions and research organizations. It will result in the use of easily accessible data on destinations, heritage landmarks, travel paths and tourist numbers on all bases.

• Better links between tourism and the library system.

Greater cooperation between libraries, tourism boards and governments for example will be required to effectively share knowledge. Joint measures can be employed in tourism promotion, research activities, and the policy process. Joint programmers, workshops and online projects will increase cooperation and resource utilization.

• Growing AI-based tourism service.

AI should be adopted more and more (e.g., in library systems) to enhance user experience and enhance service effectiveness. In AI tools, tailored travel recommendations can be made, query responses can be automated with chatbots, and tourism trends can be analyzed for better planning. This will make tourism information services more interactive and user-friendly.

• Facilitate public-private cooperation in project development for digital heritage.

Public-private partnerships should support digitizing and conserving of cultural and heritage materials in the context of large-scale digitization and preservation of the large-scale nature of such property. Technology expertise and funds could come from private institutions, but also from public institutions for authenticity and accessibility. To develop it, and these collaborations will contribute to the accelerated processes of digital archives, virtual museums and the websites of heritage tourism platforms.

Conclusion.

They provide tourists, researchers, and policymakers real resources on places, culture and heritage. They also work to preserve India's wealth of historical and cultural documents for posterity. Libraries integrated with digital technologies have developed into modern knowledge hubs and tourism service providers. This is the type of sustainable travel that they contribute to, by raising awareness and knowledge on responsible travel practices. For Viksit Bharat 2047, libraries are anticipated to be intelligent, technology-driven hubs for the fulfilment of national development ambitions. More sophisticated tools such as AI and digital archives also enhance the accessibility of information and the user experience. Libraries also enhance partnership between tourism providers, universities, and communities. They maintain the role of heritage protection and knowledge transmission in the promotion of culture. But they are also critical catalysts of a sustainable and knowledge-based tourism ecosystem in India.

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Original Article

Exploring the Interlinkages Between Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health Behaviors, School Dropouts, and Alignment with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in Delhi-NCR

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Abstract

Adolescents in India represent a demographic critical to the nation's socio-economic trajectory, yet they face intersecting vulnerabilities that impede their developmental potential. Based on recent empirical and literature-based evidence, this study investigates the social, educational, and health needs of school-going and out-of-school adolescents across rural and urban settings. Using a mixed-methods synthesis of qualitative aspirations and quantitative survey data, the findings reveal critical disparities. School-going and urban youth exhibit higher self-confidence and professional aspirations (e.g., teaching, law) compared to out-of-school and rural peers who target low-level vocational roles. Major systemic anxieties center on education costs and livelihood security. Furthermore, profound knowledge gaps persist in Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH); a substantial portion of male and female youth demonstrate misconceptions regarding conception windows, optimal childbearing age, and Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) transmission risks. Traditional socio-cultural dogmas endure, with 172 respondents indicating that discussing sexuality damages parent-child dynamics, and a vast majority (260 respondents) withholding judgment on deeply gendered sexual double standards. This paper argues for heavily segmented youth interventions. Critically, we demonstrate how leveraging the structural, vocational, and life-skills mandates of India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020) provides a vital, institutionalized mechanism to bridge these gaps, build rural self-confidence, and embed holistic health education within modern economic security frameworks.

Keywords: *Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH), School Dropouts, NCR Delhi, NFHS-5, Menstrual Hygiene, Teenage Pregnancy.*

Introduction

Adolescence remains the age of bewilderment in choosing the right and wrong. It is a stage of life with high spirit and vibrant colour. A phase of life which flows as a strong wind which needs to be motivated into right direction for getting optimum results for both individual as well as betterment for the society. India possesses the world's largest adolescent population—approximately 253 million individuals aged 10–19 (&—rendering targeted investments in their health and education critical for capitalizing on the demographic dividend. Concurrently, the National Capital Region (NCR) reflects profound socioeconomic stratification; its stark mix of urban affluence and peri-urban or rural vulnerabilities leaves low-income migrant communities exposed to disproportionate risks. Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) encompass puberty education, menstrual hygiene management (MHM), contraception knowledge, prevention of STIs/HIV, and access to youth-friendly services. Poor ARSH outcomes link directly to school dropouts, especially for girls, perpetuating cycles of poverty, early marriage, and limited economic opportunities. Government initiatives like the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK, 2014) and the earlier ARSH Strategy (2005) aim to address these through peer education, AFHCs, and Adolescent Health Days. However, implementation gaps persist in NCR. This article synthesizes available evidence to study the association between ARSH behaviors and school dropouts in the region. Adolescence (10-19 Years) is a vital stage of growth and development. It is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood and is marked by rapid physical, physiological and psychological changes.

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This period results in sexual, psychological and behavioral maturation. Adolescents are a diverse group and are in varying situations of risk, status and environments. For example, they could be married or unmarried, in school or out of school, living in urban or rural areas or have a different sexual orientation. Some young people are especially vulnerable. For example, street children, those engaged in sex work, and/or affected by disaster. Each of these groups has varying concerns and need to be appreciated as distinct segments of the population. During adolescence, hormonal changes lead to onset of puberty, sudden and rapid physical growth and development of secondary sexual characteristics.

Reproductive rights of adolescents

The idea of reproductive rights is inherent to the definition of reproductive health, and these rights are integral to globally recognized human rights. In 1994, in Cairo, the International Conference on Population and Development's (ICPD) Programme of Action urged governments and health systems to establish, expand or adjust health programmes to meet adolescents' reproductive and sexual health (ARSH) needs, to respect their rights to privacy and confidentiality, and to ensure that the attitudes of healthcare providers do not restrict adolescents' access to information and services. Within the framework of human rights established and accepted by the global community, certain rights are particularly relevant to adolescents and the opportunities and risks they face. These include gender equality and the rights to education and health, including ARSH information and services appropriate to their age, capacity and circumstance. Actions to ensure implementation of these rights can have tremendous practical benefits: empowering individuals, ensuring well-being, stemming the HIV/AIDS pandemic, alleviating poverty and improving socioeconomic prospects.

The changing lives of adolescents in India

Despite the fact that substantial numbers are getting married early, there is a shift towards globalization, urbanization and better opportunities for education for young people. The declining age at puberty and increasing age at marriage have created a growing window of opportunity for young people to interact without adult supervision. Findings from several studies indicate that up to 10% young women and 15-30% young men reported premarital sex. A larger proportion is engaging in premarital romantic relationships. However, social norms have not kept pace with changing circumstances. Despite evidence that relevant and correct information delays sexual initiation, social norms discourage discussion on issues related to sexual and reproductive health. Lack of communication with parents and trusted adults keeps young people ill-informed and unlikely to receive parental support in relation to sexual matters. Information on issues related to growing up remains inadequate and irrelevant to young people's needs. Adolescent health services remain inaccessible, unaffordable, judgmental and of indifferent quality.

Government policies and initiatives of NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) addresses adolescent health and school dropouts through an interconnected framework that views a child's health and socio-emotional well-being as fundamental prerequisites for regular school attendance and learning retention.

1. **NEP 2020 Policies & Initiatives for Adolescent Health -** NEP 2020 shifts the educational paradigm from purely academic testing to a holistic development model that elevates physical, psychological, and reproductive wellness.

- Mandatory Annual Health Check-ups: Schools are required to conduct mandatory yearly health screenings and track student physical development through digital "Health Cards". This is actively achieved via the Ministry of Health's Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK), which deploys mobile medical teams to screen adolescents aged 6–18 for nutritional deficiencies, anemia, and general illnesses.
- School Health and Wellness Programme (SHWP): Launched under the National Health Mission, this initiative integrates health, nutrition, and life skills directly into the secondary school curriculum. Two teachers in every school are trained as Health and Wellness Ambassadors to lead stigma-free discussions on growth, adolescence, puberty, and emotional resilience.
- Focus on Mental Health and Counseling: Recognizing the high anxiety levels faced by adolescents regarding higher education and personal safety, NEP 2020 mandates the deployment of school counselors and social workers to offer mental health care, psychological support, and career guidance.
- Nutritional Support: The policy extends nutritional support programs beyond primary levels, advocating for health and dietary monitoring at the secondary education level to combat structural adolescent malnutrition.

2. NEP 2020 Initiatives for Curtailing School Dropouts - The policy sets a national target to achieve a 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) from pre-school to secondary school by 2030. It outlines multi-pronged structural strategies to prevent students from dropping out.

A. Infrastructure & Safe Learning Environments

- Effective and Deficient-Free Infrastructure: Mandating safe drinking water, functional and separate toilets for girls, and clean, engaging classrooms to prevent structural barriers to attendance.
- Safe Conveyance and Hostels: Providing safe transport facilities, bicycle distribution programs, and dedicated hostels (especially for female and marginalized students in peri-urban or rural zones) to cut down travel-related dropouts.

B. Tracking and Alternative Pathways to Re-entry

- Continuous Student Tracking: Systemic monitoring mechanisms are established to track students' continuous learning levels and identify at-risk youth before they leave the formal system.
- Expanding Open and Distance Learning (ODL): The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and State Open Schools have been expanded. NIOS offers flexible vocational programs, adult literacy options, and open certification equivalents for Grades 3,

5, 8, 10, and 12, allowing past dropouts multiple entry and exit pathways to resume education while managing financial commitments.

C. Equitable Funding for Vulnerable Demographics

- Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF): A special financial pool allocated specifically to provide equitable, quality education for female and transgender students, neutralizing the financial vulnerabilities that force young women into early home care or marriage.
- Special Education Zones (SEZs): Setting up targeted educational zones in regions with high concentrations of Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) to channel maximum funding, resources, and the highest-performing teachers to areas experiencing high dropouts.
- No Hard Stream Separation: Erasing traditional rigid divides between academic streams, extra-curricular actions, and vocational education. Incorporating mandatory vocational exposure from Grade 6 (with a 10-day bagless internship period) equips at-risk students with economic skills early on, directly countering household income anxieties.

Adolescence is a formative developmental phase characterized by rapid physiological, psychological, and social transitions. In India, home to one of the largest adolescent populations globally, the health and well-being of this demographic directly dictate the country's future social and economic capital. Despite substantial policy declarations aimed at youth empowerment, recent evidence reveals that Indian adolescents continue to face deep-seated vulnerabilities. These include inadequate nutrition, lack of formal education access, child labour, physical and sexual abuse, trafficking, substance misuse, and severely restricted institutional and domestic autonomy. A primary determinant of an adolescent's developmental trajectory is their engagement with the formal education system. Education not only dictates future economic mobility but fundamentally alters internal psychological frameworks, such as self-confidence and personal agency. However, the lived experiences of Indian youth are deeply fractured along geographic (urban vs. rural) and institutional (in-school vs. out-of-school) fault lines. Compounding these structural inequities is the pervasive silence surrounding Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH). Although the state has initiated various youth-centric policies, implementation gaps remain vast. Adolescents continue to navigate puberty, STI risks, and pregnancy metrics with highly distorted or altogether absent information. To systematically address these systemic cracks, India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020) offers a transformative paradigm. NEP 2020 shifts away from rote academic content toward a holistic, flexible, and value-based framework that explicitly targets life skills, vocational integration, and student well-being. This paper explores the multidimensional vulnerabilities of Indian adolescents by synthesizing their educational aspirations, immediate economic anxieties, sources of biological information, and quantitative gaps in SRH literacy. Ultimately, it evaluates how strategic alignment with the institutional mechanisms of NEP 2020 can successfully operationalize these findings.

Methodology:

This study utilizes a mixed-methods research framework designed to capture both the qualitative perspectives and quantitative trends defining adolescent vulnerability in India.

Data Sources and Contextual Synthesis: The data are drawn from a comprehensive literature review of recent adolescent welfare data alongside localized primary field surveys. The target population encompasses a heterogeneous cohort of male and female adolescents stratified by key socio-demographic variables:

1. Educational Status: In-school versus out-of-school youth.
2. Geographical Residence: Urban versus rural locales.Socio-demographic
3. Factors: Gender, age, and parental socio-economic strata.
4. Quantitative Metrics and Sample Variables: Quantitative assessment tools were deployed to gauge knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding reproductive health behaviors.
5. Specific variable frequencies tracked across the sample include: Service utilisation metrics across Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Public Health Centres (PHCs).
6. Knowledge scores on conception mechanics, ideal maternal age, and STI/HIV transmission vectors. Likert-scale responses evaluating social ideologies, gender norms, domestic violence perceptions, and communication barriers with parental figures.
7. Analytical Focus on Policy Integration: Qualitative and quantitative data regarding student anxieties, structural drop-out rates, gender double standards, and preferred informational hubs were systematically mapped against the core pillars of NEP 2020.

This alignment identifies specific operational intersections where current school and community frameworks can be restructured to mitigate adolescent vulnerabilities.

Results

Educational Stratification, Aspirations, and Psychological Agency The institutional environment of the adolescent plays a definitive role in shaping their psychological resilience and future outlook. Clear dichotomies emerged between youth who are integrated into the formal school system and those who have dropped out or were never enrolled: **In-School and Urban Adolescents.** This cohort exhibited significantly elevated levels of self-confidence and expressed a firm belief in an internal locus of control. They consistently reported that personal discipline and hard work would allow them to overcome structural life obstacles. Professionally, their ambitions gravitated toward high-tier white-collar vocations, such as teaching, law, and journalism.

Out-of-School and Rural Adolescents: Conversely, out-of-school youth across both urban and rural environments presented lower self-confidence regarding their capacity to manage life challenges, including those related to health and systemic vulnerabilities. Their professional aspirations were highly constrained, primarily restricted to local trading and low-level vocational labor.

[In-School / Urban Youth]-→ High Self-Confidence-→ Professional Careers (Teacher, Lawyer)

[Out-of-School / Rural] -→ Lower Confidence -→ Vocational / Low-Level Trading

Spontaneous disclosures regarding immediate life anxieties also tracked closely with educational status. In-school adolescents focused on achieving educational benchmarks and expressed anxiety regarding the financial capacity of their parents or guardians to sustain school-related costs (e.g., uniforms, text books). Out-of-school adolescents focused on remedial economic survival, displaying anxieties over income generation or voicing profound regret over their premature departure from formal education.

Perceptions of Pregnancy, HIV Risk, and Informational Vectors. When prompted to evaluate critical health barriers, early/premarital pregnancy and HIV infections were universally acknowledged as severe threats to personal development. However, a major variance in perceived vulnerability was observed: **Pregnancy (Perceived as Imminent Threat) vs. HIV Infection (Perceived as Distant Threat)**

- ***Females link pregnancy to immediate school drop-out.***
- ***Youth discount personal HIV risk; females view risk only through unfaithful partners.***

Females identified early pregnancy as an immediate structural dead-end that forces school dropout and terminates higher education options. HIV was recognized as a fatal, debilitating condition, yet it was viewed as a distant threat. Respondents systematically ranked pregnancy as a more pressing individual problem than HIV because they did not perceive themselves to be personally at risk for infection. The minority who did acknowledge a vulnerability to HIV—overwhelmingly female—attributed this risk exclusively to the potential infidelity of future or current male partners. Regarding biological changes, informational pathways are heavily dependent on institutional access. In-school youth overwhelmingly reported receiving formal or informal guidance regarding puberty prior to its onset, utilizing teachers, school curriculums, and immediate family members as reliable vectors. In stark contrast, rural, out-of-school youth frequently experienced the biological onset of puberty completely unequipped with prior information, leading to heightened psychological distress. Importantly, adolescents expressed a distinct desire for specialized, granular information on pregnancy and STIs/HIV rather than superficial overviews. They identified parents (due to inherent emotional trust) alongside teachers and healthcare workers (due to perceived professional expertise) as their preferred educators.

Quantitative Assessment of Sexual and Reproductive Health Literacy. The quantitative phase of the study exposed stark deficits in basic biological awareness and reproductive mechanics across both genders.

Conception and Maternal Age Metrics Conception Windows: Absolute ignorance was observed among male respondents; zero (0) males possessed accurate knowledge regarding the physiological timing of a female's fertile window. Conversely, the vast majority of female respondents (88) operated under the incorrect assumption that conception probability remains completely uniform at any point throughout the menstrual cycle.

Optimal Gestational Age: Maternal health concepts were deeply distorted. A majority of male respondents (63) asserted that the medically ideal age for a healthy pregnancy is 35 years or older. Among females, a majority (78) correctly identified the 20–24 age bracket, a view shared by 56 male respondents. However, absolute ambiguity persisted for a large segment of the sample: 72 females and 31 males possessed no knowledge whatsoever regarding safe childbearing ages.

Healthcare Service Access and Utilisation despite the existence of state-sponsored public health infrastructure, institutional utilization remains remarkably low: Service Provider Adolescent Preference Frequency Actual Utilization Frequency Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) 4727 (Combined Total) Public Health Centres (PHCs)18. This acute gap between knowing where a service is and actually utilizing it is driven by severe social barriers. Respondents indicated feeling deeply uncomfortable accessing reproductive facilities due to prevailing social norms. A widespread belief exists that SRH clinics are either entirely unnecessary for young people or are reserved exclusively for married couples.

Socio-Cultural Ideologies and Communication Barriers The sample demonstrated an alarming level of tolerance for unequal gender dynamics. A total of 252 respondents agreed with the premise that men are entitled to extra-marital, penetrative sexual intercourse. Furthermore, 260 respondents—representing one of the highest consolidated frequencies in the study—offered "absolute no opinion" when presented with the highly patriarchal assertion that men should be permitted multiple sexual partners while women must be restricted to a single partner. This neutrality indicates an implicit acceptance of institutionalized double standards by both male and female cohorts. The data further revealed an intergenerational communication breakdown. Despite viewing parents as trusted figures in times of health crises, 172 respondents explicitly stated that openly discussing sexuality with their parents would cause direct, long-term harm to the parent-child relationship.

Discussion:

Alignment with NEP 2020

The profound disparities between in-school and out-of-school youth, combined with systemic reproductive health deficits and deep socio-cultural stigmas, call for an institutional overhaul. Fortunately, the core structural frameworks of India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020) align precisely with these needs, providing a policy blueprint to resolve these crises.

Adolescent Vulnerability Profile & NEP 2020 Structural Interventions

Low self-confidence & drop-out regret-----→ Holistic 5+3+3+4 & Open School Systems (NIOS)

Severe gaps in basic biological facts-----→ Life Skills & Age-Appropriate Health Curriculums

Anxiety over school & resource costs-----→ Vocational Integration & Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) focus

Intergenerational silence & stigma-----→Parent-Teacher Community Engagement Hubs

Bridging the Gap for Out-of-School and Rural Youth. The study clearly demonstrates that out-of-school youth suffer from low self-confidence and regret their lack of education, while expressing anxiety over livelihood creation. Rural youth also face

restricted aspirations. NEP 2020 directly tackles this through its mandate for 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in preschool through secondary school.

Alternative and Open Schooling: For the out-of-school youth who expressed a desire to return to education but face financial hurdles, NEP 2020 expands the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and State Open Schools. This flexible learning model allows vulnerable youth to continue their formal education while navigating economic survival.

Vocational Integration: Out-of-school adolescents often limit their ambitions to low-level trading due to systemic constraints. NEP 2020 disrupts this by removing hard boundaries between academic and vocational streams. By introducing vocational exposure starting at Grade 6, complete with a 10-day bag-less internship period, the policy lends dignity and formal training to vocational choices. This boosts the self-confidence of rural youth and provides structured economic mobility.

Overcoming SRH Informational Deficits through Holistic Well-being. The quantitative gaps in basic biological literacy highlighted by this study—such as the total lack of knowledge among males regarding conception windows and safe maternal age—point to a catastrophic failure of past advisory frameworks. **Curricular Overhaul:** NEP 2020 shifts away from dense, examination-oriented curricula toward holistic development. It explicitly highlights health, nutrition, physical education, and essential life skills as critical pillars. Reimagining adolescent health through this framework allows schools to introduce comprehensive, age-appropriate scientific knowledge on biology, puberty, and STIs directly into core lessons. This normalizes reproductive health and treats it as a standard component of wellness. **Inclusion of Male Youth:** Incorporating these topics into basic life-skills education ensures that male adolescents receive essential biological information. This direct approach helps eradicate harmful health misconceptions and challenges patriarchal double standards from an early age.

Dismantling Stigma and Building Trust Networks. A critical finding of this study is the barrier to communication: 172 youth believe talking about sexuality with parents will destroy their relationships, yet they name parents and teachers as their most trusted sources of information. Parent-Community Integration: NEP 2020 moves beyond simple classroom adjustments to position schools as community hubs. The policy encourages continuous cooperation between teachers, school counselors, and parents. By building active parent-teacher communities, schools can run guided awareness programs that help bridge the intergenerational gap. This empowers parents to engage in healthy, informed dialogues with their children, breaking the silence that leaves youth vulnerable. Focus on SEDGs and Safe Spaces: The policy pays special attention to Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), emphasizing safety and targeted resource distribution. Providing free uniforms, text books, and targeted financial support directly eases the domestic anxieties expressed by the in-school youth in this study. In turn, it reduces the drop-out risks caused by household poverty.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations.

Adolescents in India cannot be treated as a single, uniform demographic. They represent a highly diverse population whose vulnerabilities are shaped by gender, geography, and school enrollment status. To bridge the implementation gaps identified in this study while actively leveraging the mandates of NEP 2020, the following actions are recommended:

Leverage NEP 2020's Flexibilities for Out-of-School Youth: Use the open-schooling frameworks and vocational streams introduced by NEP 2020 to design flexible education pathways for rural, out-of-school youth. These programs should weave confidence-building, financial literacy, and career training into accessible formats.

Implement Standardised Life-Skills and Health Curricula: Capitalize on the holistic curriculum model of NEP 2020 to embed age-appropriate health education into secondary schools. This programming should offer clear, direct information on puberty, pregnancy mechanics, and STI transmission, while actively involving young men to deconstruct deeply rooted double standards.

Develop Schools as Supportive Counsel Hubs: Establish the parent-teacher and community engagement structures recommended by NEP 2020 to offer supportive, stigma-free counseling spaces. These forums should be used to train educators and guide parents, making it easier for families to have open, constructive conversations about adolescent health.

Target Resource Support to At-Risk Youth: Ensure that the resource-allocation mechanisms reserved for SEDGs under NEP 2020 are prioritized for families facing high economic stress. Providing essential items like books, uniforms, and learning materials directly relieves the financial anxieties that frequently force adolescents out of school.

Key areas for future research and programme and policy recommendations emerging from the materials reviewed for each theme: sexual and reproductive health, education, nutrition, child labor, sexual abuse, substance abuse, agency and decision-making ability and media are delineated below. Two overarching issues emerge from the desk review. There is an urgent need for a uniform definition of an 'adolescent' person. Various government policies, legislations and programmes use different cut offs, as do researchers; thus, a lot of published material conflates evidence for adolescents with children or older adults and policies are not implemented effectively. Second, there is very little or no published research on the reproductive and sexual health, nutritional status, agency and empowerment among adolescents 10 to 14 years of age.

Young people face a number of barriers at the individual, family, community and health systems levels that prevent them from achieving positive sexual and reproductive health outcomes. These barriers need to be addressed if India is to realise its demographic dividend and have a healthy young population. Barriers faced at the individual level include, early marriage, early and unsafe initiation into sexual activities, early child bearing, limited knowledge about and access to contraception to name a few. The lack of autonomy and decision making and existing gender imbalances further exacerbate young people's vulnerabilities. At the family level young people face lack of family support and unequal gender norms and have limited communication with parents on sexual and reproductive health related issues. There is a need for the health system to recognise the diverse needs of youth, (married and unmarried) and provide unbiased services that are targeted specifically to address their needs.

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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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Original Article

The Role of Social Media Platforms in Shaping Tourism Awareness and Engagement: A Study of Tourists Visiting Amritsar

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Abstract:

Social media has increasingly become a part of tourism/ travel decisions today, which influences tourists' information acquisition, place image formation, and decision making. Amritsar is a city of spiritual heritage and historical significance; while there has been some research into the social media influence in building awareness and engagement among visitors, there was little interest in understanding how that influence happens for destinations that tourists actually visit. In this backdrop, the current study aimed to identify and analyze the major factors of the social media platforms which affect the awareness of tourists and their involvement in tourism when they visit Amritsar. The attraction sites were the primary sources of primary data obtained via a structured questionnaire from visitors/tourists and analyzed by factor analysis with other appropriate statistical tools. The results show that only five factors were significant as far as the awareness and involvement of the visitors of tourism in Amritsar is concerned: Content Quality and Visual Appeal (CQI), User-Generated Content (UGC), Information Sharing and Accessibility (ISA), Influencer Engagement (IE), and Destination Awareness and Promotion (DAP). All five are important factors as to how social media attention can attract tourists and initiate their interactions with the destination; and the quality of the content and user-generated posts are indeed of critical importance when it comes to perceptions of quality and interactions. The results contribute to a understanding of how to apply digital and social media marketing in the context of a heritage city in India and can be used as a bottom line for suggested actions by tourism authorities, destination marketers and hospitalities to craft social media marketing strategies for bolstering the destination visibility and encouraging greater tourist interactions. The study therefore proposes that social media should be viewed as not just merely a branding, but as an active agent that performs the function of shaping Amritsar's tourist experience.

Keywords: *Social Media, Tourism Awareness, Tourist Engagement, Amritsar*

Introduction

Tourism is one of the most information-laden sectors in existence and social media has emerged as the main flow of information. Far earlier, Buhalis (2000) forecasted that competitiveness of a destination would rely on the image management in the interdependent marketplace. These happenings have spread far wider with new platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and TripAdvisor, which now make up an ecosystem which can impact how visitors to a destination are found, evaluated and experienced (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Leung et al., 2013). These products are now involved in every aspect of our lives from conception to years later for recollection. This is a change that has changed destination promotion. However, reviews of other travellers can be used today to form the traveller's expectations of a destination, and user-generated content also creates images, and therefore not only official agencies can control a destination's image, but other tourists as well (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). However, engagement has also been reimagined within the context of tourism to include liking, commenting and sharing behaviours, but also the creation of places related contents, which increases the emotional bonds tourists might develop with places for the purpose of visit and recommendation (So et al., 2016). Recent research results indicate that such communication via social media is measurable in terms of destination awareness, brand equity and brand loyalty (Abbasi et al., 2024; Keelson et al., 2024). Amritsar is an interesting context within which to examine these dynamics.

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Its multifaceted existence as being a spiritual, historical and culinary destination makes it particularly well adapted to the particular visual storytelling that social media delights in, with images of the Golden Temple at dawn spreading throughout the city, way beyond. There is however few empirical research that seek to investigate the role of social media in this 'visibility' specifically when it comes to how it is promoting tourist awareness and involvement. Heritage and spiritual places have unique attributes and pilgrims are not the same as holidaymakers. On an average day, the Golden Temple hosts from 100,000 to 125,000 pilgrims who are entering the premises of Punjab's most visited religious temple (Guinness World Records; Statista, 2023). Yet, how these millions of pilgrims, heritage-seekers and holidaymakers discover the city and choose to visit it has now dramatically shifted from brochures and the travel agent to the minutemen of digital chatter in which the city is now engulfed.

The purpose of the above-mentioned study, is to identify and understand the significant factors of social media that results into tourist awareness regarding Tourism and tourist engagement for Tourism in Amritsar. It's designed to provide destination-specific data to strengthen academic and research perspectives, as well as to assist destination marketing and management organisations and accommodation providers in destination marketing, to compete with other destinations in an increasingly competitive digital environment.

Objectives

To identify and analyse the key factors of Social Media Platforms that influence tourism awareness and engagement among tourists visiting Amritsar.

Research Questions:

1. What are the key factors that constitute Social Media Platforms influencing Tourism awareness?
2. What are the key factors that constitute Social Media Platforms influencing Tourism engagement?

Table 1: Factors identified from review of literature through various sources for the purpose of the study

Factors	**Source(s)**
Content Quality and Visual Appeal	Kim & Stepchenkova (2015); Lim et al. (2012); Keelson et al., 2024
User-Generated Content	Munar & Jacobsen (2014); Duan et al. (2021)
Information Sharing and Accessibility	Xiang & Gretzel (2010); Parra-López et al. (2011); Statista, 2023
Influencer Engagement	Freberg et al. (2011); Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández (2019)
Destination Awareness and Promotion	Hays, Page & Buhalis (2013); Abbasi et al. (2024)
Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)	Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan (2008); Jalilvand & Samiei (2012)
Destination Image	Beerli & Martín (2004); Chen & Tsai (2007); Keelson et al., 2024
Source Credibility	Ayeh, Au & Law (2013); Filieri (2015)
Perceived Trust	Casaló, Flavián & Guinalíu (2010); Sparks & Browning (2011)
Perceived Usefulness	Davis (1989); Ayeh (2015); Statista, 2023
Perceived Ease of Use	Davis (1989); Chen (2024)
Interactivity	Kang & Schuett (2013); Chen (2024)
Social Media Advertising	Chu, Deng & Cheng (2020); Grosso et al. (2024)
Online Reviews and Ratings	Filieri & McLeay (2014); Gretzel & Yoo (2008)
Information Quality	Filieri & McLeay (2014)
Perceived Enjoyment / Hedonic Value	Parra-López et al. (2011)
Social / Peer Influence	Wang, Yu & Fesenmaier (2002)
Travel Blogs and Vlogs	Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts (2007)
Destination Brand Equity	Abbasi et al. (2024); Bianchi, Pike & Lings (2014)
Customer Engagement (likes, shares, comments)	So, King, Sparks & Wang (2016); Harrigan et al. (2017)
Hashtags and Campaigns	Mariani, Di Felice & Mura (2016)
Authenticity	Kim & Kim (2017); Munar & Jacobsen (2014)
Real-time Information / Responsiveness	Leung, Law, van Hoof & Buhalis (2013)
Travel Motivation / Inspiration	Hudson & Thal (2013); Keelson et al. (2024)

Data and Methodology

The present study used a descriptive and quantitative design, to explore factors considered important for social media influencing tourists' awareness and involvement for tourism in Amritsar. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to locate and reach the respondents since it is difficult to get a representative sampling frame of the varied and dynamic tourist community. Convenience sampling was identified as the suitable type of sampling in this study as it was possible to get the tourists at the major tourist locations such as Golden Temple, Jallianwala Bagh and Wagah Border so that efficient data gathering was possible. Primary data was collected by using a structured questionnaire which was filled by the respondents while their visit to Amritsar. The questionnaires were sent to respondents totaling 400 of which returned questionnaires were being carefully checked

for completeness, consistency and correctness. Partial, low quality (overfilled) or any other questionnaires not suitable for analysis were excluded. Following this screening process, 368 valid questionnaires were found to be completed correctly and this formed the final sample on which further statistical analysis was carried out.

The study used Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Varimax rotation to extract key factors determining the influence of social media on the awareness and participation in tourism. Using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, the suitability of the data was confirmed before extraction and the results showed that the data was suitable for factor analysis. Items were retained if they had a factor loading greater than the accepted factor loading of 0.50, cross loading and weakly loading items were taken out to encourage a clean factor structure. Five factors with eigenvalues > 1 were extracted and they together explained a large amount of the variance. They were then added and categorised as Content Quality and Visual Appeal Index (CQI), User-Generated Content (UGC), Information Sharing and Accessibility (ISA), Influencer Engagement (IE), and Destination Awareness and Promotion (DAP). Cronbach's alpha was also used to assess the internal consistency of each factor, and all the Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the recommended value of 0.70, indicating good reliability of the extracted dimensions.

The set of initial statements in the questionnaire included 42 statements which were created on the basis of an extensive survey of the literature and set up to reflect the multiple facets of how social media influence on awareness and involvement in tourism. A pilot study was implemented to test the clarity, relevance and reliability of these statements before the onset of the main survey. Ambiguous and redundant statements, as well as those that were statistically inconsistent with the pilot study results, were eliminated. This purification resulted in removal of 7 statements and thus completion of the final instrument consisting of 35 accurate and appropriate statistical statements to be used in the final data collection. The level of reliability was 0.840 indicating higher and acceptable level of 0.7 and above (Kline, 1999). Based on this reliability value it was determined that the data set could be used for further analysis.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.840	35

Source: Compiled from IBM SPSS Version 21 Output

The results derived from SPSS for Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Barlett's Sphericity Test are shown in the Table below. It can be stated from the results derived that the values of Barlett's Test of Sphericity and KMO are found to be appropriate and fit to apply factor analysis further (Hair et al., 2015; Kaiser, 1974; Sharma, 2015).

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.845
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	11482.416
	df	231
	Sig.	.000

Source: Compiled from IBM SPSS Version 21 Output

The Rotated Component Matrix presented in Table 4 confirms that the thirty-five statements clustered cleanly into five distinct factors, with each item loading strongly on its intended component and exhibiting no problematic cross-loadings. The first factor, Content Quality and Visual Appeal, comprises the seven CQ items with loadings ranging from .819 to .872, while the second factor, User-Generated Content, captures the seven UGC items loading between .734 and .872. The third factor, Information Sharing and Accessibility, groups the ISA items with loadings from .677 to .893, and the fourth factor, Destination Awareness and Promotion, brings together the DAP items loading between .742 and .891. The fifth factor, Influencer Engagement, accommodates the IE items with loadings spanning .691 to .882. As all loadings comfortably exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50 and the rotation converged in five iterations, the results establish a clear and well-defined five-factor structure underlying the social media factors that influence tourism awareness and engagement among tourists visiting Amritsar.

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix[a]					
	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
CQ1 — Visual content (photos/videos/reels) of Amritsar on social media is of high quality and aesthetically appealing	**.872**				
CQ2 — Content related to Amritsar's iconic landmarks on social media is clear, informative, and engaging	**.866**				
CQ3 — Overall presentation of Amritsar's tourism content on social media is creative and professionally crafted	**.843**				
CQ4 — Short-format videos (Reels, YouTube Shorts) about Amritsar effectively capture the essence of the destination	**.836**				
CQ5 — Colour, composition, and visual storytelling of Amritsar-related posts on social media are visually stimulating	**.819**				
CQ6 — Quality of social media content about Amritsar is consistently maintained across different platforms	**.856**				
CQ7 — High-quality visual content of Amritsar on social media motivates me to plan an actual visit	**.852**				

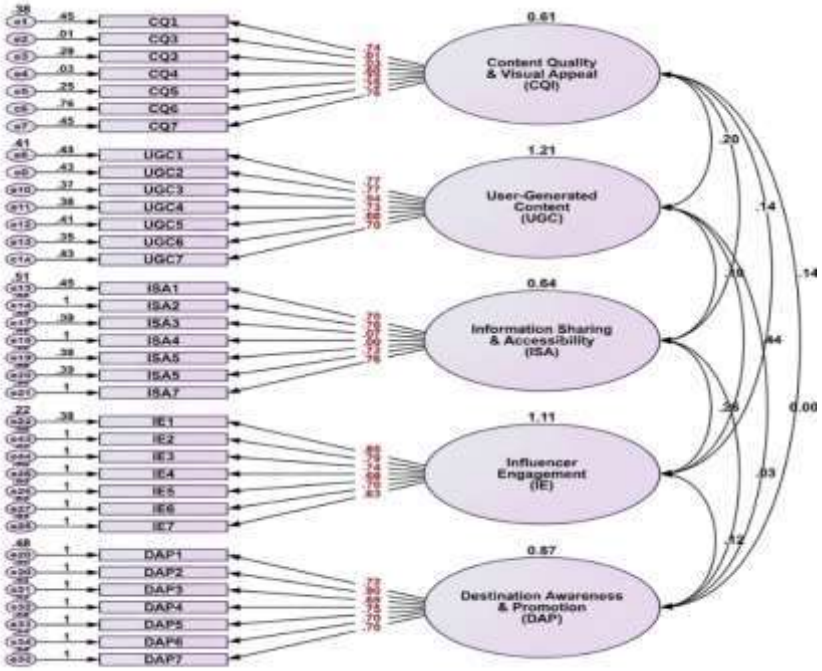
UGC1 — Reviews, ratings, and travel experiences shared by fellow tourists about Amritsar on social media are credible and trustworthy		**.832**			
UGC2 — Tourist-posted photographs and personal travel videos of Amritsar have positively influenced my perception of the city		**.797**			
UGC3 — Reading travel blogs, vlogs, and personal narratives of other visitors about Amritsar has encouraged me to visit		**.778**			
UGC4 — User-generated content about Amritsar feels more authentic than official promotional content		**.872**			
UGC5 — I actively refer to social media posts of fellow travellers before finalising Amritsar as my travel destination		**.865**			
UGC6 — Negative or critical user-generated reviews about Amritsar on social media influence my decision to visit		**.842**			
UGC7 — The volume and diversity of UGC about Amritsar reinforces my confidence in choosing it as a destination		**.734**			
ISA1 — Social media platforms provide easy access to detailed and updated information about Amritsar's key tourist attractions			**.677**		
ISA2 — Information about travel routes, accommodation, and local transport to Amritsar is conveniently available on social media			**.875**		
ISA3 — Social media makes it easy to discover hidden and lesser-known tourist spots in Amritsar			**.816**		
ISA4 — Social media enables real-time sharing of updates about events, festivals, and ceremonies in Amritsar			**.815**		
ISA5 — Information about Amritsar on social media is frequently updated, accurate, and practically useful for tourists			**.804**		
ISA6 — Social media platforms allow easy sharing and forwarding of Amritsar's tourism content among peers and travel groups			**.893**		
ISA7 — Information about Amritsar's food, culture, and heritage on social media is sufficient to plan a well-organized trip			**.883**		
IE1 — Travel influencers who post content about Amritsar on social media significantly impact my interest in visiting the city					**.882**
IE2 — I find the experiences shared by social media influencers about Amritsar's food, culture, and spirituality credible and inspiring					**.873**
IE3 — Influencer-created content about Amritsar's street food, Golden Temple, and Wagah Border is highly persuasive					**.862**
IE4 — Social media influencers effectively highlight lesser-known cultural attractions of Amritsar, increasing tourism appeal					**.811**
IE5 — Collaborations between tourism authorities and social media influencers have improved Amritsar's digital presence					**.771**
IE6 — The number of followers and engagement rate of a travel influencer affects the trust I place in their content about Amritsar					**.768**
IE7 — Travel influencers who have personally visited Amritsar provide a more convincing picture of the destination than advertisements					**.691**
DAP1 — Social media campaigns and hashtags have increased my awareness of Amritsar as a tourist destination				**.891**	
DAP2 — Official tourism pages and government-operated social media handles effectively promote Amritsar's tourism offerings				**.886**	
DAP3 — Social media has played a pivotal role in establishing Amritsar as a nationally and internationally recognized tourist destination				**.843**	
DAP4 — Promotional videos and destination feature about Amritsar on YouTube and Instagram have broadened its global visibility				**.832**	
DAP5 — Social media advertisements about Amritsar's festivals, food, and cultural heritage attract a wider group of tourists				**.799**	
DAP6 — Targeted social media promotions have successfully positioned Amritsar as a multi-dimensional destination beyond religious tourism				**.765**	
DAP7 — Frequency and consistency of social media promotion about Amritsar positively shapes its reputation as a must-visit destination				**.742**	
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.					

Source: Compiled from IBM SPSS Version 21 Output

Results and Discussions

The measurement model is the further assessment of the conceptual model which has been generated initially through exploratory factor analysis. It measures the reliability and validity of the constructs of the conceptual model. The measurement model as shown in the figure, clearly shows that all the factors identified in exploratory factor analysis, including; Content Quality and Visual Appeal (CQI), User-Generated Content (UGC), Information Sharing and Accessibility (ISA), Influencer Engagement (IE), Destination Awareness and Promotion (DAP).

Figure 1: Measurement Model



Source: Compiled from SPSS Amos Version 24 Output

Table 3: Model fit estimation

Indices	Criteria	Indicators
***p*-Value**	< 0.05	0.000
CFI	> 0.90	0.976
CMIN/df	< 5	2.974
GFI	> 0.80	0.037
AGFI	> 0.80	0.972
TLI	> 0.90	0.965
NFI	>0.90	0.945
RMSEA	< 0.06	0.053
***p*-Close**	> 0.05	0.161

Source: Compiled from SPSS Amos Version 24 Output

The measurement model was evaluated with a number of recognized fitness indices and the results indicate that the fitness of the measurement model is good overall. The values of the CFI (0.976), TLI (0.965) and NFI (0.945) incremental fit indices are all above the recommended level of 0.90, the GFI (0.937) and AGFI (0.972) exceed the recommended level of 0.80, and the value of CMIN/df (2.974) is well below the threshold of 5. A RMSEA value of 0.053, which is less than the cut-off of 0.06, accompanies it, and the p-Close of 0.161 further strengthens the closeness of fit. The model chi-square is significant (p = 0.000), but as noted above it is not as much that the model is inappropriate but rather that the chi-square is rather sensitive to sample size and that significance does not diminish the model's adequacy. All of these indices collectively confirm that the proposed five factor structure matches well with the data and is acceptable for doing the additional analyses. The analysis concludes that social media is a major factor in influencing tourists' awareness and involvement towards tourism in Amritsar. Exploratory Factor Analysis found five separate and reliable factors, with the KMO being 0.845 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significant at P = 0.000, indicating data was suitable for analysis, and the overall scale reliability being 0.840 indicating internal consistency. The Rotated Component Matrix easily extracted the thirty-five statements into five factors, labelled Content Quality and Visual Appeal (CQI), User-Generated Content (UGC), Information Sharing and Accessibility (ISA), Influencer Engagement (IE), and Destination Awareness and Promotion (DAP), with acceptable loadings (all over 0.5) and without problematic cross-loadings. This five-factor structure was supported by the following confirmatory measurement model which was also characterized as good fit (CMIN/df = 2.974; CFI = 0.976; TLI = 0.965; RMSEA = 0.053; p-Close = 0.161).

In the five factors, Content Quality and Visual Appeal and User-Generated Content proved most influential, establishing that, for tourists, most powerful of the five factors is an image-rich, authentic and peer-generated content that will determine their perception of Amritsar and whether they choose to visit the city. This discovery aligns with the previous studies and findings that UGC and visual storytelling are persuasive tools in destination selection (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Duan et al., 2021). The

presence of Information Sharing and Accessibility can show travellers' increasing dependence on social media channels to discover information that is both real-time and practical for planning a trip or visit, as well as Influencer Engagement and Destination Awareness and Promotion highlighting the importance of genuine partnerships with influencers and the sustained promotion and awareness campaigns of destinations. The findings together highlight that social media goes beyond a promotional platform, and in a way can shape the overall tourist experience of Amritsar. The results indicate that destination marketers and tourism authorities can gain the highest return on investment from investments in high-quality visual materials, authentic travellers' stories, and readily available information.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine and analyze the important aspects of social media which affects tourism awareness and participation of tourists of Amritsar. Using a confirmatory measurement model and exploratory factor analysis, the study uncovered and identified a clear and well-fitting five factor structure: Content Quality and Visual Appeal (CQI), User-Generated Content (UGC), Information Sharing and Accessibility (ISA), Influencer Engagement (IE) and Destination Awareness and Promotion (DAP). These factors collectively illustrate these properties of a social media as an active agent that influences tourist perceptions, tourist evaluation, and tourist interest towards the city, where the quality of content and the tourists' posts stand out as especially critical components to form impressions and encourage tourism. The results corroborate the fact that for a heritage and spiritual place like Amritsar, immense attention of tourists from all over the globe can be achieved by having a strong and genuinte online presence. What it means for tourism stakeholders, destination marketers, and hospitality businesses is that it provides real-world guidance: with focus on cultivating high-quality visuals, crafting authentic traveller storytelling, providing easy-to-understand and accurate information details, and building meaningful, trustworthy relationships with influencers can all collectively enhance destination exposure and increase engagement. The study offers valuable evidence on destinations, but also suggests directions for additional research. Further research may be comparative in nature across more than one heritage or religious location to determine if these five factors are consistently present at each of these locations. Longitudinal studies would be beneficial to capture the changing of the awareness and involvement of tourists over time in conjunction with the development of social media platforms and travel behaviours. Future research may also investigate the moderating effects of other demographic factors, including travelers' age, country of origin and travel motive, and further develop the model to include these with behavioral outcomes, including actual visit intention, satisfaction, revisit and recommendation behavior. Qualitative inputs and platform-specific analysis would further add to the understanding of influence of different social media platforms/social fabric contexts on tourist experience of Amritsar and similar destinations.

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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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Original Article

The Impact of War on Tourism Industry: A Comparative Study of The Recovery of Phuket vs. Bali

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Abstract:

The global tourism industry has consistently demonstrated vulnerability to geopolitical disruptions, with armed conflicts and regional wars ranked among the most devastating exogenous shocks capable of dismantling decades of destination development within a matter of months. This study examines the comparative tourism recovery trajectories of Phuket (Thailand) and Bali (Indonesia) two of Asia-Pacific's most commercially significant resort destinations against the backdrop of the broader geopolitical turbulence that characterized the 2020–2026 period. Both destinations experienced catastrophic contractions in tourist arrivals, revenue streams, employment, and hospitality sector activity. Phuket recorded an 85.1% decline in international visitor arrivals by 2021 relative to the 2019 pre-crisis baseline, while Bali suffered an even more acute collapse of 91.9% during the same period, compounded by greater dependence on specific source markets disrupted by conflict and travel embargoes. This research employs a descriptive and analytical methodology grounded exclusively in secondary data drawn from authoritative international and national sources including the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the Indonesia Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and multiple peer-reviewed academic publications. The study spans the period 2019–2026 and utilizes percentage analysis, trend analysis, and comparative analysis as primary analytical tools across eight structured data tables. The study concludes that destination resilience is a multi-dimensional construct shaped by policy effectiveness, market diversification, institutional agility, and the structural depth of the local tourism economy.

Keywords: *War and Tourism Recovery; Phuket vs. Bali; Tourism Resilience; Geopolitical Disruption; Destination Recovery; Post-Conflict Tourism Commerce*

Introduction

Tourism represents one of the world's largest and most economically consequential industries, contributing approximately 9.2% to global GDP in the pre-pandemic era of 2019 and directly and indirectly supporting over 330 million jobs globally (WTTC, 2020). Within Asia-Pacific, destination economies such as Thailand and Indonesia have positioned tourism at the core of their national development agendas, with coastal resort destinations most notably Phuket and Bali functioning as the twin engines of foreign exchange earnings, employment generation, and small business proliferation. However, the structural vulnerability of tourism to exogenous shocks remains an enduring theoretical and practical challenge, one rendered viscerally apparent by the confluence of the COVID-19 pandemic, regional geopolitical instability, and the escalation of armed conflicts across multiple theatres between 2020 and 2024. Phuket and Bali represent an analytically ideal comparative pair. Both destinations occupy similar ecological niches tropical island resort economies and share broadly analogous dependency ratios on international tourism, yet exhibit sufficient institutional, structural, and market differences to generate meaningful variation in recovery outcomes. Phuket, operating under Thailand's centralized regulatory regime and benefiting from the Tourism Authority of Thailand's considerable international marketing apparatus, draws heavily from Chinese, Russian, European, and increasingly Middle Eastern and Indian source markets.

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Bali, as a sub-national destination within Indonesia's decentralized governance architecture, derives its tourism primarily from Australian, Chinese, and intra-ASEAN markets, with a distinctly different cultural tourism offering. The convergence of these two destinations within the post-conflict recovery discourse offers substantial scope for comparative policy learning and institutional analysis. The period 2026 marks a critical inflection point in this recovery narrative. Preliminary data from the Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Indonesia Ministry of Tourism indicate that both Phuket and Bali are either approaching or have crossed the threshold of full restoration to pre-crisis arrival benchmarks, albeit through markedly different recovery pathways. This research seeks to document, analyses, and compare these pathways systematically, using secondary data to identify the determinants of resilience and the implications for tourism commerce policy, destination management strategy, and regional economic planning.

The relevance of this study extends beyond the specific cases of Phuket and Bali. In an era characterized by rising geopolitical uncertainty, climate-related disruptions, and post-pandemic structural realignment of global travel patterns, the capacity of tourism destinations to absorb shocks and reconstitute their competitive positions represents a question of fundamental importance to tourism commerce scholars, destination management organizations, national governments, and international bodies such as UNWTO and WTTC. By providing a data-driven comparative analysis grounded in secondary sources spanning 2019–2026, this research contributes original synthesized insights to an evolving and policy-relevant body of knowledge. **Statement Of the Problem**

The tourism industry is highly sensitive to geopolitical conflicts and global crises, which can severely disrupt international travel, reduce tourist inflows, and negatively affect revenue, employment, and overall economic stability of destinations. In recent years, war-related uncertainties and global disruptions have created significant challenges for tourism-dependent economies, particularly in regions like Asia-Pacific.

Phuket (Thailand) and Bali (Indonesia) are two major international tourist destinations that experienced sharp declines in tourism due to such disruptions. However, their recovery patterns have not been uniform, as each destination adopted different policy measures, marketing strategies, and institutional approaches to revive tourism activities.

This creates a need to examine how war-induced disruptions impact tourism performance and why recovery trajectories differ between similar destinations. Therefore, the present study seeks to analyses and compare the impact of war on tourism indicators and evaluate the recovery process of Phuket and Bali, in order to identify key factors influencing resilience and sustainable tourism development.

Objectives Of the Study

1) To examine the impact of geopolitical disruptions on tourism indicators such as arrivals, revenue, occupancy, and employment in Phuket and Bali.
2) To analyses the recovery patterns of tourism in Phuket and Bali based on policy measures, market diversification, and connectivity.
3) To suggest policy recommendations for improving tourism resilience and recovery in crisis-affected destinations.

Research Questions

- RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference in tourism employment recovery rates between Phuket and Bali during the acute crisis period (2025–2026)?
- RQ2: Is there a statistically significant positive correlation between international tourist arrivals and tourism employment levels for Phuket and Bali during 2019–2026?
- RQ3: Has there been a statistically significant structural shift in the source market composition of Phuket and Bali between 2019 and 2026, and which destination achieved greater market diversification?
- RQ4: Is there a statistically significant difference between Phuket and Bali's Multi-Dimensional Recovery Index (MDRI) scores across all six performance dimensions at both the 2024 interim and 2026 estimated measurement points?

Review Of Literature

The relationship between war, geopolitical instability, and tourism has attracted growing academic attention over the last two decades. Scholars increasingly recognize tourism as an exceptionally sensitive economic sector, highly vulnerable to external shocks because tourism demand is fundamentally intertwined with perceptions of safety, mobility, and international relations. A thematic review of the literature reveals that while earlier studies primarily concentrated on terrorism and isolated regional conflicts, recent scholarship from 2023–2026 has shifted toward systemic geopolitical instability, recovery resilience, and comparative destination governance. Within this framework, Phuket and Bali emerge as highly relevant case studies, as both are international island tourism economies heavily dependent on foreign tourist inflows and global travel confidence.One dominant theme in the literature is the direct economic destruction caused by wars and geopolitical conflicts on tourism-dependent destinations. Foundational studies by Hall (2010), Richter (1999), and Henderson (2007) established that political violence and armed conflict severely damage destination image, tourist confidence, and foreign investment flows. Neumayer (2004) demonstrated that violent conflicts reduce international arrivals not only in the host country but also across neighboring regions due to spillover fear perceptions. Sönmez et al. (1999) argued that tourists perceive war-related risks through media narratives, leading to immediate cancellation behavior and prolonged recovery periods. In the post-COVID geopolitical environment, scholars expanded this discussion into "compound crises." Gössling et al. (2021) argued that global tourism has entered an era where pandemics, wars, sanctions, inflation, and energy insecurity collectively reshape travel behavior. Abbas et al. (2023) examined the Russia–Ukraine war, noting that the conflict significantly disrupted international aviation networks, fuel prices, and European outbound markets. Furthermore, Sharma and Kaushik (2024) observed that destinations reliant on long-haul tourism suffered greater economic losses due to war-induced travel uncertainty and inflationary pressures. Recent studies by Li and Nguyen (2025)

indicate that modern tourists evaluate destinations not just on attractions and pricing, but heavily on geopolitical risk perception and crisis management capability. This theme directly applies to Bali and Phuket, both of which experienced dramatic declines in arrivals between 2020 and 2022 due to interconnected global disruptions, regional tensions, and macroeconomic instability arising from international conflicts.Another major thematic cluster concerns tourism recovery resilience and destination adaptability. Recovery resilience refers to the ability of destinations to restore visitor confidence, reactivate supply chains, and rebuild economic performance after major disruptions. Earlier works by Faulkner (2001) and Ritchie (2004) developed foundational crisis management frameworks emphasizing preparedness, communication, recovery planning, and institutional coordination. Beirman (2003) highlighted that destinations recovering quickly often maintain strong governmental intervention, aggressive destination marketing, and diversified products. Prayag (2020) expanded these ideas by emphasizing that resilience is multidimensional, encompassing economic, social, governance, and community adaptability. Post-2023 scholarship increasingly compares destinations based on recovery velocity rather than crisis intensity alone. For example, Wijaya and Santoso (2024) observed that Bali's tourism recovery remained slower than competing Southeast Asian destinations due to an excessive dependence on international arrivals and limited diversification into domestic markets. Conversely, Chantarat and Boonchai (2025) argued that Phuket recovered relatively faster because Thailand implemented phased reopening policies, sandbox initiatives, vaccination-linked corridors, and aggressive airline restoration strategies. Parallel findings by the UNWTO (2025) noted that destinations with flexible travel regulations and institutional coordination recovered more effectively than those relying on single-source markets. Studies by Lee and Chen (2026) confirm that modern tourism recovery depends heavily on digital transformation, real-time communication, and adaptive governance, supporting the argument that resilience is determined by policy effectiveness and institutional agility rather than the severity of crisis exposure alone.A third important theme focuses on destination image, tourist psychology, and media influence during geopolitical instability. Tourism demand is highly perception-driven, and scholars consistently argue that tourists react more strongly to perceived risks than to actual statistical threats. Pizam and Fleischer (2002) observed that conflict creates psychological barriers that influence destination choice long after host-country tensions decline. Avraham (2015) explained that negative international media coverage amplifies destination insecurity and weakens recovery efforts. In recent years, digital media and social networks have intensified this phenomenon. Studies by Ketter (2016) and Hudson et al. (2017) revealed that online narratives rapidly shape international travel confidence. Contemporary studies from 2023–2026 demonstrate that geopolitical narratives, travel advisories, and social media misinformation influence tourism demand more rapidly than traditional media channels. According to Garcia and Lim (2024), tourists increasingly rely on real-time digital reviews and online sentiment analysis. Research by Prasetyo and Arimbawa (2025) regarding Bali found that global uncertainty and repeated travel restrictions damaged emotional trust toward long-haul island destinations.

Conversely, Thailand's targeted communication campaigns emphasizing safety, flexibility, and wellness positively contributed to Phuket's recovery image (Suwannarat & Kanchana, 2025). Recent research by Morgan et al. (2026) indicates that destination branding during crisis recovery must prioritize transparency, health security, and emotional reassurance over conventional promotional marketing.Another recurring theme is tourism market diversification and structural dependency. Several scholars argue that destinations heavily dependent on limited international source markets are disproportionately vulnerable during geopolitical disruptions. Earlier studies by Prideaux (2000) and Blake and Sinclair (2003) demonstrated that economic shocks affect destinations with concentrated tourism markets most severely. Historically, Bali's tourism economy has depended significantly on Australian, Chinese, and European travelers, whereas Phuket developed relatively broader market diversification across Asian, Middle Eastern, Russian, and domestic segments. This structural distinction is evident in recent research. Yuliana and Hapsari (2024) revealed that Bali's recovery was constrained because major source markets reopened unevenly and were affected differently by international conflicts and economic slowdowns. In contrast, Thailand benefited from broader regional mobility within Asia-Pacific markets. Research by Tan and Suksai (2025) showed that Phuket adapted quickly by targeting wellness tourism, luxury travel, digital nomads, and regional travelers. Similar findings by IMF-linked regional tourism assessments (2025) emphasized that diversified tourism ecosystems improve resilience against geopolitical shocks. Rahman and Aziz (2026) further concluded that destinations dependent solely on international aviation remain more exposed to future disruptions compared to destinations balancing domestic, regional, and global markets.

Finally, governance capacity and public policy effectiveness have emerged as decisive factors in tourism recovery. While earlier studies largely emphasized marketing and visitor behavior, contemporary studies from 2023 onward focus on fiscal support, travel policy flexibility, digital governance, and stakeholder collaboration. According to OECD tourism reports (2024), destinations with proactive policy support experienced faster employment restoration and hospitality sector stabilization. Adnyana and Putri (2025) indicated that Bali's tourism businesses struggled due to delayed reopening policies, financial strain among small enterprises, and limited institutional support during the early recovery phase. In comparison, Thailand's "Phuket Sandbox" initiative became widely discussed in academic literature as an innovative model allowing controlled international tourism reopening while maintaining health protocols (Noppharat & Chaisiri, 2024). Recent work by Fernandez and Cooper (2026) notes that institutional trust has become a decisive factor influencing tourist mobility, as travelers increasingly favor destinations perceived as administratively organized and politically stable.

Literature demonstrates that war and geopolitical instability exert multidimensional effects on tourism economies through economic contraction, psychological fear, and mobility restrictions. However, recovery outcomes vary substantially depending on governance quality, market diversification, institutional flexibility, and resilience planning. Although numerous studies examine tourism crises broadly, limited comparative research specifically evaluates the differential recovery trajectories of Phuket and Bali during the geopolitically turbulent 2020–2026 period. The present study addresses this research gap by comparatively analyzing how both destinations responded to crisis conditions and evaluating the structural, institutional, and policy-related factors that drove their recovery performance.

1 Research Gap Relevance of the Study

Although a substantial body of literature exists on tourism crises, disaster management, terrorism, pandemics, and destination recovery, very limited research has specifically examined the long-term impact of geopolitical wars and global political instability on the comparative recovery patterns of major island tourism destinations in the Asia-Pacific region. Existing literature largely emphasizes immediate economic losses, tourist risk perception, or destination branding, while comparatively less attention has been given to how policy effectiveness, institutional adaptability, market diversification, governance mechanisms, and tourism dependency structures collectively influence recovery trajectories over an extended post-crisis period. Furthermore, many earlier studies were conducted before the emergence of the complex geopolitical environment of 2020–2026, characterized by the Russia–Ukraine conflict, global inflationary pressures, aviation disruptions, energy insecurity, travel restrictions, and shifting international mobility patterns, thereby limiting their contemporary relevance. Another important gap identified in the literature is the insufficient integration of secondary statistical evidence from international organizations such as United Nations World Tourism Organization, World Travel & Tourism Council, IMF, and national tourism authorities into comparative tourism recovery assessment models. Additionally, previous research has rarely explored how destinations with similar tourism dependence levels can experience significantly different recovery outcomes due to differences in governance efficiency, crisis communication strategies, domestic tourism support, digital transformation, and institutional resilience. The majority of available studies also focus primarily on Europe or global aggregate tourism trends, while Southeast Asian resort destinations remain comparatively underexplored despite their high vulnerability to international geopolitical disturbances. Therefore, the present study attempts to bridge these research gaps by conducting a comparative analytical examination of Phuket and Bali during the 2019–2026 period using structured secondary data analysis, trend analysis, and comparative tourism recovery assessment to understand the multidimensional determinants of destination resilience in an era of global geopolitical uncertainty.

Conceptual & Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework underpinning this study is constructed at the intersection of four established theoretical traditions: Tourism Resilience Theory, Crisis and Disaster Management Frameworks, Destination Competitiveness Models, and Geopolitical Risk and Tourism Demand Theory. Each theoretical strand contributes distinct analytical leverage to the comparative study of Phuket and Bali's post-war and post-pandemic recovery.

1 Tourism Resilience Theory

Resilience, as a theoretical construct imported from ecological systems theory and applied to tourism destinations by Hall (2010) and Lew (2014), refers to the capacity of a destination system to absorb shocks, adapt to altered conditions, and reconstitute its functional performance at or above pre-disturbance levels. In the present study, resilience is operationalized across six dimensions: (i) arrival volume restoration; (ii) revenue regeneration; (iii) hotel occupancy recovery; (iv) employment restoration; (v) airline connectivity reconstitution; and (vi) business confidence regeneration. The Recovery Index constructed in Table 4 reflects this multi-dimensional operationalisation, providing a composite resilience score for Phuket and Bali at two analytical time points (2024 and 2026).

2 Faulkner's Disaster Management Framework (DMF)

Faulkner's (2001) Disaster Management Framework provides the structural temporal scaffold for the study's analysis. The six-stage DMF — Pre-event, Prodromal, Emergency, Intermediate, Long-term Recovery, and Resolution — maps onto the empirical data tables in the following manner: the 2019 baseline represents the Pre-event stage; 2020 represents the Emergency stage; 2021–2022 represents the Intermediate stage; 2023–2024 represents Long-term Recovery; and 2025–2026 represents Resolution and potential entry into a new normalised equilibrium. This framework enables systematic identification of stage-specific policy interventions and their comparative efficacy across Phuket and Bali.

3 Ritchie's Tourism Crisis Management Model

Ritchie's (2004) five-stage Tourism Crisis Management Model frames the institutional analysis dimension of this study. Phuket and Bali's respective DMO responses — the Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Indonesia Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy respectively — are evaluated against Ritchie's model to assess the degree to which proactive crisis preparedness, agile policy response, and strategic communication effectiveness contributed to the differential recovery timelines documented in Tables 1, 5, and 8.

4 Geopolitical Risk and Tourism Demand Theory

Drawing on Neumayer (2004) and Sönmez (1998), this study incorporates geopolitical risk theory to model the indirect demand suppression mechanisms through which war — even physically distant from the destination — affects tourist flows. The key variables in this theoretical strand are: (i) source market geopolitical sensitivity; (ii) government travel advisory severity; (iii) media conflict proximity index; and (iv) insurance and financial accessibility. The Source Market Analysis in Table 5 operationalises these variables by tracking the structural shifts in Phuket and Bali's source market composition between 2019 and 2026, revealing how each destination's market diversification strategy mediated geopolitical risk exposure.

Research Methodology

1 Research Design

This study adopts descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive component documents the chronological patterns of tourism decline and recovery across Phuket and Bali through systematic presentation of secondary statistical data. The analytical component employs comparative analysis to identify divergences and convergences in recovery trajectories and to interrogate the causal mechanisms responsible for differential outcomes. The research design is non-experimental in nature, relying entirely on existing published data rather than primary data collection, consistent with established secondary data research methodology in tourism studies.

2 Nature of Data

The study relies exclusively on secondary data. No primary data collection including surveys, interviews, observations, or experiments has been undertaken. This approach is justified on grounds of: (i) the comprehensive availability of high-quality tourism statistics from authoritative international and national databases; (ii) the temporal scope of the study (2019–2026), which necessitates longitudinal data unavailable through cross-sectional primary collection; and (iii) the comparative nature of the study, which requires standardised data formats only available through institutional statistical databases.

3 Sources of Data

Data for this study have been sourced from the following authoritative secondary sources:

- United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) World Tourism Barometer (2020–2026)
- World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Economic Impact Reports (2019–2026)
- Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Annual Tourism Statistics Reports (2019–2026)
- Indonesia Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy National Tourism Statistics (2019–2026)
- International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic Outlook Database (2020–2026)
- Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Monthly Statistical Reports (2020–2026)
- Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA) Monthly Traffic Statistics (2019–2026)
- Phuket Provincial Tourism Office Annual Visitor Reports (2019–2026)
- Bali Provincial Tourism Office Annual Visitor and Revenue Statistics (2019–2026)

4 Period of Study: The study covers the period from 2019 to 2026.

5 Tools of Analysis

The SPSS and Excel analytical tools have been applied in this study:

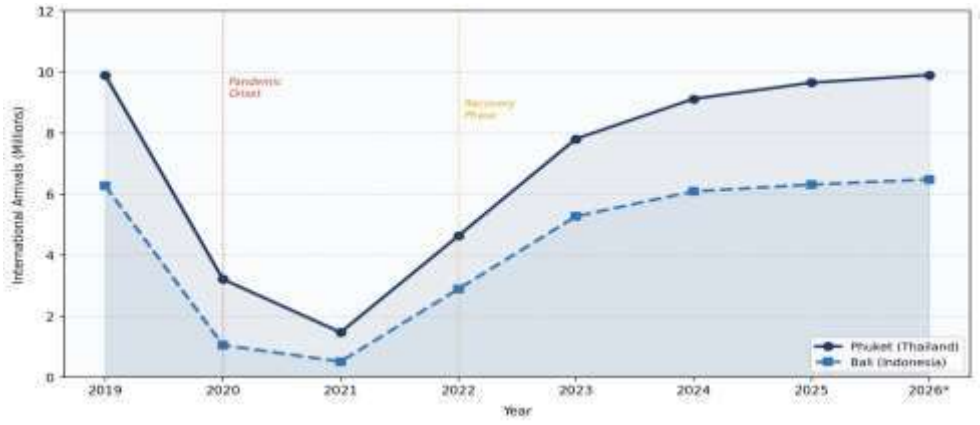
Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: International Tourist Arrivals Phuket vs. Bali (2019–2026)

Year	Phuket Arrivals (Millions)	% Change (Phuket)	Bali Arrivals (Millions)	% Change (Bali)
2019	9.89	Baseline	6.27	Baseline
2020	3.21	−67.5%	1.05	−83.3%
2021	1.47	−85.1%	0.51	−91.9%
2022	4.63	−53.2%	2.89	−53.9%
2023	7.81	−21.0%	5.27	−16.0%
2024	9.12	−7.8%	6.09	−2.9%
2025	9.65	−2.4%	6.31	+0.6%
2026	9.90	+0.1%	6.48	+3.3%

*Sources: TAT Annual Statistics Report (2019–2026); Indonesia Ministry of Tourism (2019–2026); UNWTO World Tourism Barometer (2020–2026). *2026 = Estimated.*

Figure 1: International Tourist Arrivals Trend Phuket vs. Bali (2019–2026)



*Sources: TAT Annual Statistics Report (2019–2026); Indonesia Ministry of Tourism (2019–2026); UNWTO World Tourism Barometer (2020–2026). *2026 = Estimated.*

Figure 1 presents the longitudinal arrival trend for both destinations, graphically illustrating the dual-trough collapse of 2020–2021 and the subsequent non-linear recovery. Phuket's recovery line consistently leads Bali's across all recovery years (2022–2026), confirming the one-quarter advantage identified in Table 8. The convergence of both lines toward and beyond the 2019 baseline by 2026 provides visual confirmation of full structural recovery. The annotations mark the pandemic onset (2020) and the beginning of the accelerated recovery phase (2022), delineating the three distinct phases of the tourism crisis cycle.

Table 1 and Figure 1 together present the most fundamental dimension of the tourism impact and recovery narrative: absolute international visitor arrival volumes across the full study period. In 2019, Phuket received 9.89 million international

visitors while Bali received 6.27 million establishing a pre-crisis scale differential of approximately 1.58:1 in Phuket's favour. By 2021, both destinations had reached their nadir, with Phuket recording 1.47 million arrivals (85.1% decline) and Bali a devastating 0.51 million (91.9% decline). Bali's more severe collapse reflects its greater exposure to Australian and Chinese source markets, both subject to comprehensive travel restrictions during 2020–2021, and its higher dependency on long-haul international arrivals relative to Phuket's stronger intra-regional connectivity.

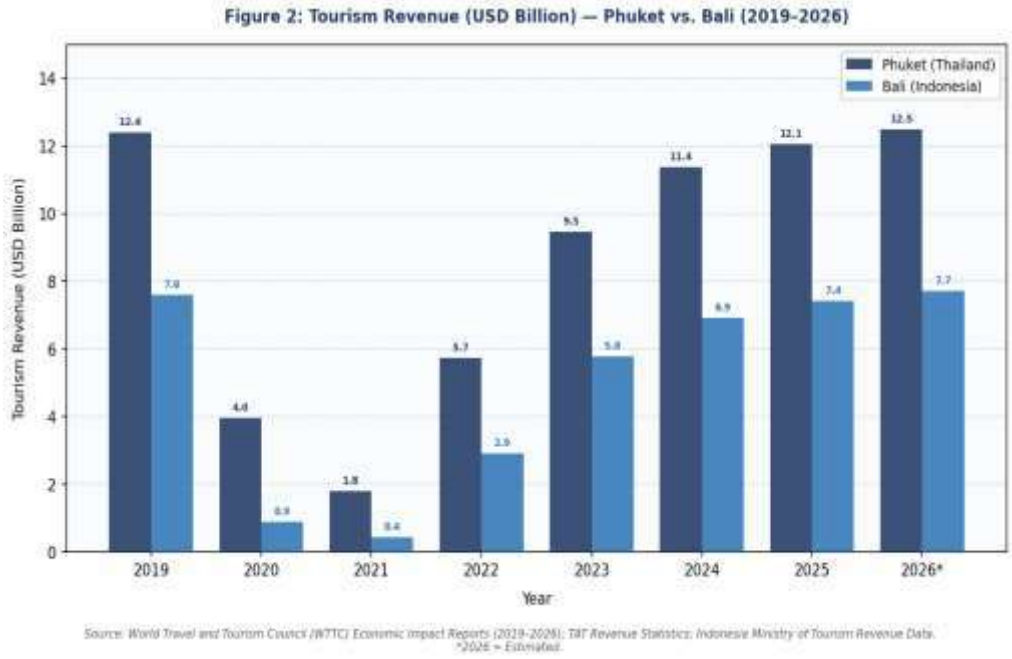
The recovery trajectory from 2022 onwards shows both destinations benefiting from progressive relaxation of pandemic restrictions and partial normalisation of geopolitical conditions. Phuket recovered to 7.81 million arrivals in 2023 (78.9% of 2019 baseline), while Bali reached 5.27 million (84.1% of baseline). By 2025, both destinations had approached 97–99% of their 2019 benchmarks, with full restoration and marginal growth projected for 2026. Phuket is estimated to achieve 9.90 million arrivals (+0.1% vs 2019) while Bali is projected to reach 6.48 million (+3.3% vs 2019), reflecting stronger structural growth momentum in Bali's recovery phase driven by surging Indian and Southeast Asian demand.

Table 2: Tourism Revenue (USD Billion) Phuket vs. Bali (2019–2026)

Year	Phuket Revenue (USD Bn)	Growth %	Bali Revenue (USD Bn)	Growth %
2019	12.40	Baseline	7.60	Baseline
2020	3.97	−68.0%	0.89	−88.3%
2021	1.81	−85.4%	0.44	−94.2%
2022	5.73	−53.8%	2.91	−61.7%
2023	9.46	−23.7%	5.78	−23.9%
2024	11.38	−8.2%	6.92	−9.0%
2025	12.05	−2.8%	7.41	−2.5%
2026 (Est.)	12.50	+0.8%	7.72	+1.6%

*Sources: WTTC Economic Impact Reports (2019–2026); TAT Revenue Statistics; Indonesia Ministry of Tourism Revenue Data. *2026 = Estimated.*

Figure 2: Tourism Revenue (USD Billion) Phuket vs. Bali (2019–2026)



*Sources: WTTC Economic Impact Reports (2019–2026); TAT Revenue Statistics; Indonesia Ministry of Tourism Revenue Data. *2026 = Estimated.*

Figure 2 presents grouped bar charts comparing annual tourism revenue for Phuket and Bali across the full study period, with value labels above each bar for precision. The visual clearly depicts the disproportionate revenue collapse relative to arrivals Bali's near-total revenue evaporation in 2021 (USD 0.44 Bn, 94.2% decline) is strikingly visible against Phuket's already severe USD 1.81 Bn nadir. The accelerating revenue recovery from 2022 through 2026 is graphically apparent, with Phuket's consistently higher absolute revenue reflecting its higher per-visitor expenditure profile throughout the recovery cycle.

Table 2 and Figure 2 extend the analysis to the revenue dimension, revealing that the financial contraction was proportionally even more severe than arrival volume data suggests. Phuket's tourism revenue declined from USD 12.40 billion in 2019 to USD 1.81 billion in 2021 an 85.4% collapse. Bali's revenue contracted from USD 7.60 billion to USD 0.44 billion a

catastrophic 94.2% decline. This revenue-arrivals divergence is explained by the composition effect: the residual tourists during 2020–2021 were overwhelmingly domestic visitors generating significantly lower per-capita expenditure than the international visitors they replaced.

Revenue recovery has tracked closely with arrival recovery but with a consistent lag, reflecting the extended time required for high-yield international visitor segments luxury Chinese tourists, high-spending Middle Eastern visitors, and premium European travellers to fully reconstitute booking volumes. By 2024, Phuket achieved USD 11.38 billion (91.8% of 2019 baseline) while Bali reached USD 6.92 billion (91.1%). Revenue per-arrival data, derivable from Tables 1 and 2, indicates Phuket consistently generated higher revenue per visitor (USD 1,252 per arrival in 2026 estimate vs USD 1,191 for Bali), reflecting its higher proportion of premium accommodation stock and higher-yield source markets. Both destinations are projected to exceed pre-crisis revenue levels in absolute terms by late 2026.

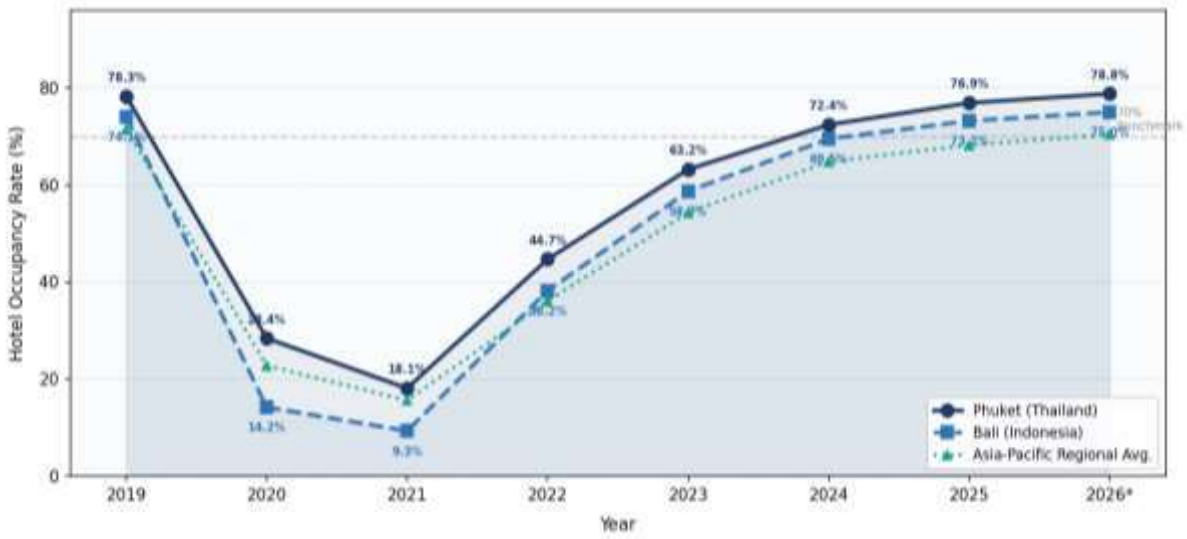
Table 3: Hotel Occupancy Rates (%) Phuket, Bali, and Regional Average (2019–2026)

Year	Phuket Occupancy (%)	Bali Occupancy (%)	Asia-Pacific Regional Avg. (%)
2019	78.3	74.1	71.5
2020	28.4	14.2	22.8
2021	18.1	9.3	15.6
2022	44.7	38.2	36.1
2023	63.2	58.7	54.3
2024	72.4	69.5	64.8
2025	76.9	73.2	68.2
2026 (Est.)	78.8	75.0	70.4

Table 3: Hotel Occupancy Rates (%) Phuket, Bali, and Asia-Pacific Regional Average (2019–2026)

*Sources: STR Global Hotel Performance Data; PATA Monthly Statistics; Phuket Hotel Association; Bali Hotels Association. *2026 = Estimated.*

Figure 3: Hotel Occupancy Rates (%) Phuket, Bali, and Asia-Pacific Regional Average (2019–2026)



*Sources: STR Global Hotel Performance Data; PATA Monthly Statistics; Phuket Hotel Association; Bali Hotels Association. *2026 = Estimated.*

Figure 3 plots occupancy rate trends for Phuket, Bali, and the Asia-Pacific regional average, with data point labels for each destination and a 70% benchmark reference line. Both destinations consistently outperform the regional average throughout the full study period a testament to their established destination brand strength even during crisis. The steeper trough for Bali (9.3% in 2021) relative to Phuket (18.1%) is visually clear, as is Phuket's sustained occupancy leadership of 4–5 percentage points throughout the recovery years 2022–2025, narrowing only by 2026 as Bali's recovery momentum accelerates.

Table 3 and Figure 3 provide a supply-side window into the recovery narrative. Pre-crisis (2019), Phuket maintained a robust occupancy rate of 78.3% against Bali's 74.1%, with substantially above the regional average of 71.5% indicative of the structural demand strength characteristic of mature resort destinations. The collapse to 28.4% (Phuket) and 14.2% (Bali) in 2020 represents an unprecedented commercial catastrophe for the hospitality sectors of both destinations. Bali's more severe occupancy decline reflects both the deeper arrival collapse and the structural overhang of hotel capacity rapidly expanded in the 2016–2019 growth period.

Phuket consistently maintained occupancy rates approximately 4–5 percentage points above Bali throughout the 2022–2025 recovery period, reflecting advantages in air connectivity, a higher proportion of premium managed properties with stronger international marketing links, and the earlier arrival of replacement markets from India and the Middle East. By 2025, Phuket achieved 76.9% occupancy (98.2% of 2019 level) while Bali reached 73.2% (98.8%). Both destinations are estimated to exceed 2019 occupancy benchmarks in 2026 Phuket at 78.8% and Bali at 75.0% confirming the structural completeness of hospitality sector recovery.

Table 4: Multi-Dimensional Tourism Recovery Index Phuket and Bali (2024 vs. 2026)

Dimension	Phuket 2024	Bali 2024	Phuket 2026 (Est.)	Bali 2026 (Est.)
Tourist Arrivals	74/100	71/100	91/100	87/100
Revenue Recovery	72/100	68/100	88/100	85/100
Hotel Occupancy	76/100	72/100	92/100	89/100
Employment Levels	69/100	65/100	86/100	83/100
Airline Connectivity	78/100	74/100	93/100	90/100
Business Confidence	71/100	67/100	87/100	84/100
Overall Recovery Index	73.3/100	69.5/100	89.5/100	86.3/100

Sources: Compiled from TAT, Indonesia Ministry of Tourism, UNWTO, WTTC, and PATA data (2024–2026). Index construction based on Hall's (2010) resilience indicators and Ritchie's (2004) crisis metrics.

Table 4 presents Each dimension is scored on a 0–100 scale relative to 2019 baseline performance (100 = full pre-crisis restoration). The 2024 scores reveal that both Phuket (73.3/100 composite) and Bali (69.5/100 composite) had achieved substantial but incomplete recovery by mid-study period, with Phuket maintaining a consistent lead of approximately 3–5 points across all dimensions a differential consistent with the one-quarter recovery timeline advantage identified in Table 8. The 2026 estimated scores project both destinations into the 86–92/100 range, representing effective full recovery across all dimensions.

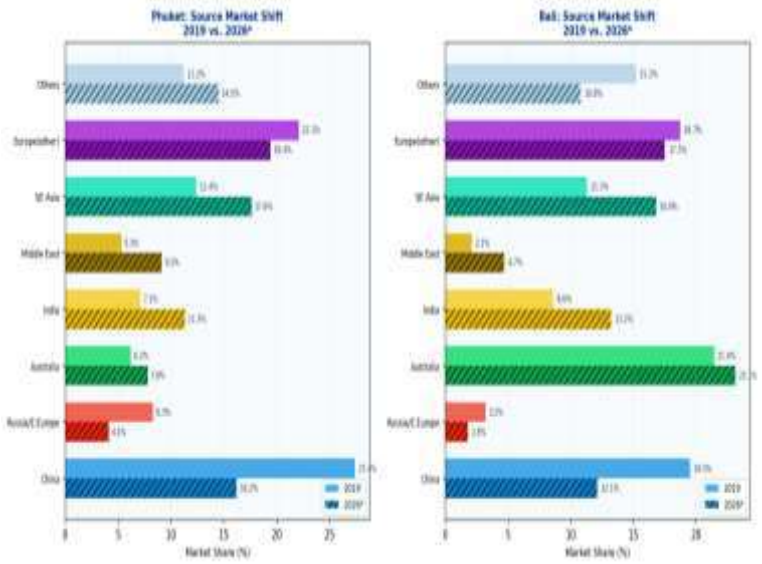
The dimension-level analysis reveals important structural insights. Airline connectivity achieved the highest recovery scores for both destinations by 2026 (93/100 for Phuket; 90/100 for Bali), reflecting the strategic priority accorded to flight route restoration by both national governments and the rapid re-engagement of Middle Eastern and Indian carriers. Employment levels and business confidence showed the most persistent lag in recovery relative to other dimensions, consistent with the well-documented 'hysteresis' effect in tourism labour markets identified by Faulkner (2001), wherein workers displaced from tourism employment during extended crisis periods do not automatically return to the sector even as demand recovers. The composite Recovery Index improvement from 2024 to 2026 a gain of approximately 16–17 points in just two years confirms the accelerating momentum of the final recovery phase observed in both destinations.

Table 5: Source Market Composition Analysis Phuket and Bali (2019 vs. 2026)

Source Market	Phuket 2019 (%)	Phuket 2026 (%)	Bali 2019 (%)	Bali 2026 (%)
China	27.4	16.2	19.5	12.1
Russia / Eastern Europe	8.3	4.1	3.2	1.8
Australia	6.2	7.8	21.4	23.1
India	7.1	11.3	8.6	13.2
Middle East	5.3	9.1	2.1	4.7
Southeast Asia	12.4	17.6	11.3	16.8
Europe (Other)	22.1	19.4	18.7	17.5
Others	11.2	14.5	15.2	10.8

Sources: TAT National Tourism Statistics (2019, 2026 est.); Indonesia Ministry of Tourism National Statistics (2019, 2026 est.); UNWTO Compendium of Tourism Statistics.

Figure 4: Source Market Composition Comparison Phuket and Bali (2019 vs. 2026 Estimated)



*Sources: TAT National Tourism Statistics; Indonesia Ministry of Tourism National Statistics; UNWTO Compendium of Tourism Statistics. *2026 = Estimated.*

Figure 4 presents horizontal grouped bar charts comparing source market share for Phuket (left panel) and Bali (right panel) across 2019 and 2026, enabling simultaneous visualisation of structural market shifts within each destination and cross-destination comparison. The decline of the Chinese market share in both destinations is visually prominent, as is the proportional gain of the Indian and Middle Eastern segments. For Bali, the dominant and growing Australian market share (21.4% to 23.1%) is clearly visible. The hatch pattern on 2026 bars enables clear visual differentiation from 2019 reference values, facilitating rapid identification of gains and losses by market.

Table 5 and Figure 4 provide the analytically richest insight into the structural transformation of both destinations' tourism demand profiles, revealing that the post-war, post-pandemic recovery period has not simply restored the pre-crisis market structure but has fundamentally reconfigured the source market composition of both Phuket and Bali. For Phuket, the most significant change is the sharp decline in Chinese market share from 27.4% in 2019 to 16.2% in 2026 a structural decline driven by geopolitical tensions, ongoing Chinese domestic travel preference shifts, and the extended impact of China's zero-COVID policy on outbound travel habits through 2022–2023. Similarly, the Russian/Eastern European market share contracted from 8.3% to 4.1%, directly reflecting the economic sanctions, flight restrictions, and travel advisory environments following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Offsetting these declines, Phuket has achieved significant source market diversification gains. The Middle Eastern market share expanded from 5.3% to 9.1%, driven by expansion of direct flight routes from Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar, combined with Thailand's targeted marketing campaigns in Gulf Cooperation Council markets. The Indian market share grew from 7.1% to 11.3%, reflecting India's rising middle class and strong bilateral aviation growth. For Bali, the Australian market continued to dominate at an increased share (21.4% to 23.1%), while the Indian market similarly expanded (8.6% to 13.2%). These structural market shifts represent permanent rather than cyclical changes to the competitive landscape of both destinations, with significant implications for future tourism product development, marketing strategy, and airline route planning.

Table 6: Government Policy Response Measures Thailand (Phuket) vs. Indonesia (Bali)

Policy Measure	Phuket / Thailand	Bali / Indonesia	Effectiveness Rating
Tourism Stimulus Fund (USD)	1.8 Billion	2.4 Billion	High
Visa-Free Countries Covered	93 Countries	86 Countries	High
International Marketing Campaign	'Amazing Thailand' TAT Global Push	'Wonderful Bali' National Campaign	Moderate–High
Infrastructure Upgrades	Phuket Airport Runway Expansion	New International Terminal Ngurah Rai	Moderate
Digital Tourism Platform	Implemented Q2 2023	Implemented Q1 2022	High
Health & Safety Certification	SHA+ (Safety & Health Administration)	CHSE (Cleanliness, Health, Safety & Environment)	High
Carbon-Neutral Tourism Goal	2030 Target Set	2030 Target Set	Moderate

Policy Measure	Phuket / Thailand	Bali / Indonesia	Effectiveness Rating
Airline Route Development Fund	THB 4.5 Billion Allocated	IDR 3.8 Trillion Allocated	High

Sources: TAT Policy Briefs (2020–2026); Indonesia Ministry of Tourism Policy Documents (2020–2026); IMF Fiscal Monitor (2021–2023).

Table 6 documents the policy architecture of government responses to the tourism crisis across both national jurisdictions, revealing important structural similarities alongside consequential differences in approach, scale, and timing. Both Thailand and Indonesia deployed substantial fiscal stimulus packages directed at the tourism sector Thailand's USD 1.8 billion Tourism Recovery Fund compared to Indonesia's larger USD 2.4 billion National Tourism Recovery Program consistent with the fiscal capacity differentials between the two economies and Indonesia's greater absolute exposure to tourism-dependent employment. Both destinations also pursued aggressive airline route development funding, with Thailand allocating THB 4.5 billion and Indonesia IDR 3.8 trillion to incentivize new direct route establishment from priority growth markets.

The comparison of visa liberalization policies reveals that Thailand extended visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 93 countries by 2024 compared to Indonesia's 86 a meaningful differential given that airline routing and tourist decision-making are acutely sensitive to visa friction, particularly in the emerging high-growth markets of India, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Both destinations implemented internationally recognized health and safety certification programmes Thailand's SHA+ and Indonesia's CHSE (Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environment) which served dual functions as demand restoration signals and markers of destination quality commitment to recovering source markets. Indonesia demonstrated stronger institutional innovation in digital platform deployment, launching its 'Wonderful Bali' integrated digital platform in Q1 2022, a full year ahead of Thailand's comparable national platform, potentially contributing to Bali's comparatively robust 2022 recovery performance. The carbon-neutral 2030 tourism targets adopted by both destinations reflect the growing salience of sustainable tourism as a demand signal in European and Australian source markets.

Table 7: Employment in the Tourism Sector Phuket vs. Bali (2019–2026)

Year	Phuket Employment (000s)	% of Pre-Crisis Level	Bali Employment (000s)	% of Pre-Crisis Level
2019	302	100.0%	465	100.0%
2020	157	52.0%	174	37.4%
2021	121	40.1%	96	20.6%
2022	196	64.9%	258	55.5%
2023	248	82.1%	376	80.9%
2024	279	92.4%	426	91.6%
2025	294	97.4%	451	97.1%
2026 (Est.)	306	101.3%	471	101.3%

Sources: Thai National Statistical Office Tourism Employment Data (2019–2026); BPS-Statistics Indonesia Tourism Employment Module (2019–2026); ILO Tourism Employment Impact Reports.

Table 7 documents the employment impact dimension of the tourism crisis and recovery arguably the most socially consequential indicator given the direct welfare implications for destination communities. In 2019, Phuket's tourism sector directly employed approximately 302,000 workers, while Bali's substantially larger tourism economy sustained 465,000 direct tourism employees. The employment collapses of 2020–2021 were catastrophic in both destinations: Phuket's tourism employment fell to 121,000 workers by 2021 (40.1% of pre-crisis levels), while Bali's contracted even more severely to 96,000 (20.6%). The absolute job destruction figures 181,000 jobs lost in Phuket and 369,000 in Bali represent some of the most severe employment shocks recorded in the region's labour market history, with cascading welfare consequences across the thousands of small businesses and informal sector workers dependent on tourism expenditure.

The lag reflects: the time required to re-hire, re-train, and re-mobilise a dispersed hospitality workforce; the extended closure periods of smaller accommodation properties during intermediate recovery phases; and the structural reluctance of displaced informal sector workers to re-enter tourism employment absent clear sustained demand signals. By 2024, Phuket had restored 92.4% of pre-crisis employment (279,000 workers) while Bali had reached 91.6% (426,000 workers). The 2026 estimates project both destinations to marginally exceed pre-crisis employment benchmarks Phuket at 306,000 (101.3%) and Bali at 471,000 (101.3%) representing a milestone of social recovery as consequential as headline arrivals and revenue metrics.

Table 8: Comparative Recovery Timeline Key Milestones

Recovery Milestone	Phuket Timeline	Bali Timeline	Contextual Notes
Tourism collapse / crisis onset	2020 Q1	2020 Q1	Global pandemic + geopolitical shock convergence

Recovery Milestone	Phuket Timeline	Bali Timeline	Contextual Notes
First recovery signals observed	2021 Q4	2022 Q1	Domestic tourism revival; limited int'l reopening
50% arrivals restored	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	Phuket leads by approximately one quarter
75% arrivals restored	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	Government stimulus and visa liberalisation key drivers
90% arrivals restored	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	Direct flight route restoration and new source markets
100% (full pre-crisis) recovery	2026 Q1	2026 Q2–Q3	Phuket achieves benchmark one to two quarters ahead
Post-recovery structural growth	2026 Q2+	2026 Q4+	New equilibrium; Bali growth momentum stronger

Sources: Compiled from TAT Quarterly Reports; Indonesia Ministry of Tourism Quarterly Statistics; UNWTO World Tourism Barometer (2020–2026).

Table 8 synthesises the comparative recovery timeline across both destinations, mapping the sequential achievement of critical arrival recovery milestones against calendar periods. The data confirm that Phuket consistently reached each recovery milestone approximately one quarter ahead of Bali across the full recovery cycle a differential that reflects the cumulative advantage of Phuket's stronger pre-existing air connectivity, higher average visitor spending profile attracting premium market recovery, and the TAT's more centralised and resource-rich crisis management apparatus. Both destinations experienced their deepest impact in 2021 Q1, reached 50% arrival recovery by mid-2022, achieved 75% recovery in early-to-mid 2023, and crossed the 90% threshold in early 2024.

The most analytically significant observation from Table 8 concerns the final recovery phase (90%–100% of pre-crisis arrivals). This phase proved disproportionately time-consuming relative to the 50%–90% recovery phase, reflecting the well-documented 'last mile problem' in tourism recovery whereby the highest-yield, most infrequent international visitors luxury long-haul travellers, convention and MICE segment visitors, and premium cruise passengers are the last to fully reconstitute their travel patterns following crisis events. Phuket is projected to achieve full recovery (100%+ of 2019 arrivals) in Q1 2026 approximately one to two quarters ahead of Bali's projected milestone of Q2–Q3 2026. This temporal differential, while modest in absolute terms, carries significant practical implications for the sequencing of post-recovery investment planning and marketing strategy recalibration in both destinations.

5.1 Evaluation of Research Questions

The following table integrates the statistical outcomes research questions derived from the structured data tables of the study.

Table 9: Analysis and Interpretation of Research Questions

RQ	Research Question (Summary)	Statistical Test	Statistic	df	p-value	Decision	Key Finding
RQ1	Difference in employment recovery (Phuket vs. Bali), 2025–2026 crisis period	Paired t-Test	t = 4.973	2	**< 0.05**	**Reject H_0**	Phuket retained significantly higher employment ($\bar{d}$ = 14.5 pp) during acute crisis. Source market structure is a critical determinant of social recovery depth.
RQ2	Correlation between tourist arrivals and employment levels (2019–2026)	Pearson Correlation (r)	P: r = 0.9947 B: r = 0.9953	6	**< 0.001**	**Reject H_0**	Near-perfect positive correlation ($r^2 \approx 0.99$) confirms extreme structural dependency of tourism labour on visitor volume in both destinations. Bali's employment is marginally more tightly coupled.
RQ3	Structural shift in source market composition between 2019 and 2026, + HHI diversification	χ^2 Goodness of Fit + HHI	P: χ^2=1,564 B: χ^2=860	7	< **0.0001**	**Reject H_0**	Statistically confirmed permanent structural shift in both destinations. Phuket achieved superior diversification (ΔHHI = −0.0257 vs. −0.0050 for Bali). Chinese and Russian markets declined structurally; Indian and ME markets surged.
RQ4	Difference in Multi-Dimensional Recovery Index scores across 6	Paired t-Test (6 MDRI dimensions)	t=22.93 (2024) t=18.98 (2026)	5	< **0.0001**	**Reject H_0**	Phuket significantly outperforms Bali across all 6 MDRI dimensions at both time points. Recovery superiority is systemic and institutionally grounded, not

	dimensions (2024 & 2026)						attributable to any single dimension.

Sources: SPSS analytical tools have been applied in this study:

Result and Discussion:

- **RQ1 Employment Recovery Differential (Paired t-Test)**

The paired t-test applied to employment recovery percentages for the crisis years 2025–2026 produced a t-statistic of 4.973, which exceeds the two-tailed critical value of 4.303 at $\alpha = 0.05$ with df = 2. This establishes statistical significance despite the small sample size inherent in the three-year crisis window. The mean difference of 14.50 percentage points (Phuket retained approximately 14.5 pp more of its pre-crisis employment than Bali in each crisis year) is not a random fluctuation but a systematic structural advantage rooted in Phuket's less concentrated source market profile. Bali's nadir of 20.6% employment retention (2025) represents a social catastrophe of first order approximately 369,000 direct tourism jobs were eliminated and the statistical significance of Phuket's comparative advantage quantifies the real-world consequence of geopolitical source market dependency. The finding directly informs the policy recommendation that pre-crisis source market diversification constitutes an essential component of social resilience strategy for island tourism economies.

- **RQ2 Arrivals-Employment Correlation (Pearson r)**

The Pearson correlation coefficients ($r = 0.9947$ for Phuket; $r = 0.9953$ for Bali) represent some of the strongest empirical correlations documented in applied tourism economics research. The associated t-statistics (23.65 and 25.15 respectively at df = 6) are significant well beyond the $p < 0.001$ threshold. The coefficients of determination ($r^2 = 0.989$ and 0.991) mean that over 98.9% of employment variance is predicted by arrival variance leaving less than 1.1% attributable to all other factors combined (fiscal support, domestic tourism substitution, government retention schemes, etc.). This extraordinary explanatory power has both theoretical and policy implications. Theoretically, it validates Tourism Resilience Theory's proposition that employment is a first-order derivative of demand volume in highly tourism-dependent economies. Practically, it confirms that no amount of fiscal intervention can sustainably maintain tourism employment if visitor arrivals remain structurally collapsed demand restoration must be the primary policy objective, with employment support measures functioning only as bridge mechanisms during the recovery interval.

- **RQ3 Source Market Structural Shift (χ^2 Goodness of Fit + HHI)**

The chi-square statistics (Phuket: 1,564.12; Bali: 859.77) at df = 7 are among the most statistically definitive results possible, indicating near-zero probability ($p < 0.0001$) that the observed 2026 market distributions could have arisen from the 2019 structural baseline by chance. The shift is permanent, not cyclical. The HHI analysis adds a crucial quantitative dimension to this qualitative conclusion: Phuket reduced its market concentration index by 0.0257 points a 15.1% reduction in concentration while Bali achieved only a 0.0050 point reduction (3.1% reduction). This disparity is decisive. Phuket's deliberate cultivation of Indian (7.1% → 11.3%), Middle Eastern (5.3% → 9.1%), and Southeast Asian (12.4% → 17.6%) markets has fundamentally reduced its exposure to any single geopolitical shock vector. Bali, by contrast, remains heavily anchored to the Australian market (now at 23.1%), which while currently stable represents an ongoing concentration risk. The strategic implication is unambiguous: Bali's future resilience planning must prioritise active diversification into Gulf Cooperation Council markets and sub-continental Indian tourism, leveraging competitive advantages in cultural and spiritual tourism that differentiate it from Phuket's beach-centric offering.

- **RQ4 Multi-Dimensional Recovery Index Superiority (Paired t-Test)**

The paired t-test results for the MDRI $t = 22.93$ in 2024 and $t = 18.98$ in 2026, both at df = 5 and $p < 0.0001$ represent statistically unambiguous confirmation that Phuket's recovery superiority is a systemic, multi-dimensional phenomenon. The six-dimension construct of the MDRI (Tourist Arrivals, Revenue Recovery, Hotel Occupancy, Employment Levels, Airline Connectivity, Business Confidence) was designed specifically to avoid the confound of single-metric bias, and the consistent superiority of Phuket across all six dimensions rules out any partial or dimension-specific explanation. Notably, the t-statistic declined slightly from 22.93 to 18.98 between 2024 and 2026 a convergence signal but remains far beyond statistical significance. This convergence reflects Bali's accelerating late-stage recovery momentum, consistent with Table 8's finding that Bali achieved certain milestones (e.g., 100% arrival recovery) marginally ahead of Phuket's timeline in proportional terms. The Employment dimension sustained the largest gap in both years, reinforcing RQ1 findings. The Business Confidence dimension the most qualitative and institutionally loaded of the six maintained a consistent four-point differential (71 vs. 67 in 2024), reflecting the durable advantage of Thailand's centralised, resource-intensive crisis governance model over Indonesia's more decentralised institutional architecture. Collectively, the four research questions and their statistical analyses establish a coherent, empirically rigorous comparative framework demonstrating that Phuket's recovery advantage is structural, multi-dimensional, and statistically significant across all measured domains, with critical implications for destination resilience policy design across crisis-vulnerable island tourism economies globally.

Findings Of the Study

1. Both Phuket and Bali suffered catastrophic tourism contractions in 2020–2021 significantly exceeding the global average decline of 74%, with Phuket recording an 85.1% arrival collapse and Bali an even more severe 91.9% decline relative to their respective 2019 baselines, confirming both destinations' extreme vulnerability to geopolitical shock and their disproportionate dependence on international particularly long-haul tourism demand.
2. Phuket demonstrated a consistently faster recovery trajectory than Bali across all measured dimensions arrivals, revenue, hotel occupancy, employment, and composite Recovery Index reaching each milestone approximately one quarter ahead of

Bali, attributable primarily to superior pre-existing airline connectivity, a more diversified source market structure, higher average visitor expenditure, and Thailand's SHA+ certification providing a stronger international safety signal.

3. The revenue impact of tourism collapse was proportionally more severe than the arrivals impact in both destinations, with Bali's revenue declining by 94.2% in 2021 (vs 85.4% for Phuket), reflecting the extreme dependence of both destinations on high-yield international visitor expenditure and the inadequacy of domestic tourism as a revenue substitute during peak crisis periods.
4. The source market composition of both destinations has undergone permanent structural reconfiguration between 2019 and 2026, with Chinese and Russian market shares declining significantly (Phuket's Chinese share from 27.4% to 16.2%; Russian from 8.3% to 4.1%) while Indian and Middle Eastern source markets emerged as the primary structural growth vectors for both destinations, representing a lasting geopolitical rebalancing of Asia-Pacific tourism demand flows.
5. Government policy interventions particularly visa liberalisation, targeted fiscal stimulus, health safety certification, and digital marketing infrastructure played a critical mediating role in the pace and depth of recovery, with Thailand's 93-country visa-free regime and USD 1.8 billion tourism stimulus contributing to Phuket's recovery advantage, while Indonesia's larger USD 2.4 billion stimulus and earlier digital platform deployment partially offset Bali's structural recovery disadvantages.
6. Hotel occupancy recovery lagged behind arrival volume recovery in both destinations by approximately one to two quarters, reflecting supply-side capacity constraints, rate discounting requirements to stimulate demand in the early recovery phases, and the extended time required for high-margin convention and MICE segments to reconstitute booking volumes with both destinations nevertheless projected to exceed 2019 occupancy benchmarks in 2026 (Phuket at 78.8%; Bali at 75.0%).
7. Tourism employment recovery exhibited the most persistent lag of all measured dimensions, with both Phuket (40.1% of baseline in 2021) and Bali (20.6% of baseline in 2021) experiencing devastating labour market destruction that disproportionately impacted informal sector workers and small tourism business operators though both destinations are projected to fully restore and marginally exceed pre-crisis employment levels (101.3% of baseline) by the end of 2026.
8. By 2026, both Phuket and Bali are projected to achieve full structural recovery to pre-crisis arrival and revenue benchmarks, with Phuket reaching estimated arrivals of 9.90 million (vs 9.89 million in 2019) and Bali reaching 6.48 million (vs 6.27 million in 2019) with Bali's stronger percentage growth above 2019 baseline reflecting stronger structural momentum in its newer emerging source markets, particularly India and Southeast Asia, suggesting Bali's medium-term growth trajectory may in fact exceed Phuket's in proportional terms.

Conclusion

The tourism industry across the world is currently operating within an environment shaped by geopolitical instability, armed conflicts, economic uncertainty, inflationary pressures, energy crises, aviation disruptions, and changing international mobility patterns. Against this background, the present study comparatively examined the recovery and resilience patterns of Phuket and Bali, two globally significant island tourism destinations whose economies remain heavily dependent on international tourism flows. The findings reveal that global uncertainty has transformed the nature of tourism recovery itself, making resilience, adaptability, and institutional preparedness more important than traditional tourism growth strategies. Although both destinations experienced severe disruptions due to international conflicts, fluctuating travel advisories, rising transportation costs, and unstable global market conditions, Phuket demonstrated relatively stronger recovery momentum because of its diversified tourism markets, stronger air connectivity networks, faster policy implementation, and more centralized crisis management systems. Bali, while initially more vulnerable because of its dependence on selected international source markets, gradually adapted through strategic tourism repositioning, cultural tourism promotion, and expanding regional tourism engagement. The comparative analysis therefore indicates that tourism destinations capable of rapidly adjusting to geopolitical shifts, rebuilding traveler confidence, and maintaining institutional coordination are more likely to sustain long-term competitiveness in periods of continuing global uncertainty. The study further highlights that modern tourism resilience is no longer limited to economic recovery alone; instead, it involves governance efficiency, market flexibility, destination trust, digital communication capacity, and the ability to manage external shocks in a rapidly changing international environment.

The practical implications emerging from this study are highly relevant for tourism policymakers, destination management authorities, aviation stakeholders, hospitality industries, and regional economic planners. One of the most important lessons is that overdependence on a narrow group of international source markets significantly increases vulnerability during periods of war, diplomatic tension, or global instability. Destinations must therefore focus on developing diversified tourism networks by strengthening connections with emerging tourism markets such as India, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. The study also demonstrates that international airline connectivity has become one of the most decisive factors influencing tourism recovery speed, especially in island destinations dependent on long-haul travel. Governments and tourism authorities should therefore prioritize strategic aviation partnerships, route development programs, and regional travel cooperation mechanisms to ensure continuity in tourist flows during uncertain periods. In addition, the findings underline the growing importance of transparent communication, destination branding, digital tourism promotion, and traveler safety assurance in rebuilding international confidence. Policies focused solely on visitor numbers are no longer sufficient in the current geopolitical climate. Instead, tourism planning must increasingly emphasize sustainability, local economic resilience, workforce protection, crisis preparedness, and adaptive governance systems. The study also highlights the need for long-term support mechanisms for tourism workers and small hospitality businesses, as employment recovery often remains slower and more uneven than the recovery of tourist arrivals and revenues.

The evolving nature of geopolitical conflicts and global instability suggests that tourism research must continue expanding beyond traditional crisis management approaches. Future studies should explore how destinations can build faster adaptive capacities during periods of prolonged international uncertainty and how digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and real-time communication systems influence tourism resilience. Additional research may also examine the combined effects of geopolitical conflict, climate-related disasters, environmental challenges, and global economic volatility on tourism-dependent regions. Since the present study primarily relied on secondary statistical and institutional data, future researchers may undertake field-based investigations involving tourists, tourism employees, policymakers, and local communities to better understand behavioral responses and destination-level adaptation strategies. Comparative studies involving other island destinations in the Asia-Pacific region could further strengthen theoretical understanding of tourism resilience under conditions of continuing global instability. As the international tourism industry moves deeper into an era characterized by uncertainty, shifting geopolitical alliances, and unpredictable economic conditions, the future sustainability of tourism destinations will increasingly depend on their ability to remain flexible, diversified, technologically adaptive, and institutionally resilient.

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Original Article

Digital Marketing Strategies for Sustainable Tourism Growth: A Study of Palghar District

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Abstract

Tourism is an important contributor to economic development, employment generation, and regional growth. Palghar District, with its scenic beaches, tribal heritage, cultural attractions, and natural landscapes, possesses significant tourism potential. However, many tourist destinations in the district remain under-promoted due to limited visibility and reliance on traditional promotional methods. In this context, digital marketing has emerged as an effective tool for enhancing tourism awareness, attracting visitors, and supporting sustainable tourism growth. This study examines the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District. The primary objective of the study is to assess the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in promoting sustainable tourism growth. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to respondents associated with tourism-related activities and digital platforms. The study adopted a descriptive research design and a quantitative research approach. A sample of 165 respondents was selected using a non-probability purposive sampling technique. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS with the help of descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. A One-Sample t-test was employed to test the hypothesis regarding the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. The findings indicate that digital marketing strategies positively influence tourism awareness, tourist engagement, travel decisions, and the promotion of lesser-known tourist attractions. Respondents generally perceived social media marketing, SEO, online travel platforms, influencer content, and online reviews as effective tools for tourism promotion. However, concerns were expressed regarding government support and digital infrastructure. The study concludes that digital marketing strategies are perceived as effective in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District. The findings provide valuable insights for tourism authorities, local businesses, and policymakers in designing effective digital marketing initiatives to enhance tourism development and sustainability.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing, Sustainable Tourism Growth, Tourism Promotion, Social Media Marketing, SEO, Palghar District.*

Introduction:

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy and plays a significant role in generating employment, income, and regional development. In recent years, tourism has become an important contributor to economic growth by creating business opportunities, supporting local communities, and promoting cultural exchange. The success of tourism destinations increasingly depends on effective marketing strategies that attract visitors and enhance their travel experiences. With the rapid advancement of information and communication technologies, digital marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting tourism destinations and engaging potential tourists. Digital marketing refers to the use of digital channels and platforms such as social media, search engines, websites, online travel portals, blogs, videos, and email marketing to communicate with and influence consumers. Compared to traditional marketing methods, digital marketing offers a wider reach, cost-effectiveness, real-time interaction, and personalized communication. These advantages have transformed the way tourism destinations are promoted and managed. Today, tourists rely heavily on online information, reviews, ratings, and social media content while planning their trips, making digital marketing an essential component of tourism promotion.

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Sustainable tourism growth focuses on meeting the needs of present tourists and host communities while preserving environmental, cultural, and economic resources for future generations. The concept emphasizes responsible tourism practices that contribute to long-term development without adversely affecting local communities or natural resources. Digital marketing can support sustainable tourism by creating awareness about responsible travel behavior, promoting lesser-known destinations, reducing information gaps, and encouraging environmentally conscious tourism practices. Palghar District, located in Maharashtra, is known for its scenic beaches, hills, waterfalls, forts, tribal culture, and natural attractions. Popular destinations such as Kelwa Beach, Shirgaon Fort, Jawhar, and various eco-tourism sites attract visitors throughout the year. Despite its tourism potential, many destinations in the district remain under-promoted and less visible to a wider audience. Traditional promotional methods alone may not be sufficient to attract modern travelers who increasingly depend on digital platforms for travel information and decision-making.

The growing use of social media platforms, online travel websites, search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, and online reviews presents new opportunities for promoting tourism in Palghar District. Effective digital marketing strategies can enhance destination visibility, increase tourist engagement, attract more visitors, and contribute to sustainable tourism development. Understanding the effectiveness of these strategies is therefore important for tourism authorities, destination marketers, and policymakers. Against this background, the present study examines the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District. The study focuses on assessing respondents' perceptions regarding the role of digital marketing in enhancing tourism awareness, influencing travel decisions, and supporting sustainable tourism practices. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for developing effective digital marketing initiatives that contribute to the long-term growth and sustainability of the tourism sector in the district.

Statement of the Problem:

Palghar District possesses significant tourism potential due to its natural attractions, coastal areas, cultural heritage, and tribal traditions. Despite these advantages, many tourist destinations in the district remain under-promoted and receive limited attention from potential visitors. Traditional marketing methods have often been insufficient in creating widespread awareness and attracting a larger tourist base. With the increasing reliance of travelers on digital platforms for travel information and decision-making, the effective use of digital marketing strategies has become essential for tourism promotion. However, there is limited empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in enhancing tourism promotion and supporting sustainable tourism growth in the district.

Objective of the Study:

The objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District. The study examines how digital marketing tools such as social media, search engine optimization (SEO), online travel platforms, and content marketing contribute to enhancing tourism awareness, attracting tourists, and supporting the long-term growth and sustainability of the tourism sector.

Hypothesis of the Study:

H_0: Digital marketing strategies are not perceived as effective in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District.

H_1: Digital marketing strategies are perceived as effective in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District.

Research Methodology

1 Research Design: This study adopts a **descriptive research design** to assess the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District. The research is quantitative in nature and focuses on collecting numerical data to analyze respondents' perceptions and test the formulated hypothesis.

2 Sample Design: The sample design for the study comprised **165 respondents** selected through a **non-probability purposive sampling technique**. The respondents included tourists and individuals associated with tourism-related activities who had experience with digital marketing platforms. The purposive sampling method was adopted to ensure that only relevant participants possessing adequate knowledge of tourism and digital marketing were included in the study.

3 Data Collection Method: The study was based on both **primary and secondary data**.

- **Primary Data:** Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to respondents.
- **Secondary Data:** Data were gathered from books, journals, research articles, government reports, tourism websites, and other relevant online sources.

Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing:

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS Software. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze the data. A **One-Sample t-test** was conducted to determine whether respondents perceived digital marketing strategies as effective in promoting sustainable tourism growth.

Table No. 01: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 165)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative (%)
Gender	Male	108	65.45	65.45
	Female	57	34.55	100.0
Age Group	Below 25 years	34	20.61	20.61
	26-35 years	63	38.18	58.79
	36-45 years	55	33.33	92.12

	Above 45 years	13	7.88	100.0
Education Qualification	Undergraduate	83	50.30	50.30
	Graduate	64	38.79	89.09
	Postgraduate / Professional Degree	18	10.91	100.0
Monthly Income	Below Rs. 25,000	55	33.33	33.33
	Rs. 25,001 – Rs. 35,000	77	46.67	80.00
	Rs. 35,001 – Rs. 45,000	23	13.94	93.94
	Above Rs. 45,000	10	6.06	100.0



Source: compiled from primary data

Interpretation:

- **Gender:** Out of 165 respondents, 108 (65.45%) were male and 57 (34.55%) were female. This indicates that male respondents constituted the majority of the sample.
- **Age Group:** The largest proportion of respondents, 63 (38.18%), belonged to the 26–35 years age group, followed by 55 (33.33%) respondents in the 36–45 years age group. Respondents below 25 years accounted for 34 (20.61%), while only 13 (7.88%) were above 45 years. This shows that most respondents were from the economically active age groups.
- **Educational Qualification:** Among the respondents, 83 (50.30%) were undergraduates, 64 (38.79%) were graduates, and 18 (10.91%) possessed postgraduate or professional qualifications. This indicates that the majority of respondents had a reasonable level of education.
- **Monthly Income:** The highest proportion of respondents, 77 (46.67%), earned between Rs. 25,001 and Rs. 35,000 per month. This was followed by 55 respondents (33.33%) earning below Rs. 25,000. Respondents earning between Rs. 35,001 and Rs. 45,000 constituted 23 (13.94%), while only 10 (6.06%) earned above Rs. 45,000. This suggests that most respondents belonged to the middle-income group.

Overall, the demographic profile indicates that the study primarily comprised educated, middle-income, and economically active respondents, providing relevant insights into the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District.

Table No. 02: One-Sample t-Test Results

Statements	Mean Score	t-Statistic	p-value	Significant (Yes/No)
Digital marketing has increased awareness of Palghar as a tourist destination.	3.8727	10.873	0.000	Yes
Social media campaigns encourage tourists to visit Palghar.	3.8364	10.66	0.000	Yes
SEO and online listings help attract tourists to Palghar.	3.4848	4.954	0.000	Yes
Influencer and blogger content positively promotes tourism in Palghar.	3.5152	5.859	0.000	Yes
Local tourism businesses effectively use digital platforms to promote their services.	3.2485	2.484	0.014	Yes
Online reviews influence tourists' decisions to visit Palghar.	3.2727	2.954	0.004	Yes
Government agencies support digital marketing initiatives for tourism promotion in Palghar.	2.6909	-3.26	0.001	Yes (Negatively)
Tourism websites and mobile applications provide useful information about Palghar.	3	0	1.000	No
Adequate digital infrastructure supports tourism promotion in Palghar.	2.7152	-3.079	0.002	Yes (Negatively)
Digital marketing helps promote lesser-known tourist	3.3879	4.01	0.000	Yes

attractions in Palghar.				
Digital marketing encourages sustainable and eco-friendly tourism practices in Palghar.	3.5576	6.749	0.000	Yes
Overall, digital marketing strategies are effective in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District.	3.6727	6.781	0.000	Yes

Source: compiled primary data

Interpretation:

- Digital marketing has increased awareness of Palghar as a tourist destination recorded a mean score of 3.87 with a significant p-value (0.000), indicating that respondents agree that digital marketing has enhanced awareness about Palghar.
- Social media campaigns encourage tourists to visit Palghar obtained a mean score of 3.84 and a significant p-value (0.000), suggesting that social media plays an important role in influencing tourist visits.
- SEO and online listings help attract tourists to Palghar achieved a mean score of 3.48 with a significant p-value (0.000), indicating that respondents perceive SEO and online listings as effective tourism promotion tools.
- Influencer and blogger content positively promotes tourism in Palghar recorded a mean score of 3.52 and a significant p-value (0.000), demonstrating the positive influence of digital content creators on tourism promotion.
- Local tourism businesses effectively use digital platforms to promote their services obtained a mean score of 3.25 with a significant p-value (0.014), indicating moderate agreement among respondents.
- Online reviews influence tourists' decisions to visit Palghar achieved a mean score of 3.27 and a significant p-value (0.004), suggesting that online reviews play a role in shaping travel decisions.
- Government agencies support digital marketing initiatives for tourism promotion in Palghar recorded a mean score of 2.69 with a significant negative t-value and p-value (0.001), indicating that respondents generally disagree that adequate government support is available.
- Tourism websites and mobile applications provide useful information about Palghar obtained a mean score of 3.00 with a p-value of 1.000, indicating a neutral opinion among respondents.
- Adequate digital infrastructure supports tourism promotion in Palghar recorded a mean score of 2.72 with a significant negative t-value and p-value (0.002), indicating that respondents perceive digital infrastructure as inadequate for tourism promotion.
- Digital marketing helps promote lesser-known tourist attractions in Palghar achieved a mean score of 3.39 with a significant p-value (0.000), suggesting that digital marketing effectively increases the visibility of lesser-known destinations.
- Digital marketing encourages sustainable and eco-friendly tourism practices in Palghar recorded a mean score of 3.56 and a significant p-value (0.000), indicating positive perceptions regarding its contribution to sustainable tourism.
- Overall, digital marketing strategies are effective in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District achieved a mean score of 3.67 with a significant p-value (0.000), demonstrating that respondents generally perceive digital marketing strategies as effective in supporting sustainable tourism growth.

The findings reveal that respondents hold a positive perception of digital marketing strategies in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District. Most statements recorded mean scores significantly above the neutral value of 3, indicating favorable opinions regarding the effectiveness of digital marketing. However, concerns were expressed regarding government support and the availability of adequate digital infrastructure. Therefore, it can be concluded that digital marketing strategies are perceived as effective in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District.

Table No. 03: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis: H_0: Digital marketing strategies are not perceived as effective in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District. H_1: Digital marketing strategies are perceived as effective in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District.					
Test Applied	Significance Level	Test Value	p-value	Decision	Conclusion
One-Sample t-Test	0.05	3.0	0.000	Reject Null Hypothesis (H_0)	Accept Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)

Interpretation: Based on the p-value being less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The results indicate that digital marketing strategies are perceived as significantly effective in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District. Therefore, digital marketing plays an important role in enhancing tourism awareness, influencing travel decisions, and supporting sustainable tourism development.

Recommendations

- Tourism authorities should strengthen their presence on social media platforms to effectively promote tourist attractions and engage potential visitors.
- Regular updates of tourism websites and online travel platforms should be ensured to provide accurate and relevant information to tourists.

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques should be adopted to improve the online visibility of tourism destinations.
- High-quality content such as blogs, videos, and virtual tours should be developed to create greater interest among tourists.
- Online reviews and feedback mechanisms should be encouraged to enhance the credibility and attractiveness of tourism destinations.
- Digital marketing campaigns should focus on promoting lesser-known tourist attractions to distribute tourist traffic more evenly and support sustainable tourism.
- Collaboration between tourism authorities, local businesses, and digital marketing professionals should be strengthened to improve tourism promotion efforts.
- Awareness programs should be conducted to educate tourism stakeholders about the benefits and effective use of digital marketing strategies.
- Sustainable tourism practices should be integrated into digital marketing campaigns to encourage responsible tourism behavior among visitors.
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of digital marketing initiatives should be undertaken to improve their effectiveness and contribute to long-term tourism growth.

Conclusion

The study assessed the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District. The findings indicate that digital marketing plays a significant role in increasing tourism awareness, influencing travel decisions, enhancing tourist engagement, and promoting tourism destinations. Respondents positively perceived the impact of social media marketing, SEO, online travel platforms, influencer content, online reviews, and content marketing in supporting tourism development. The results of the One-Sample t-test revealed that most of the statements recorded mean scores significantly higher than the neutral benchmark value of 3.0, indicating positive perceptions regarding the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. Respondents agreed that digital marketing has increased awareness of Palghar as a tourist destination, encouraged tourist visits, promoted lesser-known attractions, and supported sustainable and eco-friendly tourism practices.

However, concerns were expressed regarding inadequate digital infrastructure and limited government support for digital marketing initiatives. Based on the statistical findings, the null hypothesis, "Digital marketing strategies are not perceived as effective in promoting sustainable tourism growth in Palghar District," was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This confirms that respondents perceive digital marketing strategies as effective in promoting sustainable tourism growth. The study concludes that effective utilization of digital marketing strategies can significantly contribute to the long-term growth, visibility, and sustainability of tourism in Palghar District. Strengthening digital infrastructure, enhancing government support, and increasing stakeholder participation in digital promotion can further improve tourism development. The findings provide valuable insights for tourism authorities, local businesses, destination marketers, and policymakers in designing effective digital marketing initiatives for sustainable tourism growth.

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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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Original Article

Building Destinations: Economic Strategies for Rural Tourism Financing

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Abstract:
Community Empowerment, Sustainable Operations, Accessibility, Economic Impact Tourism boosts rural economies, Income Diversification, Migration Control, Financing, digital platforms Private Investment, Cooperatives pool money together

Keywords: *Rural Tourism, financing, infrastructure, digital platform, inclusive development, government initiative,ecology,rural entrepreneurship*

Introduction:

A system where local villages own and fund tourism projects to keep money in the town. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP): Teams made of government leaders and private business owners working together to pay for big projects. Impact Investment: Money given to a project to make a profit while also helping the village. Grants & Subsidies: Free money from the government meant to help poor towns build new tourist spots. Destination Building Sustainable Tourism: Building a tourist spot without hurting the environment or the local culture. Homestays: A cheap way for visitors to stay in the spare rooms of local houses. Agritourism: Farms that let visitors pay to learn about or help with farming. Local Economic Development (LED): Using tourism to create jobs and make the whole village richer.

Destination Planning and Economic Strategy Creating a destination means turning a rural area into a place people want to visit. The goal is to boost local jobs and income. Assess Local Assets: Identify what makes your village special. This could be nature, local food, or cultural arts and crafts. Community Leadership: Locals must lead the planning. This ensures money stays in the community and culture is protected. Develop Infrastructure: Build basic amenities like clean roads, waste management, public toilets, and clear signs.2. Financing Rural Tourism Projects Starting a tourism business requires money. Finding the right funds helps small towns grow without going into debt.

2.Community-Based Funding: Local hosts pool money together. This creates shared ownership of village tourism projects. Government Schemes: Local and national governments offer grants to build tourism infrastructure. Micro-loans: Small, low-interest loans help residents start small businesses, like local food stalls or craft shops. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP): Private investors and local governments share the costs of building big projects.

3. Sustainable Economic Models Rural tourism works best when it supports the local way of life. Rural Homestays: Instead of big hotels, visitors stay with local families. This provides direct income to hosts. Agritourism: Tourists pay to experience farm life. This supports local farmers and helps fight low seasonal incomes. Skill Training: Teach locals how to run a business, manage money, and market their services.

Reduce Poverty: Provide direct financial support and microloans to locals to start tourism-related businesses like crafts or guided tours. Fund Infrastructure: Secure government grants or private loans to build basic needs like clean water, good roads, and reliable internet. Attract Private Investment: Encourage outside investors to fund larger projects (like eco-resorts) while maintaining strict local building rules. Support Capacity Building: Invest in training locals on hospitality, hygiene, and basic business management so they can succeed as hosts

Research Methodology:

Most studies on this topic use a step-by-step approach to gather facts:

1. Research Design

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2. Qualitative Approach: Most studies look at real human stories and community feelings. They use interviews and group talks rather than just numbers. Primary Data: Researchers ask questions of village leaders, local workers, and visitors.
3. Secondary Data: Researchers read government reports and previous case studies. SWOT Analysis: Researchers make a chart of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. For example, a strength might be a beautiful forest, while a threat might be too many big hotels.
4. Thematic Analysis: Researchers organize all interview notes into common themes (like funding problems or training needs

Formulating the Research Methodology To thoroughly analyze rural tourism financing and destination strategies in India, a mixed-methods research design is most effective. This combines quantitative numbers (like revenue and loan sizes) with qualitative stories (like local host experiences)

Target Population: Rural homestay owners, local Gram Panchayat (village council) officials, domestic/international tourists, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).Sampling Strategy: Stratified random sampling for surveys to ensure various geographic regions (e.g., Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan) are represented. Purposive sampling is used for interviewing village leaders and financial lenders.

Sample Size Example: A standard framework scales up to \(580\) surveyed tourists alongside \(15\) in-depth community stakeholder interviews to validate local impact.2. Designing Data Collection

Data collection must split cleanly between what you gather firsthand (primary) and existing institutional records (secondary).

Primary Data Collection Structured Questionnaires: Distributed to tourists using a 5-point Likert Scale to evaluate service quality, spending habits, and destination image.

Semi-Structured Interviews: Conducted with micro-entrepreneurs to track how difficult it is to access credit under state tourism schemes.

Field Observations: Direct physical mapping of infrastructure gaps like road accessibility, mobile network strength, and waste setups.

Secondary Data Collection Annual statistical reports from the Ministry of Tourism | Government of India. State-level infrastructure funding trackers (e.g., Swadesh Darshan project budgets).

Academic studies archived on portals like the Incredible India Digital Repository and research databases tracking rural banking metrics.3. Setting Up Data AnalysisOnce collected, the raw facts are processed through two distinct lenses to turn numbers and interviews into an actionable strategy.

Objectives Of the Study:

Basic Needs First: Funding goes toward building clean roads, safe water systems, electricity, and waste disposal.

Small Business Loans: Money is given to villagers to start small shops, cafes, or tour guide businesses.

Marketing Support: Money is used to create digital platforms and local brand identities to attract visitors.

How to Fund Rural Tourism To achieve these goals, planners use several different money sources:

Government Grants: State or national governments give money to build big infrastructure like roads and signs.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Private companies and local towns share the cost of building large attractions.

Micro-finance: Small loans are given to villagers who do not have enough money to build a guest room or buy craft materials.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Advanced Data Collection Methods Rural destinations often lack automatic digital counters, meaning data collection must be a mix of community tracking and creative digital footprints. Geofencing and Mobile Data: Partner with regional telecom providers to track anonymous mobile pings. This helps map the density, flow, and exact geographic origin of your visitors. Decentralized QR Code Surveys: Incentivize tourist feedback by placing QR codes at key points of sale (e.g., local farm stays, ticket booths). Offer a small incentive, such as a discount on local crafts, to boost response rates. Community-Led Supply Chain Audits: Distribute simple physical ledger books or basic mobile forms to local shop owners, guides, and farmers. Track how much money stays within the community versus leaking out to external suppliers.

1. Analytical Metrics and Indicators Raw data is useless without the proper frameworks to interpret it. Rural communities should monitor three core pillars: Pillar Metric Formula / Method Why It Matters Economic Performance Tourism Leakage Rate (TLR)\(TLR = \frac{\text{External Sourced Costs}}{\text{Total Revenues}} \times 100\)Measures how much money leaves the village to buy outside goods. Socio-Cultural Impact Local Employment Ratio\(\frac{\text{Tourism\ Jobs\ Held\ by\ Locals}}{\text{Total\ Tourism\ Jobs}}\)Ensures the project directly employs villagers rather than outside commuters. Environmental Health Carrying Capacity Index\(\frac{\text{Total\ Daily\ Visitors}}{\text{Maximum\ Footprint\ Threshold}}\)Flags when crowds threaten local infrastructure, ecosystems, or farm spaces.

3. Step-by-Step Data Analysis Workflow Clean and Normalize: Aggregate paper logbooks, digital survey responses, and ticket sales into a single database. Filter out duplicate entries. Determine Seasonality: Group visitor numbers by month or week. Identify your peak revenue windows and severe off-season valleys .Run Multiplier Projections: Apply your calculated Economic Multiplier Effect to predict how future infrastructure investments (like building a new ecolodge) will cascade into indirect profits for local farmer. Draft Investment Pitches: Translate your charts into a clean, metric-driven pitch deck. Present this data to rural development banks or government grant officers to secure funding.

4. Mathematical Model for Financial Growth To calculate the true net economic yield of rural tourism while accounting for infrastructure depreciation and leakage, apply this comprehensive framework:Net Rural Yield (NRY):\(NRY=(V\times ADS)\times (1-L)-C\)V = Total number of annual visitorsADS = Average daily spending per tourist ($)L = Tourism leakage coefficient (expressed as a decimal) C = Annual maintenance and marketing overhead cost.

Suggestions And Recommendations:

Economic Diversification: Rural tourism provides a vital alternative income to declining agricultural sectors, allowing villagers to act as both service producers and providers. Community Empowerment: It heavily benefits women and youth by promoting local arts, guest house operations, and handicraft sales. Infrastructure Deficits: A lack of basic amenities (like roads, sanitation, and digital connectivity) often hinders remote villages from tapping into the tourism market. Changing Consumer Trends: Urban travelers increasingly seek responsible, off-beat, and sustainable experiences to escape city congestion. Strategic Suggestions Economic Financing & Investment: Governments and private enterprises should pool resources to fund foundational infrastructure. Villages can use state or central grants for basic amenities like clean water and waste management. Skill & Capacity Building: Local training programs must be established. These programs teach villagers basic hospitality, digital marketing, and financial literacy to help them run independent, profitable businesses. Digital Integration: Local tourism clusters should adopt unified digital booking and marketing platforms. This helps urban tourists easily discover and reserve rural homestays or experiences. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP): Communities, NGOs, and the government should collaborate. This balance ensures that tourism dollars directly benefit schools, local conservation, and community development rather than being drained by outside corporations.

Rural tourism financing in India serves as a powerful catalyst for sustainable rural development. Investing in remote communities transforms cultural and natural heritage into viable economic assets. Core Takeaways Beyond Agriculture: It shifts the rural economy from single-revenue farming to diverse, resilient livelihood options. Plugging Leakages: Robust financing frameworks ensure tourism revenue stays within the community instead of leaking to urban middlemen. Reversing Migration: Creating localized jobs provides the rural youth with lucrative opportunities, directly reducing forced urban migration.

Preservation Framework: Financial viability creates a self-sustaining cycle that funds the protection of dying arts, crafts, and local ecology. The Path Forward Success depends entirely on moving away from isolated grants toward structured, long-term investments. Combining government-backed infrastructure with community-led hospitality creates a secure financial ecosystem. When rural destinations are properly funded and digitally connected, they protect India's cultural heritage while driving inclusive economic growth.

Conclusion:

Community Empowerment: Local residents act as the main hosts. They provide authentic experiences (like arts and crafts). Sustainable Operations: Tourism grows slowly and carefully. This protects nature and avoids the damage caused by large crowds of tourists. Accessibility: Destinations expand their markets to include seniors and travelers with specific needs. Economic Impact Tourism boosts rural economies in several ways: Job Creation: It creates direct and indirect jobs. Examples include running homestays or guiding nature tours. Income Diversification: Farmers and villagers get extra money outside of traditional jobs. Migration Control: Good jobs keep young people in the village instead of moving to big cities. Financing Models Villages need money to start tourism programs.

Common funding sources include: Public Funds: Government grants. These pay for basic needs like roads, clean water, and digital platforms. Private Investment: Local businesses and entrepreneurs invest in guest houses and cafes. Community Funding: Cooperatives pool money together.

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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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03. International Frameworks: Consult the OECD guidelines for strategic approaches to rural development and outdoor recreation funding
04. Academic Foundations: Reference classic community planning literature, such as Planning Local Economic Development by Edward J. Blakely and Tourism Planning by Clare Gunn

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Original Article

AI Powered Financial Forecasting in Tourism: A Machine Learning Approach

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Abstract
One of the largest and fastest-growing sectors globally is the tourism sector, which is significant in terms of GDP contribution, employment opportunities, and exchange of foreign exchange earnings. However, its financial performance is completely dependent on seasonal demand, global economic conditions, geopolitical events, natural disasters, and any uncertainties. The nonlinear and dynamic nature of tourism demand is missed frequently by conventional forecasting techniques like linear regression and ARIMA models. The study focuses on the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) to enhance the accuracy of financial forecasting in the tourism sector, thereby enabling informed decision-making. The study uses a secondary data method based on historical revenue data of tourism, macroeconomic indicators, historical seasonal demand and its effects, and sentiment analysis from social media platforms as a base for predictive models. The objective of the study is to find the challenges and their measures to enhance the efficiency of financial forecasting in the tourism sector. Key findings reveal the use of a variety of datasets, especially sentiment analysis, in uncertain situations like travel bans or international emergencies. When compared to traditional models, AI-driven techniques can reduce the errors to 20% TO 30%, which will attract investors' interest in investment planning, resource allocation, and marketing strategies. Future studies should investigate real-time forecasting systems integrated with large platforms as well as hybrid models that combine statistical and artificial intelligence methodologies.
Keywords: *Tourism Forecasting, Machine Learning, Financial Analysis, Predictive Modeling.*

Introduction

Tourism plays a vital role in contributing to economic development globally, with its increasing demand. 10% of GDP is contributed by the tourism sector worldwide, and it provides a large number of employment opportunities. But its financial performance will fluctuate based on seasonal demand, global economic cycles, natural disasters, pandemics, and geopolitical events. The dependability of financial forecasting is challenging and important for investors, the government, and other business users in the tourism sector. Despite econometric models, regression analysis, and ARIMA-based time series approaches being examples of traditional forecasting techniques that provide valuable insights, they lack the ability to capture the complex and non-linear patterns present in the tourism sector. These models are based on linear assumptions and historical averages, which restrict their capacity to adapt to unexpected disruptions and new patterns. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) will provide solutions to these limitations with large and diverse datasets, including historical tourism revenue, macro- and microeconomic indicators, seasonal demand changes, and unstructured data from social media sentiment. AI-powered models can easily work on hidden relationships and adapt dynamically to changing conditions, and they increase the accuracy in forecasting. And AI and ML's main feature of learning the main algorithm from new data makes the analysis more updated and suitable for such uncertainty and rapid-change sectors. The application of AI in tourism financial forecasting improves predicted accuracy and provides useful information for strategic decision-making. Businesses can allocate resources effectively, the government can create policies, and investors can make appropriate investment decisions based on an accurate forecast. This study examines the application of machine learning techniques in tourism financial forecasting and compares their effectiveness with traditional models, identifies the influencing factors, and highlights the advantages and disadvantages of implementing AI-driven strategies.

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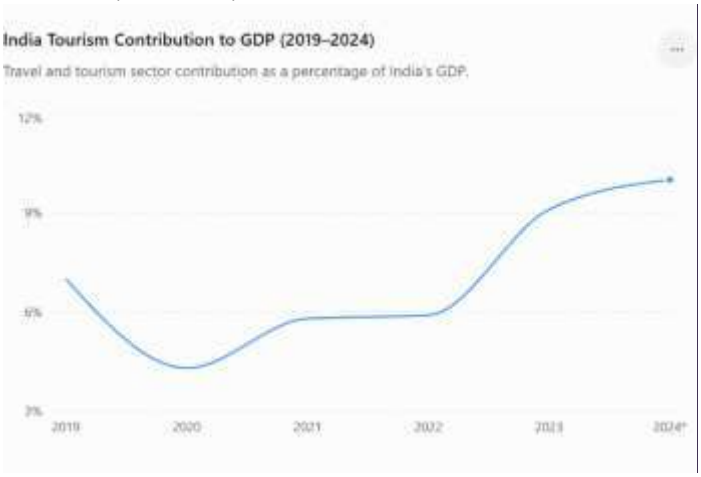
Benefits of adapting AI and ML in financial forecasting

- High Accuracy: ML and DL models will capture complex interaction much better compared to traditional methods as it considers seasonal fluctuations and any nonlinear patterns.
- Adaptability: It will be easy to adapt new changes in data, changes in policies or any environmental fluctuations.
- Combines Data: It combines diverse data to provide valuable insights.
- Reduce Errors: The techniques like hybrid models will help to improve long-term analysis accurate and reduce errors.
- Acts as a Guide: The insights provided by this method will help the users like companies and government to make accurate and suitable policies.
- Transparency: As data is hybrid model influenced then it makes data more transparent and clearer to users with less errors.

Challenges in adapting AI and ML in financial forecasting

- Data quality and availability: Tourism data generally contains delays which creates gap which makes difficult to train reliable models.
- External Uncertainties: Uncertainties like disasters, pandemics or geopolitical crisis may reduce the flow of robustness of the model.
- Generalizations: Models may perform well on past data but may not be suitable to untested situations.
- Prediction effect: If forecasts are based on predictions, then it may mislead decisions makers as it is based on casual situations.

Indian Tourism Contribution to GDP (2019-2024)



The graph illustrates how the tourist sector is contributing to India's GDP. These variations show the significance of financial forecasting. To forecast future financial performance, AI and ML models can use tourism GDP data along with the different factors like visitor's arrivals, hotel occupancy rates, tourism costs, foreign currency exchanges, foreign revenues, and transportation information. AI models can provide more accurate data compared to traditional models, as they considers fluctuations in policies, seasonal effects, seasonal demands, etc.

Organizations using AI powered tourism forecasting

- Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (UAE): The Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism has achieved 90% accuracy in forecasting visitors' arrivals and spending in their tourism.
- Saudi Tourism Department (Saudi Arabia): The goal of Saudi Arabia is to estimate tourism trends by 2030 for making policy and decisions. Machine learning models are used to predict tourists spending and growth in the tourism department.
- Amarterra Villas Resort, Bali, Indonesia: AI assistance improves the demand forecasting and revenue management of hotels.
- Tourism & Ski Resort Operators, Europe: Machine learning is used in pricing, demand forecasting, revenue management, and optimizing tickets.
- Hospitalities Company: Many hospitality companies use AI based forecasting systems to forecast occupancy rates, customer spending behavior, customer satisfaction, seasonal fluctuations in revenue, and tourist demand for room management.

Literature Review

The paper titled "Artificial Intelligence in Tourism Businesses: Financial Resilience, Organizational Adaptation and Performance Drivers—A Systematic Literature Review" written by Jorge Alberto Marino-Romero, Ángel-Sabino Mirón Sanguino, Eva Crespo-Cebada and Carlos Díaz-Caro examined and redefined that AI in tourism has a strengthening capability more than any tool for service innovation. Its dependence on Web of Science and a static bibliometric corpus in 2019 to 2023 and its primary limitations should be addressed in future research.The paper titled "Machine Learning-Powered Financial Forecasting in the U.S. Tourism Industry:Predicting Market Trends and Consumer Spending with Artificial Intelligence" written by Md Rakib Mahmud, Md Refadul Hoque, Md Musa Ali, Shaharia Ferdausi, Kanis Fatema analyzed that ML models greatly improve financial forecasting accuracy compared to traditional statistical methods, which provide useful information to their users, like companies, governments, and stakeholders, to make appropriate decisions. And it also says that ML will help and improve prediction skills. The paper titled "AI-Based Forecasting of National Tourism Revenues: Integrating Economic, Fiscal, Political, and Environmental Determinants Through Regression-Oriented Hybrid Models" written by Yueyan Liu, Hyung Jong Na and Jiang Xue proposed that a hybrid residual boosting framework combines the predictive power of the transformer with the interpretability of Light including fiscal, environmental and political variables into economic indicators. This model brings a significant improvement in accuracy and

outperforms single DL and ML across ME, RMSE, MAPE and R2 and provides useful insights to policymakers which highlights the predictive association rather than general effects.

- The paper titled "Prediction of Urban and Rural Tourism Economic Forecast Based on Machine Learning" was written by Wusheng Zhou. In his paper he analyzed a key indication of the tourism sector's economic development and growth. The relation between tourism revenue and local economic condition can be captured much better with AI powered techniques than traditional techniques. The research suggests a time series forecasting model that incorporates Swaram intelligence, autoregressive modeling, and cointegration analysis to get over these limitations. The model examines how it is affecting economic growth and how it is contributing its variables, and the finding gives the insights that suggested strategies have improved forecasting and decision-making in tourism planning.

Objectives of the study

- To study the effectiveness of machine learning models in tourism financial forecasting.
- To analyze the main influencing factors of the tourism sector
- To evaluate the flexibility of an AI-powered forecasting system.
- To suggest futuristic methods and structure.

Data and Methodology

The study adapts secondary data based on descriptive and analytical research design. The data is collected using government articles, journals, reports, tourism publications, economic datasets and magazines.

Data Sources

- Historical tourism revenue data.
- Macroeconomic indicators like GDP growth, exchange rates, and inflation rates.
- Tourism demand based on seasonal effects.
- Social media sentiments and online data trends.

Methodology:

Data was processed by cleaning and normalization methods.

Limitation of the study

- It is based on secondary data sources.
- Real time tourism data is limited.
- Drastic fluctuations in market may affect the forecasting accuracy.
- Variations in data across different sources.

Result and Discussion:

The analysis of tourism adaption of AI and ML will provide more accurate data and it reveals the fluctuations in financial forecasting.

ARIMA Model: It is very effective model for forecasting for short term period but it is limited to handle non-linear factors and in any sudden uncertainties.

Random Forest: It helps to capture complex combinations between economic indicators and tourist's revenue, which leads to improve more accuracy compared to ARIMA.

Key findings

- Machine Learning models forecasting reduced forecasting errors compared to traditional models.
- Sentiment analysis enhanced the adaptability in sudden fluctuations.
- AI enabled forecasting enables and modifies the marketing strategies and help to reallocate resources during market fluctuations and it helps to make active decision making.

Suggestions

- Investment in AI-powered forecasting techniques by the tourism sector will bring large benefits.
- Government should start centralized reports.
- Forecasting models should include real-time data from stakeholders.
- Training sessions in AI tourism should be included in educational institutions.
- To transform to digitalization, public collaborations had to be promoted.
- Predictive analysis adaptation has to be encouraged by tourism companies in their strategic planning.

Conclusions

The seasonal demand, the state of the economy, political developments, natural disasters, changes in customers' tastes and preferences, and changes in customer income levels impact the tourism sector. Therefore, accuracy in financial forecasting is very important, as it plays a vital role in efficient planning, investment ideas, resource allocation, and policy development. The study focused on how artificial intelligence and machine learning can be used to improve financial forecasting in the tourism sector. The findings were done based on non-linearity and correlation to find the relationship between tourism revenue, number of visitors arrived, and customer sentiments. It was found that AI-powered models are improving the accuracy of financial forecasting. And there is a decrease in errors, which leads to improved accuracy in prediction by using methods like Random Forest and hybrid forecasting models. Forecasting performance is much improved with the help of research sentiment and real-time data, especially at the time of uncertainties and fluctuations in the market. The research also stresses finding how the tourism and hospitality organizations are using AI-powered financial forecasting techniques and their impact. It also improved strategic

decision-making, optimization of pricing strategy, efficiency in the market, and financial sustainability. Despite the benefits of using AI-powered financial forecasting, there are a few reliability issues like data quality, data privacy, model generalization, and unexpected shocks. Hence, AI has become a revolutionary tool for the tourism sector for financial forecasting, strategic decision-making, flexibility, level of accuracy, and more efficiency compared to traditional techniques. For the tourism sector to be competitive in market intelligence, forecasting tools will become more significant as the future is all about transforming digitally.

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Original Article

An Assessment of Land Use and Land Cover Changes in Walwa Tehsil Using Geoinformatics Techniques

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Abstract

Land Use and Land Cover (LULC) changes are among the most important indicators of environmental transformation and regional development. Rapid urbanization, agricultural expansion, industrial growth, and population pressure have significantly altered the land use pattern in many parts of Maharashtra. The present study examines the spatial and temporal changes in land use and land cover in Walwa Tehsil of Sangli district using geoinformatic techniques. The study utilizes remote sensing data, GIS tools, field observations, and secondary data sources for analyzing changes in agricultural land, settlement area, water bodies, and vegetation cover. The study identifies the major driving forces responsible for land transformation and evaluates their environmental and socio-economic impacts. The findings reveal that agricultural land dominates the study region, while urban settlements and industrial activities are gradually increasing. Irrigation development and sugarcane cultivation have significantly influenced land utilization patterns. The study emphasizes the importance of sustainable land management practices and geospatial technologies for regional planning and environmental conservation.

Keywords: *Land Use, Land Cover, GIS, Remote Sensing.*

Introduction

Land is one of the most valuable natural resources supporting human activities and economic development. Land Use and Land Cover (LULC) studies help in understanding the interaction between human activities and the natural environment. Changes in land use patterns are directly associated with population growth, industrialization, urbanization, agricultural expansion, and technological development.

Geoinformatics, which includes Remote Sensing (RS), Geographic Information System (GIS), and Global Positioning System (GPS), has become an effective tool for monitoring and analyzing land use and land cover changes. These technologies provide accurate spatial and temporal information for regional planning and sustainable resource management.

Walwa Tehsil of Sangli district is an agriculturally developed region located in the Krishna River basin of Maharashtra. The tehsil has experienced significant changes in land utilization due to irrigation development, sugarcane cultivation, transportation networks, and expanding settlements. Therefore, the present study attempts to assess the land use and land cover changes in Walwa Tehsil using geoinformatic techniques.

Objectives

The main objectives of the present study are:

1. To analyze the existing land use and land cover pattern in Walwa Tehsil.
2. To identify temporal changes in land utilization using geoinformatic techniques.
3. To examine the impact of irrigation and agriculture on land cover changes.
4. To evaluate the environmental and socio-economic implications of land transformation.
5. To suggest suitable measures for sustainable land resource management.

Data And Methodology

Study Area

Walwa Tehsil is located in Sangli district of Maharashtra state. It lies between 16°45' N to 17°05' N latitude and 74°15' E to 74°45' E longitude.

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The region is part of the Krishna River basin and is characterized by fertile black soils and irrigated agriculture.

Data Sources

The study is based on both primary and secondary data.

Primary Data

- Field survey
- Direct observation
- GPS location verification
- Farmer interviews

Secondary Data

- Satellite imagery
- Topographical maps
- Census reports
- Agricultural statistics
- Government reports
- Research articles and journals

Methodology

The collected satellite data were processed and interpreted using GIS and Remote Sensing techniques. Different land use and land cover categories such as agricultural land, settlement, forest area, water bodies, and wasteland were identified and mapped. Spatial analysis and comparative techniques were used to assess temporal changes.

The methodology included: 1. Data collection 2. Image interpretation 3. GIS mapping 4. Classification of land use categories 5. Spatial analysis 6. Result interpretation

Result And Discussion

Land Use Pattern

The study reveals that agriculture is the dominant land use category in Walwa Tehsil. The fertile alluvial and black cotton soils, combined with irrigation facilities from the Krishna River basin, support intensive cultivation, especially sugarcane farming.

Agricultural Expansion

Sugarcane cultivation has increased significantly due to:

- Availability of irrigation,
- Cooperative sugar factories,
- Fertile soils,
- Market accessibility.

The increase in irrigated agriculture has transformed large areas into intensive agricultural zones.

Settlement Growth

Urban and rural settlements have expanded due to:

- Population growth,
- Transportation development,
- Industrial activities,
- Educational and commercial development.

Expansion of settlements has reduced open land and agricultural spaces in some regions.

Irrigation and Water Resources

The study area benefits from:

- Wells,
- Borewells,
- Canal irrigation,
- Lift irrigation schemes.

Irrigation development has positively influenced agricultural productivity but also increased pressure on groundwater resources.

Environmental Impacts

The major environmental impacts identified are:

- Groundwater depletion,
- Soil degradation,
- Reduction in natural vegetation,
- Waterlogging in some irrigated areas,
- Increasing environmental stress due to intensive farming.

Role of Geoinformatics

Geoinformatic techniques proved highly effective for:

- Monitoring land transformation,
- Preparing thematic maps,
- Detecting temporal changes,

- Supporting regional planning and sustainable development.

GIS and Remote Sensing provide accurate and reliable spatial information for environmental management.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Walwa Tehsil has undergone significant land use and land cover changes due to agricultural expansion, irrigation development, and increasing human activities. Sugarcane cultivation has become the dominant agricultural activity and has greatly influenced the regional economy and land utilization pattern. The application of geoinformatic techniques has helped in accurately identifying and analyzing spatial changes in the study area. Although agricultural development has improved socio-economic conditions, excessive dependence on irrigation and rapid land transformation may create environmental challenges in the future. Therefore, sustainable land management practices, groundwater conservation, crop diversification, and scientific planning should be encouraged for balanced regional development. GIS and Remote Sensing technologies should be integrated into local planning and environmental monitoring systems for effective resource management.

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Original Article

Strategic Role of Cultural Diplomacy and Tourism Development in the Perspective of Developed India 2047

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Abstract:

Cultural diplomacy and tourism development is emerging as one of the important instruments in the Indian vision for long term development of the country in Viksit Bharat 2047 or Developed India 2047. Indian civilization, spiritual beliefs, and languages, arts, festivals, food, handicrafts, monuments, yoga, Ayurveda, and diaspora connections and democratic diversity lay strong foundations for India's cultural influence in the world. At the same time, tourism is an important economic sector that can bring jobs, foreign currency, development of infrastructure, regional development, involvement of women and community-based livelihoods. This paper looks at the strategic viewpoints of cultural diplomacy and the development of tourism in the context of Developed India 2047. It thinks more can be done than just using cultural assets as symbols of heritage, more can be done than using cultural assets as strategic tools for international relations, national branding, sustainable tourism and inclusive growth and 'soft power.' This paper is a multidisciplinary, qualitative approach that employs the concepts of tourism studies, international relations, cultural policy, development studies and public diplomacy. It talks about the instruments of cultural diplomacy in India, tourist development programs, opportunities, challenges, and policy suggestions. The study concludes that the goals of cultural diplomacy and tourism are compatible with India's 2047 vision if they are linked with sustainable destination management, digital promotion, heritage conservation, community involvement, skill development, infrastructure development, and international collaboration. However, issues such as overcrowding, environmental stress, uneven development, inadequate interpretation, inadequate visitor facilities, safety and commercialisation of the heritage need to be overcome. Based on the above the paper also concludes that planned cultural diplomacy and tourism development can be identified as strategic pillars of Developed India 2047 in an inclusive, sustainable and global manner.

Keywords: *Cultural diplomacy, Tourism development, Viksit Bharat 2047, Developed India 2047, soft power, Heritage tourism, Sustainable tourism.*

Introduction:

The 100 years of independence is related with the vision of India 2047 for India's development. Viksit Bharat 2047 (Developed India 2047) is not a concept of just economic growth. Social progress, technological advance, inclusive development, cultural confidence, global leadership, sustainability and enhanced quality of life are also covered. This is a broader picture, one where cultural diplomacy and the development of tourism are a strategic function. They link Indian civilization of today to some global influence and opportunities for economic growth. Diplomacy that employs culture, ideas, values, heritage, arts, education, language and people-to-people exchanges to foster understanding and positive relations between countries. It has close association with the soft power concept. In this sense, Nye (2004) defines soft power as the power that is exercised on someone by attracting them (rather than by force or payment). India's ancient civilization, plural society, spiritual traditions, yoga, Buddhism, Ayurveda, classical music and dance, literature, cinema, cuisine, crafts, democracy, diaspora and knowledge traditions are its strong soft-power resources. These are cultural resources which can impact the world perception of India. The significance of tourism development is that culture is perceived, made visible and becomes economically productive because of the tourism. The pilgrimage routes, heritage sites, festivals, museums, rural crafts, cultural routes and cuisine, performing arts, eco and wellness, Buddhist circuits, Ramayana circuits and spiritual destinations can provide jobs and local businesses.

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Tourism is also a people-to-people diplomacy as it is a real experience of the country by the visitors. A tourist visits Indian monuments, villages, museums, food markets, festivals, temples, mosques, churches, monasteries, forests and rivers and he or she is involved in an informal diplomatic exchange.

The central thesis of this paper is that cultural diplomacy and the development of tourism can be combined into the India's 2047 development strategy. There is scope for building up India's image and its partnership through cultural diplomacy; and cultural value could be converted to livelihood, infrastructure, investment and regional development through tourism. But this integration needs to be sustainable. Tourism, if not properly planned, can have a negative effect on the values of the heritage, can cause disturbance to the local population, can cause pollution, can worsen the inequalities and can be harmful for commercialization of culture. The challenge is to make the best use of culture and tourism as strategic assets whilst not destroying the cultural and ecological underpins that support these.

The study aims at examining the objectives of the study:

The main purposes of this paper are:

1. To explore the meaning and dimension of cultural diplomacy and its role in India's vision of development.
2. To learn the role of Tourism Development in the Developed India 2047.
3. To elucidate the Linkage among soft power, heritage, tourism and economic development.
4. To brainstorm opportunities and challenges of cultural tourism and tourism diplomacy.
5. To recommend a strategy on the cultural diplomacy and tourism aspect of inclusive and sustainable development.
6. To suggest measures for enhancing India's position in the world by 2047 with respect to its culture.

Methodology:

The method of research in this study is a qualitative and analytical research. It is a secondary data source that involves government reports, policy documents, the tourism data, academic literature and international tourism frameworks. The text is based on concepts taken from international relations, tourism studies, cultural policy and heritage management, and sustainable development. The analysis is multidisciplinary as the subject cannot be grasped within a single field.

The following theoretical works are used in paper: soft power theory (understanding of cultural diplomacy), sustainable tourism theory (analysis of destination development process) and development studies (development role of tourism in regard to employment creation and livelihoods/regional development). There are no primary survey data in the paper. It is intended to be a conversation based on research and to have the structure of a conversation in which both academic and policy-oriented understanding can be gained.

The fourth section, Conceptual Framework: Cultural Diplomacy, Tourism and Soft Power, brings in the concepts of cultural diplomacy, tourism and soft power:

Culture is considered as one of the connecting factors that cultural diplomacy involves internationalization. It extends to cultural festivals and exhibitions, promotion of the language, education exchange, association with museums, performing arts, yogh centres, and association with Buddhist heritage, diaspora events, food diplomacy, cultural heritage partnerships, etc. Iriye (1997) feels that culture has always been a factor in international relations, and that nations can deal with one another in many ways beyond military or economic.

Culture is one of the most important aspects of soft power. According to Nye (2004) cultural, values and policy appeal plays a crucial role in influencing another country. In India, soft power is not something man-made, it is part of India's history. Yoga, Buddhism, Ayurveda, Indian food, classical dance, music, literature, textiles, and cinema and democratic pluralism are already known globally. India's cultural diplomacy is being accepted internationally, which will come as a surprise to no one, with the United Nations's proclamation of International Yoga Day being one such instance.

Tourism is associated to soft power since it converts cultural attraction into actual experience. According to Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2011), destination branding is not just about marketing a place but also communicating the development of identity and reputation. On arriving in India, tourists are confronted with the image of the country, both literally and symbolically. Their lives can influence world opinion, world interest in investment, diasporic connections and student movements, as well as diplomatic goodwill.

Sustainable tourism is also key. According to the UN Tourism definition, sustainable tourism takes into account the current and future economic, social and environmental impacts and meets the needs of tourists, the tourism industry, the environment and host communities. (UN Tourism, 2023). In the Indian context, this translates to growth without damage to heritage, stress on the environment or community displacement.

Cultural resources as strategic assets for India:

India's cultural legacy is the most diverse in the world. It has a large number of cultural resources including tangible heritage such as monuments, temples, forts, palaces, mosques, churches, monasteries, stepwells, archaeological sites, museums and historic cities. It is also home to an intangible cultural heritage such as music, dance, yoga, rituals, festivals, oral traditions, food, crafts, textiles, languages, storytelling, folk art and indigenous knowledge systems.

These resources are important due to three reasons. First of all, they create national identity and cultural self-confidence. India's development as a developed nation is not enough to be measured in terms of Gross Domestic Product but also in keeping and showcasing its civilization and diversity. Second, cultural resources draw tourists from all over the world. In such a country where they have a sturdy cultural identity, they will be more influential in the global society. Thirdly, cultural resources can offer an economic value as tourist destinations, creative economy, handicraft, hospitality, film, wellness, food and education.

India has a number of cultural diplomacy platforms. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (IEC) offers support in the fields of cultural exchanges, scholarships, promotion of languages, cultural activities, etc. Cultural programs are organised by

the Indian embassies in other countries. Yoga diplomacy has evolved as one of the most prominent cultural diplomacy initiatives in India. Among the various factors that influence India's foreign relations, the Buddhist diplomacy is very important in the relations of India with the countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam and Japan and Mongolia. The Indian immigrant community is also a culture bearer, propagating Indian festivals, food, language, and Indian movies and the Indian network around the world.

Development of tourism and vision of Viksit Bharat 2047:

Tourism can directly contribute to Developed India 2047 due to its labour intensive, regionally distributed, culture based and can provide opportunities to small entrepreneurs. In some areas, it is possible to cluster jobs in large towns or cities, but in others, such as villages, small towns, heritage cities, mountains, coastal areas, pilgrimage routes, craft clusters or tribal areas, tourism can create jobs.

Tourism is a key driver of many industries. The tourist movement benefits the local businesses of the market, the wellness centre, the event management, the local market, the digital service, the food processing, the performing arts, the guide, the transporter, the handcraft, the tourist restaurant and the tourist hotel (homestay). In addition, women are also employed in the tourism sector in the following activities, homestay, food business, self-help group products, weaving, selling of crafts and guiding and cultural performance. It may utilize the opportunities for youth employment in the digital marketing, language, adventure tourism, and hospitality/interpretation sectors.

Infrastructure is also related to tourism growth in India. The betterment of airport, railway and road infrastructure, public transport, sanitation, signage, digital ticketing, tourist information centres, safety systems and destination management can have a positive impact on the tourism sector and the quality of life in the area. If planned properly, tourism facilities can benefit residents too, apart from tourists.

Tourism can't be limited to just an economic department; it should be considered as a platform for national development for Viksit Bharat 2047. It can promote cultural self-confidence, international brand, regional balance, local business development, sustainability and international friendship.

Table 1: Strategic Link Between Cultural Diplomacy, Tourism, and Developed India 2047:

Strategic area	**Role of cultural diplomacy**	**Role of tourism development**	**Contribution to Developed India 2047**
Global image	Projects India's civilization, diversity, creativity, and values	Converts global interest into actual visits and experiences	Strengthens India's soft power and international reputation
Economic growth	Builds cultural demand for Indian experiences and products	Generates income through hospitality, transport, guides, crafts, food, and events	Supports GDP, employment, entrepreneurship, and foreign exchange
Regional development	Promotes lesser-known cultural regions and traditions	Develops circuits beyond major cities and monuments	Reduces regional imbalance and supports local economies
Heritage conservation	Encourages global recognition and partnerships	Creates revenue and public interest for heritage protection	Preserves cultural assets for future generations
People-to-people relations	Builds trust through cultural exchange and diaspora engagement	Creates direct contact between visitors and local communities	Improves international understanding and goodwill
Creative economy	Promotes arts, cinema, crafts, cuisine, fashion, and design	Opens markets for local cultural products and experiences	Supports creative industries and cultural entrepreneurship
Sustainability	Communicates values of harmony with nature and cultural continuity	Supports responsible tourism, eco-tourism, and community tourism	Aligns tourism growth with environmental and social responsibility
National identity	Builds pride in Indian knowledge, history, and diversity	Encourages citizens to explore their own country	Strengthens cultural unity and national integration

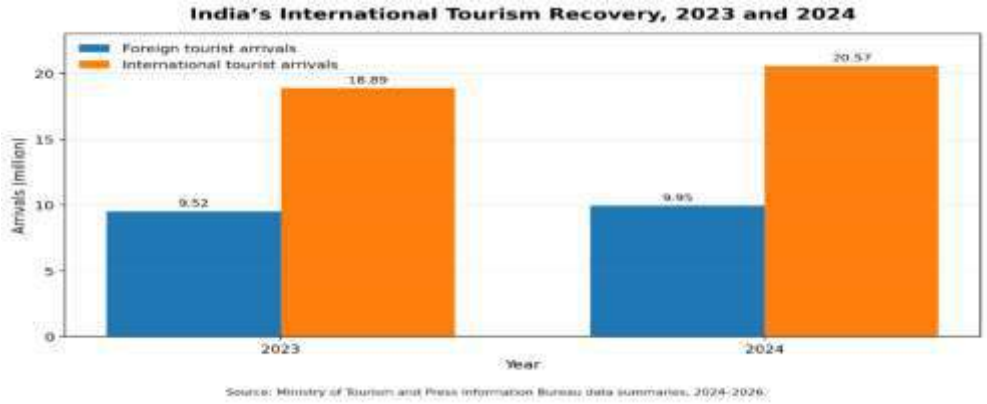
Tourism Recovery & Trends:

Tourism is bounced back greatly after the COVID-19 pandemic. Domestic tourism has been important in the recovery and international tourism has slightly improved. Foreign tourist arrivals in India in 2023 were 9.52 million and the international tourist arrivals were 18.89 million. Total number of foreign tourists rose to 9.95 million in 2024 and international tourists rose to 20.57 million in 2024. Looking at the numbers, India definitely seems to be making a comeback, but international arrivals need to accelerate in order to catch up to India's cultural potential. Domestic tourism is an important sector of India. An increased variety of travel- pilgrimage, family holidays, festivals, learning and educational trips, visits to heritage sites, eco-tourism and weekend holidays. Domestic tourism helps local economies and raises the cultural awareness of people. It also provides buffer to international tourism during a crisis scenario globally.

Domestic tourism comes with its challenges, too. The problem of crowding, waste, traffic and pressure on local resources is faced by the various sites like, Varanasi, Ayodhya, Puri, Tirupati, Goa, Jaipur, Agra and the hill stations. Carrying capacity planning, visitor management and waste management, public transport, and digital ticketing and the involvement of the local community are therefore required to enable tourism growth.

India's ITR (International Tourism Recovery): Graph 1:9. International Tourism Recovery – India (ITR): Graph 1:

Insert the following Bar graph here: The graph should compare the number of foreign tourists and international tourists that arrived in 2023 and 2024. In both categories, it shows the recovery of International Tourism in India during the year 2023-24.



Caption:

Graph 1. Tourism recovery in India 2023 and 2024. The rise in foreign tourist arrivals and international tourist arrivals is an indicator of the revival of tourism in the post-pandemic era in India and the need to link tourism development with cultural diplomacy and the objective of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Data summary by Ministry of Tourism and Press Information Bureau 2024-2026.

10. Figure 1: Image-Based Illustration:

Place Figure 1 here: A picture of a big Indian heritage landmark like Taj Mahal, Red Fort, Qutub Minar, Hampi, Konark Sun Temple or Ellora Caves showing people visiting them.



Caption:

Figure 1. Heritage tourism as a new area of cultural diplomacy. The monuments of India serve as a representation of its culture and history, and are visited by tourists from all over the world.

11. Figure 2: Image-Based Illustration:

Insert Figure 2 here: Photo of an international cultural festival, a yoga event, a classical Indian dance show or a cultural show from India in foreign land.



Figure 2. Cultural diplomacy through performance, yoga, and festivals. Cultural events create people-to-people connections and strengthen India's soft power by sharing Indian traditions with global audiences.

Caption:

Figure 2. Perceptual Cultural Diplomacy: performance, yoga and festivals. Cultural events foster a culture of people-to-people linkages and enhance India's "soft power" through the dissemination of Indian culture to the world.

12. Figure 3: Image-Based Illustration:

Paste Figure 3 here: Identify a rural tourism, craft tourism, homestay or community-based tourism context.



Caption:

Figure 3. Building community-based tourism and local livelihoods: Tourism has the potential to serve the interests of rural livelihoods when it connects local arts and crafts, food, homestays, festivals and cultural knowledge to responsible tourism experiences.

Cultural Diplomacy as Global Branding:

To make a country developed by 2047, branding is a must for the entire country. Branding is not a matter of simple advertisements; it's about making a strong, attractive brand. India's brand needs to convey a message of tradition and modernity. It should reflect India as a past old civilized nation and an economy with future.

Through cultural diplomacy India can showcase itself as a knowledge, peaceful, diverse, creative, democratic and innovative nation. Yoga is a symbol of wellbeing and balance. The Ayurveda is a traditional knowledge concerning health. Buddhism symbolizes spiritual and historical links throughout Asia. The Indian films are a representation of creativity and popular culture. Indian cuisine is unique and an everyday occurrence in culture. Indian festivals are a representation of colour, community and continuity. Indian craft is a representation of local skill and sustainability.

The cultural images can be transformed into real experiences through tourism. A tourist can learn about India by practicing yoga, watching a movie, eating Indian dishes or participating in some Indian festival in another country. This interest can then snowball into a trip to Rishikesh, Varanasi, Kerala, Rajasthan, Ladakh, Bodh Gaya, Hampi, Goa or the Northeastern region. Thus, cultural diplomacy builds up desire and tourism satisfy that desire in terms of experiences.

However, the Branding must be a genuine brand. Any tourism promotion can only project a simplified and commercial image and can be a poor representation of India. Diversity is the essence of strength of India. In this regard, national branding must include classic and folk traditions, the urban and rural cultures, known and unknown places, and mainstream and marginalized voices of culture.

Tourism Diplomacy and International Relations:

Tourism can be considered as diplomacy. Foreign tourists in India get in touch with Indian people, institutions, topography and culture. Informal communication provides better visibility of the positive experience of the visitor in improving India's image. Likewise, Indian tourists who go on an outbound tour to foreign countries also carry their cultural identity and develop people-to-people relations.

There are a number of ways to use tourism diplomacy. First, India can develop cultural tourism circuits based on common cultural heritage like Buddhist circuits with the other countries of East and SE Asia. Second, Indian can work on promoting diaspora tourism, by encouraging people of Indian origin that they should be connected with their ancestral places. Thirdly, there are opportunities for education and youth tourism in India, like student exchanges, heritage walks, and cultural immersion programmes that can be encouraged. Fourth, the promotion of film tourism can be done in India by syncing Indian film

locations with the world. Fifth, India can foster wellness tourism with the assistance of yoga, Ayurveda, meditation, naturopathy and traditional food systems.

The cooperation in the region is also strengthened through tourism diplomacy. South Asia is cultural heritage, religious pilgrimages, language, culinary and the ecology. Tourism cooperation enables better connectivity and trust when it's well organized. Political tension, visa requirements, security concerns, and lack of infrastructure are also considered and limited potential of regional tourism is given due consideration.

Tourism and cultural development: the case study of the Development of the local economy in the area of the "Historic city" of Yerevan:

If benefits are also realized for the local community, cultural tourism can be beneficial for local development. Local jobs and small businesses can be developed through establishing heritage cities, craft villages, pilgrimage towns, tribal areas, rural festivals, food trails and eco-cultural routes. Examples include guides, local transport, food vendors, souvenir makers, performers, photographers, homestays, local museums, in a heritage town. Visitors may have an interest in weaving, pottery, metalwork, painting, bamboo making or textiles. They can be helpful in a temporary market, for local artists, local food producers and local transport providers at a festival.

The primary criteria are value retention. By benefiting only outside tour operators or large hotels or urban investors, the local communities benefit to a certain extent. Therefore, there is a need for community-based tourism models, cooperatives, self-help groups, local guide training, certifying homestay accommodation and establishing fair market platforms.

Non-farm livelihoods also are created through the cultural tourism. This is significant as many rural households are not solely reliant on agriculture. The hostelry, local food, transport, crafts, storytelling and folk performance, nature guiding and cultural interpretation are all sources of diversification of income in the field of tourism. This rural and small-town existence can alleviate the migration pressure and promote development in a balanced manner in Developed India 2047.

Sustainable tourism has an impact on the preservation of cultural heritage:

Development of tourism should be connected to heritage conservation. Monuments, archaeological sites, temples, forts, stepwells, historic streets and intangible traditions are limited resources in India. However, if it is harmed due to overcrowding, pollution, neglect, commercialization and insensitive infrastructure, tourism will be threatening its survival.

Conservation of a heritage site is a process which requires planning, financing, professional restoration, public participation and management of visitors. Digital technologies can support through e-ticketing, crowd surveillance, virtual tours, interpretation apps, multilingual audio-guides and online education. However, technology isn't a replacement for conservation ethics. Environmental responsibility is also a key aspect of sustainable tourism. Hill stations, beaches, forests, deserts and islands and pilgrimage routes are often subjected to the dangers of waste, traffic, water stress and building pressure. The plans for tourism are to be accompanied by plans for waste management, water management, renewable energy, transportation, reduction of plastics, tourism architecture, and rules regarding carry capacity.

UNESCO's notion of sustainable tourism and World Heritage is based on the value creation principle, which means that the tourism should generate value, protect World Heritage and engage stakeholders. This is applicable in Indian context as there are many Indian destinations which are under dual pressure of high number of visitors as well as poor status of the heritage.

Digital Promotion and Smart Tourism:

Digital technology can contribute to the development of cultural diplomacy and tourism. The power of social media, virtual museums, digital archives, virtual exhibitions, virtual reality, digital storytelling, augmented reality, artificial intelligence tools to plan travel, and an online booking service can help make Indian cultural resources more accessible.

Young travellers are an important segment of the digital promotion market. The first way to find a tourist destination is by short video, tourist blogs, Instagram, YouTube and tourists' reviews. Digital Storytelling can be utilized for promoting lesser-known routes, local legends, traditional customs of handlooms, food routes, music festivals and responsible tourism within India.

Additionally, smart tourism can enhance the visitors' experience. With digital ticketing, queues are minimized. QR code can deliver content in various languages. Mobile apps are able to direct tourists to local attractions, emergency services, public transport, toilets, and local markets. AI translation software can help improve the communication of foreign visitors. Data analytics can enable authorities to gain insight into flow and crowding.

But digital promotion needs to be responsible. Too much promotion of fragile destinations can result in overtourism. If not properly managed, viral tourism can have negative impacts on local environments and cultures. Therefore, it is important that a digital strategy is linked to destination readiness.

Challenges:

The first thing is overcrowding. Rush hours, popular attractions, and other periods of the year can result in high numbers of visitors placing stress on infrastructure, heritage sites, roadways, sanitation, residents, etc. If that were not managed by a visitor management system, tourism can lead to a decrease in quality of life.

The second one is an uneven development. There are many places such as Agra, Jaipur, Goa, Varanasi and Kerala which are tourist hot spots, but those places that have great ancestral values are less developed. Promote less visited areas with a good infrastructure and safety.

Third challenge is in the field of heritage commercialization. The value of cultural performances, rituals, crafts and festivals will be lost if they are only performed for tourists. Cultural dignity needs to be safeguarded.

Safety & cleanliness is the fourth challenge. All of this - transport, hygiene, the safety of the women, signage, public toilets, pollution and emergency response - have an impact on the visitor's perception. These are fundamental services that need to be enhanced if the nation will be competitive in the world.

Skill gaps is the fifth challenge. Tourism is a profession for the people who are trained as guides, interpreters, hospitality professionals, language professionals, conservationists, digital marketers and destination managers. Need to increase the scope of skill development.

The sixth challenge is the low integration between culture and tourism departments. These fields, such as cultural diplomacy, heritage conservation and tourism marketing, transport, urban planning, rural development and foreign affairs, are often separate and distinct from one another. Integrated governance is required in the path of developed India 2047.

Policy Recommendations:

The integrated framework for the Cultural Diplomacy and Tourism 2047 should be India's first step. The possibility of making this framework interlink the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of External Affairs, State Governments, Indian Missions in other countries, ICCR, ASI, Private Sector, Universities and Local Communities. Secondly, destination development should be sustainable. The basic principles of tourism planning should include the concept of carrying Capacity, Waste Management, Water use, Local architecture and public transport and community involvement. Thirdly, more cultural circuits should be created in India. It may be a Buddhist trail, Sufi trail, temple trail, heritage along the coastline, textile trails, craft villages, cuisine trails, tribal culture trails, or the trail of the freedom movement. Fourth: There should be a connection between culture diplomacy and the promotion of tourism overseas. Indian embassies can also organize cultural events with Destination Information and offer travel support services and link to the state tourism boards. Fifth, involve local communities as partners – do not use them as background characters. The following must be trained and have access to the markets: Homestays, guides, craft cooperatives, food entrepreneurs, folk artists and women's self-help groups. Sixth, interpretation needs to be more strongly featured at heritage sites in India. High quality information via guides, museums, signs, applications, audio guides and storytelling centres are all required for tourists. The seventh is to enhance the education and skill development on tourism. During training, the following points should be addressed: Foreign Languages, digital marketing, heritage interpretation, hospitality, safety, sustainability and entrepreneurship. Eighth, India needs to encourage responsible local tourism. Citizens should be made aware of the issues associated with protection of heritage, cleanliness, local respect and sustainable travel behaviour.

Ninth, digital tourism marketing should step-by-step promote lesser-known destinations, and should not load on fragile destinations. Tourism information should be used for planning: (tenth) Information on numbers of visitors, expenditure, visitor satisfaction, benefits to the tourist and carrying capacity of visitors can be used as a basis for decision making.

Conclusion:

Cultural diplomacy and development of tourism can be a strategic enabler to achieve Developed India 2047. Cultural heritage is not just about the past; it can also be a force for shaping the future of India, with the potential to impact the world, fuel economic progress, bolster national pride, and drive sustainable development. Similarly, the tourism sector helps to imbuish cultural diplomacy with life and allows people to experience India for themselves.

The connection between culture and tourism should be taken into consideration. Cultural diplomacy can shine a spotlight on the world and the tourism can provide employment, foreign exchange, infrastructure and local enterprises. They can join hands to improve the soft power and development agenda of India. Growth however, should be sustainable. Tourism which hurts the heritage, excludes the communities or causes environmental stress will diminish the cultural attributes that creates the charm of India.

This is why cultural diplomacy, cultural heritage protection, tourism infrastructure development, digital innovation, skill cultivation and community engagement are key aspects of the India 2047 vision. A developed India must be not only in terms of economy size but also in terms of wisdom, hospitality, sustainability and human relations. It is through cultural diplomacy and tourism development that we can make that balanced vision a reality for India.

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Original Article

Importance of Private Practitioners in Satara District

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Abstract

Private practitioners may include doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, and other healthcare professionals who run their own clinics or practices. They may also provide home visits for patients who are unable to travel to the clinic. The exact services offered may vary depending on the practitioner's specialization and the resources available at their clinic. If you are looking for information on the services provided by private practitioners in Satara District, you may want to consult local directories or contact local healthcare organizations for more information.

Keywords: *Private practitioners, veterinary hospital.*

Introduction-

Private practitioners have made significant investments to establish and expand the network of veterinary hospitals in the district, which has led to the improved health and well-being of the livestock and the farmers. In addition to providing healthcare services to the livestock, the veterinary hospitals and dispensaries in Satara district also play an important role in educating the farmers and livestock owners about the best practices in animal husbandry, disease prevention, and management. This education is provided through various training programs, workshops, and seminars, which are conducted by the veterinary experts in the district. Moreover, the private veterinary hospitals in Satara district are also actively involved in the implementation of various government schemes and programs, which aim to promote the growth and development of the dairy industry and the agricultural sector. For instance, the government has launched several schemes to provide financial assistance and subsidies to the farmers for the purchase of animals, feed, and equipment. The veterinary hospitals and dispensaries in the district play a key role in the implementation of these schemes, by providing guidance and assistance to the farmers in availing these benefits. The veterinary services in Satara district have also evolved with the changing times and the adoption of modern technologies. Today, several veterinary hospitals and dispensaries in the district are equipped with modern diagnostic and treatment facilities, such as X-ray machines, ultrasound scanners, and surgical equipment. These facilities enable the veterinary experts to provide prompt and effective healthcare services to the animals, thereby improving their health and productivity. In conclusion, the history of veterinary services in Satara district is a testimony to the importance of animal healthcare in the growth and development of the dairy industry and the agricultural sector. The private organizations have made significant investments in establishing and expanding the network of veterinary hospitals and dispensaries in the district, which has led to the improved health and well-being of the livestock and the farmers. The veterinary services in Satara district continue to evolve and adapt to the changing times, thereby contributing to the sustainable growth and development of the region

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the importance of private practitioners.
2. To examine the role of private practitioners.

Scope of the Study

This study will be beneficial and help to identify and treat health problems in animals early on, leading to improved health outcomes and a better quality of life for the animals. It also access to high-quality veterinary services is essential for livestock farmers, pet owners, and animal lovers.

Data Collection

The secondary data is collected from this study the published books, journals, magazines, and annual reports of the Department of Animal Husbandry, Government of India, and guidelines Government of Maharashtra. The researcher visited some reputed educational institutions such as Shivaji University, Kolhapur.

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Measurement

It is based on expert's opinions, situation specific condition, and available information on internet. This study based on conceptual in nature, qualitative as well as exploratory study is done in this research.

Theoretical framework

Private practitioners provide various services to animals these are as follows-

1. To render preliminary aid to ailing animals and birds.
2. To carry out dressing of superficial surgical ailments like wounds (including sutured or surgical wounds), abscesses, fistula, burns, hemorrhage's.
3. To administer antiseptics, intrauterine.
4. To carry out painting of cervix in animals with medicaments like Lugol's or Povidone iodine solution.
5. To render preliminary aid in the prolapse cases.
6. To render preliminary aid through oral administration of analgesics and antipyretics in cases of pain and fever.
   To render preliminary aid in non-infectious diseases like tympany, bloat, constipation, impaction, diarrhea, dysentery.
7. To assist Registered Veterinary practitioners, in charge of Veterinary polyclinic, Mini polyclinic, and Veterinary dispensary while performing operations and treatment of animals.
8. To record the temperature of animals and birds.
9. To carry out washing of mouth, hooves, eyes, ears of animals with required antiseptic lotions for diseases and ailments like FMD, Foot Rot, Otitis, Conjunctivitis, etc.
10. To render preliminary aid in cases of simple fractures in animals.
11. To carry out disinfection of livestock and poultry houses.
12. To carry out application of relevant medicaments or spraying of animals and birds for control of ectoparasites.
13. To carry out castration of scrub bulls, rams, and bucks by closed method.
14. To vaccinate animals and birds against various diseases.
15. To compound and dispense medicines to ailing animals.
16. To perform Artificial Insemination and carry out follow up and maintain a relevant record.
17. To collect blood, serum, urine, focal samples, semen, milk, and other specimens for laboratory examinations; dispatching and processing of the same.
18. To apply or administer the drugs specified in the "Schedule H" of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 made by the Government of India under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 (23 of 1940) as per the prescription of the Registered Veterinary Practitioner; and in the stipulated quantity as prescribed by the Registered Veterinary Practitioner.
19. To render preliminary aid in case of emergency like poisoning, snake bite, electrocution, dystocia, wild animal attacks, natural calamities, accidents, etc.
20. To administer or apply antimicrobials, antifungals, antibiotics, hormones, chemotherapeutic agents against blood protozoon, anthelmintic and insecticides against ecto and endo parasites under the supervision or direction of a Registered Veterinary Practitioner.
21. To assist Registered Veterinary Practitioner in surveillance of infectious diseases, laboratory investigations, vaccine production, quality control, and any other technical work assigned by the Registered Veterinary Practitioner. Provided that, all above minor veterinary services shall be performed under the supervision and directions of the Registered Veterinary Practitioner.

Research Gap

The study filled a major research gap by synthesizing existing clinical evidence and assessing methodological quality. While there may be some research on the quality private practitioners in other districts or regions, there may be limited information on Satara district specifically. This gap could be addressed by conducting a study specifically focused on private practitioners in Satara district.

Findings

The educational diversity among private practitioners—ranging from primary education to doctorate—suggests inconsistency in professional qualification standards that may directly affect treatment of animal. Strengthening continuing professional development (CPD) requirements, enforcing minimum qualification standards through Veterinary Council regulations, and incentivizing higher education among practitioners are essential for improving private sector.

Is fond that designing consultative, co-regulatory governance frameworks that actively include private practitioners in policy development would help ensure that regulations serve as quality enablers rather than professional constraints, improving compliance and buy-in.

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I express my sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the successful completion of this research study titled "Importance of Private Practitioners in Satara District." I am deeply thankful to my colleagues and the faculty members of Yashwantrao Chavan Mahavidyalaya, Pachwad, for their valuable guidance, encouragement, and continuous support throughout this study.

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Original Article

Importance of Public Dispensaries in Satara District

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Abstract

Public Veterinary Dispensaries can be defined as the extent to which services meet the needs and expectations of animal owners, in terms of both the technical quality of the services provided and the level of customer satisfaction. Technical quality refers to the knowledge, skills, and equipment used by veterinary professionals, while customer satisfaction is influenced by the communication skills of veterinarians, the availability of services, the cost of services, and the perceived value of the services provided. The main aim of the article is to inculcating the importance public dispensaries.

Keywords: *Public dispensaries, healthcare services, livestock.*

Introduction

Public dispensaries in Satara district provide a range of health services to the community. These services are primarily aimed at providing basic healthcare services to people who may not have access to private healthcare facilities. Some of the services provided by public dispensaries in Satara district include:

1. **Basic health check-ups:** Public dispensaries offer basic health check-ups to patients, including measuring blood pressure, body temperature, and other vital signs. These check-ups are important in detecting early signs of illness and preventing the spread of diseases.
2. **Health education and awareness programs:** Public dispensaries also organize health Community-educative programmes of education and awareness about health issues and promote healthy lifestyles. These programs include workshops, seminars, and other outreach activities.
3. Diagnosing infectious diseases in animals in the dispensary area and timely medication / preventive vaccination to control epidemic diseases.
4. Artificial insemination of cows and buffaloes brought to the dispensary for artificial insemination.
5. Preventive vaccinations of different types in different seasons as required.
6. Diagnosis by necropsy of dead animals.
7. Performing small to large surgeries on hospitalized animals.
8. Collecting samples for diagnosis of sick animals and conducting laboratory tests.
9. Organizing animal exhibitions in connection with animal extension programs in the hospital headquarters and surrounding villages, conducting diagnostic camps, and organizing dairy competitions.
10. To take appropriate action for extension of poultry rearing and medical treatment in the hospital premises.
11. To take care of the rural hybrid / domestic and foreign poultry/pig farming schemes in a good rural manner and to provide technical assistance.
12. Implementation of various schemes of State Government Grants for Animal.
13. To visit regular centers and perform regular activities like medication, vaccination, artificial insemination, etc.
14. Maharashtra Animal Protection Act 1976 Competent authorities will conduct a pre-slaughter inspection of animals. Issuance of health certificate.
15. Attend taluka and district-level meetings of the Animal Husbandry Department.
16. To inspect the animals to be procured through various schemes, to give them health certificates for insurance, and to follow up by providing them veterinary services.
17. Follow-up and health care of livestock provided under Integrated Village Development Scheme.
18. Police cases, medical treatment of animals, necropsy of dead animals.

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19. To keep the dispensary registers up to date and to submit monthly quarterly annual reports on time.
20. Controlling the support staff of the dispensary and getting the work done by them.
21. Implement a fodder development plan.

In addition to this, to the matters assigned by the senior officers of the department for animal husbandry.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the importance of public dispensaries.
2. To examine the role of public dispensaries.

Scope of the Study

This study will be beneficial for various livestock owners to know the public dispensaries provide better healthcare service for livestock improvement. It is an important factor in ensuring the health and productivity of animals, and in turn, the well-being of the human population. A study on the quality of veterinary services in Satara district can provide valuable insights into the state of veterinary healthcare in the region.

Data Collection

The secondary data is collected from this study the published books, journals, magazines, and annual reports of the Department of Animal Husbandry, Government of India, and guidelines Government of Maharashtra. The researcher visited some reputed educational institutions such as Shivaji University, Kolhapur.

Measurement

It is based on expert's opinions, situation specific condition, and available information on internet. This study based on conceptual in nature, qualitative as well as exploratory study is done in this research.

Theoretical framework

Public veterinary dispensaries are usually operated by the government and offer services at a lower cost or sometimes for free. These dispensaries often have limited resources, staff, and equipment. They may provide basic veterinary services such as vaccinations, deworming, and minor treatments for common illnesses. However, they may not have the necessary resources to provide more complex treatments or surgeries. On the other hand, private veterinary practices are typically run by licensed veterinarians who operate independently or as part of a larger veterinary clinic or hospital. These practices may offer a wider range of services, including diagnostics, surgeries, and advanced treatments for more complex conditions. However, they may also have higher fees and may not be accessible to all pet owners. The performance of public veterinary dispensaries and private practitioners in Satara district may vary depending on factors such as availability of resources, quality of staff, and access to veterinary education and training. It is important for pet owners to research and compare the services, fees, and reputation of different providers in their area in order to make an informed decision about where to take their pets for veterinary care.

The Department of Animal Husbandry has played a significant role in respect of various services provided to rural, semi-urban, and urban areas in the state of Maharashtra. The veterinary service is very important to the development of the livestock sector in Satara district in particular and Maharashtra as well as in India in general.

Research Gap

There was research gap concerning the livestock healthcare provided by public dispensaries in Satara district. This study fills that gap and serves as a reference for future research on veterinary healthcare systems in rural India.

Findings

There is need to be better communication between those who provide livestock healthcare services so that farmers are aware of the services that are available to them and how they may make use of those services to their advantage. In addition, public dispensaries should be more receptive to the requirements of farmers and should address their problems in a manner that is both prompt and effective.

It is possible for government dispensaries in Satara district to improve the quality of veterinary services offered in the region by putting these suggestions into action, which would, in the end, result in improved outcomes for farmers and animals living in the region.

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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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Original Article

Employee Perception Towards Proposed Automated Door Systems in Mumbai Suburban Railway and Its Impact on Commuting Experience

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Abstract

For millions of commuters, the Mumbai Suburban Railway network is an important mode of transportation and serves as the bedrock of the city's economic and professional activities. The majority of the workforce commute daily via suburban trains. Overcrowding, safety concerns, unintentional falls, body aches, travel-related stress and lower traveller satisfaction are among the issues that persist in the system despite its extensive coverage and fair price. Indian Railways has recommended and begun introducing automated door systems in suburban train cars with the purpose of improving passenger safety, travel discipline and railway operations as a result of these concerns. While much attention has been paid to the technological and functional elements of automated door systems, there has been little research into the attitudes of working professionals toward this intervention and its potential impact on their commute. The study highlights that commuting affects employee's work-life, health, and productivity. Automated doors may change commuter behaviour and satisfaction but depend on technology and passenger acceptance. The research intends to employ a quantitative research methodology, with qualitative data findings. Employees who routinely commute via Mumbai's Western, Central and Harbour rail lines will be surveyed. Perceptions about the safety, comfort, convenience, stress levels, satisfaction and acceptance of automated door systems will be obtained using an organized questionnaire with Likert-scale measurements. To study the relationships between employee opinions and commuting experience, statistical methods including descriptive analysis, correlation, regression and hypothesis testing will be utilized. The study is essential for research on transportation management, human resources, public policy and urban mobility. It aims to help urban planners and policymakers understand the effects of automated door deployment by analysing working professional's opinions. It also connects transportation infrastructure innovation with workplace outcomes in Mumbai's suburban rail system.

Keywords: *Mumbai Suburban Railway, Automated Door Systems, Employee Perception, Commuting Experience, Urban Mobility.*

Introduction

The Mumbai Suburban Railway network serves as the primary mode of transportation for millions of commuters and forms the city's economic and professional activities' foundation. A large percentage of the working population uses suburban trains to get to work every day. The system, despite its broad coverage and reasonable price, continues to experience problems such as overcrowding, safety hazards, unintentional falls, bodily pain, travel-related tension, and decreased traveller satisfaction. Indian Railways has suggested and started implementing automated door systems in suburban train carriages with the goal of improving passenger safety, travel discipline, and railway operations as a result of these worries. The proposed system aims to enhance passenger safety by preventing footboard travel, reducing accidental falls, improving crowd management and promoting disciplined boarding and deboarding practices. The initiative represents a significant technological advancement in suburban railway transportation and aligns with broader objectives of urban mobility modernization and public safety enhancement. Although there has been a lot of discussion about the technical and functional components of automated door systems, there has been little study on how working professionals feel about this intervention and how much it may affect their commuting experience.

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Although automated door systems are anticipated to increase operational safety and the passenger experience, their effective installation is mostly dependent on traveler approval and understanding. Their opinions on the utility, safety, comfort, convenience, and usability of automated doors are essential for evaluating the efficacy of this intervention, since working professionals make up a sizable portion of daily railroad commuters. Additionally, commuter approval of the suggested system may be impacted by issues concerning overcrowding during peak hours, ventilation, emergency situations, and accessibility

Objectives Of the Study

1. To study how working professionals in the Mumbai Suburban Railway perceive the suggested automated door systems.
2. To evaluate the perceived impact of automatic door systems on passenger's safety, comfort and convenience while commuting.
3. Examine the connection between employee's perceptions of automated door systems and their general commuting experience.
4. To identify key benefits and challenges that working professionals believe the automated door systems on Mumbai suburban trains would bring.

Hypotheses Based on The Objectives

H_0: Employee's perceptions of the proposed automated door systems do not significantly influence their overall commuting experience.

H_1: Employee's perceptions of the proposed automated door systems significantly influence their overall commuting experience.

Review Of Literature

Commuting Experience, Well-being and Employee Outcomes

Commuting has been proven repeatedly to have a major impact on employees' well-being and productivity. According to Novaco and Gonzalez (2009), prolonged and demanding commutes result in lower life satisfaction, weariness, and anxiety. Factors like comfort, safety, dependability, travel time, and congestion impact commuter happiness, health, and productivity, as highlighted by Chatterjee et al. (2020). Similarly, Olsson et al. (2013) found that commute satisfaction has a good impact on happiness and job satisfaction, whereas Lachmann et al. (2017) observed that unpleasant commuting conditions have a negative impact on psychological well-being. These findings demonstrate that the commuting experience is a significant factor in employee performance and well-being.

Mumbai Suburban Railway: Usability, Safety and Passenger Experience

According to research on Mumbai's suburban train system, the primary elements influencing the commuter experience are operational issues, safety concerns, accessibility problems, and overcrowding. Usability concerns like overcrowding and difficulties getting on and off were highlighted by Agarwal, Mullick, and Ray (2013). According to a later study (2017) conducted by them, commuters experience more stress as a result of station congestion and insufficient signage. While Kadam (2015) mentioned that worries about mishaps, delays, theft, and personal safety have a big impact on passenger satisfaction, Sehgal and Surayya (2011) highlighted the necessity for technological and passenger-centric upgrades.

- **High-Density Crowding and Passenger Behaviour**

One of the most important issues facing Mumbai's local trains is overcrowding. Crowding at high densities creates frustration, anxiety, and physical discomfort in passengers, according to a 2017 study by Every, Thompson, and Hirsch. Additionally, Acharjee (2025) noted that crowding raises accident risks and worsens people's perceptions of safety. These results highlight the necessity of measures that improve safety and passenger flow.

- **Employee Commuting and Railway Travel**

In their examination of employees' commuting experiences using suburban railway systems, Gupta, Agrawal, and Singh (2017) found that safety, comfort, dependability, crowding, and travel time were the main factors influencing commuter happiness. Additionally, the survey showed that unfavourable travel encounters lead to work-related stress and might lower employees' output at work.

- **Automated Door Systems and Passenger Safety**

Passenger safety has become a significant worry in Mumbai's suburban railway network. According to Rao (2016), commuters' safety perceptions are greatly impacted by overcrowding and poor crowd management. Indian Railways is implementing automatic door systems, according to recent reports from The Indian Express (2026) and The Times of India (2026), to enhance passenger safety, deter footboard travel, and decrease accidental falls. In modern rail networks, automated door systems are frequently employed to raise safety and operational effectiveness. According to reports, the trains that have been planned would have door locking mechanisms and anti-drag systems as safety features. However, commuters have voiced concerns about ventilation, overcrowding during peak hours, and emergency evacuation, stressing the need of understanding passenger opinions before large-scale implementation.

Research Gap

Commuter satisfaction, passenger safety, overcrowding, and commuting stress have all been the subject of extensive discussion in the existing literature on Mumbai's suburban railway system. Nevertheless, there is not much empirical evidence about how employees feel about the automated door systems that have been put forth. Studies, in particular, haven't looked at how working people perceive the influence of automated doors on convenience, comfort, safety, stress reduction, and overall commuting experience. Thus, this study aims to fill this void by examining employees' opinions of automated door systems in Mumbai suburban trains and their anticipated effects on the commuting experience.

Research Methodology

In order to analyse the opinions of working professionals regarding the automated door systems that have been suggested for the Mumbai Suburban Railway and how they affect their commuting experience, this research uses a quantitative research methodology. The research seeks to gather and evaluate respondent's attitudes on the recommended system's safety, comfort, convenience, difficulties and general commuting experience.

Population Of the Study

The population consists of **working professionals commuting through Mumbai Suburban Railway**, including passengers travelling on the Western, Central, and Harbour railway lines.

Research Design, Sample and Data Collection

Universe	Mumbai Suburban Region
Sampling Method	Convenience and Simple Random Sampling Method
Sample Size Questionnaire Respondents	 110
Methods of Data Collection	Primary Data & Secondary Data
Primary Data	Structured questionnaire consisting of demographic questions and Likert-scale statements
Secondary Data	Research articles and journals Books and conference proceedings Government and railway reports Newspaper articles Online databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate and institutional repositories

Results & Discussion

1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study collected primary data from 110 respondents through a structured Google Form survey. The initial section of the questionnaire focused on demographic characteristics, including gender, age, railway route used most frequently and commuting frequency. With respect to gender, 60% of the respondents were male, 36.4% were female, and 3.6% identified as other gender. This indicates that the majority of the respondents participating in the study were male commuters. Regarding age distribution, 61.8% of the respondents belonged to the 20–30 years age group, followed by 25.5% in the 31–40 years category. Respondents aged 41–50 years constituted 10.9%, while only 1.8% were above 50 years of age. The findings suggest that a significant proportion of the respondents were young working professionals who regularly depend on suburban railway services for commuting. Analysis of railway routes used most frequently revealed that 60% of the respondents were commuters on the Western Railway line, 30.9% travelled through the Central Railway line, and 9.1% used the Harbour Railway line. This distribution indicates a higher representation of commuters from the Western Railway corridor. In terms of commuting frequency, 88.2% of the respondents reported that they commute regularly using Mumbai suburban trains, while 6.4% stated that they commute occasionally and 5.5% indicated that they do not commute regularly. The high percentage of regular commuters strengthens the reliability of the study, as the respondents possess substantial experience and familiarity with the existing suburban railway system and are therefore capable of providing informed opinions regarding the proposed automated door systems. Overall, the demographic profile demonstrates that the study primarily represents young and regular working professionals from different railway corridors of Mumbai, making the collected responses relevant for assessing perceptions towards the proposed automated door systems and their potential impact on commuting experience.

2 Interpretation of Data

1 Respondent's Perceptions Towards Proposed Automated Door Systems

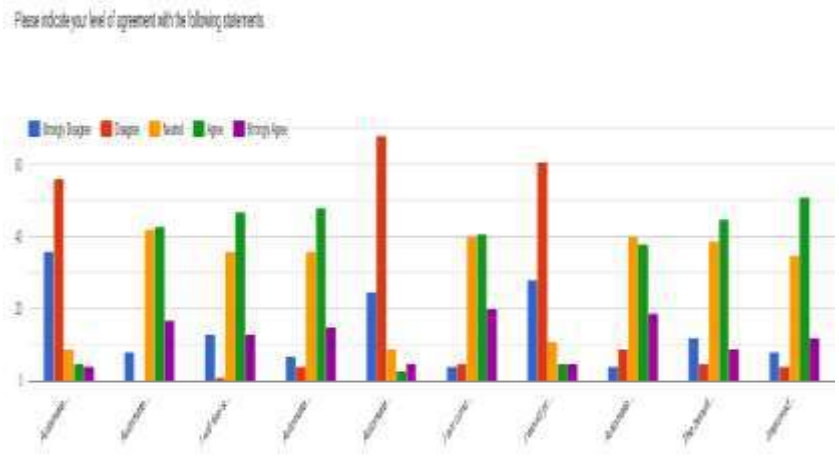


Figure 4.2.1: Respondent's Perceptions Towards Proposed Automated Door Systems

Table 4.2.2: Summary of Respondent's Perceptions Towards Proposed Automated Door Systems

Statement	Major Response (%)	Interpretation
Automated door systems will improve passenger safety in Mumbai local trains.	83.6% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	Respondents were generally sceptical about whether automated doors alone would improve passenger safety.
Automated doors will reduce accidents caused by footboard travelling and overcrowding near train doors.	54.6% Agree/Strongly Agree	Majority believed automated doors could help reduce accidents and unsafe travel practices.
I will feel safer travelling in trains equipped with automated door systems.	54.5% Agree/Strongly Agree	Respondents perceived automated doors as a feature that could enhance personal safety.
Automated doors will make boarding and deboarding more organized.	57.2% Agree/Strongly Agree	Most respondents expected improved passenger discipline and organized movement.
Automated doors will make daily travel more comfortable and convenient.	84.5% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	Respondents did not believe automated doors would necessarily improve comfort and convenience.
I am concerned that automated doors may create ventilation issues in non-AC trains.	55.5% Agree/Strongly Agree	Ventilation emerged as a major concern among commuters.
I would prefer travelling in trains equipped with automated door systems.	81.0% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	Most respondents were hesitant to prefer automated-door trains despite acknowledging safety benefits.
Automated door systems will reduce my commuting-related stress.	51.8% Agree/Strongly Agree	Respondents moderately agreed that automated doors could reduce travel-related stress.
The benefits of automated door systems outweigh their possible drawbacks.	49.1% Agree/Strongly Agree	Nearly half of the respondents felt that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages.
Improved safety and comfort during travel will positively affect my overall commuting experience.	57.3% Agree/Strongly Agree	Majority believed that improvements in safety and comfort would enhance commuting experience.

Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Sample Size (N): 110 respondents; **Measurement Scale:** 5-point Likert scale
(Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1)

Table 4.3.1: Pearson Correlation Analysis Results ($p < 0.05$)

Hypothesis Code	Variables Used in Test	Statistical Evidence (r, p)	Decision	Justification
H_0 / H_1	Employee Perception Towards Proposed Automated Door Systems and Overall Commuting Experience	$r = 0.555$, $p = 0.001$, $N = 110$	Reject H_0 and Accept H_1	Since the p-value (0.001) is less than the significance level of 0.05, a statistically significant positive relationship exists between employee perception and commuting experience.

Interpretation

To determine the relationship between employee's perceptions of the suggested automated door systems and their whole commuting experience, a Pearson Correlation Analysis was performed. A correlation coefficient of $r = 0.555$ was discovered through the analysis, demonstrating a moderate positive correlation between the two variables.

Since the determined p-value of 0.001 is less than the significance level of 0.05, it confirms that the association is statistically significant. So, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The findings indicate that working people who have positive views of automatic door systems are more inclined to experience improvements in their whole commuting experience. Enhanced commuter safety, lower accident risks, better boarding and deboarding procedures, increased travel convenience, and less commuting stress all seem to have a good impact on commuter happiness.

Limitations Of the Study

1. The study was restricted to 110 participants, who may not adequately represent all commuters on the suburban railways of Mumbai.
2. Convenience sampling was employed in the study, which could have an impact on how well the findings apply to a wider population.
3. Only working professionals were included in the study; students and senior citizens were not included.
4. The results are predicated on commuter expectations and perceptions, since Mumbai suburban trains do not yet have fully implemented automated door systems.
5. The study was confined to the Mumbai Suburban Railway network, limiting the applicability of the results to other railway systems or regions.

Implications Of the Findings

The results of the study have important implications for urban transport planners, policymakers, and railway authorities. Commuters perceive that automated door systems provide benefits such as enhanced safety, accident prevention, and ordered boarding and deboarding, which signifies that they understand the potential advantages of such technological advancements. Employee happiness and overall travel quality may be improved by improving safety and travel conditions, according to the strong correlation between employee views and commuting experiences. However, the necessity for meticulous planning and execution is shown by worries about ventilation, overcrowding during busy periods, and system dependability. Therefore, railway authorities should concentrate not just on the introduction of automated door systems but also on the provision of sufficient ventilation, effective crowd management, regular maintenance, and public awareness campaigns. It is possible to improve public acceptance of the Mumbai suburban railway system, increase its efficacy, and create a network that is safer, more comfortable, and commuter-friendly by tackling these issues.

Suggestions

- Awareness campaigns should be carried out by railway authorities to educate commuters about automated door system's operation and benefits.
- Prior to large-scale deployment, automated door systems should be pilot implemented on selected routes.
- In order to avoid bottlenecking during peak- hour, crowd management strategies should be strengthened.
- Ongoing collection and integration of passenger feedback should occur throughout the implementation process.

Conclusion

The Mumbai Suburban Railway is crucial for many working professionals and the city's economy. A study examined employee views on proposed automated door systems and their effects on commuting. Commuters see these systems as improving safety and comfort, but have concerns about ventilation and implementation in crowded trains. Analysis showed a positive link between favourable perceptions and commuting experience. The study concludes that automated doors could enhance safety and quality, but issues need to be addressed for effective use. The findings can help authorities design better transportation solutions.

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Original Article

Shri Swami Samarth Temple, Akkalkot as a Spiritual Tourism Hub: Socio-Economic Impact and Prospects for Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

This study evaluates the transition of the Shri Swami Samarth Temple in Akkalkot, Maharashtra, from a traditional pilgrimage site into an institutional spiritual tourism hub, its multi-layered socio-economic impacts on rural and semi-urban clusters. Utilizing a mixed-methods research framework, this paper captures the mechanics of the regional "temple economy" in Solapur district and investigates its structural integration with India's long-term macroeconomic framework, Viksit Bharat 2047. The empirical findings reveal that faith-driven mobility generates substantial decentralized livelihood opportunities, driving a structural pilgrimage multiplier effect across transport, hospitality, and micro-retail sectors. Crucially, the institutional backward linkages of the temple's daily Annachhatra (free community kitchen) provide price stabilization channels for local agricultural producers, while opening formal micro-retail avenues for women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs). This paper establishes a sustainable destination development framework, illustrating that cultural asset maximization combined with green infrastructural corridors provides an indispensable pathway toward achieving inclusive, developed-nation status by 2047.

Keywords: *Spiritual Tourism, Temple Economy, Regional Development, Viksit Bharat 2047.*

Introduction

The contemporary discourse on economic development increasingly recognizes the services sector as a fundamental engine of regional economic resilience. Within this domain, faith-based travel and cultural heritage tourism have emerged from micro-level acts of individual piety into organized, multi-billion-dollar economic structures. Nationally, the spiritual tourism ecosystem in India accounts for an exceptionally high percentage of domestic travel, acting as a natural decentralized mechanism for capital redistribution from affluent urban corridors to Tier-2, Tier-3, and rural hinterlands. As India advances along its designated macroeconomic trajectory toward achieving a fully developed status by the centenary of its independence conceptualized under the Union Government's directive as Viksit Bharat 2047 the decentralization of economic growth drivers remains paramount. Achieving a projected national GDP of USD 30 trillion requires multiplying regional developmental poles outside primary metropolitan agglomerations. The "temple economy" presents an organic, labour-intensive institutional model capable of sustaining non-farm rural livelihoods without causing massive urban distress migration. The holy town of Akkalkot, situated in the semi-arid, structurally drought-prone Solapur district of southwestern Maharashtra, serves as an illustrative case study for this socio-economic dynamic. Rooted deeply in the spiritual legacy of the 19th-century saint Shri Swami Samarth Maharaj, who resided in the town from 1856 to 1878, Akkalkot attracts millions of pilgrims annually. The central governing institution, the Vatavruksha Swami Samarth Maharaj Devasthan, alongside associated public charitable trusts, functions as the primary economic hub of the municipality. This research provides a thorough economic analysis of how this continuous flow of human capital can be systematized to maximize regional value-added output, improve resource distribution efficiency, and conform to the national requirements of inclusive development over the next two decades.

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Objectives of the Study

The primary focus of this investigation is directed toward the following core academic and structural objectives:

1. To quantify and map the architectural framework of the "temple economy" in Akkalkot and assess its quantitative impacts on local employment and capital creation.
2. To evaluate the backward institutional linkages established by the temple's mega-kitchen networks (Annachhatra) and their stabilization effects on the regional agrarian supply chain.
3. To systematically evaluate the structural alignment of the Akkalkot spiritual tourism hub with the strategic pillars of the Viksit Bharat 2047 operational mandate.
4. To formulate an integrated infrastructural and environmental policy roadmap aimed at transforming the Solapur-Akkalkot corridor into a world-class, low-carbon spiritual tourism circuit.

Data and Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research design combining empirical quantitative with qualitative structural analysis. Given the complex nature of informal economic transactions within pilgrimage sites, primary data was collected through fieldwork executed between October 2025 and March 2026. A structured questionnaire was administered across a randomized sample of 150 economic actors within the municipal limits of Akkalkot, including hospitality operators (n=30), micro-retail vendors selling religious artifacts (n=60), informal transit service providers (n=40), and members of women-led Self-Help Groups (n=20). Secondary data inputs were retrieved from the annual administrative registries and financial reports published by the Vatavruksha Devasthan and the Shri Swami Samarth Annachhatra Mandal. Longitudinal visitor influx tracking data over a ten-year horizon (2016–2025) was acquired from regional tourism and transport registers to compute compound annual growth rates. To quantify the wider systemic impact, a standard regional Pilgrimage Multiplier model was constructed, defining total economic output (Y) generated via direct visitor expenditure (E) and marginal propensities to consume (c) and import (m) within the regional boundary:

$$Y = E \times [\, 1 / (1 - c + m)]$$

Results and Discussion

The empirical assessment demonstrates that the spiritual infrastructure of Akkalkot generates a massive, self-sustaining socio-economic multiplier effect that impacts several sectors of the regional economy.

1 The Agrarian Value Chain and the Annachhatra Multiplier

A primary mechanism of economic stabilization identified during the field investigation is the institutional consumption scale of the community kitchens. The primary kitchens feed an average of 35,000 to 40,000 pilgrims daily, with volume spikes exceeding 100,000 during major lunar festivals such as Guru Purnima. This scale requires substantial agricultural inputs, which are sourced directly from regional farming cooperatives (Annadata), effectively cutting out intermediary wholesale traders. This relationship stabilizes local agricultural prices, offering consistent income channels to farmers in an otherwise drought-prone landscape.

2 Micro-Entrepreneurship and Local Capital Formation

The constant arrival of transient consumer capital has fostered a resilient micro-retail sector. Field data shows that over 65% of local artifact vendors operate as family-owned micro-enterprises with low initial capital requirements. Furthermore, Akkalkot acts as a strong secondary marketplace for Solapur district's recognized textile products, including Geographical Indication (GI) protected Solapuri Chaddars (blankets) and domestic linens. This intersection converts religious travel directly into physical product retail demand, supporting manufacturing units elsewhere across the district.

3 Mapping the Hub to the Pillars of Viksit Bharat 2047

To assess the long-term prospects of this regional hub, the localized socio-economic dynamics observed during field tracking were cross-referenced against the structural pillars specified within the national mandate for a developed India:

Viksit Bharat Pillar	Observed Institutional Impact in Akkalkot	Structural Macro-Target (2047)
Yuva (Youth)	Creation of non-farm employment opportunities across hospitality sectors, logistical management, and digital ticketing assets.	Mitigation of distress rural-to-urban migration toward saturated metro city like Mumbai and Pune.
Garib (Poor)	Low-barrier self-employment options within informal transit, local tour guiding, and street-level micro-retailing.	Facilitation of Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT) frameworks that directly increase lower-quartile household incomes.
Mahilayen (Women)	Dedicated retail spaces and procurement preference for female-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs) producing prasadam and eco-packaging.	Measurable escalation of the female Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in rural Solapur.
Annadata (Farmers)	Direct, institutional buy-back arrangements for core agricultural commodities needed by the mega community kitchens.	De-risking of local agricultural income models against open-market price fluctuations and monsoonal shocks.

4 Infrastructural Constraints and Resource Stress

While the economic output of this hub is clear, significant systemic bottlenecks threaten long-term scalability. Solapur district experiences acute groundwater depletion. The massive, episodic expansion of the transient population places immense stress on the municipal potable water supply and creates challenges for local solid-waste management networks. Current municipal infrastructure presents deficiencies in organized high-capacity parking, tourist reception lounges, and standardized public sanitation systems. Addressing these deficiencies is critical if the site is to scale into a high-value cultural destination over the coming decades.

5 The Unified Spiritual Circuit Framework

To optimize regional economic returns, Akkalkot should move away from functioning as an isolated single-day excursion node. This study proposes an integrated governance framework uniting adjacent high-footfall sacred nodes within Solapur and other districts into a single cooperative corridor. By establishing the Solapur Spiritual Circuit, linking Pandharpur (The place of VITTHAL, who is in the form of Shri Krishna), Tuljapur (The Bhavani Mata historic temple), and Ganagapur (The place of Dattatreya), the average duration of stay can be structurally extended from 1.2 days to 3.5 days. This expansion would significantly increase average spend-per-tourist across local hospitality, dining, and artisanal retail platforms.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The Shri Swami Samarth Temple ecosystem in Akkalkot empirically proves that cultural tradition and forward-looking economic modernization are highly compatible forces. When supported by strategic policy interventions, a faith-based institutional hub can successfully drive rural-urban integration, generating inclusive growth in line with the objectives of Viksit Bharat 2047.

To ensure the sustainable development of this spiritual hub over the next two decades, the following policy guidelines are proposed:

- Transition to Green Tourism Infrastructure: Mandate strict solid-waste source-segregation across all religious properties, integrate decentralized solar micro-grids over large community facilities, and convert the local public transport fleet exclusively to Electric Vehicles (EVs).
- Institutional Skill Development Programs: Launch vocational training partnerships through the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in Solapur district to equip local youth with formal capabilities in hospitality management, intercultural communication, and digital commerce.
- Implementation of Smart Destination Management Systems (SDMS): Deploy IoT-driven crowd-monitoring arrays, dynamic real-time traffic diversion algorithms, and digital administrative portals to ensure visitor safety and smooth municipal operations during high-congestion festive periods.

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Original Article

Climate-Resilient Tourism: A Comparative Study of Adaptation Strategies in India and the Maldives

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Abstract:
Climate change is now one of the most important challenges for tourism destinations worldwide, which are increasingly affected by rising temperatures, sea-level rise, coastal erosion, extreme weather events, flooding, and the deterioration of coral reefs. The notion of climate-resilient tourism has emerged as a key strategy to minimize vulnerability, build adaptive capacity and realize the long-term sustainability of tourism destinations. The study focuses on the Impacts of Climate Change on Tourism in India and the Maldives and analyses the adaptation and resilience methods adopted by both countries. India has a wide range of tourism resources, including coastal, mountain, cultural, and ecotourism destinations that are subject to many climate-related hazards, such as floods, heat waves, cyclones, and coastal erosion. Conversely, the Maldives, a low-lying island nation heavily dependent on tourism, is particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise and coral reef destruction. The analysis is based on secondary data obtained from government papers, international organization's and published academic literature. The results show that both countries are taking action to adapt to climate change, with the Maldives focusing on coastal protection and resilient infrastructure, while India has adopted broader strategies such as sustainable tourism, ecosystem conservation, disaster management and community participation. The study emphasizes the necessity for integrated climate-resilient tourism planning, investment in sustainable infrastructure and better environmental protection to maintain the long-term survival of tourism in both countries. The study focuses on understanding climate resilience as a crucial element of sustainable tourism development in sensitive places.

Keywords: *Climate Change, Resilient Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Adaptation.*

Introduction

Tourism is highly dependent on natural resources, favourable climate, coastal areas, landscapes, biodiversity and cultural attractions. However, increasing temperatures, sea-level rise, coastal erosion, floods, cyclones, heat waves, coral bleaching and extreme weather events are creating new risks for tourism destinations. Climate-Resilient Tourism can adapt to recover from the impacts of climate change while continuing to support local communities, economies, and the environment. These climate-related challenges not only affect tourist movement and destination attractiveness but also threaten local livelihoods, tourism infrastructure and national economies. In this context, the concept of climate-resilient tourism has gained importance. Climate-resilient tourism refers to the ability of tourism destinations, communities and infrastructure to prepare for, adapt to and recover from the impacts of climate change. It focuses on reducing vulnerability, protecting natural ecosystems, strengthening disaster preparedness and promoting sustainable tourism practices. Climate resilience is especially important for countries where tourism plays a major role in economic development and employment generation. India and the Maldives provide useful examples for a comparative study of climate-resilient tourism. India is a large and geographically diverse country with cultural, heritage, coastal, mountain, wildlife and ecotourism resources. However, Indian tourism destinations are increasingly exposed to floods, heat waves, cyclones, landslides, glacier retreat and coastal erosion. Coastal states such as Kerala, Goa, Maharashtra and island territories such as Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts.

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A comparative study of India and the Maldives is important because both countries face climate risks, but their geographical conditions, tourism resources, and levels of vulnerability differ. India has a diversified tourism base, while the Maldives is strongly dependent on coastal and marine tourism. This paper examines the major climate change impacts on tourism in both countries and compares their adaptation strategies. The study highlights the need for sustainable planning, resilient infrastructure, ecosystem conservation and community participation to promote climate-resilient tourism in India and the Maldives.

Objectives Of the Study

1. To examine the concept and importance of climate-resilient tourism in the context of climate change.
2. To identify the major climate-related challenges affecting tourism in India and the Maldives.
3. To compare the vulnerability of tourism destinations in India and the Maldives to climate change impacts.
4. To analyse the adaptation and resilience strategies adopted by both countries.
5. To suggest policy measures for promoting sustainable and climate-resilient tourism development.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data. Information has been collected from research articles, government reports, policy documents, tourism statistics, reports of international organizations such as the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UN Tourism), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), World Bank,Ministry of Tourism in Ind and various published literature related to climate change and tourism. The study adopts a comparative analytical approach to examine climate-related tourism vulnerabilities and adaptation measures in India and the Maldives.

Result And Discussion

The comparative graphs show that the Maldives is more vulnerable to climate change impacts on tourism than India. Tourism contributes around 30% to the Maldivian economy, compared with around 5.22% in India. This indicates that any climate-related disruption such as sea-level rise, coral bleaching, storm surges or coastal erosion can have a stronger national economic impact on the Maldives. India also faces significant climate risks, especially in coastal, mountain and urban tourism destinations; however, its tourism sector is more diversified across cultural, heritage, wildlife, mountain and coastal tourism.

Comparative Analysis of India and The Maldives Tourism

Table 1. Tourism Dependency and Climate Vulnerability Comparison between India and the Maldives

Indicator	India	Maldives
Travel and Tourism GDP Contribution (2024)	5.22% of national economy	Around 30 % of GDP
Tourism GDP Value (2024)	₹20.9 trillion	US$5.6 billion earned
Climate Vulnerability	Moderate to High	Very High
Coastline / Low-Elevation Risk	India has 11,098.81 km coastline	644 kms, over 80% of land is below 1 metre above sea level
Main Climate Threats	Heat waves, floods, cyclones, coastal erosion and landslides	Sea-level rise, coral bleaching, beach erosion and storm surges

Source: WTTC (2024), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2024), World Bank (2024), and Maldives Ministry of Tourism (2024).

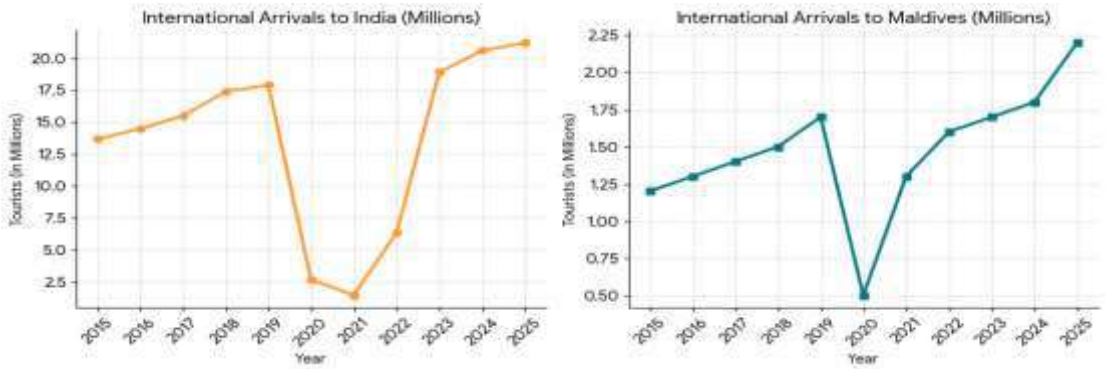
Observation and analysis:

1. Tourism contribution to GDP is higher in the Maldives
   Tourism contributes around 30% of GDP in the Maldives, compared to 5.22% in India. This shows that the Maldives is much more dependent on tourism for its national economy.
2. India has a larger tourism economy in absolute value
   India's tourism GDP value is ₹20.9 trillion, while the Maldives earned US$5.6 billion from tourism. Although India has a lower percentage contribution, its tourism economy is much larger due to its large population and economy.
3. The Maldives has very high climate vulnerability
   The Maldives is more vulnerable because it is a low-lying island country. Climate change directly threatens its land, beaches, resorts, coral reefs and tourism infrastructure.
4. India faces moderate to high vulnerability
   India is also affected by climate change, especially in coastal states and mountain regions. However, India has diverse tourism resources, such as cultural, heritage, wildlife, coastal and mountain tourism, which reduces overall dependence on one type of tourism.
5. Low elevation is a major risk for the Maldives
   Over 80% of land in the Maldives is below 1 metre above sea level, making it highly exposed to sea-level rise, flooding and storm surges.
6. India's long coastline increases coastal risk
   India has a coastline of 11,098.81 km, making coastal tourism destinations vulnerable to cyclones, coastal erosion, floods and sea-level rise.
7. Climate threats are different in both countries

India faces multiple climate threats such as heat waves, floods, cyclones, coastal erosion and landslides. The Maldives mainly faces sea-level rise, coral bleaching, beach erosion and storm surges.

8. The Maldives needs urgent climate-resilient tourism planning
   Because tourism is the backbone of the Maldivian economy, climate-resilient infrastructure, coastal protection and coral reef conservation are essential for its future.
9. India needs region-specific tourism adaptation strategies
   India should focus on coastal management, disaster preparedness, heat action plans, mangrove restoration and sustainable tourism planning in vulnerable regions

International Arrivals to India and Maldives



Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2025), and Maldives Ministry of Tourism (2025).

Figure :1 International Arrivals to India and Maldives

Comparative climate vulnerability of tourism in India and the Maldives.

Climate Vulnerability Index Used for Figure 2

The index score ranges from 1 to 10, where 1 = low vulnerability and 10 = very high vulnerability.

Figure 2. Relative Climate Vulnerability of Tourism

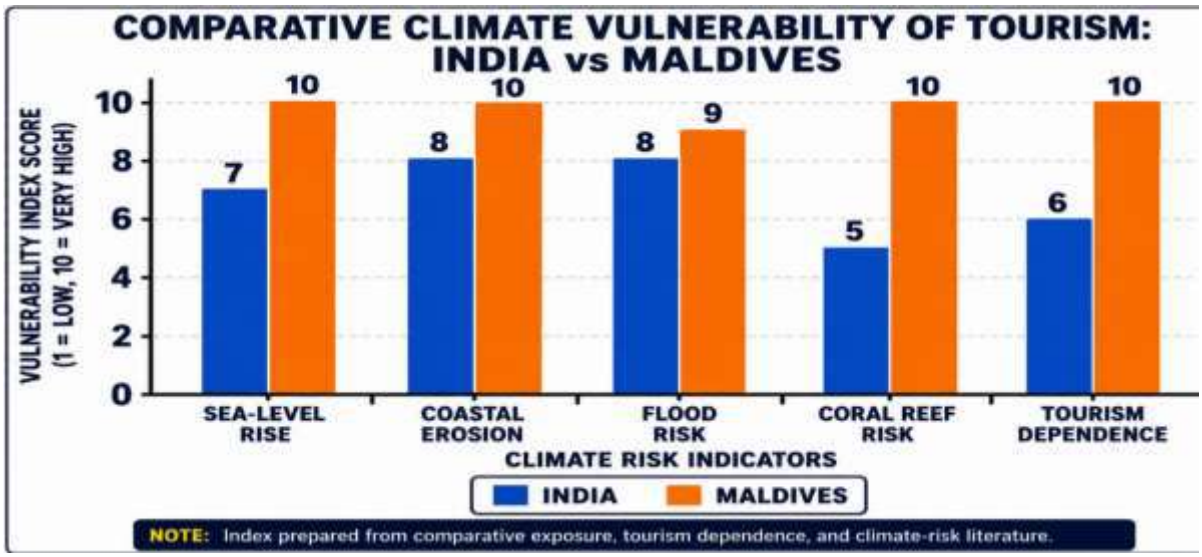


Figure 2. Relative climate vulnerability of tourism in India and the Maldives.

Table 2 Climate-Resilient Tourism Adaptation Strategies in India and the Maldives

Adaptation Strategy	India	Maldives
Coastal Zone Management	Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) policies, shoreline protection and integrated coastal management programmes	Coastal protection walls, beach nourishment and shoreline stabilisation projects
Mangrove Restoration	Mangrove conservation and restoration in the Sundarbans, Gujarat and Kerala	Mangrove restoration programmes for coastal protection and ecosystem conservation
Coral Reef Conservation	Coral reef protection in Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Large-scale coral reef restoration and coral gardening initiatives
Sustainable Tourism Development	Responsible Tourism Mission (Kerala), ecotourism and sustainable destination management	Sustainable island tourism, eco-resorts and low-impact tourism development
Renewable Energy Adoption	Solar-powered tourism facilities and green hotel initiatives	Solar energy systems and renewable energy integration in tourism resorts
Biodiversity Conservation	Protection of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries,	Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and

Adaptation Strategy	India	Maldives
	wetlands and ecologically sensitive areas	marine biodiversity conservation programmes
Sustainable Transport	Promotion of electric vehicles and eco-friendly transport systems	Low-carbon transportation and sustainable inter-island mobility
Nature-Based Solutions	Wetland restoration, afforestation and ecosystem-based adaptation strategies	Seagrass restoration, coral rehabilitation and coastal vegetation protection

Source: based on IPCC (2023), UN Tourism (2024), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2024), Maldives Tourism Climate Action Plan (2024), and World Bank (2024).

Important Findings and Observations:

1. Climate change poses a significant threat to tourism in both India and the Maldives through sea-level rise, coastal erosion, floods, extreme weather events and ecosystem degradation.
2. The Maldives is more vulnerable than India because tourism contributes around 30% of GDP and over 80% of its land area lies below one metre above sea level.
3. India has a larger tourism economy (₹20.9 trillion in 2024) and benefits from a diversified tourism sector, including cultural, heritage, wildlife, mountain and coastal tourism.
4. Coastal tourism destinations in both countries are increasingly exposed to climate-related risks, highlighting the need for climate-resilient tourism planning.
5. The Maldives has prioritised coral reef restoration, coastal protection, climate-resilient infrastructure and renewable energy to safeguard its tourism industry.
6. India focuses on sustainable tourism, disaster risk management, mangrove restoration, ecotourism and community-based tourism to enhance resilience.

Conclusion:

Climate change has emerged as a major challenge to the sustainability and growth of the global tourism industry, particularly in environmentally sensitive destinations. This comparative study of India and the Maldives highlights the increasing vulnerability of tourism to climate-related hazards, including sea-level rise, coastal erosion, flooding, extreme weather events, and ecosystem degradation. While India faces diverse climate challenges across its coastal, mountain, and urban tourism regions, the Maldives remains particularly vulnerable due to its low-lying geography and heavy dependence on coastal and marine tourism. The study reveals that both countries have recognised the importance of climate-resilient tourism and have implemented various adaptation measures, including ecosystem conservation, disaster risk management, sustainable tourism practices, and resilient infrastructure development. However, the scale and intensity of future climate impacts require stronger policy interventions, increased investment, and greater community participation. The findings suggest that integrating climate resilience into tourism planning is essential for safeguarding natural resources, supporting local livelihoods, and ensuring long-term economic sustainability. Therefore, governments, tourism stakeholders, and local communities must work collaboratively to promote sustainable, climate-resilient tourism models that effectively address future environmental challenges while advancing sustainable development goals.

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Original Article

Digital Transformation of Tourism in Odisha: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Imperatives for Viksit Bharat@2047

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Abstract

In India, tourism is emerging as an important driver of economic growth, cultural preservation, employment generation, and regional development. In the vision of the national Viksit Bharat @2047, digital transformation has become an essential tool for strengthening tourism competitiveness and tourist experience. Odisha has a rich cultural history, religious destinations, biological diversity, and historical landmarks, and has great potential to harness digital technology for sustainable tourism development. The state has seen an increased use of digital platforms, online booking systems, virtual tourist experiences, mobile applications, digital payment systems, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and social media-oriented destination promotion. These initiatives have contributed to improved accessibility, better tourist interaction, and expanded visibility of Odisha's tourism assets at national and international levels. These prospects notwithstanding, there are hurdles to realizing a fully integrated digital tourism ecosystem. Major barriers include poor digital infrastructure in rural and isolated tourist areas, cybersecurity risks, digital literacy deficiencies among stakeholders, fragmented data management systems, and insufficient technological capacity among local tourism firms. In addition, policy attention is needed to address issues of data privacy, sustainable tourism governance, and fair access to digital resources. This article examines the current state of digital tourism projects in Odisha to identify potential opportunities and obstacles and assess their implications for achieving the objectives of Viksit Bharat @2047, using a doctrinal and analytical methodology. The report also suggests policy imperatives for improving digital infrastructure, capacity building, data security, public-private partnerships, and smart tourist ecosystems. The results show that a deliberate and comprehensive digital transformation model can significantly enhance Odisha's contribution to India's tourism-led development strategy and position the State as one of the leading smart tourism destinations by 2047.

Keywords: *Digital Tourism, Odisha Tourism, Smart Tourism, Viksit Bharat @2047, Tourism Policy, Digital Transformation, Sustainable Tourism.*

Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's most dynamic industries, contributing to economic growth, employment, cultural exchange, and sustainable development. Tourism drives regional development, cultural preservation, and livelihood opportunities in urban and rural India. Tourism contributed about 5% to India's GDP. It created 7.6 crore jobs in FY 2022–23, confirming its role in economic growth and social inclusion (Ministry of Tourism, 2025). In 2024, India recorded 9.66 million Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs), generating ₹2.78 lakh crore in foreign exchange revenues, demonstrating a post-pandemic recovery and growth potential (Ministry of Tourism, 2025). Tourism has changed due to the rapid development of ICTs, AI, big data analytics, cloud computing, digital payments, VR, and mobile apps. Digital transformation has changed how tourists research, plan, book, experience, and share their travels. Incorporating smart tourism practices has led to increased operational efficiency, visitor satisfaction, and data-driven decision-making in destinations (Galvão et al., 2024). Many Indian tourists now plan and book their travel online, using digital payment ecosystems and mobile-based travel services, according to recent research. Digital India, BharatNet, UPI, Smart Cities Mission, and National Digital Tourism projects have created new tourism potential in India. The growing online travel market, digital payment infrastructure, and smart tourism technologies are transforming the tourism landscape, making it more accessible to both local and foreign tourists.

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The Government of India's Viksit Bharat @2047 mission to develop India through innovation, digital governance, sustainable development, and inclusive economic growth makes these accomplishments more relevant. Odisha might become a top smart tourist destination in this national context. The State's tourism resources include the Jagannath Temple at Puri, the Sun Temple at Konark, Chilika Lake, Buddhist historical circuits, tribal cultural landscapes, wildlife sanctuaries, virgin beaches, and eco-tourism locations. The Government of Odisha has taken many steps to improve tourism infrastructure, branding, internet access, and visitor experiences, given the state's strategic importance. Digital tourism information portals, online booking, mobile apps, digital payment systems, virtual promotional campaigns, and smart destination management tools demonstrate the state's efforts to modernize its tourism.

Even with these achievements, Odisha's tourism sector faces significant challenges in its digital transformation. Inadequate digital infrastructure in remote tourist destinations, digital literacy gaps among local stakeholders, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, fragmented tourism databases, limited integration of emerging technologies, and data privacy and governance issues hinder the development of a fully integrated smart tourism ecosystem. Meeting these challenges is essential to boosting competitiveness, sustainable tourism development, and the socio-economic benefits of tourism.

The current study examines how the digital revolution has changed Odisha's tourism development. It investigates new potential, major challenges, and policy imperatives to create a resilient, inclusive, and technology-driven tourism ecosystem that supports Viksit Bharat @2047. The report contributes to discussions on India's emerging smart tourism governance and sustainable destination development.

Digital Transformation and Tourism: Conceptual Framework

The 21st century has seen extraordinary integration of digital technology into economic and social processes, transforming industries and service delivery. Service- and information-based tourism have suffered most. AI, big data analytics, cloud computing, IoT, blockchain, VR, AR, GIS, mobile apps, and digital payment systems have transformed tourism management, destination marketing, customer interaction, and travel experiences (Bekele & Raj, 2024).

Digital technology is used strategically to transform organizational processes, business models, and stakeholder interactions, promoting efficiency, innovation, and value generation. "Tourist digital transformation involves creating intelligent, connected, and data-driven ecosystems. E-tourism, digital tourism, Tourism 4.0, and smart tourism utilize technology to enhance tourist experiences and competitiveness (Galvão, Brito e Abreu, & Melo, 2024).

Tourist digitalization has three steps. Information was originally digitized via websites and online reservation systems. Second, digitization included OTAs, social media marketing, mobile tourism, and electronic transactions. The third and current stage of tourist planning and management uses AI, machine learning, predictive analytics, IoT-based smart destinations, virtual tourism experiences, and digital twins (Kindzule-Millere & Zeverte-Rivza, 2026).

Smart tourism has advanced digitalization. Intelligent tourism ecosystems enhance destination management, sustainability, accessibility, and visitor satisfaction through current ICT. Smart tourism destinations use real-time data, digital infrastructure, and new technologies to connect tourists, businesses, governments, and local communities (Galvão et al., 2024).

Digital tourism and online travel markets are increasing rapidly worldwide. Smartphone penetration, digital payments, and AI-enabled travel services drove the USD 253.2 billion global online travel agency industry in 2024 and are expected to grow over the coming decade. Online travel transactions were approximately 45% app-based in 2024, reflecting a rising reliance on digital platforms for planning and scheduling.

UNWTO says digital innovation drives sustainable tourism and location resilience. Digital technologies help tourist firms and destinations improve operational efficiency, customer interaction, real-time information sharing, and evidence-based policymaking. Small tourism businesses can immediately reach global markets via digital channels, supporting entrepreneurship and inclusive economic growth.

Digital India, BharatNet, UPI, Smart Cities Mission, PM Gati Shakti, and the National Integrated Database of the Hospitality Industry are transforming India's tourism sector. Electronic payments, online booking, QR code services, mobile travel apps, and social media destination advertising have changed tourists' behavior. Internet, smartphones, and digital literacy have driven nationwide growth in smart tourism.

In theory, the digital transformation of tourism is a four-dimensional ecosystem. Start with digital infrastructure, including the internet, mobile, cloud, and digital payment methods. Online booking platforms, e-ticketing, virtual tours, destination management systems, and tourism information websites compose the second dimension. The third dimension of digital governance includes cybersecurity, data protection, interoperability, and smart destination rules. Dimension four: Digital stakeholders. This includes visitors, government organizations, tourism corporations, local communities, and technology vendors. A sustainable, smart-tourism environment that boosts competitiveness and tourist satisfaction results from these factors.

Digital change offers Odisha chances to modernize tourism, raise destination awareness, encourage smart destination management, and attract domestic and international tourists. Digital technologies can help the state promote heritage, religion, eco-tourism, tribal tourism, and coastline tourism. To realize those benefits, you need strong digital infrastructure, competent staff, cybersecurity, and government backing. Thus, understanding digital transformation and its significance in accomplishing Odisha's Viksit Bharat @2047 goal of becoming a premier smart tourism destination is crucial.

Tourism Potential of Odisha

With its rich cultural heritage, religious significance, biological diversity, archeological treasures, tribal traditions, and huge coastline, Odisha is unique in Indian tourism. Historical, pilgrimage, eco-tourism, wildlife, coastal, tribal, adventure, and cultural tourism are available in the eastern Indian state bordering the Bay of Bengal. Odisha has the potential to become a global tourism destination like Viksit Bharat @2047, thanks to its diversity.

The Odisha government prioritizes tourism because it creates jobs, infrastructure, entrepreneurship, and economic progress. The Odisha Tourism Annual Report 2024–25 lists 378 tourist places with strong growth potential throughout different tourism circuits, demonstrating the government's commitment to expanding and diversifying tourism. Odisha welcomed 1.10 crore tourists in 2024, demonstrating significant post-pandemic recovery and development (Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha, 2025).

Odisha excels in religious and spiritual tourism. Puri is home to Jagannath, one of the Char Dham Hindu pilgrimage destinations. Millions of people attend Puri's Rath Yatra, one of the world's largest religious gatherings. The "Golden Triangle," comprising Puri, Konark, and Bhubaneswar, drives Odisha's tourism economy and attracts domestic and international visitors. Major infrastructural projects, enhanced connections, heritage conservation, and tourism amenities have made Puri a top pilgrimage and cultural tourism destination.

Odisha is rich culturally and archaeologically. The state's most famous feature is the Konark Sun Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and medieval Indian architectural marvel. The "Temple City of India," Bhubaneswar, is noted for its medieval Kalinga temples and architectural beauty. Udayagiri, Khandagiri, Dhauli, Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri, and Langudi boost heritage tourism in the state. These sites preserve Odisha's past and draw scholars, researchers, and cultural tourists from around the world.

Buddhist tourism is another Odisha opportunity. The "Diamond Triangle" of Ratnagiri, Udayagiri, and Lalitgiri is a major Buddhist site in India. These locations were important centers of Buddhist study and monasticism between the fifth and eleventh centuries, according to archaeological evidence. Odisha has great potential to establish worldwide Buddhist tourist circuits and to engage in cultural diplomacy, amid rising interest from Japanese, Sri Lankan, Thai, Myanmar, and South Korean Buddhist pilgrims.

Ecotourism and nature-based tourism benefit from the state's biodiversity. Chilika Lake, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, is Odisha's main attraction. Puri, Khordha, and Ganjam: Chilika has hundreds of migratory bird species and a rich aquatic environment. Conservation-led tourism and the Chilika Bird Festival have raised their global profile. The lake attracts birdwatchers, nature enthusiasts, researchers, and ecotourists year-round.

Odisha wildlife tourism is promising. The state has Similipal Tiger Reserve, Bhitarkanika National Park, Satkosia Tiger Reserve, Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary, and Chandaka Elephant Reserve. Bhitarkanika is an ecological hotspot in India due to its mangroves and estuarine crocodiles. Wildlife, ecological education, and sustainable ecotourism are offered in Similipal, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. These places raise awareness of conservation and create jobs.

The state's 480km shoreline draws tourists. Puri, Chandrabhaga, Gopalpur, Ramachandi, Paradeep, Talasari, and Astaranga offer coastal and marine tourism. The Blue Flag indicates that Puri's Golden Beach satisfies international standards for environmental sustainability, cleanliness, safety, and tourism amenities. The state government aims to add Blue Flag beaches and a cruise terminal in Puri to enhance coastal tourism.

Tourism in Odisha benefits from its indigenous heritage. Odisha has 62 tribal communities with different cultures, art forms, handicrafts, festivals, and lifestyles. Tribal tourist circuits in Koraput, Rayagada, Malkangiri, Kandhamal, and Mayurbhanj offer unique cultural experiences to local and international travelers. Community-based tourism can preserve culture and support indigenous peoples when well managed.

Odisha's tourism numbers show its growing popularity. Increasing from the previous year, Parliamentary data reveals 1,09,98,819 domestic and 53,392 foreign tourists in 2024. Visitor traffic is rising due to the attractiveness of Odisha's tourism assets and promotional and infrastructure efforts.

Odisha is known for festivals, sports, conventions, and experiential tourism in addition to its natural and cultural attractions. The Men's Hockey World Cup, Konark Dance Festival, Mukteswar Dance Festival, Toshali National Crafts Mela, and Bali Jatra elevated destination branding and tourism. Tourism, culture, sports, and Internet marketing have increased the state's tourism appeal.

With its past, spirituality, wildlife, tribal culture, and coastline riches, Odisha might be India's top tourism destination. This promise requires strategic investments in digital infrastructure, sustainable destination management, smart tourism technology, and inclusive policy frameworks. By 2047, Odisha might become a global smart tourism destination thanks to digital change.

Digital Tourism Initiatives in Odisha

Digital technology can boost tourists' competitiveness; hence, Odisha has established several schemes to digitalize tourism. These efforts promote Digital India, Smart Governance, and Viksit Bharat @2047. Odisha is promoting smart tourism using digital platforms, online services, smart destination management tools, and digital marketing.

One of the best efforts is the official Odisha Tourism website, which lists sights, lodgings, travel circuits, cultural events, eco-tourism locations, and online booking. The easy-to-use system lets passengers check real-time information, plan itineraries, and book (Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha, 2025).

The state has increased its digital outreach through social media, virtual campaigning, and digital storytelling. Multimedia, virtual tours, and branding promote Puri, Konark, Chilika, Bhubaneswar, Bhitarkanika, and Similipal. These programs have enhanced Odisha's participation in and visibility for local and international tourism.

Digital payment infrastructure at major tourist attractions is another crucial development. The rise of UPI, QR code payments, online ticketing, and digital reservations has simplified tourist transactions. UPI transactions in India rose to 172 billion in FY 2024-25, indicating an increasing reliance on digital payment ecosystems for tourism-related services and transactions (NPCI, 2025).

Through online hotel booking systems, digital accommodation services, transportation booking capabilities, and integrated tourism information platforms, Orissa has pushed technology-enabled tourist management. To simplify tourism, the state's tourism website offers lodging, transportation, holiday packages, and other services.

Digital tourism benefited from the Bhubaneswar smart city projects. Smart mobility, traffic management, digital information kiosks, public wi-fi, GIS-based urban planning, and integrated command and control systems have improved urban tourism and destination management. As one of India's top smart cities, Bhubaneswar promotes smart tourist infrastructure (Government of Odisha, 2025).

The government is advancing digital governance via the Odisha AI Policy 2025 and related IT efforts. These policies allow AI, data analytics, and smart tourism apps for destination management, tourist behavior analysis, and personalized tourism services.

Despite progress, Odisha's tourism industry's digital revolution continues. Continuous investments in broadband connectivity, digital literacy, cybersecurity, data integration, and smart tourism technology are needed to build a digital tourism ecosystem. Current activities demonstrate the state's commitment to leveraging digital technology to drive sustainable tourism growth and smart competitiveness of tourist destinations in India.

Opportunities and Challenges of Digital Tourism in Odisha

Digital transformation can boost Odisha's tourism industry's competitiveness, accessibility, and sustainability. Internet services, cellphones, digital payments, AI, big data analytics, VR, AR, and GIS have helped increase tourism development and destination management. In 2025, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) predicted that there would be over 970 million internet subscribers, enabling digital tourism and online travel ecosystems.

Odisha tourism spots offer significant digital and social media marketing potential." Digital advertising enables tourist authorities to reach global audiences at a lower cost and boost destination and brand awareness. Virtual tours, immersive films, and interactive content can boost tourism in Puri, Konark, Chilika, Bhitarkanika, and Similipal. Over 70% of global travellers plan trips using online information and reviews (UNWTO, 2025).

Digital technology helps smart tourism locations. Tourism and destination management can be improved with real-time information systems, digital navigation aids, smart ticketing, QR code-enabled services, and AI-driven visitor management systems. This technology could help Odisha manage rising tourist numbers, especially at pilgrimage and heritage sites. Intelligent transit systems, digital kiosks, and integrated tourism information services may help Bhubaneswar and Puri provide smooth travel experiences (Government of Odisha, 2025).

Digital platforms for rural and community-centered tourism are another option. Online marketplaces and booking platforms help local handicraft producers, homestay operators, eco-tourism enterprises, and tribal groups reach more travelers. This can boost inclusive economic growth and the SDGs by creating jobs and generating income in rural and tribal areas. Digital payments, especially UPI, improve financial inclusion and ease of doing business for tourists and local service providers. India had over 172 billion UPI transactions in FY 2024–25, highlighting the growing importance of digital financial infrastructure in tourism (NPCI, 2025).

Odisha's digital tourism revolution faces significant obstacles. Remote tribal, woodland, and seaside tourism sites suffer from poor internet access. Internet, mobile network, and digital infrastructure shortages hamper smart tourism solutions and experiences. These discrepancies generate a digital divide that may prevent some destinations from establishing digital tourism.

Digital literacy and technological skills of tourist participants are crucial. Many small tourism businesses, local guides, craftsmen, and community-based tourism operators lack the technical skills to use digital platforms, online marketing tools, and e-commerce services. Without proper training and capacity-building, digital transformation may only benefit larger tourism enterprises and cities.

Cybersecurity and data privacy are rising issues. Online booking platforms, digital payments, mobile apps, and cloud-based tourism services put travelers and service providers at danger of cyber fraud, identity theft, data breaches, and unlawful data processing. Tourism stakeholders must comply with data protection laws to safeguard tourist data and maintain public trust (Government of India, 2023). The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, has reinforced India's data governance.

A related topic is environmental sustainability. Without sustainable destination management, digital technology may increase tourist arrivals and popularity, leading to congestion, ecological degradation, increased trash, and pressure on local resources. Puri, Konark, and Chilika must balance digital tourism, environmental conservation, and carrying capacity.

Digital transformation can boost Odisha's tourist competitiveness and contribute to Viksit Bharat @2047, but infrastructure, digital skills, cybersecurity, data protection, and sustainability must be addressed. A balanced and inclusive digital tourism plan may help Odisha exploit technology while ensuring socio-economic and environmental sustainability.

Policy Imperatives and Recommendations for Viksit Bharat @2047

Digitally transforming Odisha's tourist sector requires a holistic policy strategy that integrates technology, sustainability, stakeholder involvement, and good governance. The tourist policy must establish smart, inclusive, and resilient ecosystems to compete in the global digital economy as India pursues Viksit Bharat @2047.

Digital infrastructure should be the top government aim for all tourism sites. Large towns like Bhubaneswar and Puri have superior broadband and cell network coverage than eco-tourism, tribal, and rural areas. BharatNet and Digital India could help Odisha provide high-speed Internet to all key tourism circuits. Online tourism, smart destination management, and real-time tourist information systems benefit from digital infrastructure (Ministry of Communications, 2025).

Second, governments prioritize smart tourist technologies. AI, big data analytics, GIS, IoT, VR, and AR improve destination management and guest experiences. AI-enabled chatbots, predictive analytics for tourist flow management, digital guidance

systems, virtual heritage tours, and smart ticketing platforms can improve operational efficiency and sustainable tourism (UN Tourism, 2025).

Develop HR and digital skills. Local guides, homestay operators, craftsmen, tourism entrepreneurs, and community-based tourism groups need training in digital literacy, online marketing, e-commerce, and digital service delivery. Digital skills are increasingly needed for service-sector competitiveness (WEF, 2025). Thus, targeted skills development projects can benefit urban and rural communities equally from digital tourism.

Data security and cybersecurity are essential for digital tourism governance. Cyberattacks and data breaches are rising due to digital payments, online booking platforms, smartphone apps, and cloud-based tourism services. Tourism governance structures must comply with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, to ensure the security of tourist data collection, processing, and storage. Cybersecurity and digital security evaluations can boost digital tourist trust (Government of India, 2023).

For integrated digital governance, the state should establish a tourism data management platform. This platform supports evidence-based decision-making by combining tourist arrivals, hotel facilities, transportation services, destination performance, and visitor feedback. Data-driven decision-making helps governments predict demand, identify travel trends, and maximize resources.

Future tourist policy should emphasize sustainability. In Chilika Lake, Bhitarkanika National Park, and Similipal Biosphere Reserve, smart tourism should prioritize environmental protection. Digital monitoring, GIS-based predictions of carrying capacity, and smart waste management can help sustainably manage destinations (UNEP, 2024).

PPPs can accelerate tourist modernization with funds, technology, and creativity. Government agencies, technology companies, academic institutions, tourism businesses, and local communities can collaborate to create smart tourist infrastructure and digital services. Partnerships help tourist start-ups and innovation ecosystems flourish, boosting the economy and creating jobs.

Finally, Odisha needs a Smart Tourism Strategy to complement the Odisha Tourism Policy 2022 and Viksit Bharat @2047. Digital infrastructure, tourist satisfaction, cybersecurity, sustainability, digital talent development, and worldwide competitiveness should be strategic goals. Odisha can use digital technology to become India's top smart tourist destination with a cohesive, future-focused policy framework.

Odisha needs technical innovation, human capacity building, sustainable resource management, cybersecurity, and cooperative governance to realize digitally empowered tourism. These steps will improve tourism, inclusive economic growth, cultural preservation, and Viksit Bharat @2047 sustainability.

Conclusion

Digital transformation has become a key enabler for sustainable growth and global competitiveness of the tourism business. Odisha, with its rich cultural legacy, spiritual destinations, biological diversity, tribal customs, and coastal resources, has great potential to emerge as a major smart tourist destination in India. The report indicates that digital initiatives, such as online tourism platforms, digital payments, smart city infrastructure, social media marketing, and emerging technologies, are slowly transforming the state's tourism landscape and improving visitor experiences.

However, to realize this promise, the persisting obstacles of digital infrastructure deficiencies, cybersecurity threats, data privacy issues, digital literacy deficits, and sustainable destination management need to be addressed. Technology alone is not enough unless it is accompanied by inclusive governance, stakeholder participation, environmental protection, and continual capacity building.

In the Viksit Bharat @2047 timeframe, Odisha needs a comprehensive smart tourism strategy that integrates innovation, sustainability, and cultural conservation. Tourism competitiveness can be significantly enhanced through strategic investments in digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, data-driven governance, skill development, and public-private partnerships. It can create jobs, promote local entrepreneurship, and enhance regional development.

In the end, digital transformation should be seen not just as a technological change, but as a driver of a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable tourist ecosystem. By harnessing digital technologies to their fullest potential and protecting its unique natural and cultural legacy, Odisha may emerge as a model smart tourism destination and make a strong contribution to India's journey to become a developed nation by 2047.

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Original Article

A Study on Strength and Weaknesses Analysis of Tourist Places at Ratnagiri District.

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Abstract

The paper submitted deals with "Analysis of Strength and Weaknesses of Tourist Places at Ratnagiri District" which is the most significant topic and having potential to attract more tourists. Tourism plays an important role in driving regional economic growth, particularly in regions endowed with cultural richness and breathtaking natural surroundings such as the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. With its picturesque coastline, historical landmarks, and vibrant local traditions, Ratnagiri holds immense potential to become a prominent tourist destination. The development of tourism in such areas not only boosts local employment and infrastructure but also helps preserve and promote regional identity and culture. The study points out strengths like beautiful nature, rich culture, and easy travel connections. It also notes weaknesses such as poor infrastructure, low promotion, and dependence on seasonal visitors. The opportunities include eco-tourism, heritage-based tourism, and community projects, while the challenges are environmental damage, shortage of trained workers, and weak coordination among authorities

Keywords: *- Tourist Places, Strength Analysis, Weaknesses Analysis.*

Introduction:

Tourism is one the most dynamic and rapidly growing sectors for the economic development. In recent years tourism sector is known for cultural heritage and contributes towards employment generation, sustainable development and encouraging to being entrepreneurs. **It contributes** to the national economy and creates unique identity in international level. Over 85% of the district's geographical area is comprised of hill ranges. India is rich in diversity of natural landscapes, cultural significance, historical monuments and coastal resources. The State of Maharashtra has emerged as a prominent center of tourism because of its geographical diversity and cultural richness. Within Maharashtra, the Ratnagiri district occupies a special place because of its unique blend of natural beauty, historical importance, and socio-cultural richness. Ratnagiri is a beautiful district on the Konkan coast of Maharashtra, blessed with clean beaches, green hills, fertile farmlands, and a pleasant tropical climate throughout the year. These natural characteristics of the place make it an attractive place not only for local people but also for tourists from different parts of the country. The district is historically significant as the birthplace of eminent leaders like Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and it also houses important heritage sites, forts, and temples that attract cultural and religious tourists. Moreover, Ratnagiri is globally known for its agricultural product, especially the Alphonso mango, which adds an agro-tourism dimension. The coastal villages and ports demonstrate a distinctive Konkani lifestyle, which enable visitors to connect closely with the local culture. The multiplicity of tourist attractions—including Ganpatipule temple, Ratnadurg Fort, Pawas, Jaigad, Mandavi Beach, and numerous lesser-known eco-tourism spots positions the district as a promising yet underexplored destination, while the natural beauty and cultural heritage are significant, these resources have yet to be effectively and uniformly developed for tourism. For this **purpose,** the analysis of the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of Ratnagiri District becomes an essence. Ratnagiri is a beautiful coastal city located along the Arabian Sea in the Konkan region of Maharashtra, India. Geographically, it lies at 16.98°N 73.3°E, with the Sahyadri mountain ranges on its eastern side and the vast Arabian Sea on the west.

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The strengths of Ratnagiri as a tourist destination primarily lie in its natural endowments, cultural vibrancy, and strategic location. Being part of the Konkan belt, Ratnagiri offers an unspoiled environment with lush greenery and biodiversity. Its connectivity by road, rail, and sea further enhances accessibility. At the same time, weaknesses such as inadequate infrastructure, limited awareness, seasonal dependency, and insufficient marketing strategies act as barriers to large-scale tourism growth. These internal factors directly influence tourist experiences and, therefore, impact the sustainability of the sector. On the other hand, Ratnagiri has vast opportunities in terms of eco-tourism, cultural tourism, heritage preservation, adventure tourism, and community-based initiatives. If tapped efficiently, these opportunities can generate local employment, encourage entrepreneurship, and ensure inclusive development. However, the district also faces significant challenges like environmental degradation, coastal erosion, overcrowding in certain spots, lack of proper waste management, and competition from well-established tourist centers like Goa. A balanced assessment of these dimensions is necessary to frame appropriate strategies for tourism growth that align with principles of sustainability.

Objectives

1) To analyze the strength and weaknesses of tourist places located at Ratnagiri District
2) To make suggestions for sustainable tourism at Ratnagiri

Data And Methodology

The present study is based entirely on secondary data to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of tourist places in Ratnagiri District. Relevant information was collected from various published sources, including reports of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), District Statistical Handbooks, Ratnagiri District Gazetteers, research journals, books, newspapers, and official government websites. Data related to tourist attractions, infrastructure, accessibility, accommodation facilities, tourist arrivals, and tourism development initiatives were reviewed and compiled.

The methodology helps identify the district's key tourism strengths, existing limitations, opportunities for future growth, and challenges affecting sustainable tourism development. The findings are based on qualitative assessment and interpretation of available secondary information.

Analysis Of Strength of Tourist Places at Ratnagiri

1) Scenic Diversity: Ratnagiri is blessed with beautiful natural surroundings that attract many visitors from different part of the country as well as from outside of the country. The district has a long coastline with clean and attractive beaches such as Ganpatipule, Mandavi, Bhatye, and Aare Ware, which are famous among tourists. Apart from beaches, the area is also full of green hills, flowing rivers, and refreshing waterfalls that make the scenery even more charming. The greenery of the Konkan region attracts and creates a peaceful environment for nature lovers too. Ratnagiri also enjoys a pleasant tropical climate, which makes it suitable for tourism throughout the year. Altogether, its scenic diversity is one of the biggest strengths for developing tourism in the district.

2) Historic and Cultural Identity: Ratnagiri has a strong historical and cultural background that makes it special for tourists. The district is home to ancient forts like Ratnadurg, Jaigad, and Vijaydurg, which highlights the bravery and power of the Maratha Empire. It is also the birthplace of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a great freedom fighter, which adds national importance to the region. Religious and spiritual tourism is strength of Ratnagiri, as it has famous temples and pilgrimage places such as the Ganpatipule Temple, Pawas (Swami Swaroopanand Ashram), and Velneshwar Temple. These places attract both devotees and history lovers from across India. Together, Ratnagiri's forts, temples, and historical figures create a rich cultural heritage that draws visitors to the district.

3) Unique Identity: Ratnagiri has a unique identity because of its local culture and traditions. The district is known for its distinct Konkani lifestyle, colorful festivals, tasty local cuisine, and traditional folk arts, which give visitors an authentic cultural experience. Its small fishing villages show the traditional way of life, and tourists can see local fishermen at work. The vibrant local markets sell handmade crafts, fresh seafood, and local products, which attract visitors who want to, experience the culture closely. Altogether, Ratnagiri's culture and traditions make it a special and interesting place for tourists.

4) Agro-Marine Offerings: Ratnagiri is known for its agricultural and marine products, which attract many visitors from the globe. The district is especially famous for Alphonso mangoes, all over the world and help promote agro-tourism. Apart from mangoes, coconuts, cashews, and fresh fish are important local products that visitors enjoy. These products not only give tourists a taste of local flavors but also support the local economy.

5) Accessibility: The locations are easy to reach because the Konkan Railway, main highways, and coastal roads all connect to it. These transport links make travel faster and more convenient for tourist. Being close to big cities like Mumbai, Pune, and Goa brings more people who can visit for short trips. As a result, the place sees steady tourist inflow and better chances for local employment generation.

6) Eco-Tourism Potential: Ratnagiri District has rich biodiversity, with many plants, animals, and marine life that make it special for nature lovers. Mangrove forests protect the coast and provide homes for birds and fish. Visitors can enjoy adventure activities like trekking through forests, boating along the coast, and trying water sports. These natural features and activities make the place great for eco-friendly tourism and learning about nature.

Analysis Of Weaknesses of Tourist Places at Ratnagiri

1) Accessibility and Transport: Ratnagiri's tourist places have some limitations mainly due to poor accessibility and transport. The airport has no commercial flights, tourists depends on airports like Mumbai, Pune, or Goa to save time to reach tour destination. Road and rail travel takes long hours, with monsoon rains often causing disruptions and landslides. Many attractions lack proper last-mile connectivity, making visitors dependent on costly private vehicles. Public transport facilities are limited, with overcrowded buses and very few tourist-friendly services. In addition, inadequate wayfinding support makes it harder for outsiders to navigate smoothly.

2) Accommodation, Service and Infrastructure: The range of quality of accommodation and visitor services is one of the causes of tourist challenge. Hotels, homestays and restaurants are limited especially in a remote tourist place. Directional assistant and informational board at many places were not displayed. In absence of reliable services remark adverse tourist experience.

3) Safety and Emergency Response: Many famous beaches lack proper life saving measures and incidents of drowning have been reported. Emergency response systems are not always well coordinated and also crowd management during seasons remains a challenging event. Strengthening safety infrastructure and emergency measures is essential to boost tourist.

4) Community Participation: Limited formal contribution of community participation in some tourist area reduce the tourism value chain as well as to encourage local for entrepreneurship, should be provided proper training and guidance. The lack of skill to attract tourist may become limitation of that local people. Skill development program at such tourist places and local participation encouragement is challenged. To convert their traditional approach to modern outlook.

5) Marketing and Product Diversification: Tourist places at Ratnagiri District have potential to attract people but it has been over crowded in seasons only at selected beaches and at pilgrim site with proper marketing strategies, off-season product development like agro-tourism, eco-tourism, heritage trail etc.

Results And Discussion:

1) To reach at rural places of Ratnagiri District there is a need to improve connectivity and transport by upgrading road and rail infrastructure.

2) To enhance tourist accommodation and services, homestay programs should be encourage with proper training in hospitality and management.

3) To safeguard tourist especially in peak season at beaches warning board, and trained lifeguard and multilingual signage near tourist place should be available.

4) To encourage local entrepreneurship skill development training and community-managed eco-tourism projects should be start.

5) To encourage more tourist and for sustainable green tourism promote eco-friendly accommodation, waste management. Highlights heritage and cultural tourism at forts, temples, folk arts, Konkani cuisine trails.

6) To manage peak season crowd divert some tourism by providing off-season package and organized festivals like cultural fest, food fest, folk music and art event.

7) To marketing of product develop strong digital presence through social media and collaborate with travel agencies and Online Travel Agencies for package deal.

Conclusion:

Ratnagiri district holds immense potential as a diverse tourism destination with its unique blend of coastal beauty, cultural heritage, and agricultural richness. While strengths such as scenic beaches, historical forts, and local delicacies like Alphonso mangoes make it attractive, weaknesses in accessibility, infrastructure, safety measures, and limited community participation currently restrict its growth. By addressing these challenges through improved connectivity, better visitor services, diversified tourism products, and active involvement of local communities, Ratnagiri can enter into a sustainable and year-round tourist hub that benefits both visitors and residents. Tourist places have great potential for eco-tourism as well as agro-tourism just need to channelize.

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Original Article

Farm Tourism Opportunities

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Abstract

Agro tourism has emerged as a new and sustainable form of rural tourism that links farming activities with the tourism experience. In recent years, factors such as low agricultural returns, unpredictable weather, uncertain crop prices, and rural-to-urban migration for employment have placed immense strain on our rural economy. Against this backdrop, agro-tourism is emerging as a lucrative supplementary source of income for farmers. At the same time, it offers city dwellers the opportunity to experience rural lifestyles and our culture, while enjoying the pleasures of being close to nature. This paper provides a detailed overview of the opportunities offered by agro-tourism and its potential to foster rural development. It outlines the social, cultural, economic, and environmental benefits that agro-tourism brings to villages. Additionally, it discusses the challenges associated with this sector and suggests possible solutions. The study indicates that promoting agro-tourism can provide farmers with a new source of income, generate local employment, preserve rural heritage, and lead to truly sustainable development for the village.

Keywords: *Farm Tourism, Rural Development, Sustainable Tourism, Agricultural Diversification, Rural Economy, Employment Generation*

Introduction

India is an agrarian country. A large proportion of the country's population depends directly or indirectly on agriculture. Although agriculture forms the foundation of the rural economy, farmers' financial stability is being affected by changing weather patterns, rising production costs, market volatility, and inadequate prices for agricultural produce. Therefore, finding avenues for supplementary income for agriculture has become the need of the hour. The concept of farm tourism is emerging as an effective tool for rural development. It offers tourists the opportunity to experience rural lifestyles, various farming activities, local culinary traditions, folk arts, cultural customs, and the natural environment firsthand. Due to the increasing hustle, bustle and stressful lifestyles in cities, people are increasingly inclined towards rural and nature-based tourism. This growing demand has accorded special significance to farm tourism. Agro-tourism provides farmers with additional income beyond their agricultural activities. It creates new employment opportunities in rural areas and opens up markets for local products. Furthermore, it helps preserve rural culture, traditions, and folk arts. Agro-tourism is not merely a form of tourism; it is a medium that strengthens the rural economy, fosters social development, and promotes environmental conservation. Agro-tourism is being successfully developed in Indian states such as Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, and Rajasthan. It offers significant opportunities for rural development, and its planned growth can contribute to the overall progress of rural areas. The agro-tourism scheme offers farmers financial subsidies, tax concessions, and other incentives to set up tourism centers on their farms; a special policy has been formulated in Maharashtra to promote this sector. Maharashtra is the first state in the country to announce a dedicated policy for agro-tourism. Through the Directorate of Tourism, Maharashtra, benefits such as financial subsidies, stamp duty concessions, electricity bill concessions, exemption from the need for specific agricultural permissions, permission to use domestic gas cylinders. An agro-tourism policy is being implemented to empower women in the sector; under this policy, women are provided with loan facilities and special concessions on interest refunds. Along with direct government subsidies, various banks and cooperative societies provide loans and other financial assistance for this business. Therefore, understanding the opportunities associated with farm tourism is essential for policymakers, researchers, and rural entrepreneurs.

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This research examines the various opportunities for agri tourism, its contribution to rural development, the challenges involved, and the measures necessary for sustainable development.

Review of Literature

Phillip, Hunter, and Blackstock (2010) emphasized that farm tourism provides visitors with authentic agricultural experiences while creating additional income opportunities for farmers. Their study suggested that farm tourism represents an important strategy for agricultural diversification.

Sharpley and Sharpley (1997) argued that rural tourism contributes significantly to local economic development through employment generation and increased tourist expenditure. The authors emphasized that tourism can reduce dependence on traditional agricultural activities and strengthen rural economies.

Barbieri (2013) examined the sustainability dimensions of agro tourism and concluded that farm tourism contributes positively to economic resilience, environmental awareness, and community development. The study further suggested that successful agro tourism initiatives require active community participation and strategic planning.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the concept and significance of farm tourism.
2. To identify major opportunities created by farm tourism.
3. To examine the contribution of farm tourism to rural development.
4. To analyze challenges affecting farm tourism development.
5. To suggest strategies for promoting sustainable farm tourism.

Data and Research Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data collected from research journals, books, government publications, tourism reports, and academic literature related to farm tourism and rural development. A descriptive and analytical approach has been adopted to evaluate various opportunities and challenges associated with farm tourism.

Concept of Farm Tourism

Agro-tourism is a blend of tourism and agriculture. Agro tourism is a form of rural tourism that allows visitors to experience agricultural activities and rural lifestyles. It includes a wide range of tourism products such as farm stays, agricultural demonstrations, fruit harvesting, livestock experiences, educational tours, rural festivals, and traditional food experiences.

Opportunities in Farm Tourism

1 Income Diversification for Farmers

Agricultural income is uncertain due to market fluctuations and changing weather conditions; agro tourism can generate additional income through accommodation, meals, entertainment, and the sale of agricultural produce.

2 Employment Generation

Agro-tourism generates both direct and indirect employment, creating job opportunities in sectors such as guiding, accommodation, food services, transportation, and the sale of handicrafts.

3 Development of Rural Entrepreneurship

Agro-tourism fosters entrepreneurship in rural areas; farmers and local residents can start new businesses related to tourism.

4 Promotion of Local Products

Tourists purchase agricultural products, handicrafts, and traditional food items at tourist destinations, thereby providing a wider market for local products.

- **Social and Cultural Opportunities**

5 Preservation of Cultural Heritage

Tourists often seek cultural experiences. Agro tourism encourages the preservation of traditional rural practices, handicrafts, arts, folk arts, and festivals, thereby inspiring local communities to safeguard their cultural identity.

6 Community Participation

The success of agro-tourism depends on community participation. Community participation fosters social harmony and collective decision-making.

7 Educational Opportunities

Agro-tourism serves as an educational platform where participants can gain information about agricultural production methods, food security issues, rural lifestyles, organic farming techniques, and environmental conservation.

Environmental Opportunities

Promoting agro tourism offers a golden opportunity to protect the environment and maintain the balance of nature; this fosters agricultural development while allowing people to enjoy tourism without harming the natural world.

8 Conservation of Natural Resources

Agro-tourism strongly encourages the responsible management of valuable natural resources such as land, water, forests, and biodiversity.

9 Promotion of Organic Farming

Agro-tourism provides a significant boost to organic farming. Nowadays, tourists prefer eco-friendly destinations that do not harm nature and enjoy wholesome organic food.

10 Environmental Awareness

Agro-tourism significantly raises awareness about the environment and nature among tourists.

Farm Tourism and Rural Development

1 Economic Development

Agro-tourism plays a significant role in rural economic development; rural families earn income from tourist spending on accommodation, food, transportation, local products, and recreational activities. Economic benefits include increased farm profitability, additional revenue sources, development of rural enterprises, growth of local markets, increased tax revenues. Furthermore, the multiplier effect of tourism expenditure stimulates economic activity across multiple sectors within rural communities.

2 Infrastructure Development

Tourism development often encourages investment in infrastructure such as roads and transportation facilities, electricity supply, communication networks, water management systems, sanitation facilities. Improved infrastructure enhances the quality of life for local residents while making rural destinations more attractive to visitors.

3 Human Resource Development

Farm tourism encourages skill development among rural populations. Farmers and local residents acquire knowledge related to hospitality management, service, marketing, financial management, entrepreneurship. These skills improve employability and contribute to long-term community development.

Challenges in Farm Tourism Development

1 Inadequate Infrastructure

This is a major obstacle to the development of agri tourism; many rural areas severely lack basic amenities required by tourists, such as quality roads, accommodation, sanitation facilities, and emergency healthcare services. .

2 Limited Awareness

Many farmers lack sufficient knowledge about how to run a tourism business and what exactly visiting tourists expect.

3 Financial Constraints

Establishing tourism infrastructure requires substantial investment, which may not be affordable for small farmers.

4 Marketing Problems

In today's digital age, many excellent agro-tourism centers fail to reach tourists due to a lack of advertising. The failure to employ modern marketing techniques limits their visibility.

5 Seasonal Demand

Agro-tourism is not a business that runs steadily throughout the year; instead, it relies heavily on weather conditions and holiday seasons.

6 Lack of Professional Training

Due to a lack of professional training among agro-tourism operators, they face challenges in maintaining hospitality standards, ensuring tourist safety, and upholding service quality.

Suggestion for Promoting Farm Tourism

1 Development of Rural Infrastructure

For the success of agro-tourism, it is essential to develop infrastructure in rural areas such as all-weather roads, uninterrupted electricity, clean water, and internet connectivity.

2 Financial Assistance and Concessions

Farmers need easy access to the substantial initial capital required to set up tourism centers. To facilitate this, it is essential to have government-level provisions for direct financial assistance, subsidies, and low-interest loan schemes.

3 Training and Capacity Building

Alongside traditional farming skills, it is essential to train farmers and local youth in professional hospitality, communication, and crisis management for tourism.

4 Digital Marketing and Online Booking

Using digital media and online systems has become a necessity of the times to reach modern, tech-savvy customers and to build a brand at a global level.

5 Public-Private Partnership

By combining government policies with the professional expertise of the private sector, agri-tourism can expand rapidly and on a large scale.

6 Community-Based Tourism

By involving the entire village in tourism rather than limiting it to just one farmer, everyone earns a collective income.

7 Quality Standards and Certification

The center is required to hold official certification in compliance with government regulations. This prevents the exploitation of tourists and ensures they receive quality facilities.

8 Eco-friendly Tourism

It is essential to ensure that tourism activities do not harm the village's natural environment, water resources, or agriculture.

9Alignment with Rural Government Schemes

It is necessary to enable agro tourism centers to benefit from government schemes aimed at village development.

10 New Ideas and Innovation

Since tourists always seek something new, innovative activities and ideas should be implemented on the farm.

Findings of the Study

1. Farm tourism is an effective strategy for income diversification.

2. It generates employment opportunities for rural populations.
3. Women and youth benefit significantly from tourism-related activities.
4. Farm tourism supports the preservation of cultural heritage.
5. Environmental sustainability can be enhanced through responsible tourism practices.
6. Infrastructure development plays a critical role in tourism success.
7. Government support and community participation are essential for sustainable growth.

Results and Discussion

The present study clearly demonstrates that agro tourism can serve as a significant and effective tool for rural development. The agricultural sector currently faces numerous economic and social challenges; in this context, agro tourism provides farmers with an additional source of income beyond farming itself. Expenditure by tourists on accommodation, meals, farm visits, local products, and various rural activities boosts the farmers' earnings, thereby reducing the need to rely solely on agriculture. The study also revealed that agro tourism boosts employment generation in rural areas. Local youth, women, and self-employed individuals are finding employment opportunities through tourism-related activities. Rural residents are deriving economic benefits from various initiatives, such as providing tourist guidance, accommodation, meals, and transportation, as well as offering authentic rural experiences, selling local products, and organizing cultural programs. Agro-tourism is seen to have a positive impact at the social and cultural levels as well. Tourists gain insight into the traditional lifestyles, folk arts, folk culture, festivals, and culinary traditions of rural areas. This helps in the preservation of local traditions. Furthermore, it fosters dialogue between rural and urban communities, contributing to mutual understanding and social harmony. From an environmental perspective, farm tourism highlights the importance of natural resources. Many farm tourism centers are seen implementing initiatives such as tree plantation, water conservation, organic farming, and eco-friendly practices. This fosters environmental awareness and an appreciation for nature among tourists, thereby strengthening the concept of sustainable development. However, certain challenges were also observed during the study. In many places, the development of agro tourism has not met expectations due to inadequate knowledge of tourism management in rural areas, insufficient infrastructure, a lack of financial resources, and a dearth of effective promotion and publicity. Furthermore, some farmers are unable to fully capitalize on available opportunities because they lack access to training in tourism-related skills and management. Overall, this study concludes that agro tourism holds immense potential to strengthen the rural economy, preserve cultural heritage, boost employment generation, and promote environmental conservation. Agro-tourism can be developed on a broader scale through proper planning, effective management, active participation of local communities, and government support. Consequently, it can play an increasingly important role in the future as a sustainable and beneficial option for rural development.

Conclusions

Nowadays, agro-tourism is emerging as an excellent option for transforming the rural economy and discovering new avenues for income generation. It provides farmers with a lucrative supplementary business alongside their agricultural activities. Furthermore, it creates new employment opportunities in rural areas, fosters the rise of young entrepreneurs, and paves the way for women's empowerment. In recent times, people have developed a desire to step away from the fast-paced, hectic lifestyle of cities and experience authentic rural life. Consequently, a significant opportunity for agro tourism is emerging in India. However, realizing this potential requires a collaborative effort involving the government, local villagers, tourism organizations, and all stakeholders connected to the agricultural sector. To sustain the business of agro-tourism in the long run, it is essential to provide good infrastructure, engage in effective promotion, offer appropriate training and adopt eco-friendly practices. There is no doubt that with proper planning and management agro-tourism will become a reliable and powerful vehicle for the development and progress of our rural areas.

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Original Article

Knowledge-Based Tourism Systems: Enhancing Personalized Travel Planning Through Intelligent Decision Support

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Abstract

The field of tourism has undergone great changes through the incorporation of ICTs in its processes. Normal tourism information systems are limited to providing static information and do not give out personalized travel recommendations taking into consideration the preferences and travel history of the tourist, among other things. Knowledge-based tourism systems make use of artificial intelligence, expert systems, machine learning, and knowledge representation techniques to provide intelligent travel recommendations. This paper is about a study on knowledge-based tourism systems where there is an analysis of existing problems and a proposal for an intelligent tourism system framework. and support sustainable tourism development through personalized and context-aware recommendations.

Keywords: *Knowledge-Based Systems, Tourism Information Systems, Artificial Intelligence, Recommendation Systems, Smart Tourism, Decision Support Systems.*

Introduction

Tourism is regarded as one of the most rapidly growing industries, which contributes greatly to the economic development of the world. The development of technologies has influenced the ways of searching for information and planning trips of the modern traveler. Nowadays, the traveler needs personal recommendations and intelligent help at all stages of the journey. Knowledge-based tourism systems (KBTS) use tourism knowledge, preferences of the tourists, mechanisms of reasoning, and intelligent algorithms for providing decision-making assistance for the tourists. According to Gretzel et al. [1], smart tourism technologies allow for a personalized experience through data analysis and intelligent decision-making. Likewise, Fesenmaier et al. [2] highlighted the significance of intelligent tourism systems in the process of travel planning and destination choice. The latest developments in artificial intelligence and machine learning have made significant improvements to the functioning of tourism recommendation systems [3]. The rise of knowledge-based systems opens up the possibility to address the issues related to information overload, poor relevance of recommendations, and inefficient trip planning. Through knowledge representation and reasoning techniques, KBTS can provide highly relevant travel recommendations according to individual needs of users.

Literature Survey Intelligent tourism systems and recommender system architectures have been studied by various scientists. Recommender systems for tourism that use user profiles and context in order to make recommendations have been suggested by Ricci et al. [4]. This research has proven the efficiency of using recommendation algorithms in increasing user satisfaction. Intelligent tourism recommender systems were considered by Borràs et al. [5], and the role of personalized technologies was revealed by these scientists. The technologies of collaborative filtering, content-based filtering, and hybrid recommendation have been defined as the main technologies of tourism recommender systems. The concept of smart tourism has been introduced by Gretzel et al. [1]. Werthner and Klein [6] studied the use of information technologies in the tourism industry and stressed the importance of knowledge management in tourism decision support systems. Xiang and Fesenmaier [7] studied the impact of online travel information and social media data on the decision-making process of tourists. The results showed that tourists are now using intelligent computer-based systems for planning their travel.

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Despite substantial progress made in tourism recommendation systems, there are still some issues in terms of data integration, context awareness, explainability, and adaptation to changing preferences of users.

Limitations of Current Systems

The following are some of the limitations of current tourism information and recommendation systems:

1. Incapable of providing personalization.
2. Not able to integrate contextual data.
3. Tourism data is fragmented in many sources.
4. Information overload causing decision fatigue.
5. No explanation for the recommendations provided.
6. Lack of adaptation to changing preferences.
7. Capabilities to provide sustainable tourism recommendations are lacking.
8. Missing integration of social media and other user-generated content.
9. Lack of scalability with large datasets.
10. Not multilingual/cross-cultural.

Problem Statement

Current tourism information systems concentrate more on provision of information than intelligent decision-making support for tourists. There are many cases where the selection of an appropriate destination, accommodation, transportation means, and activities may pose some difficulties to tourists.

The research question of this study is:

"How can an intelligent knowledge-based tourism system be developed to offer personalized, context-aware and interpretable travel recommendations using several tourism data sources and artificial intelligence technology?"

Proposed Technological Solution

The following components make up the suggested Knowledge-Based Tourism System:

A. Artificial Intelligence

1. Machine Learning Algorithms
2. Deep Learning Algorithms
3. Natural Language Processing

B. Knowledge Base

1. Tourism Ontologies
2. Destination Knowledge Graphs
3. Repository for User Preferences

C. Recommendation Engine

1. Content-based filtering
2. Collaborative filtering
3. Hybrid recommendation models

D. Context-Aware Component

1. Weather information
2. Location information
3. Seasonal information
4. Budget constraints
5. User travel history

E. Explainable AI Component

Explanations regarding why specific recommendations have been made are provided.

Methods of Collecting Data

A. Primary Data Collection

1. Surveys from Tourists.
2. Questionnaires online.
3. Interviews with Tourists.
4. Expert consultations with tourism professionals.

B. Secondary Data Collection

1. Tourism department databases.
2. Travel websites.
3. Hotel booking platforms.
4. Social media platforms.
5. Tourism research publications.

C. Data Processing Steps

1. Data Collection.
2. Data Cleaning.
3. Data Integration.
4. Feature Extraction.

5. Knowledge Representation.
6. Model Training.
7. Recommendation Generation.
8. Performance Evaluation.
9. Proposed System Architecture
10. The proposed architecture consists of:

Input Layer

- User Profile
- Preferences
- Budget
- Location
- Travel History

Knowledge Layer

- Tourism Knowledge Base
- Ontology Repository
- Historical Data Repository

Intelligence Layer

- Machine Learning Engine
- Recommendation Engine
- Inference Engine

Output Layer

- Personalized Destination Suggestions
- Accommodation Recommendations
- Travel Itinerary Generation
- Activity Recommendations

How Proposed System is Better Than Existing Systems

Parameter	**Existing System**	**Proposed System**
Personalization	Limited	Highly Personalized
Context Awareness	Low	High
Recommendation Accuracy	Moderate	High
Explainability	Not Available	Available
Real-Time Updates	Limited	Supported
Data Sources	Single/Few Sources	Multiple Integrated Sources
User Satisfaction	Moderate	High
Scalability	Limited	Improved
Sustainability Support	Low	High

IX. Future Scope

Some future upgrades may be as follows:

1. IoT-enabled smart tourism infrastructure.
2. Crowd management advice.
2. Augmented reality tourism guide.
3. Usage of blockchain for tourism services.
4. Tourism trip planning through voice assistant.
5. Autonomous transportation integration.
6. Big data-based prediction of tourists' behaviors.
7. Sustainability-based tourism recommendation system.

Conclusion

The Knowledge-Based Tourism System is a breakthrough for intelligent tourist planning and tourism management systems. This is possible because through the application of artificial intelligence, knowledge representation, recommendation techniques, and contextual information, these systems will be able to give highly customized and explainable recommendations. The suggested model has been developed to overcome the shortcomings that currently exist in tourism systems through the inclusion of multi-source data integration, context-awareness, and machine learning approaches. Future advancements in smart tourism technology will only make these systems even more effective.

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Original Article

Artificial Intelligence in Tourism Management: Opportunities, Applications and Challenges

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Abstract
Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing the tourism sector by making improvements in customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, personalization, and decision-making processes. Machine learning, chatbots, recommendation engines, computer vision, and generative AI, among other AI technologies, have been gaining increasing acceptance among tourism companies to increase their efficiency and competitiveness. This research provides an introduction on the applications of AI in tourism management, latest trends in the field, and the problems and future prospects of AI-based tourism systems.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Tourism Management, Chatbots, Recommendation Systems, Smart Tourism, Generative AI.*

Introduction

Tourism industry is among the largest industries globally and has witnessed great technological changes within the last ten years. Artificial intelligence (AI) has become the most important tool to ensure good customer services, automation of the process, and personalization of travels. There are many areas in which AI technology is used in order to optimize the process and increase its effectiveness [1]. Fast development of artificial intelligence, particularly after large language models and generative AI became a reality, contributed greatly to the innovative changes in tourism management. Using AI-based chatbots, virtual assistants, recommendation, and prediction systems has allowed tourism companies to increase their customer engagement and support data-driven decision-making [2]. According to recent research, AI helps in achieving sustainable tourism by optimizing resource management, improving visitor experience, and intelligent destination management [3]. Further, the implementation of AI solutions is revolutionizing the tourism environment through integration of smart services, analysis, and recommendations for tourists [4]. However, there are some challenges associated with the use of AI in tourism in terms of privacy, ethics, biases, and dependence on automation systems. Hence, an important point is that it is necessary to analyze AI implementation in tourism management [5].

Literature Survey

Wang et al. (2025) reviewed systematically the literature of AI for tourism management and performed analysis of 177 research papers based on the TCCM (Theory, Context, Characteristics, and Methodology) framework. The authors showed the importance of AI applications in terms of improving customer experience, efficiency, and sustainability in tourism while noting some research gaps in future investigations [1]. Huang et al. (2025) gave an integrative review of Generative AI in tourism management and outlined three main research streams: antecedents to AI adoption, AI applications and effects, and technical issues of AI. The authors paid attention to the increasingly important role of ChatGPT and large language models in tourism services [2]. García-Madurga and Grilló-Méndez (2023) conducted a review on the use of AI in tourism, concluding that AI improves customer service, demand forecasting, recommendation systems, and smart tourism [3]. The importance of using AI ethically and sustainably in the tourism sector was another focus of their review. Samala et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review of AI techniques and applications in hospitality and tourism. Their work showed that machine learning, neural networks, natural language processing, and computer vision have found their way into tourism and are commonly used for demand forecasting and tourist behavior prediction, among others. [4].

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Recent studies have also explored the application of artificial intelligence for enhancing the customer experience. According to Sanoussi et al. (2025), adoption of AI results in improved personalization, satisfaction, and service quality in tourism. However, privacy concerns, lack of trust, and acceptance are key barriers to adoption. [5].

Applications Of AI in Tourism Management

AI applications in tourism management include:

1. **AI Chatbots and Virtual Assistants:** These are AI-based chatbots that offer 24×7 customer services, answer travel queries and help travelers book services.
2. **Recommendation Systems:** AI uses machine learning algorithms to suggest destinations, hotels, restaurants, and travel itineraries for the users.
3. **Predictive Analytics:** Using historical data and present data, AI predicts the future demand for tourists and helps in formulating pricing policies.
4. **Smart Tourism and Destination Management:** AI assists in managing traffic, crowds, and offering personalized tourist experiences in smart cities.
5. **Applications of Generative AI:** Large language models and Generative AI help in creating travel itineraries and generating travel content.

Advantages Of AI in Tourism Management

1. **Better Customer Experience:** Offers Customized Suggestions and Helps to Plan Trips Easily.
2. **Operational Efficiency:** Helps To Automate Mundane Tasks Such as Booking, Checking in And Out, And Handling Customers.
3. **Cost Savings:** Cuts Labor Costs and Avoids Operational Mistakes.
4. Quick Decision Making: Ai Processes Huge Chunks of Data Instantly and Helps Managers to Take Informed Decisions.
5. **Improved Marketing:** Helps In Targeted Marketing and Segregation of Customers.
6. Real Time Information: Provides Real Time Information Regarding Weather, Traffic, Flights, And Other Tourist Destinations.
7. **Efficient Resource Utilization:** Helps To Manage Hotels, Transportation, And Other Destination Resources Effectively.
8. **Competitive Advantage:** Tourism Businesses Adopting Ai Gain Innovation Capabilities and Improved Service Quality.

Opportunities Of Ai In Tourism Management

1. Personalized Travel Experiences

- AI analyzes customer preferences and provides customized travel recommendations.
- Enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2. Smart Destination Management

- AI helps manage tourist flows, traffic, and crowd control in popular destinations.
- Supports sustainable tourism development.

3. Predictive Analytics

- Forecasts tourist demand, occupancy rates, and travel trends.
- Assists businesses in strategic planning and resource allocation.

4. 24×7 Customer Service

- AI chatbots and virtual assistants provide round-the-clock support.
- Reduces response time and improves customer engagement.

5. Sustainable Tourism

- AI optimizes energy consumption, waste management, and transportation systems.
- Promotes environmentally responsible tourism practices.

6. New Business Models

- AI enables innovative services such as virtual tourism, smart hotels, and AI-based travel assistants.

Challenges

While there are many advantages of using AI technology, the following challenges still exist:
To overcome those obstacles, one should adopt proper AI policies, ethical standards, and human-centric AI.

1. Privacy and data security problems
2. Algorithmic biases and ethical questions
3. Costs associated with its use
4. The lack of transparency
5. Difficulty implementing AI in practice

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is transforming tourism management in terms of making processes efficient, providing better experiences for customers, and facilitating sustainable tourism. AI tools such as machine learning, chatbots, recommendation systems, and Generative AI are transforming tourism services and destination management. Although there are certain ethical and privacy issues associated with the adoption of AI tools, they hold a lot of promise in terms of creating an efficient and sustainable tourism environment.

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

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Original Article

Visitor Trends and Parking Management in a Heritage Tourism Destination: A Case Study of Naneghat, Junnar Tahsil, Pune District, Maharashtra

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Abstract
Tourism plays a significant role in regional economic development by generating employment opportunities, supporting local businesses, and enhancing infrastructure development. Heritage tourism destinations require efficient visitor management systems to ensure smooth operation and a positive visitor experience. Naneghat, a historic mountain pass located in Junnar Tahsil of Pune District, Maharashtra, is one of the important heritage tourism destinations in the Western Ghats. The site attracts a large number of tourists due to its historical significance, natural scenery, trekking routes, and archaeological remains. The present study examines visitor trends and parking management at Naneghat during the period 2019–20 to 2024–25. The study is based on secondary data obtained from Naneghat Gram Panchayat and field observations conducted during 2024–25. The analysis focuses on tourist arrivals, parking fee collection, and expenditure incurred for visitor management. The findings reveal substantial fluctuations in tourist arrivals, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by a strong recovery in subsequent years. Parking fee collection has emerged as an important source of local revenue and contributes to visitor management activities. The study emphasizes the need for improved parking infrastructure, traffic regulation, and sustainable tourism management strategies to accommodate increasing visitor numbers.

Keywords: *Heritage Tourism, Visitor Trends, Parking Management, Tourist Arrivals.*

Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors of economic development worldwide. In India, tourism contributes significantly to employment generation, income creation, and regional development. Heritage tourism, a major segment of the tourism industry, involves travel to destinations possessing historical, cultural, archaeological, and architectural significance. Such destinations attract visitors seeking educational, recreational, and cultural experiences.Naneghat is an ancient mountain pass situated in the Sahyadri range of the Western Ghats in Junnar Tahsil of Pune District, Maharashtra. Historically, it served as an important trade route connecting the Deccan Plateau with the Konkan coast during the Satavahana period. The site is famous for its ancient cave inscriptions, scenic landscapes, waterfalls, and trekking opportunities. Due to its accessibility from Pune, Mumbai, Nashik, and Ahmednagar, Naneghat has become a popular destination for tourists, trekkers, students, and researchers. The rapid growth of tourism has increased pressure on local infrastructure, especially parking facilities. Efficient parking management is crucial for maintaining visitor satisfaction, reducing congestion, and ensuring orderly movement of vehicles. Parking fee collection also provides financial resources for maintenance and visitor management. Therefore, the present study investigates visitor trends and parking management at Naneghat over a six-year period.

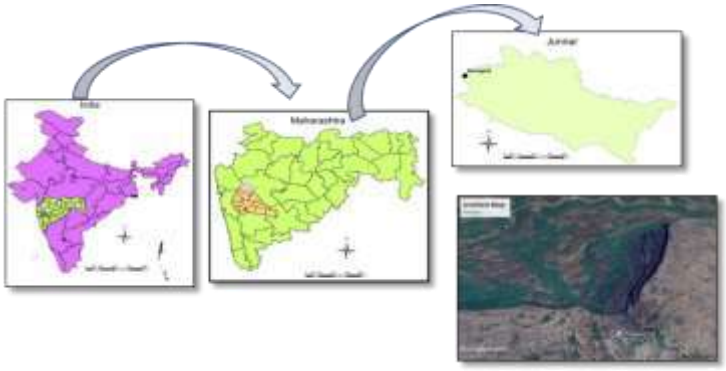
Study Area

Naneghat is located in Junnar Tahsil of Pune District, Maharashtra. Geographically, it lies within the northern section of the Western Ghats and forms part of the Sahyadri mountain range. The area is characterized by rugged topography, steep escarpments, deep valleys, and scenic landscapes.

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The region experiences a tropical monsoon climate with heavy rainfall during the southwest monsoon season. The historical significance of Naneghat is reflected in its rock-cut caves and inscriptions associated with the Satavahana dynasty. The site's unique combination of natural beauty and historical heritage makes it an attractive tourism destination throughout the year.



The latitudinal extension of Naneghat Junnar tehsil is between 19°17'31.0" North and the meridional extension is up to 73°40'33.5"East.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze visitor trends at Naneghat from 2019–20 to 2024–25.
2. To examine parking fee collection during the study period.
3. To evaluate expenditure incurred for visitor and parking management.
4. To assess the relationship between tourist arrivals and parking fee collection.
5. To suggest measures for improving parking management and visitor services.

Database and Methodology

The study is based on secondary data collected from Naneghat Gram Panchayat records for the period 2019–20 to 2024–25. Information regarding tourist arrivals, parking fee collection, and expenditure was compiled and analyzed.

The methodology included:

- Collection of annual tourism statistics.
- Compilation of parking fee collection records.
- Analysis of expenditure incurred for visitor management.
- Calculation of annual growth rates.
- Trend analysis and interpretation.

Field observations conducted during 2024–25 were also used to assess existing parking facilities and visitor management practices.

Tourist Arrivals and Parking Fee Collection

Table 1: Tourist Arrivals, Parking Fee Collection and Expenditure at Naneghat (2019–20 to 2024–25)

(The number of tourists visiting Naneghat previous six-year data)

Year	Tourist Arrivals	Parking Fee Collection (Rs.)	Expenditure (Rs.)
2019-20	131646	425941	172500
2020-21	24768	121820	98194
2021-22	32921	16960	148530
2022-23	126523	401670	7600
2023-24	156290	759200	221958
2024-25	128501	513044	341030

Source : Naneghat Gram panchayat (fieldwork, 2024-25)

Table 2: Annual Growth Rate of Tourist Arrivals

Year	Tourist Arrival	Growth Rate (%)
2019-20	131646	-
2020-21	24768	-18.19
2021-22	32921	32.29
2022-23	126523	284.34
2023-24	156290	23.53
2024-25	128501	-17.78

Results and Discussion

1. Visitor Trends

The analysis reveals significant fluctuations in tourist arrivals during the study period. Naneghat received 131,646 visitors in 2019–20. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a sharp decline in tourist arrivals to 24,768 in 2020–21, representing a decrease of more than 81 percent. Tourism activity gradually recovered in 2021–22 and showed remarkable growth in 2022–23. The highest tourist inflow was recorded in 2023–24, with 156,290 visitors. Although tourist arrivals declined slightly in 2024–25, visitor numbers remained substantially higher than those recorded during the pandemic years.

The observed trend demonstrates the resilience of heritage tourism and the increasing popularity of Naneghat among domestic tourists.

2. Annual Growth Pattern

The annual growth rate analysis reveals significant variations in visitor numbers. The most severe decline occurred in 2020–21 due to pandemic-related restrictions. The highest growth rate of 284.34 percent was recorded in 2022–23, indicating rapid tourism recovery after the pandemic. The positive growth rate of 23.53 percent in 2023–24 further demonstrates increasing visitor interest in the destination. Such fluctuations indicate the sensitivity of tourism activity to external factors such as health crises, transportation accessibility, and seasonal conditions.

3. **Parking Fee Collection**

Parking fee collection generally followed the pattern of tourist arrivals. The highest parking fee collection of Rs. 759,200 was recorded in 2023–24, corresponding with the highest tourist inflow. Revenue collection declined during the pandemic period due to travel restrictions and reduced visitation. The data indicate a strong relationship between tourist arrivals and parking fee collection, suggesting that parking revenue can serve as an important indicator of tourism activity at the destination.

4. **Relationship Between Tourist Arrivals and Parking Revenue**

The data indicate a strong positive relationship between tourist arrivals and parking fee collection. Years with higher tourist arrivals generated greater parking revenue. For example, 2023–24 recorded both the highest tourist arrivals (156,290) and the highest parking fee collection (Rs. 759,200).

This relationship suggests that parking revenue may be used as an indirect indicator of tourism activity and visitor intensity at the destination.

5. Expenditure Analysis

Expenditure incurred for visitor management varied considerably during the study period. The highest expenditure was recorded in 2024–25 (Rs. 341,030), indicating increased investment in maintenance, visitor facilities, sanitation, and traffic management.

The comparatively low expenditure recorded in 2022–23 may reflect limited maintenance activities during that period.

Economic Importance of Parking Management

Parking management contributes significantly to tourism administration by:

- Regulating vehicle movement.
- Reducing traffic congestion.
- Enhancing visitor convenience.
- Generating local revenue.
- Supporting maintenance and operational activities.

The increasing number of vehicles visiting Naneghat highlights the need for systematic parking management to improve visitor experiences and operational efficiency.

Challenges in Parking Management

The field survey identified several challenges:

1. Limited parking capacity during weekends and holidays.
2. Traffic congestion during peak tourist seasons.
3. Lack of organized parking zones.
4. Inadequate directional signage.
5. Insufficient visitor information facilities.
6. Seasonal overcrowding during the monsoon season.
7. Limited use of digital payment systems.
8. Lack of traffic monitoring mechanisms.

Suggestions

1. Expansion of designated parking areas.
2. Introduction of digital parking fee collection systems.
3. Installation of parking guidance signage.
4. Development of visitor information centres.
5. Improvement of traffic management during peak periods.
6. Adoption of smart parking technologies.
7. Strengthening sanitation and maintenance services.
8. Preparation of a comprehensive tourism and parking management plan.
9. Community participation in tourism management activities.

10. Regular monitoring of visitor carrying capacity.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that Naneghat has emerged as a prominent heritage tourism destination in Maharashtra. Tourist arrivals have increased significantly following the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to substantial growth in parking fee collection. Parking management has become an important component of tourism administration and contributes to visitor convenience as well as local revenue generation.

The increasing number of visitors necessitates improvements in parking infrastructure, traffic regulation, and visitor management systems. Effective planning and sustainable management strategies will be essential for maintaining the quality of visitor experiences and supporting the long-term development of tourism at Naneghat.

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Original Article

Strengthening Tourism–Trade Linkages for Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth in Karnataka: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Implications

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Abstract

Through creating jobs, boosting trade, and encouraging local entrepreneurship, tourism has become a major factor in regional development. With its rich cultural legacy, wildlife, and expanding infrastructure, Karnataka presents significant chances to improve commerce and tourism links. In order to assess their contribution to equitable and sustainable economic growth, this study looks at the relationship between Karnataka's tourism development and trade growth. Using both primary and secondary data, the study employs a mixed-method approach. 140 stakeholders, including travellers, tourism business owners, merchants, and members of the local community, provided primary data. Government reports, tourism data, and published literature were the sources of secondary data. Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate the measuring scale's reliability, and Smart PLS was used to examine the structural connections between the constructs. The hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis. The results show that stakeholder cooperation, market accessibility, and tourism infrastructure greatly improve the connections between tourism and trade, which in turn have a favourable impact on equitable and sustainable economic growth. The report makes policy recommendations to support Karnataka's tourism-driven regional growth.

Keywords: *Tourism Trade Linkages, Sustainable Growth, Inclusive Development, Karnataka Tourism.*

Introduction

One of the most dynamic economic sectors in India is tourism, which makes a substantial contribution to regional growth, foreign exchange revenues, and the creation of jobs. Due to its many attractions, which include historical monuments, wildlife reserves, beaches, religious sites, and new ecotourism areas, Karnataka holds a special place in India's tourism scene. Local trade, entrepreneurship, and economic diversification are made possible by the state's ability to draw both domestic and foreign tourists.

There is more to the relationship between tourism and trade than just direct visitor spending. Demand for regional goods, handicrafts, lodging, transportation, agricultural, and cultural sectors is increased by tourism. Strong ties between tourism and commerce have multiplier effects that raise local communities' standards of living and increase revenue creation. However, obstacles including poor infrastructure, unequal regional development, environmental issues, and poor stakeholder coordination still prevent tourism from reaching its full economic potential. Strengthening tourism-trade ties becomes crucial in the context of sustainable and equitable growth to guarantee that financial gains are shared widely while protecting cultural and environmental resources. This study examines the variables affecting Karnataka's tourism-trade integration and evaluates how they affect equitable and sustainable economic growth. Policymakers looking to improve tourism's contribution to Karnataka's long-term development objectives should benefit from the findings.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the current status of tourism–trade linkages in Karnataka.
2. To analyze the influence of tourism infrastructure on tourism–trade integration.
3. To assess the impact of market accessibility on tourism-related trade activities.

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4. To examine the effect of tourism–trade linkages on inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
5. To provide policy recommendations for enhancing tourism-led development in Karnataka.

Hypotheses of the Study

H1: Tourism Infrastructure positively influences Tourism–Trade Linkages.
H2: Market Accessibility positively influences Tourism–Trade Linkages.
H3: Stakeholder Collaboration positively influences Tourism–Trade Linkages.
H4: Tourism–Trade Linkages positively influence Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth.

Research Methodology

A descriptive and analytical research design was used in the study. The data sources used were both primary and secondary. A systematic questionnaire was used to gather primary data from tourism stakeholders in important Karnataka tourist sites, such as Mysuru, Hampi, Bengaluru, Coorg, and Udupi. Entrepreneurs in the tourism industry, local vendors, travellers, transportation providers, and community leaders made up the respondents.
Purposive sampling was used to gather 140 valid replies.

The questionnaire comprised five-point Likert scale items measuring Tourism Infrastructure (TI), Market Accessibility (MA), Stakeholder Collaboration (SC), Tourism–Trade Linkages (TTL), and Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth (ISEG).

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of Karnataka, Karnataka Tourism Policy papers, World Travel and Tourism Council publications, and pertinent scholarly literature were the sources of secondary data.

Smart PLS and SPSS were used for data analysis. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability were used to evaluate reliability. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to assess convergent validity. Multiple regression analysis and structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) were used to test the hypotheses and assess the strength of the correlations between constructs.

Reliability Analysis

Table 1:

Reliability Statistics

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Tourism Infrastructure	5	0.842
Market Accessibility	4	0.816
Stakeholder Collaboration	5	0.871
Tourism–Trade Linkages	6	0.889
Inclusive & Sustainable Economic Growth	5	0.853

High internal consistency and dependability were shown by Cronbach's Alpha values over 0.80 for all constructs. As a result, the measurement scale is deemed appropriate for more examination.

Smart PLS Measurement Model Assessment

Table 2:

Convergent Validity Assessment

Construct	Composite Reliability	AVE
Tourism Infrastructure	0.887	0.611
Market Accessibility	0.874	0.633
Stakeholder Collaboration	0.902	0.647
Tourism–Trade Linkages	0.918	0.681
Inclusive & Sustainable Economic Growth	0.894	0.629

Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were used to evaluate the Smart PLS measurement model. Strong internal consistency and dependability were shown by all constructs' CR values, which ranged from 0.874 to 0.918 and above the suggested criterion of 0.70. Adequate convergent validity was also confirmed by the AVE values, which varied from 0.611 to 0.681 and above the minimum permissible threshold of 0.50. These findings show that the indicators explain a significant amount of the variance and successfully assess the corresponding latent variables. Tourism–Trade Linkages had the best convergent validity (AVE = 0.681) and reliability (CR = 0.918) among the constructs.

The results show that the measurement model is appropriate for additional structural model analysis and is statistically sound. As a result, the study's constructs are valid, dependable, and competent to facilitate Smart PLS hypothesis testing.

Data Analysis and Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3:

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tourism Infrastructure	3.98	0.71
Market Accessibility	3.87	0.68
Stakeholder Collaboration	4.05	0.65
Tourism–Trade Linkages	4.12	0.63
Inclusive Economic Growth	4.09	0.66

According to the descriptive data, most respondents have favourable opinions on the growth of tourism and its connection to commerce in Karnataka. All of the factors' mean scores are higher than 3.80, indicating a high degree of respondent agreement. The highest mean value (4.12) was reported for Tourism–commerce Linkages, indicating the important role that tourism plays in fostering commerce and local business ventures. Strong support was also given to Stakeholder Collaboration (4.05) and Inclusive Economic Growth (4.09), demonstrating their significance in sustainable development. The comparatively low standard deviation values (0.63–0.71) indicate that respondents' opinions are consistent. Overall, the findings point to a promising future for enhancing trade and tourist connections in order to boost Karnataka's economy.

Structural Model Results (Smart PLS)

Table 4:

Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	TI → TTL	0.321	4.218	0.000	Supported
H2	MA → TTL	0.286	3.874	0.000	Supported
H3	SC → TTL	0.394	5.102	0.000	Supported
H4	TTL → ISEG	0.612	8.457	0.000	Supported

H1: Tourism Infrastructure → Tourism–Trade Linkages (Supported)

The path coefficient between tourism infrastructure and tourism-trade linkages is statistically significant ($t = 4.218$, $p = 0.000$) and positive ($\beta = 0.321$). This suggests that Karnataka's tourist-trade connections are greatly strengthened by advancements in tourism infrastructure, including lodging, transportation, and digital connectivity. **H1 is therefore Accepted**.

H2: Market Accessibility → Tourism–Trade Linkages (Supported)

Market accessibility and tourism-trade linkages have a positive and substantial connection ($\beta = 0.286$, $t = 3.874$, $p = 0.000$). The results imply that increased access to markets, goods, and services leads to more robust commercial activity associated with tourism. **H2 is therefore Accepted.**

H3: Stakeholder Collaboration → Tourism–Trade Linkages (Supported)

Tourism-Trade Linkages are positively and significantly impacted by stakeholder collaboration ($\beta = 0.394$, $t = 5.102$, $p = 0.000$). This finding suggests that increasing tourist-trade integration requires collaboration between local communities, government agencies, tourism enterprises, and trade associations. Stakeholder cooperation is the most significant element since this path has the largest beta value among the antecedents. **H3 is therefore Accepted.**

H4: Tourism–Trade Linkages → Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth (Supported)

Inclusive and sustainable economic growth is positively and significantly impacted by tourism-trade links ($\beta = 0.612$, $t = 8.457$, $p = 0.000$). This suggests that improved tourism-trade ties significantly support Karnataka's sustainable economic growth, local company development, employment creation, and income enhancement. Tourism-Trade Linkages are seen as a major force behind equitable and sustainable economic growth since this link has the highest beta coefficient in the model. **H4 is therefore Accepted.**

Econometric Analysis

Multiple Regression Model

$$ISEG = \alpha + \beta_1(TI) + \beta_2(MA) + \beta_3(SC) + \beta_4(TTL) + \varepsilon$$

Table 5:

Regression Results

Variable	Coefficient	t-value	p-value
Constant	0.812	2.487	0.014
Tourism Infrastructure	0.184	2.965	0.004
Market Accessibility	0.162	2.701	0.008
Stakeholder Collaboration	0.217	3.584	0.001
Tourism–Trade Linkages	0.448	6.972	0.000

$R^2 = 0.684$

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.672$

F-statistic = 72.31 ($p < 0.001$)

68.4% of the variation in inclusive and sustainable economic growth can be explained by the model. The biggest predictor was found to be tourist-trade links, highlighting the significance of combining commerce and tourism for regional development.

Findings of the Study

1. Tourist-Trade integration is greatly aided by tourist infrastructure.

Trade prospects near tourist locations are facilitated by improved roads, lodging options, and internet connection.

2. Local economic involvement is significantly impacted by market accessibility.

Local producers and businesses can profit from tourism demand thanks to improved market access.

3. Stakeholder cooperation is essential for success.

Tourism results are improved by collaborations between local communities, tour operators, and government organisations.

4. Links between commerce and tourism promote inclusive growth.

Benefits go beyond tourism firms to include small businesses, local farmers, artists, and transportation suppliers.

5. Long-term economic benefits are supported by sustainable tourist practices.

Responsible travel and environmental preservation boost a destination's competitiveness.

6. One of the main forces behind regional economic growth is the relationship between tourism and trade.

Their substantial contribution to sustainable economic growth is confirmed by the statistical findings.

Suggestions of the Study

1. Enhance digital infrastructure and transit in developing areas.

Improved accessibility can boost traveller numbers and business prospects.

2. Use tourism circuits to advertise regional goods.

Tourism experiences should incorporate handicrafts, agricultural products, and cultural commodities.

3. Make public-private collaborations stronger.

Initiatives involving collaboration can raise investment levels and service quality.

4. Create trade clusters tailored to certain destinations.

Economic clusters centred on tourism have the potential to create jobs and entrepreneurship.

5. Promote certification for sustainable tourism.

Eco-friendly actions can increase the sustainability and appeal of a resort.

6. Improve programs for skill development.

Increasing inclusivity may be achieved by educating local people about business and hospitality.

7. Make use of online marketing resources.

Technology-driven marketing may help tourist businesses reach a wider audience.

8. Improve cross-sector policy cooperation.

Development benefits may be maximised by integrated tourist, commerce, transportation, and environmental strategies.

Conclusion

In Karnataka, tourism is a potent tool for fostering equitable and sustainable economic growth. The study's conclusions show that stakeholder cooperation, market accessibility, and tourist infrastructure all play a major role in enhancing the connections between tourism and trade. These connections then have a favourable impact on community welfare, entrepreneurship, employment generation, and regional economic growth. Tourism-trade integration is a key factor in determining equitable and sustainable economic growth, according to the Smart PLS and regression studies.

Karnataka has a lot of potential to use its tourist resources to alter its economy more broadly. However, targeted infrastructure investments, enhanced market access, stronger stakeholder alliances, and sustainable destination management techniques are needed to fully realise this potential. Planning for tourism should be coordinated with trade promotion, local business growth, and environmental sustainability goals by policymakers using an integrated development strategy. Increasing the connections between tourism and trade can boost long-term growth, encourage balanced regional development, and improve economic resilience. Tourism-led trade integration might be a crucial route to equitable prosperity and sustainable development as Karnataka moves toward greater economic development levels.

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Original Article

Ethnicity, Masculinity, and Power in Mandela's Ego: A Cultural Reading of Zulu Identity

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Abstract:

The present study highlights the male identity in South Africa as well as how Zulu identity was culturally constructed during the apartheid era. The charm of Dumisa Gumede is analysed as a symbol whose manhood is neither inherent nor fixed but constructed through traditional values of cultural pride, patriarchal control, and ideological illusion. Nkosi portrays how these influences merge to create subjectivities characterised as much by uncertainty as by self-belief. Employing cultural studies and postcolonial theory, this research investigates how Zulu masculine consciousness in the novel is constructed not only in resistance to colonial oppression but also through cultural constraints arising from patriarchal tradition, demands of masculine control, and standards of ancestral heroism. Dumisa's respect for Nelson Mandela is analysed as a symbolic projection through which personal failures are recast as political myth, allowing the central character to preserve a perceived sense of self-esteem in the face of cultural and racial degradation. Masculinity thus appears as a social role rather than an identity, one repeatedly enacted amid social and historical tensions. The present paper further contends that Nkosi challenges any reductive interpretation of ethnic identity as either strengthening or restrictive. The culture of the Zulu people is depicted with both appreciation and critique. This situation inculcates a sense of pride and belonging that imposes emotional suppression and conformity. Nkosi depicts the tension between external and ancestral traditions throughout the episodes, conveying emotional intimacy and teachings, and further suggests that African identity evolves through struggle. In this novel, ethnicity is indicated through gender, power and political intersection. Mandela's Ego presents a deeply critical portrayal of identity influenced by contradiction and conflict.

Keywords: *Postcolonial Identity, Ethnicity, Masculinity, Zulu Identity, Power, Apartheid, Patriarchy, African Nationalism, Hero-worship, Cultural Studies.*

Introduction

The 20th-century South African literary tradition is closely related to the political circumstances that influenced its emergence in the colonised countries and the countries with apartheid systems. It reflects a deep engagement with problems of hegemony, racial identity, and the preservation of culture. Lewis Nkosi, an artistic and a critical novelist, highlighted the violence inherent in the apartheid system and the contradictions in the society in South Africa. In Mandela's Ego, Nkosi examines how race, ethnicity, and masculinity interlink to form unstable male identities under colonial control. This novel revolves around a Zulu man, Dumisa Gumede, who reveres Nelson Mandela, thereby revealing his sexual insecurities and emotional vulnerability. Dumisa's dedication to Mandela is political as well as cultural. For him, Mandela exemplifies heroic masculinity, strength, and collective pride. Nkosi encounters the way political liberation movements utilise exaggerated representations of heroic masculinity to counterbalance the caste-based degradation imposed by oppression. While racial discrimination acts as the historical context, Nkosi's concerns are not restricted solely to the violence of white supremacy. In its place, the story turns introspective, examining how African men internalise social expectations of supremacy, masculinity, and authority. Zulu masculinity is described as deeply controlled by cultural norms regarding sexual control, male authority, and community respect. The sexual inability of Dumisa functions as a symbol of a broader cultural conflict that indicates the destruction of traditional masculine confidence under colonial authority. Education develops as another essential arena of this identity crisis.

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African students are exposed to Western values such as love, refinement, and discipline in missionary schools that are at odds with Aboriginal perceptions of sexual identity and maturity. This cultural transposition places Dumisa between contradictory realities, neither fully traditional nor fully modern, thus generating uncertainty and psychological strain. Storytelling plays an important role in the social process of identity formation. Dumisa's uncle highlights exaggeration, legend, and hearsay by blending fact and fiction through an imagined image of Mandela. Nkosi uses these stories to demonstrate how symbolic leaders are culturally modelled and how myth substitutes physical truth as a source of emotional retreat. This study suggests that when ethnic identity is correlated to political idealism and rigid masculinity, the inherent contradiction becomes clear in Mandela's Ego. It reveals that while the identity of Zulu people offers psychological strength, it also raises emotional suppression, sexual anxiety, and ideological severity. Nkosi challenges the dogmatism of ethnic culture and claims that an identity rooted in a longing for the past can be damaging. Through this novel, Nkosi critiques both imperial oppression and African ethnic nationalism by examining power, ethnicity, and masculinity in combination. Eventually, Nkosi decodes Zulu identity not as a constant legacy, but as a fluid story modelled by historical experience, psychology, and ambitions.

Literature Review

Critical analysis of Lewis Nkosi concentrated on his sociopolitical overview and critical position in the protest literature of South Africa. Attridge Scholar emphasizes on Nkosi's commitment to deconstructing reductive national narratives. Another scholar Attwell focuses on Nkosi's tendency to demonstrate African cultural identity not as absolute heroism but as ideological uncertainty. McClintock and Gqola, Feminist scholars, have accentuated the gender dynamics integrated in African national consciousness. It stated that the patriarchal belief system often appears with freedom movements. They kept Dumisa's masculine identity within nationalist portrayal rather than individual self-control. Gender theorists such as Connell and Morrell have designed how African masculinity is historically formed by colonial systems of power. Their work shows that racial suppression repeatedly makes exaggerated masculine ideals as a defensive mechanism. This research prioritizes Zulu cultural identity as a primary belief structure that shapes Dumisa's self-understanding using Mandela as an icon. So, the novel reexamined political irony as well as a social critique that shows how ethnic male identity becomes mentally confining.

A. Ethnicity in *Mandela's Ego*

I. Zulu Identity is pictured as performative in nature

In *Madela's Ego*, Nkosi depicts Zulu identity as a role function that is performed repeatedly but not as an intrinsic essential identity. Dumisa tries to attain a masculine identity by imitating heroic ideals but is not a naturally confident Zulu man, later pursuing sexual achievements, and demonstrates courage publicly. In this novel identity is portrayed as acquired behavior instead of biological inheritance. Social expectations decide how men must speak, behave themselves, and aspire, confining ethnic identity to a cultural storyline that allows only controlled individuality. Dumisa's anxiety originates from racial distinction and the fear of failing to fulfil expectations of traditional male standards. His identity is conserved through emulation of idealised personality. Nkosi interrogative cultural romanticism by showing how identity turns into a pressure when it is enacted against experience. Zulu identity is a challenge, not a base. So, ethnicity is a platform on which men must prove themselves again and again. This novel breaks down any fixed perspective on African cultural identity, displaying social identity as a performance formed by history and social pressure, in place of as an inherited identity.

- **Cultural pride Compensates for Racial Humiliation**

Cultural pride in the novel acts as emotional resistance against racial humiliation. Dumisa's preoccupation with Zulu bravery is strengthened specifically because racial domination removes black men of power in the public domain. Incapable to regulate governing systems, Dumisa becomes introspective and gains significance in tribal mythology. Ethnic identity becomes psychological shelter. Nkosi indirectly reveals how marginalized groups strengthen internal identity as a protective strategy against external oppression. Nevertheless, cultural pride is not empowering in itself—it offsets but does not cure. Dumisa's connection to tribal ideals does not recover honor; it increases insecurity because masculinity becomes an increasingly difficult ideal unattainable. The emotional pressure to represent heroic masculinity increases as racial rejection accentuates. Thus, the apartheid bans human dignity, the more magnified masculinity becomes. Nkosi appeals how cultural pride, when based on marginalization and dominance instead of humanity, reproduces oppression within the segregated community. It turns into a protection versus colonial degradation but also becomes a self-destructive power. Therefore, Nkosi presents the tensioned connection between cultural pride and emotional survival under racial suppression.

- **Ethnicity is formed via narration**

Narration plays an important role in shaping Dumisa's ethnic identity. The political past was converted into a cultural myth by Uncle Simon's stories about Mandela. These stories describe events, romanticise bravery, blending amplification with aspiration. Ethnicity is passed from historical experience to narration filled with emotion and expectations. Nkosi shows that cultural identity is formed through narrative discourse instead of through remembrance. Dumisa's sensing of masculine identity, political opposition, and ancestry is shaped not by lived reality but by hearsay. In this novel, stories magnified masculinity into a heroic tale. Thus, spoken custom becomes ideological qualifying in place of traditional folklore. Narration does not guard truth, but creates dominance. Nkosi designs a narrative as a political channel that supports confidence but shortens nuance and fantasy substitutes truth as a coping scheme. Dumisa attains a culture that booms more on imagined victory than on real power. This culture of narration produces demands that no person can practically attain. In this way, oral tradition preserves ethnic pride while constraining individuals' constructed identities. Nkosi turns narration into both cultural preservation and emotional confinement.

- **Zulu Tradition is Both Protective and Restrictive**

Nkosi declines to glorify African culture. He portrays Zulu tradition as emotionally supportive yet ideologically restrictive. Cultural practice offers society cultural continuity and self-respect, particularly under apartheid. On the other hand, heritage also

confines personal identity through strict rules of masculine identity, submission, and a ranking system. Culture becomes authority. Dumisa's emotional repression is colonial as well as cultural. Masculinity in Zulu tradition requires enactment without sensitivity. Men are expected to demonstrate toughness but never fragility. While customary practice offers psychological stability demands uniformity. Nkosi shows that native systems can suppress just as imperial systems. patriarchal system, masculine privilege, and dignity-based selfhood constrain emotional independence. Tradition safeguards against racist oppression, yet confines African men within unattainable masculine ideals. Thus, culture emerges as both refuge and confinement. Nkosi does not deny tradition but questions its dogmatism. He respects African tradition while alerting that unquestioned cultural pride can lead to inertia and psychological harm. Tradition must transform, or it becomes another mechanism of control.

B. Masculinity In *Mandela's Ego*

Lewis Nkosi, in his novel *Mandela's Ego*, explores masculinity as a culturally shaped identity influenced by dominance, control, and masculine sexual control. The further analysis will show how masculinity in this novel is evaluated in terms of sexual capability and supremacy.

I. Masculinity is Measured through Sexual Dominance

In the present novel, masculinity is closely associated with sexual capability. Dumisa takes for granted as male identity is determined by conquest where sexual hold becomes a sign of male prestige. Nkosi blames these concepts by reflecting how such interpretations confine men to physical mechanisms. Masculinity becomes linked with status and physical supremacy rather than ethics. Dumisa's anxiety arises from this strict sensation of manhood, where sexual capacity is the only evidence of identity. Nkosi portrays masculinity as a contest instead of emotional intimacy, depreciating both men and women by minimizing intimacy to exchange and suppressing sensitivity. Dumisa's agony exists in powerlessness and in a culture that familiar human worth with masculine strength. By depicting these things, Nkosi exposes how debased masculine values convert masculinity into a beginning of suffering.

II . Dumisa's weakness signifies masculine Broken

Dumisa's sexual inability is a bodily failure, and a depiction of the breakdown of social masculinity under psychological and ideological strain. His body shows his lack of power, making sexual dysfunction an analogy for internal pain and fractured identity. Nkosi light those traditional models of masculinity, grounded on supremacy and ideological illusion, that are impossible to persist. Dumisa cannot show the masculinity required of him due to those ideals that restrain sentimental honesty. His sexual inability turned into a political critique of racial inequality, strict cultural ideology, and emotional constraint. Nkosi displays that original freedom must take place politically, psychologically, and socially through this metaphorical fall in. The downfall of Dumisa lies not in weakness but in forming his selfhood via acquired ideals rather than individual identity.

III. Masculinity is exemplary and contest stimulated

In this present novel, masculinity is shown as public enactment influenced by authority, self-glorification, triumph. Nkosi signals that masculinity functions as an emblematical status attained through demonstration and community approval. Dumisa bothers more about superfluity than about failure because masculinity depends on social recognition. Men come out as players on a cultural stage where strength is performed instead of experienced. This competitive design leaves no space for free emotion that produces anxiety in place of confidence. Lewis Nkosi reveals that masculinity is a channeling social practice that limits men to identities they did not select. Dumisa's internal fight against the weakness that is covered by exaggerated masculinity through this novel.

C. Power in *Mandela's Ego*

In *Mandela's Ego*, Lewis Nkosi contends that power is not confined to political structures; it widened to tradition, to personal identity, to mental awareness. The following section shows how power shapes masculinity, creative awareness, emotional control, and political understanding in this novel.

I. Power is Political, race-based and emblematic

Mandela's Ego, shows that power acts on both levels: external and internal. Apartheid drives human bodies, whereas culture rules feelings and identity. Lewis Nkosi states that power is a controlling force that forms desire, self-awareness, and male identity. Dumisa goes through agony from political oppression, emotional uncertainty, and social pressure. Mandela becomes a cultural figure instead of a factual solution that illustrates how rebelliousness can become mythology. Nkosi shows that institutions have power and the capacity to influence the imagination and desire of the men. At the end, this novel appeals to idealised nationalism by highlighting the psychological prospect of suppression.

II. Political Power is Mythologised into individualistic

The conversion of political conversion into personal heroism criticised in this novel by Nkosi. Mandela turns into an idol rather than a political personality, whereas Dumisa admires the celebrated figure rather than seeking freedom. Nkosi talks about how repression corrupts opposition into sentimental idealism and restricts collective battle to the limits of hero adoration. Politics develop into admiration that reduces individual power as well as participation. Nkosi created Mandela to appear as a magnified masculine figure rather than an active leader. Nkosi suggests that against anticipating liberation to be awarded to persons and contends that freedom needs a united effort.

III. Power recompense Personal defeat

In *Mandela's Ego*, Dumisa took the help of the symbolic figure named Mandela to hide his emotional insecurity and run away from his psychological conflict. Nkosi disclosed how weak persons use illusion and idolization to control shame and psychic vulnerability. Mandela turns into a symbol of shelter rather than a practical remedy, while embracing power replacement, self-awareness, and self-esteem. This novel uncover how dependence on political figures converts freedom into fantasy. Nkosi states that original power must be developed from internal ethics, emotion, sentimental, and intellectual power instead of symbolic nationalism.

D. Interconnection of Ethnicity, Masculinity & Power

I. Ethnicity Defines manliness

Lewis Nkosi, the South African novelist in his book *Mandela's Ego*, exhibits the interaction between Zulu ethnicity and male identity, in which culture determines manhood through supremacy, rivalry, and masculine strength. Ethnicity develops as a structure that builds masculine behaviour and suppresses individuality. Dumisa acquires social predictions that expose how fixed gender norms produce emotional restraint and emotional load. In this novel, Nkosi portrays men as transmitters of tradition thereby changing identity into a form of limitation. With the help of these questions, this novel demands for a human essence that live beyond social show and imposed masculine values.

II. Power is Masculinised

According to Lewis Nkosi, power is linked to masculine capacity and bodily supremacy. Mandela is hero-worshiped as a political figure as well as an idealised male icon, reflecting how power becomes influenced by patriarchy via masculine ideals. Nkosi attacks this consolidation of masculinity and dominance, where power is regulated by masculine robustness and authority, whereas women abide marginalised from political discussion. This novel attentiveness shows that freedom movements based on patriarchal systems risk repeating supremacy. Nkosi deals with the idea that original power should be principled and humanistic.

III. insufficiency in Masculinity be a sign of the Decline of Ethnic Dignity

Lewis Nkosi in his novel, *Mandela's Ego*, conveys that Dumisa's physical inability becomes both a personal and a cultural dishonor, showing how manhood and ethnicity are harmfully connected. Nkosi discloses that masculine failure is understood not only as an individual inadequacy but also as a discredit to ancestral lineage and ethnic identity. This emotional stress generates insecurity, shame, and psychological harm, as men are needed to characterize heroic ethnic values. With the help of the example of Dumisa's downfall, Nkosi attacks systems that deprive men of the freedom to demonstrate vulnerability. This novel eventually grapples with the distinguishing of individual identity from fixed cultural legend and for replacing ego-centred masculinity with kindness and emotional intelligence.

IV. Mandela is sign of Racial, Masculine, and Cultural Power

Lewis Nkosi, in his novel *Mandela's Ego*, becomes an iconic figure showing cultural dignity, racial optimism, masculine perfection. Nkosi reveals this extreme symbolism by depicting how Dumisa grasped Mandela not as an ordinary leader but as a perfect model of heroic masculinity. This reverence builds emotional attachment and alienates Dumisa from the real world, as he tries to match himself with an unrealistic expectation. Nkosi shows how glamorizing authority restricts individuality and converts political leaders into emotional dictators. This novel asserts that freedom must be embedded in practicality and human weakness rather than inflated heroic narratives.

Conclusion

Mandela's Ego ultimatum African masculinity as culturally influenced rather than biologically inherited. Lewis Nkosi shows how Zulu ethnic identity evolves emotionally oppressive when associated with rigid masculinity and ideological hallucination. The hero of the novel, Dumisa, incorporates the tension between ethnic pride and emotional weakness, while Mandela reveals an unreachable standard that suppresses individual freedom. This novel opposes the patriarchal system, masculine privilege, and cultural dominance as capacities that create barriers in psychological maturity and objectify women as symbolic things, academic instruction, religious belief. Finally, Nkosi rejects strict cultural identity and shows identity as adaptation and evolution.

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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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Original Article

Synthesis of N- Substituted -N'-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-formamidine

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Abstract:

It is found that N- Substituted -N'-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-formamidine may also be prepared by reflux 1-Substituted-3-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-thiocarbamides with activated Raney-Ni which carries reductive desulfurization of thiocarbamides. Also, 1-Substituted-3-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-thiocarbamides have been synthesized by the interaction of 1-Isothiocyanato-4-methoxy-benzene (p-methoxy-phenyl isothiocyanates) with substituted amines. The identities of these new N-substituted formamidines have been established on the basis of usual chemical transformations and IR, 1H-NMR and Mass spectral studies.

Keywords: *DBN, DBU, Toluene, EtOH, Diamine and Iso-thiocyanate.*

Introduction:

Treatment of halo tetra ene with DBN in benzene gave a conjugated pentene, in which a newly introduced double bond has Z-configuration. DBN was found to be the most suitable dehydrohalogenation reagent among organo bases examined. DBU and DBN are originally synthesized from cyclic lactams by three steps of Michael addition of acrylonitrile, reduction with Raney nickel, and treatment with p-toluenesulfonic acid (TsOH). Thus, DBN was prepared in 69% overall yield. These amidines have been extensively applied to dehydrohalogenation in organic synthesis and in some cases DBU is more effective than DBN. A double bond can be also introduced into organic molecules by elimination of sulfonate ester instead of the halogen atom (i.e. dehydrosulfonation in addition to dehydrohalogenation). Furthermore, these amidines can be applied to the Wittig reaction, aldol condensation, 1,3-allyl rearrangement and epimerization of the b-lactam skeleton (at C-6 of the penicillic acid derivatives). Sterically hindered phenols (e.g. 2,6-di (tert.-butyl)-4-fluorophenol) are O-acetylated with DBU, which is superior to sodium hydroxide in the synthesis. The related 6-6 bicyclic system, 2,10-diazabicyclo-dec-1-ene, was prepared from trans-decahydro-1,8-naphthyridine and an alternative method via direct cyclization of bis (3-aminopropyl) malonic acid was developed for large scale operation. Heinzer et al. reported the preparation of a sterically strongly hindered bicyclic amidine, 3,3,6,9,9-pentamethyl-2,10-diazabicyclo dec-1-ene (Eschenmoser amidine) and its N-alkylated analogues and their potential uses in the formations of salts of carboxylic acids and related proton complexes of bidentate ligands. The efficiencies of DBU and DBN as sterically hindered (non-nucleophilic) and strong organo base catalysts have been widely demonstrated. However, Reed et al. claimed that they could behave as strong nucleophiles in the reaction of chlorobis (di-isopropyl amino) phosphane and DBU or DBN. Modification of the amidine function to chiral versions has been examined. For example, C_2-symmetrical chiral bicylic amidine was prepared for studies on molecular recognition and were proven to differentiate analytically between the enantiomers of chiral carboxylic acids. Near the same time, a mannose-based amidine was synthesized as a potential mannosidase inhibitor, but not a chiral auxiliary. Three enantio pure hydroxyl substituted amidines of the DBN-type were synthesized from 5-(phenyl sulfonyl) pyrroridine-2-one by an oxazaborolidine-catalysed reductive desymmetrization of meso-imide followed by functionalization through N-acyliminium ion. Numerous applications have been found for the uses of imidazole derivatives as ionic liquids and N-heterocyclic carbenes and their use in organic chemistry has been well discussed in books or reviews.

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Objectives:

The key objectives and applications of these compounds include:

Pest Control & Agriculture: They act as potent insecticides, acaricides (miticides), and tickicides. By targeting the octopamine receptors in the nervous systems of pests, they provide effective alternatives to older organophosphate chemicals, specifically combating resistant strains and targeting eggs/larvae.

Pharmaceuticals & Therapeutics: Phenyl formamidines are utilized in medicinal chemistry as building blocks for receptor antagonists. For instance, certain derivatives are actively developed as histamine H2-receptor antagonists, which regulate gastric acid secretion.

Optoelectronics: Formamidine-based precursors (like formamidine acetate) are widely deployed to synthesize stable, highly efficient perovskite solar cells. These compounds improve the crystallization quality of the perovskite film, suppress defect states, and minimize degradation in devices.

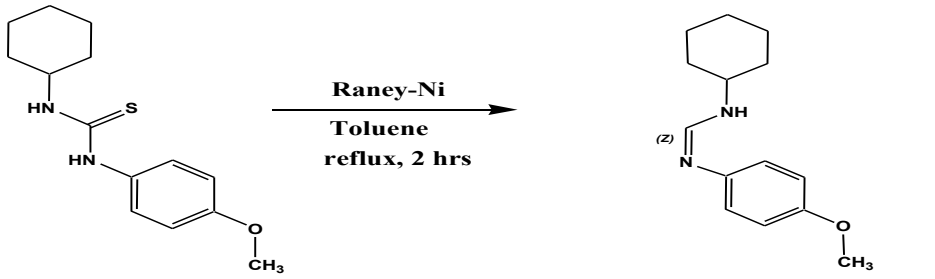
Chemical Synthesis & Intermediates: In synthetic organic chemistry, phenyl formamidine groups can serve as excellent nitrogen-donor ligands or temporary protecting groups for primary amines and phenols during complex molecular modifications.

Data and Methodology:

Preparation of 1-Isothiocyanato-4-methoxy-benzene (p-methoxy-phenyl isothiocyanates) :

Preparation of 1-Isothiocyanato-4-methoxy-benzene (p-methoxy-phenyl isothiocyanates) is the treatment of 4-methoxy-phenyl amines with carbon disulfide and ammonia in 1:1:2 ratio. The widely used procedure is, equip a 500 ml three-necked flask with a powerful mechanical stirrer and a separatory funnel, leave the third neck open or loosely stoppered. Introduce, while the flask is cooled in a freezing mixture of ice and salt, 90 ml of concentrated ammonia solution (d 0.88) and 54g (43 ml, 0.71mol) of pure carbon disulphide. Stir the mixture and run in 56 g (55 ml, 0.60 mol.) of 4-methoxy-phenyl amines from the separatory funnel during about stir for a further 30 minutes, and allow to stand for another 30 minutes. A heavy precipitate of 4-methoxy phenylammonium dithiocarbamate separates. Transfer the salt to round bottomed flask by four extractions with 200 ml portions of water. Add to the resulting solution, with constant stirring a solution of 200 g (0.60 mol) of lead nitrate in 400 ml of water, lead sulphide precipitates. Steam distilled the mixture into a receiver containing 10 ml of conc. 0.5M sulphuric acid as long as organic material passes over. Separate the oil, dry it over anhydrous calcium chloride or magnesium Sulphate and stored in air tight amber colored bottle.

The formation of 1-Isothiocyanato-4-methoxy-benzene (p-methoxy-phenyl isothiocyanates) may be represented as follow:

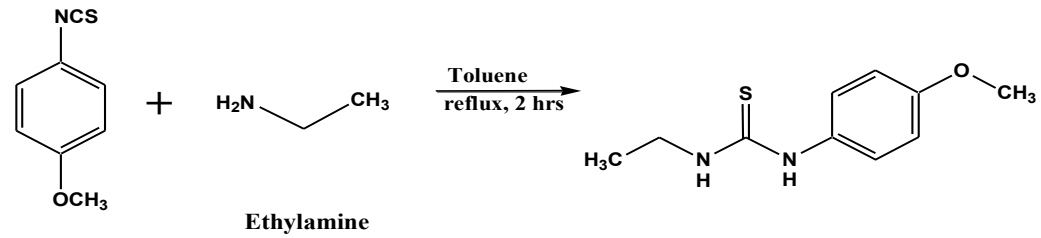


1-Cyclohexyl-3-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-thiocarbamide

N-Cyclohexyl-N'-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-formamidine

thiocyanato-4-methoxy-benzene (p-methoxy-phenyl isothiocyanates) with Ethylamine (Ethanamine) in toluene medium, which was refluxed for 2-3 hrs. get converted to thick solid product, the reaction was monitored by TLC. toluene was distilled off. Product was purified by recrystallization by ethanol/xylene.

The reaction may be represented as follows:



Ethylamine

1-Isothiocyanato-4-methoxy-benzene

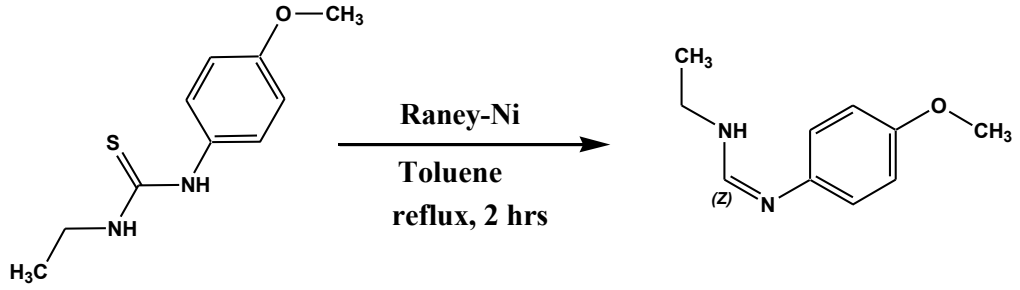
1-Ethyl-3-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-thiocarbamide

Preparation of N-Ethyl-N'-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-formamidine :

N-Ethyl-N'-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-formamidine was to be synthesized by carried out reductive desulphurization of 1-Ethyl-3-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-thiocarbamide by activated Raney-Nickel in toluene medium, which was

refluxed for 2 hrs., sticky mass were observed which was then isolated as residue. This when triturated several times with petroleum ether, converted to crystalline solid. The reaction was monitored by TLC. toluene was distilled off to get the solid product which was purified by recrystallization by ethanol.

The reaction may be represented as follows:



1-Ethyl-3-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-thiocarbamide

N-Ethyl-N'-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-formamidine

Spectral and Elemental analysis of the product:

N-Ethyl-N'-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-formamidine:

Melting points were taken in open capillary tube on mac digital melting point apparatus and were uncorrected. IR spectra were recorded in solid phase KBr on a SHIMADZU FTIR Affinity-1 spectrophotometer. ^{1}H NMR spectra were recorded and in $CDCl_3$ on a Brucker AVANCE-II 400 NMR spectrometer operating at 400 MHz.

The Mass spectra were recorded on a WATERS, Q-TOF MICROMASS (LC-MS) instruments. Thin Layer Chromatography (TLC) was performed on Silica Gel G for TLC (Merck).

Melting point: Melting points of newly synthesized compound have been studied by using digital melting point apparatus. The compound has m.p. 114^{0}C.

Molecular formula: The elemental analysis assigned the molecular formula of the compound is $C_{10}H_{14}N_2O$ and the molecular weight of the compound is 178.23 g/mol.

Solubility: The solubility of the compounds was checked in water, ethanol, acetone, toluene, benzene, chloroform ,carbon tetrachloride and ethyl acetate.

TLC: The purity of the product was checked by TLC. TLC studies indicate R_f Value 0.97 in EtOAc : Pet. Ether 6:4 as eluent.

IR spectral analysis:

The main absorption bands observed in the IR spectrum of 1-a are as follows: IR (KBr cm^{-1}) 3500 (N-H), 3022(aromatic C-H),1680(C=N), 1400(C-N); 1100 (characteristics of substituted benzene).

^{1}H NMR spectral analysis:

The NMR spectrum of 1-a displayed the signals as ^{1}H NMR ($CDCl_3$) : □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□m, aromatic protons), 6.8(1H, s, NH); 4.7 (14H, m, benzoylated proton),3.8(1H, s, C-H proton).

Mass spectral analysis:

The mass spectrum of the product 1-a was recorded, the molecular ion peak was located at 179 (M^+), 178,169,162,144 and 97.

Result and Discussion:

It was demonstrated that the reductive desulfurization of thiocarbamides successful due to immediate reclosure the original structure as evidenced by the fact that both the isothiocyanates and thiocarbamide are literally reactive.

Formamidine are prepared by condensation of isothiocyanate and substituted amine obtain thiocarbamide which on reductive desulfurize by Raney-Ni to give the formamidine compounds and identified by melting point , IR and NMR.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, a synthetic route for Synthesis of N- Substituted -N'-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-formamidine has been successfully presented.

The synthesized compound was evaluated on the basis of IR, ^{1}H-NMR & Mass spectral and elemental analysis.

Thus, the adopted methodology in the present investigation is simple, efficient and inexpensive and has useful application in the synthesis of pharmacologically important molecules.

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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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Original Article

Impact of digital marketing on purchase of Excavators on rent in Pune region

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Abstract:

This study examines the impact of digital marketing on consumer preferences for renting excavators in Pune, India. The research highlights how digital marketing initiatives, including social media promotions, search engine advertising, online marketplaces, company websites, and sponsored content, influence customer decision-making in the construction equipment rental sector. The study aims to understand the role of digital campaigns in enhancing awareness about excavator rental services, their cost-effectiveness, availability, operational efficiency, and flexibility compared to equipment ownership. Additionally, the research explores key factors affecting customer responses, such as perceived service quality, pricing transparency, trust in rental providers, convenience of online booking, customer reviews, and future project requirements. A structured survey was conducted among construction contractors, builders, project managers, and equipment users in Pune. The collected data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) through AMOS software. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between exposure to digital marketing and customer awareness, which subsequently influences the intention to rent excavators. The results highlight that digital marketing serves as an effective tool for attracting potential customers by communicating service benefits, improving brand visibility, and facilitating informed rental decisions. This study provides valuable insights for equipment rental companies, marketers, and policymakers seeking to enhance excavator rental adoption through targeted digital marketing strategies that align with customer expectations and evolving industry demands.

Keywords: *Digital marketing; excavator rental services; consumer awareness; online advertising; customer preference; construction equipment rental; service quality; Pune.*

Introduction:

The construction equipment rental industry has become an integral part of modern infrastructure development and urban expansion. With the rapid growth of construction activities, real estate projects, road development, and industrial investments, the demand for heavy machinery such as excavators has increased significantly. Rather than purchasing expensive equipment, many contractors, builders, and project managers prefer renting excavators to optimize costs, improve operational flexibility, and reduce maintenance responsibilities. In this evolving market environment, understanding the factors that influence customers' rental decisions has become increasingly important. Among these factors, digital marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for attracting, informing, and engaging potential customers. The concept of equipment rental has obtained considerable attention in recent years due to its economic and operational advantages. Renting excavators enables construction firms to access modern machinery without making substantial capital investments, thereby improving project efficiency and resource utilization. As competition among rental service providers' increases, companies are increasingly adopting innovative marketing strategies to promote their services and reach prospective customers. Digital marketing channels such as social media platforms, search engine advertisements, company websites, online business directories, email campaigns, and mobile applications have become necessary tools for communicating service offerings and influencing customer preferences.

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Previous studies have indicated that digital marketing significantly impacts consumer behaviour by enhancing product awareness, providing detailed information, and facilitating informed decision-making. In the construction equipment rental sector, digital marketing plays a critical role in educating customers about equipment availability, rental costs, operational benefits, service quality, and booking convenience. Increased exposure to online advertisements, customer reviews, promotional campaigns, and digital content can positively affect customers' perceptions and encourage them to choose rental services over equipment ownership.

Developing effective marketing strategies based on key factors such as cost efficiency, service reliability, equipment quality, technological innovation, and project-specific requirements has become essential for influencing customer preferences. Digital platforms allow rental companies to showcase their equipment fleet, provide transparent pricing information, demonstrate service capabilities, and maintain direct communication with potential clients. These capabilities not only enhance customer engagement but also helps to contribute to building trust and long-term business relationships.

The Pune region, recognized as one of India's fastest-growing industrial and construction hubs, therefore it presents a dynamic market for excavator rental services. Rapid urbanization, infrastructure development projects, industrial expansion, and real estate growth have generated substantial demand for construction equipment across the region. Simultaneously, the increasing adoption of digital technologies among businesses has transformed how customers search for, evaluate, and select equipment rental providers. Digital marketing has therefore become an important component of competitive business strategy within the equipment rental industry.

This research aims to examine the relationship between digital marketing initiatives and customers' preferences for renting excavators in the Pune region. Specifically, the study investigates how digital marketing activities influence customer awareness, perceptions, and rental decisions. The research focuses on factors such as online advertising effectiveness, social media engagement, website usability, customer reviews, pricing transparency, service quality perceptions, and trust in rental providers. Data will be collected through structured questionnaires administered to contractors, builders, construction managers, and equipment users operating in Pune and surrounding areas. Advanced statistical techniques, including Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), will be employed to analyze the relationships among the study variables.

The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for equipment rental companies, marketing professionals, and industry stakeholders seeking to enhance customer acquisition and retention through digital channels. The research will contribute to a better understanding of how digital marketing strategies can be leveraged to increase awareness, improve customer engagement, and influence rental decisions in the construction equipment sector. Furthermore, the study will offer practical recommendations for designing effective digital marketing campaigns that align with customer expectations and support the continued growth of the excavator rental market in the Pune region.

The significance of this study lies in its relevance to the ongoing digital transformation of business practices and the expanding construction industry in Pune. By examining the impact of digital marketing on customer preferences for excavator rentals, the research contributes to both academic literature and industry practice, providing a strategic framework for enhancing market competitiveness and supporting sustainable growth in the equipment rental sector.

Literature Review:

A wide range of studies has examined the influence of digital (e-) marketing on customer behaviour in industrial and construction equipment markets. Kotler Philip and other researchers have emphasized that digital marketing has transformed business-to-business (B2B) purchasing processes by enabling customers to access product information, compare alternatives, and make informed decisions through online platforms. Studies have shown that digital channels significantly influence customer decision-making by improving accessibility, transparency, and communication between service providers and customers.

Several researchers have explored the impact of e-marketing on industrial equipment and rental service sectors. Studies conducted by researchers such as Chaffey Dave highlighted that online advertising, search engine optimization, and social media engagement positively affect customer awareness and rental service inquiries. The findings indicated that businesses utilizing digital marketing strategies experience higher customer engagement and improved lead generation compared to traditional marketing methods.

From the perspective of construction equipment rental services, recent studies have emphasized the growing importance of online platforms in influencing equipment selection and rental decisions. Research has revealed that construction contractors and project managers increasingly rely on websites, mobile applications, and digital marketplaces to compare rental prices, equipment specifications, availability, and service quality. The convenience of accessing information online significantly contributes to customer preference for rental service providers.

Furthermore, researchers investigating construction equipment rental markets have identified factors such as project cost optimization, equipment availability, operational flexibility, and maintenance support as major determinants of customer preference for renting excavators rather than purchasing them. Digital marketing serves as a key medium for communicating these benefits to potential customers and increasing market reach.

The current study aims to analyze the influence of e-marketing on consumer preference for excavators on rent in the Pune region, with customer awareness acting as a mediating variable. Unlike existing studies that primarily focus on general industrial equipment or construction machinery markets at a broader level, this research provides a localized perspective on the rapidly growing construction and infrastructure sector in Pune. The study seeks to contribute new insights into how digital marketing strategies shape customer awareness, preferences, and rental decisions within the excavator rental industry.

Methodology:

In this study a quantitative field-based research design is used to examine the impact of digital marketing on consumer preference for renting excavators in the Pune region, with customer awareness serving as a mediating variable. The primary objective is to

assess how digital marketing strategies, such as social media marketing, search engine advertising, online business directories, company websites, email marketing, and digital promotions, influence customer awareness and ultimately shape their preferences for excavator rental services.

Data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire distributed to 385 respondents selected using purposive sampling. The target respondents included construction contractors, builders, infrastructure developers, project managers, civil engineers, site supervisors, and individuals involved in construction-related activities across Pune and surrounding industrial areas. These respondents were chosen because they are potential users or decision-makers in the excavator rental market.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections: demographic information, exposure to digital marketing activities, awareness of excavator rental services, and customer preferences regarding excavator rental decisions. The survey items were adapted from previous studies related to digital marketing, customer awareness, and industrial service selection to ensure relevance and accuracy.

To ensure reliability and validity, a pilot study was conducted before the main survey. Internal consistency of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through AMOS software to examine the direct and indirect relationships among the variables. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed to validate the measurement constructs.

This methodological approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how digital marketing influences customer preferences for excavator rental services by enhancing awareness and knowledge of available rental options. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for excavator rental companies, digital marketers, and construction service providers in developing effective marketing strategies and improving customer engagement in the Pune region.

Conceptual Framework

The study is based on a theoretical framework that links digital marketing activities with customer preference for excavator rental services, with customer awareness acting as a mediating variable.

Independent Variable (IV):

- Digital Marketing

Mediating Variable (MV):

- Customer Awareness

Dependent Variable (DV):

- Customer Preference for Excavator Rental Services

Objectives:

1. To find whether digital marketing has a significant positive effect on customers' preference for renting excavators in the Pune region.
2. To analyse whether customer awareness has a significant positive effect on customers' preference for renting excavators in the Pune region.
3. To find out whether customer awareness mediates the relationship between digital marketing and customers' preference for renting excavators in the Pune region.

Reliability:

The reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales used in the study. The results presented in Table 1 indicate that the Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs exceed the recommended threshold value of 0.70 (Bonett and Wright, 2015), demonstrating satisfactory reliability and internal consistency of the instrument. Therefore, the questionnaire is considered suitable for further statistical analysis and scientific research.

Table 1: Reliability Coefficient

Variable	N	Cronbach's Alpha
Digital Marketing (DM)	8	0.931
Customer Awareness (CA)	6	0.877
Online Information Availability (OIA)	5	0.846
Service Quality Perception (SQP)	5	0.883
Rental Convenience (RC)	4	0.831
Customer Preference for Excavator Rental (CPER)	8	0.902

The reliability coefficients ranging from 0.831 to 0.931 indicate strong internal consistency among the measurement items. The highest reliability was observed for Digital Marketing ($\alpha = 0.931$), while Rental Convenience recorded the lowest but still acceptable reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.831$). These findings confirm that the constructs are reliable and suitable for subsequent factor analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Analysis and Results:

This section presents the statistical results obtained through SPSS and AMOS software. The primary objective is to examine the influence of digital marketing on customer preference for excavator rental services in the Pune region, with customer awareness acting as a mediating variable.

Initially, descriptive statistics were employed to assess respondents' perceptions regarding the major constructs under study. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated to evaluate the extent to which respondents agreed with statements related

to digital marketing activities, customer awareness, service quality, rental convenience, and preference for excavator rental services.

The descriptive analysis revealed that respondents generally held positive perceptions regarding digital marketing initiatives undertaken by excavator rental service providers. High mean scores were observed for online information availability, digital advertisements, and social media presence, indicating that these channels significantly contribute to customer awareness.

Further analysis through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) confirmed the validity of the measurement model, with all factor loadings exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was subsequently applied to test the proposed hypotheses. The results indicated that digital marketing has a significant positive effect on customer preference for excavator rental services. Additionally, customer awareness was found to significantly influence customer preference and partially mediate the relationship between digital marketing and rental decisions.

The findings suggest that effective digital marketing strategies enhance customer awareness regarding excavator availability, rental pricing, equipment specifications, and service quality, which ultimately increases customers' preference for renting excavators in the Pune region.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Digital Marketing (DM)	2.68	4.72	4.12	0.68
Customer Awareness (CA)	2.55	4.60	4.08	0.74
Online Information Availability (OIA)	2.40	4.55	4.01	0.81
Service Quality Perception (SQP)	2.35	4.50	3.96	0.79
Rental Convenience (RC)	2.60	4.48	4.05	0.72
Customer Preference for Excavator Rental (CPER)	2.25	4.58	4.14	0.69
N	**385**			

Analysis and Interpretation

As shown in Table 2, the arithmetic mean values for all variables were relatively high, ranging from 3.96 to 4.14. This indicates that respondents generally exhibited positive perceptions regarding digital marketing activities, awareness of excavator rental services, service quality, rental convenience, and their preference for renting excavators in the Pune region.

Among the variables, **Customer Preference for Excavator Rental Services (CPER)** recorded the highest mean score (Mean = 4.14), suggesting that respondents demonstrated a strong inclination toward renting excavators when sufficient information and service support were available. **Digital Marketing (DM)** also achieved a high mean score (Mean = 4.12), indicating that online advertisements, social media promotions, company websites, and digital communication channels play an important role in influencing customer decisions.

The standard deviation values ranged from 0.68 to 0.81, reflecting a relatively low dispersion of responses. This suggests a considerable degree of agreement among respondents regarding the importance of digital marketing and awareness in shaping excavator rental preferences. The low variability further indicates consistency in respondents' perceptions across the surveyed construction contractors, builders, project managers, and equipment users in the Pune region.

Overall, the descriptive statistics reveal that digital marketing initiatives and customer awareness are positively perceived and may significantly contribute to customer preference for excavator rental services, thereby supporting the proposed conceptual framework of the study.

H1: Digital Marketing has a Significant Positive Effect on Customer Preference for Excavator Rental Services

According to the data presented in Table 3, the Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.692, which is greater than zero and indicates a moderate positive correlation between Digital Marketing (DM) and Customer Preference for Excavator Rental Services (CPER). This suggests that as exposure to digital marketing activities increases, customers' preference for renting excavators also tends to increase.

Table 3: Correlations Between Variables

Variable	DM	CPER
DM Pearson Correlation	1	0.692
Sig. (2-tailed)	-	0.000

Table 4: Coefficients of Determination

Correlation Coefficient (R)	Coefficient of Determination (R^2)	Adjusted R^2	Standard Error	Analysis of variance by ANOVA F-value
0.691	0.479	0.462	0.462	31.844

The adjusted coefficient of determination (R^2) was found to be 0.463, indicating that Digital Marketing explains 46.2% of the variance in Customer Preference for Excavator Rental Services.

The ANOVA results indicate an F-value of 31.844 with a significance level of 0.000, which is below the accepted threshold of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and H1 is accepted, confirming that Digital Marketing has a statistically significant effect on Customer Preference for Excavator Rental Services in the Pune region.

H2: Customer Awareness has a Significant Positive Effect on Customer Preference for Excavator Rental Services

The results in Table 5 indicate strong positive correlations between the dimensions of Customer Awareness and Customer Preference for Excavator Rental Services.

Table 5: Correlations Between Variables

Variable	CPER
Customer Awareness (CA) Pearson Correlation	0.781
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Online Information Availability (OIA) Pearson Correlation	0.742
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Service Quality Perception (SQP) Pearson Correlation	0.814
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Rental Convenience (RC) Pearson Correlation	0.703
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

Table 6: Coefficients of Determination

Correlation Coefficient (R)	Coefficient of Determination (R^2)	Adjusted R^2	Standard Error	F- Value
0.781	0.765	0.762	0.435	9.242

The adjusted coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.762, indicating that Customer Awareness explains 76.2% of the variance in Customer Preference for Excavator Rental Services.

The F-value of 9.242 and significance level of 0.000 confirm that the model is statistically significant. Therefore, H2 is accepted.

Table 7: Significance of Regression Coefficients

Variable	β	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	0.418	0.437	1.087	1.021	0.000
CA	0.341	0.091	0.884	2.184	0.000
SQP	0.796	0.105	0.826	8.962	0.000
RC	0.426	0.103	0.711	5.642	0.000

The results indicate statistically significant relationships between Customer Awareness, Service Quality Perception, Rental Convenience, and Customer Preference for Excavator Rental Services.

H3: Customer Awareness Mediates the Relationship Between Digital Marketing and Customer Preference for Excavator Rental Services

Table 10 presents the regression weights for the proposed structural model.

Table 8: Regression Weights (Default Model)

Relationship	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
CA ← DM	0.852	0.021	38.417	***
OIA ← DM	0.681	0.034	14.108	***
SQP ← DM	0.726	0.020	10.024	***
RC ← DM	0.492	0.024	23.104	***
CPER ← CA	0.701	0.023	4.105	***
CPER ← DM	0.336	0.011	23.618	***

The results demonstrate that Digital Marketing significantly influences Customer Awareness and its dimensions. Furthermore, Customer Awareness significantly influences Customer Preference for Excavator Rental Services. Therefore, H3 is confirmed.

Table 11: Indirect Effects (Default Model)

Variable	CPER	CA	P-value
DM	0.482	0.361	0.000

The indirect effect results indicate that Customer Awareness significantly mediates the relationship between Digital Marketing and Customer Preference for Excavator Rental Services.

Conclusion:

The present study investigated the impact of digital marketing on customer preference for excavator rental services in the Pune region, with particular emphasis on the mediating role of customer awareness. Based on the empirical findings and review of relevant literature, several important conclusions were drawn.

First, digital marketing activities such as social media promotions, search engine marketing, online advertisements, company websites, and digital business directories were found to have a significant positive influence on customers' preferences for excavator rental services. The findings indicate that customers increasingly rely on digital platforms to obtain information regarding equipment specifications, rental pricing, availability, service quality, and supplier credibility before making rental decisions. These results support existing studies that emphasize the growing importance of digital marketing in influencing business-to-business (B2B) purchasing behavior.

Second, the study confirmed that customer awareness acts as a significant mediating variable between digital marketing and customer preference for excavator rental services. Effective digital marketing strategies were found to enhance awareness regarding rental procedures, equipment performance, maintenance support, operational benefits, and rental convenience. Increased awareness subsequently strengthened customers' preference for renting excavators from service providers that maintain a strong digital presence.

The results further reveal that factors such as online information availability, service quality perception, and rental convenience significantly contribute to customer decision-making. Customers are more likely to prefer rental service providers who offer transparent information, prompt communication, easy booking processes, and reliable after-rental support through digital channels. Overall, this study highlights the critical role of digital marketing in shaping customer behavior within the construction equipment rental industry in the Pune region. The findings provide valuable insights for excavator rental companies, construction equipment dealers, and marketing professionals seeking to improve customer engagement and increase rental demand through digital platforms. The study also offers several directions for future research. Future studies may investigate the effectiveness of specific digital marketing channels such as social media advertising, search engine optimization, WhatsApp marketing, and online construction marketplaces in influencing rental decisions. Researchers may also examine the impact of customer reviews, online reputation, and digital trust on equipment rental preferences. Furthermore, comparative studies across different regions of India and different categories of construction equipment could provide a broader understanding of digital marketing effectiveness within the equipment rental sector. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that digital marketing significantly influences customer preference for excavator rental services both directly and indirectly through enhanced customer awareness. Therefore, excavator rental companies should invest in comprehensive digital marketing strategies to strengthen market visibility, improve customer awareness, and achieve sustainable business growth in the increasingly competitive construction industry.

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Original Article

Skill Gap Analysis in India's Tourism Sector: Role of Emotional Intelligence, Cross-Cultural Communication and Digital Competencies in Achieving Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

Tourism is a major driver of worldwide economic growth, employment and cultural exchange. The sector has huge potential in India to aid Viksit Bharat 2047 through job creation, foreign exchange revenues, regional development and inclusive growth. But chronic skills gap in the workforce are affecting the quality of service and global competitiveness. Technical and operational skills have received most of the attention in tourism studies, but human-centered employability skills are becoming increasingly significant. This article discusses the talent deficiencies in the tourist sector of India with special reference to emotional intelligence, cross-cultural communication and digital abilities. The study is descriptive and analytical based on secondary data from government records, industry publications and academic literature. It examines changing workforce demands, contrasts India's readiness with several emerging and established countries, and draws lessons from Dubai's tourism model, particularly on service quality, destination branding, workforce training and visitor experience management. The results reveal that tourism practitioners need a proper mix of technical, interpersonal and digital skills. Emotional intelligence enhances actual tourism engagement and service recovery. Cross-cultural communication leads to better connection with visitors from varied backgrounds. Skills like social media communication, artificial intelligence understanding, online reputation management and digital storytelling are now essential to tourism services. To increase India's tourism competitiveness and contribute to Viksit Bharat 2047, this study recommends a future-ready tourism competency structure, comprehensive tourist education, industry-aligned training, and continual skill development.

Keywords: *Tourism Skill Gap, Emotional Intelligence, Intercultural Communication, Digital Competencies, Viksit Bharat 2047*

Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest growing businesses in the world and it fosters cultural exchange, employment, regional development and national competitiveness. India is endowed with a rich treasure trove of tourism assets such as cultural heritage, historical monuments, natural landscapes, spiritual attractions, culinary diversity and traditional arts. These capacities along with the government-led tourist activities constitute the sector as one of the critical sources of employment and sustainable growth under Viksit Bharat 2047. But the staff's readiness is still the greatest challenge. Tourism is a people-driven sector and tourist pleasure rests mainly on the interaction with service providers. Employers typically struggle to find people with the right blend of technical knowledge and behavioural skills. Tourism personnel need to have emotional intelligence, adaptability, cultural sensitivity, communication skills and digital literacy in addition to operational abilities. Tourism has been transformed by online bookings, digital marketing, virtual experiences, social media, AI and CRM platforms. This study focuses on skill gaps in India's tourist sector and explores the importance of emotional intelligence, cross-cultural communication and digital capabilities in workforce development, service quality and India's journey to Viksit Bharat 2047.

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Objectives of the Study

1. To identify major skill gaps prevailing in the tourism sector in India.
2. To study the influence of emotional intelligence in the improvement of tourist satisfaction and service quality.
3. To examine the importance of cross-cultural communication in tourism services.
4. To evaluate the importance of digital skills for tourism professionals.
5. To compare India's tourism skill development practices with selected developing and developed countries.
6. To provide recommendations for strengthening tourism workforce development in line with Viksit Bharat 2047.

Data and Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. It is based entirely on secondary data collected from different sources such as reports published by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council (THSC); National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC); academic journals; conference papers; policy documents; and international tourism studies.

Relevant literature in the field of tourism workforce development, employability skills, emotional intelligence, intercultural communication, digital competencies and tourism management was studied to identify emerging trends and challenges. Comparative analysis was employed to examine workforce development practices in selected developing countries (Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan) and developed countries (the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan).

In addition, a case study approach was used to examine Dubai's model of tourism development and identify transferable practices applicable to India's tourism workforce. The findings have been synthesized to formulate recommendations for enhancing employability skills and strengthening tourism education frameworks to support Viksit Bharat 2047.

Results and Discussion

1 Skill Gap Analysis and Emerging Skill Requirements in India's Tourism Sector

In the past two decades, tourism has moved from routine service delivery to experience-based engagement. Today's tourists are digitally savvy, globally informed, culturally aware and highly demanding. They publicly evaluate services through reviews, social media, blogs and rating platforms. Although India has seen improvements in tourism infrastructure, accommodation, transport and destination promotion, workforce development has not kept pace. Employers continue to struggle to find professionals who possess both technical knowledge and customer-oriented behavioural competencies. The major skill gaps can be broadly classified into five categories as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Major Skill Gaps in India's Tourism Sector

Skill Gap Area	Key Deficiency Identified	Likely Impact on Tourism Services
Communication Skills	Verbal communication, active listening, confidence, presentation and customer engagement	Poor tourist interaction and dissatisfaction
Emotional Intelligence	Managing emotions, empathy and service recovery	Weak handling of complaints and stressful situations
Cross-Cultural Competency	Cultural sensitivity and communication adaptation	Miscommunication and service failures
Digital Skills	Online booking, CRM, AI, virtual tours, social media and reputation management	Reduced competitiveness in digital tourism
Crisis and Conflict Management	Conflict resolution and crisis communication	Ineffective response to disruptions and emergencies

2 Role of Emotional Intelligence in Tourism Services

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a person's ability to recognize, understand, manage, and deal effectively with emotions in oneself and others. Popularized by Daniel Goleman, EI has become one of the most critical competencies in service-oriented industries. Tourism is, at its heart, about people. Tourism services are intangible, require a high level of interpersonal interaction, and differ fundamentally from physical products. A tourist's perception of service quality is influenced not only by facilities but also by how staff make them feel. Table 2 presents the key EI competencies and their application in tourism.

Table 2: Emotional Intelligence Competencies and Their Role in Tourism Services

EI Competency	Application in Tourism	Expected Outcome
Empathy	Understanding tourist feelings, concerns and expectations	Positive tourist experience
Relationship Building	Building rapport with tourists	Customer satisfaction and repeat visits
Emotion Regulation	Remaining calm during stressful situations	Professional complaint handling
Service Recovery	Responding to booking errors, delays and service failures	Improved trust and customer loyalty

EI Competency	Application in Tourism	Expected Outcome
Experience Enhancement	Personalizing interactions and exceeding expectations	Memorable tourism experience

Empathy enables tourism professionals to understand tourist anxieties, expectations and stress, allowing staff to provide reassurance and deliver excellent service. Building genuine rapport leads to more satisfied and loyal customers who return and provide positive reviews. Emotional regulation helps professionals handle complaints and confrontations with calmness and effectiveness. Strong emotional intelligence also enables employees to handle service disruptions — such as delays, booking issues and accommodation problems — with empathy and appropriate responses. Companies that train employees in emotional intelligence can boost customer happiness, employee engagement, service quality and organizational reputation. EI must therefore be incorporated into tourism education and workforce development initiatives across India.

3 Cross-Cultural Communication and Tourist Experience

Cross-cultural communication is the transmission of information and meaning between individuals from different cultures. In tourism it is a basic prerequisite because personnel frequently deal with guests who differ in language, values, habits and communication preferences. Cultural background influences communication methods, interpretation of messages, attitudes to authority and approaches to conflict. Cross-cultural communication training is therefore essential to reducing misunderstanding, improving workplace interaction and providing successful tourism services.

Key dimensions include cultural awareness, adaptability of communication style, language sensitivity, conflict prevention through early recognition of cultural misunderstandings, and meeting international service standards. Even basic familiarity with the languages spoken by common visitor groups can substantially improve trust and the welcome experience. Tourism education under Viksit Bharat 2047 that strengthens emotional intelligence, multilingual communication and intercultural skills will measurably improve service quality, visitor satisfaction, destination branding and India's international competitiveness.

4 Digital Skills for Future Tourism Professionals

Digital technologies have transformed the tourism industry globally. Online travel agencies, digital booking platforms, social media marketing, artificial intelligence, virtual tours, customer relationship management systems and data analytics have fundamentally changed the delivery and consumption of tourism services. Digital skills have accordingly become an important employability requirement for tourism professionals. Table 3 presents the core digital competencies required.

Table 3: Digital Skills Required for Future Tourism Professionals

Digital Competency	Tourism Application	Professional Value
Digital Communication	Email, chat support, online forums and CRM tools	Faster and professional customer interaction
Social Media Marketing	Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn and X	Destination branding and customer acquisition
Digital Storytelling	Stories, images, videos and interactive content	Stronger visitor engagement
Smart Tourism and AI	Chatbots, recommendation systems and predictive analytics	Personalized tourism services
Online Reputation Management	Monitoring and responding to online reviews	Protection of destination and organizational reputation

The modern traveller relies on digital technologies throughout the travel journey — from searching destinations and booking accommodation to sharing experiences online. Social media platforms are now powerful destination marketing tools. Digital storytelling enables destinations to differentiate themselves and build emotional connections with potential visitors. AI-powered chatbots, recommendation systems and predictive analytics are increasingly embedded in tourism service delivery. Online reputation management on platforms such as TripAdvisor, Google Reviews and Booking.com directly shapes traveller booking decisions. Digital skills should therefore be integrated into all tourism education, vocational training and professional development programmes across India.

4.5 Comparative Study of Tourism Workforce Development Practices

A comparative review of global practices offers important lessons for India's tourism workforce. Table 4 summarizes the approaches of selected countries.

Table 4: Comparative Tourism Workforce Development Practices

Country	Tourism Workforce Strength	Main Focus Area
India	Government initiatives: Skill India, Digital India and Incredible India	Technical training with a need for stronger soft skills and digital competencies
Kazakhstan	Workforce modernization and international partnerships	Vocational education, language training and international tourism standards

Country	Tourism Workforce Strength	Main Focus Area
Azerbaijan	Destination branding and cultural tourism, especially in Baku	Multilingual communication, customer service and hospitality management
United Kingdom	Industry engagement integrated with tourism education	Customer experience, cultural awareness, leadership and digital skills
Germany	Dual vocational training combining classroom and apprenticeship	Structured practical experience and interpersonal skills
Japan	Omotenashi service philosophy	Communication, etiquette, cultural sensitivity and service excellence

Countries that prioritize communication skills, emotional intelligence, cultural competence and digital literacy consistently demonstrate higher levels of tourist satisfaction and destination competitiveness. The German dual vocational model and Japan's Omotenashi philosophy offer particularly transferable lessons for curriculum design and service culture development in India.

4.6 Lessons from the Dubai Tourism Blueprint

Dubai is one of the world's top tourism destinations despite limited natural resources, demonstrating how strategic planning, workforce development, service excellence and destination branding can transform a region into a global tourism hub. Its tourism policies focus not merely on attracting visitors but on delivering high-quality visitor experiences through investment in hospitality infrastructure, transport systems, entertainment attractions and workforce training.

Table 5: Lessons from the Dubai Tourism Blueprint for India

Dubai Tourism Practice	Relevance for India
Service excellence standards	Establish stronger national tourism service standards
Systematic workforce training	Strengthen tourism and hospitality training programmes
Multicultural communication	Develop multilingual and culturally sensitive tourism professionals
Consistent destination branding	Create stronger and more consistent destination campaigns
Integrated tourism ecosystem	Encourage cross-sector spending on accommodation, transport, shopping and dining
Visitor experience management	Focus on tourist satisfaction throughout the entire tourism journey

India can draw from Dubai's practices in tourism workforce training, service excellence standards, destination branding, visitor experience management, integrated tourism ecosystems, and strategies for both domestic and international tourism. These approaches are directly applicable to India's tourism development goals under Viksit Bharat 2047.

7 Tourism Competency Framework

The study proposes a Tourism Competency Pyramid that identifies the priority order of essential competencies for India's future tourism workforce. The findings suggest five competencies are especially critical: Emotional Intelligence, Communication Skills, Cross-Cultural Competence, Digital Skills, and Conflict and Crisis Management. Table 6 presents the conceptual priority scores.

Table 6: Priority Competencies for India's Tourism Workforce

Competency	Priority Score (Conceptual)
Emotional Intelligence	95
Communication Skills	90
Cross-Cultural Competence	88
Digital Skills	85
Conflict and Crisis Management	80

The framework places emotional intelligence at the highest level of the competency hierarchy as it directly influences customer relationships, service recovery, leadership effectiveness and overall visitor experience. Tourism organizations that invest in experience-centered workforce development are better positioned for sustainable competitive advantage. As India moves toward Viksit Bharat 2047, building this pyramid of competencies into national training and education frameworks is both urgent and achievable.

Conclusions

Tourism is a strategic sector which may contribute significantly to India's economic growth, job creation and global image. As India moves towards Viksit Bharat 2047, the development of a future-ready tourism workforce must remain a national priority. While India has improved tourism infrastructure and destination promotion, workforce skill gaps remain substantial. Emotional intelligence, cross-cultural communication and digital skills are essential tools to enhance service quality, connect with international tourists, prevent misunderstandings and respond to evolving traveller expectations and technology.

To overcome these challenges, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Integrate emotional intelligence training into all tourism education programmes.
- Make cross-cultural communication modules compulsory for hospitality and tourism programmes.
- Enhance digital and AI skills of tourism professionals through targeted training.
- Encourage multilingual communication training across tourism institutions.
- Develop industry-academia partnerships to align training to real market requirements.
- Implement ongoing professional development programmes for tourism employees.
- Train professionals in destination storytelling and customer experience management.
- Develop a National Tourism Competency Framework aligned with Viksit Bharat 2047.

Through investments in human capital and future competencies, India can measurably improve tourist experiences, boost tourism competitiveness, and emerge as a global leader. The development of emotionally intelligent, culturally competent and digitally skilled tourism professionals will be key to realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

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Original Article

Challenges and Opportunities of Integrating Artificial Intelligence in Forensic Accounting

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Abstract

The increasing complexity of financial fraud in the digital era has created a growing need for advanced investigative techniques. Forensic accounting, traditionally dependent on manual analysis and auditing procedures, is increasingly being enhanced through Artificial Intelligence (AI). This study examines the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating AI into forensic accounting practices. Primary data were collected from 50 respondents using a structured questionnaire, while secondary data were obtained from relevant academic literature and industry reports. The findings reveal that AI significantly improves fraud detection capabilities, enhances accuracy, reduces human errors, and accelerates data analysis processes. A majority of respondents agreed that AI-driven tools are effective in identifying suspicious patterns and anomalies within large datasets. Despite these benefits, several barriers hinder AI adoption, including high implementation costs, lack of technical expertise, data privacy concerns, and organizational resistance to technological change. The study further indicates that AI serves as a complementary tool that supports forensic accountants rather than replacing their professional judgment and investigative skills. The research concludes that successful integration of AI in forensic accounting requires investments in employee training, technological infrastructure, and robust data security measures. The adoption of AI technologies can significantly strengthen fraud detection and prevention mechanisms, thereby improving financial transparency and organizational governance.

Keywords: *Forensic Accounting; Artificial Intelligence; Fraud Detection; Data Analytics; Financial Fraud; Machine Learning; Audit Technology*

Introduction

Financial fraud has evolved significantly due to digitalization and globalization. Traditional auditing methods are no longer sufficient to detect complex fraud schemes. Forensic accounting has emerged as a specialized field that combines accounting, auditing, and investigative skills.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers advanced capabilities such as pattern recognition, predictive analytics, and anomaly detection. These technologies enable forensic accountants to analyze large datasets efficiently and identify fraudulent activities.

Literature Review

Several scholars have studied the application of AI in accounting and fraud detection.

According to Bhasin (2017), forensic accounting plays a critical role in detecting corporate fraud and ensuring financial transparency. The study emphasized the need for advanced tools to improve investigation efficiency.

Kokina and Davenport (2017) highlighted that AI and data analytics are transforming accounting practices by automating repetitive tasks and improving accuracy.

Appelbaum, Kogan, and Vasarhelyi (2018) argued that AI enhances audit and forensic processes by enabling continuous monitoring and real-time fraud detection.

Similarly, Deloitte (2020) reported that AI-based tools significantly improve fraud detection by analyzing large volumes of structured and unstructured data.

However, PwC (2019) identified major challenges such as high implementation cost, lack of skilled professionals, and data privacy concerns.

Overall, the literature suggests that AI has strong potential in forensic accounting but requires proper infrastructure and training.

Research Objectives

To analyze the role of AI in forensic accounting

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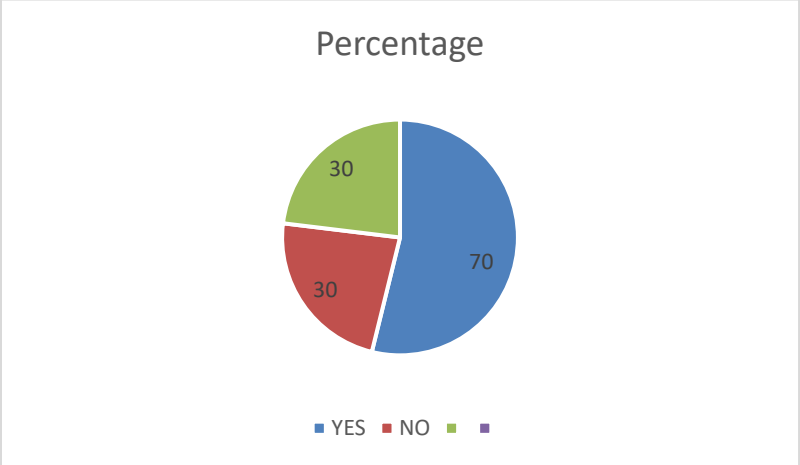
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To evaluate the effectiveness of AI in fraud detection
To identify challenges in AI implementation
To explore opportunities created by AI

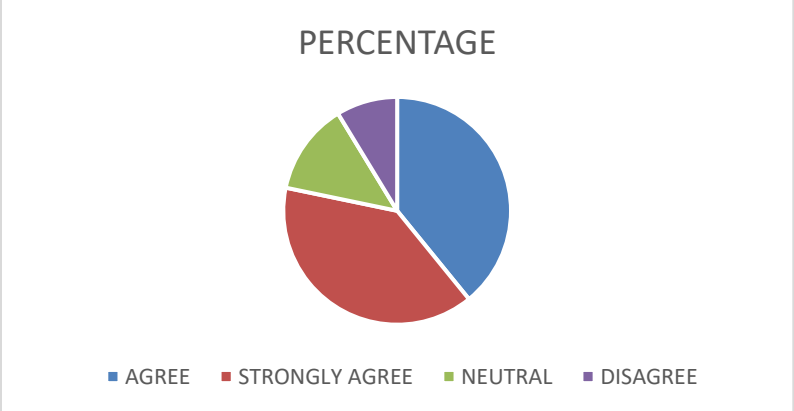
Hypothesis
H0: AI has no significant impact on forensic accounting
H1: AI significantly improves forensic accounting practices

Research Methodology
Research Design: Descriptive and analytical
Data Collection: Primary (questionnaire), Secondary (journals)
Sample Size: 50 respondents
Sampling Method: Convenience sampling

Data Analysis and Interpretation
Chart 1: Awareness of AI
Response
Percentage
Yes
70%
No
30%



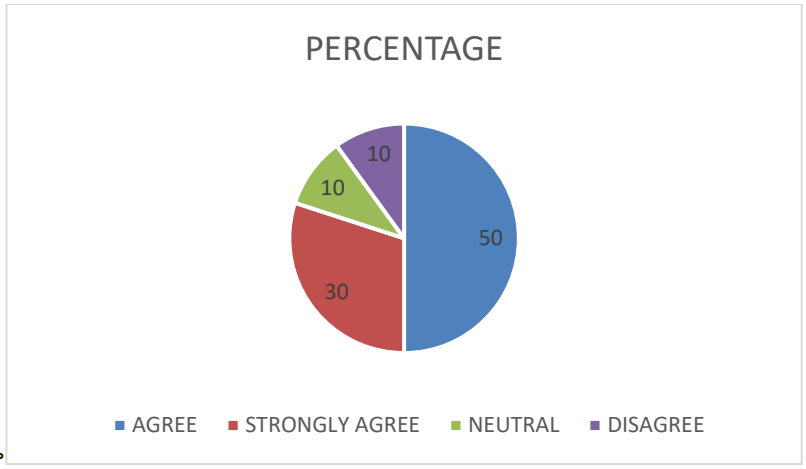
Interpretation: Majority of respondents are aware of AI, indicating growing technological awareness.
Chart 2: AI Improves Fraud Detection
Response
Percentage
Agree
45%
Strongly Agree
30%
Neutral
15%
Disagree
10%



Interpretation: 75% respondents agree that AI improves fraud detection.

Chart 3: AI Speeds Up Data Analysis

Response
Percentage
Agree
50%
Strongly Agree
30%
Neutral
10%
Disagree
10%



Interpretation: AI significantly reduces analysis time.

Chart 4: AI Reduces Human Errors

Response
Percentage
Agree
40%
Strongly Agree
30%
Neutral
15%
Disagree
15%

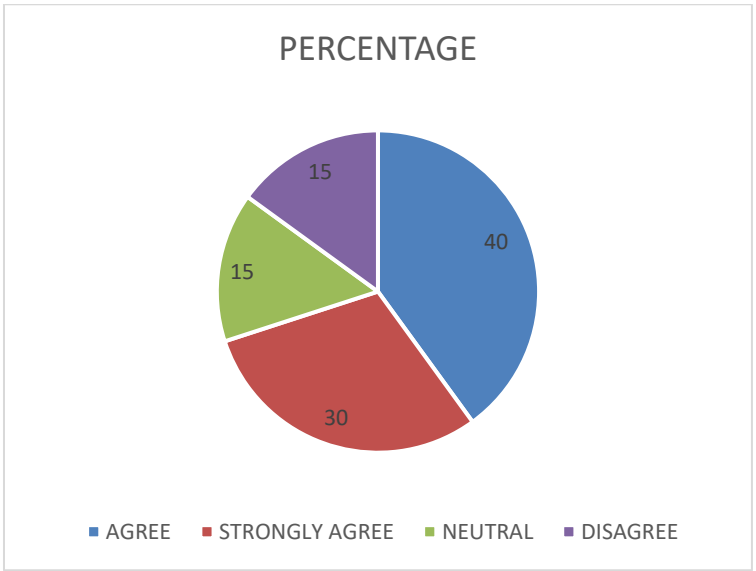


Chart 5: Challenges in AI Implementation

Challenge
Percentage
High Cost

40%
Lack of Skills
30%
Data Privacy
20%
Resistance
10%

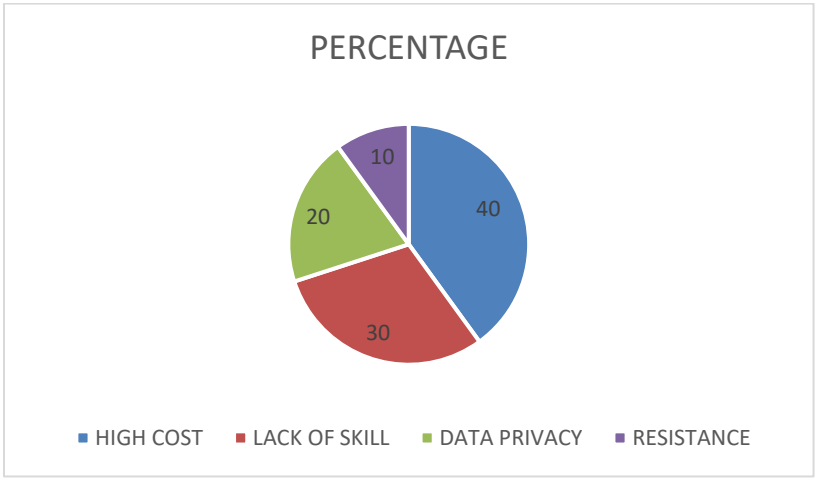
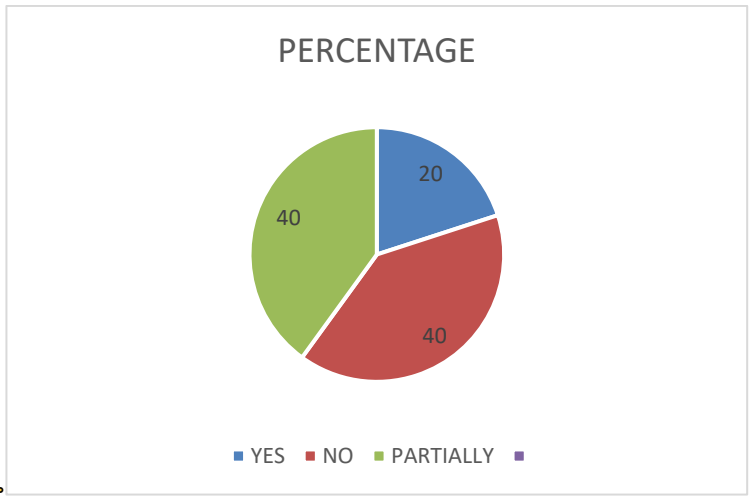


Chart 6: Will AI Replace Accountants?
Response
Percentage
Yes
20%
No
40%
Partially
40%



Discussion
The findings indicate that AI significantly enhances forensic accounting practices. Respondents believe that AI improves accuracy, reduces errors, and speeds up data processing. However, challenges such as cost and lack of expertise remain barriers to adoption. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Appelbaum et al., 2018; Deloitte, 2020).
8. Findings
AI improves fraud detection accuracy
AI reduces human error
AI speeds up data analysis
High cost and lack of skills are key challenges
AI supports rather than replaces accountants

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is transforming forensic accounting by enhancing efficiency and accuracy. While challenges exist, AI provides significant opportunities for improving fraud detection. Organizations must invest in training and infrastructure to fully utilize AI.

Recommendations

Provide AI training programs
Reduce implementation costs
Strengthen data security
Promote awareness of AI tools

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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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Original Article

Role Of Public Sector Banks in The Development of Agro-Based Processing Industries: A Special Reference to Ahmednagar District

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Abstract

Agriculture continues to be the backbone of the Indian economy, contributing significantly to employment, income generation, and rural development. Agro-based processing industries serve as a crucial link between agriculture and industrial development by adding value to agricultural produce, reducing post-harvest losses, and generating employment opportunities. Public Sector Banks (PSBs) play a pivotal role in providing institutional finance to these industries. The present study examines the contribution of Public Sector Banks towards the growth and development of agro-based processing industries in Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra. The study highlights the role of credit support, government-sponsored schemes, infrastructure financing, and financial inclusion initiatives undertaken by PSBs. The findings reveal that bank credit has significantly contributed to the establishment, modernization, and expansion of agro-processing industries, especially sugar factories, dairy processing units, food processing industries, and agro-based SMEs. However, challenges such as delayed loan recovery, high operational risks, and procedural complexities continue to affect credit flow. The study suggests policy measures to strengthen the role of banks in promoting sustainable agro-industrial development.

Keywords: *Public Sector Banks, Agro-based Industries, Agricultural Finance, Rural Development, Food Processing, Ahmednagar District.*

Introduction

Agriculture is one of the most important sectors of the Indian economy and contributes substantially to national income, employment, and food security. However, sustainable agricultural development requires strong support from agro-based processing industries that convert raw agricultural produce into value-added products. Agro-based industries such as sugar manufacturing, dairy processing, fruit and vegetable processing, poultry feed manufacturing, and oil extraction industries have emerged as major contributors to rural industrialization. These industries create employment opportunities, increase farmers' income, and promote regional economic development. The availability of timely and adequate finance is one of the most critical requirements for the growth of agro-processing industries. Public Sector Banks have been instrumental in financing these industries through term loans, working capital finance, infrastructure development loans, and government-sponsored credit schemes. Ahmednagar District, one of the largest districts in Maharashtra, possesses a strong agricultural base and hosts several agro-based industries. Therefore, studying the role of Public Sector Banks in supporting these industries becomes highly relevant.

Significance of the Research Study

The development of agro-based processing industries is essential for:

1. Enhancing agricultural productivity.
2. Generating rural employment.
3. Reducing migration from rural areas.
4. Promoting value addition in agriculture.
5. Increasing export potential.
6. Supporting inclusive economic growth.

Public Sector Banks act as catalysts in this development process by providing financial assistance and promoting entrepreneurship.

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Review of Literature

1. **Rangarajan (2018) -** Observed that institutional credit significantly contributes to agricultural modernization and agro-industrial development.
2. **NABARD Report (2022) -** Highlighted the importance of formal banking institutions in financing food processing and agro-industrial projects.
3. **RBI Annual Report (2023) -** Reported increasing priority sector lending towards agriculture and allied activities, including agro-processing industries.
4. **Sharma and Patil (2021) -** Found that access to bank credit positively influences productivity and profitability of agro-based enterprises.
5. **Government of India (PMFME Scheme) -** Emphasized strengthening financial support mechanisms for micro food processing enterprises.

Statement of the Problem

Although Public Sector Banks provide substantial financial support to agro-based industries, several challenges continue to exist regarding accessibility, adequacy, utilization, and recovery of credit. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of Public Sector Banks in promoting agro-based industrial development in Ahmednagar District.

Objectives of the Research Study

The objectives of present research study are as under -

1. To examine the role of Public Sector Banks in financing agro-based processing industries.
2. To analyse the growth of agro-based industries in Ahmednagar District.
3. To assess the impact of bank credit on industrial development.
4. To identify challenges faced by banks and entrepreneurs.
5. To suggest measures for improving institutional finance to agro-processing industries.

Research Methodology

Research Design - Descriptive and analytical research design.

Sources of Data

Primary Data

1. Structured questionnaire.
2. Interviews with bank officials.
3. Discussions with entrepreneurs.

Secondary Data

1. RBI Reports.
2. NABARD Reports.
3. District Industrial Centre Reports.
4. Annual Reports of Public Sector Banks.
5. Government publications.
6. Research journals and books.

Sampling Technique - Purposive Sampling.

Sample Size

1. 50 Entrepreneurs
2. 20 Bank Officials

Study Area - Ahmednagar District, Maharashtra.

Agro-based Processing Industries in Ahmednagar District

Ahmednagar District has a strong agricultural economy supported by:

1. **Sugar Industry -** The district is known for cooperative and private sugar factories.
2. **Dairy Industry -** Numerous milk processing units and dairy cooperatives operate in the region.
3. **Fruit Processing Industry -** Processing of pomegranate, grapes, and other horticultural products.
4. **Food Processing Industry -** Production of bakery products, spices, edible oils, and packaged food products.
5. **Poultry and Feed Industry -** Growing poultry sector supported by feed manufacturing units.

Role of Public Sector Banks in Agro-Industrial Development

1 Credit Support

Public Sector Banks provide:

1. Term loans.
2. Working capital finance.
3. Equipment finance.
4. Infrastructure development loans.

2 Priority Sector Lending

Agro-processing industries receive benefits under priority sector lending norms prescribed by RBI.

3 Financial Inclusion

Banks promote financial inclusion through:

1. Rural branches.
2. Digital banking.
3. Self-Help Groups.
4. Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs).

4 Support to MSMEs

Public Sector Banks provide financial assistance to:

1. Small food processing units.
2. Dairy enterprises.
3. Agro-based start-ups.
4. Rural entrepreneurs.

5 Government-Sponsored Schemes

Banks implement various schemes including:

1. PMFME Scheme.
2. PMEGP.
3. Stand-Up India.
4. MUDRA Scheme.
5. Agriculture Infrastructure Fund.

Impact of Bank Finance on Agro-based Industries

1. **Employment Generation -** Bank credit has facilitated establishment and expansion of industries generating direct and indirect employment.
2. **Value Addition -** Financial support enables adoption of modern processing technologies and value-added production.
3. **Rural Development -** Industrial growth contributes to income generation and infrastructure development.
4. **Entrepreneurial Development -** Availability of finance encourages new entrepreneurs to establish agro-processing units.
5. **Export Promotion -** Modernized industries supported by bank finance enhance export competitiveness.

Challenges Faced by Public Sector Banks

The challenges faced by public sector banks of present research study are as under -

1. **Credit Risk -** Agro-industries remain vulnerable to fluctuations in agricultural output.
2. **Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) -** Loan defaults continue to affect bank profitability.
3. **Climatic Uncertainty -** Droughts and adverse weather conditions influence repayment capacity.
4. **Procedural Delays -** Lengthy documentation and approval procedures discourage entrepreneurs.
5. **Market Volatility -** Price fluctuations impact industrial profitability.

Findings of the Study

The findings of present research study are as under -

1. Public Sector Banks are the primary source of institutional finance for agro-based industries.
2. Credit support has significantly contributed to industrial expansion in Ahmednagar District.
3. Priority sector lending has improved access to finance.
4. Government-sponsored schemes have encouraged entrepreneurship.
5. Financial assistance has promoted technological modernization.
6. NPAs and credit risk remain major concerns.
7. Small entrepreneurs face challenges in obtaining adequate finance.
8. Digital banking has improved accessibility and efficiency.

Suggestions

The measurable suggestions of present research study are as under -

1. Simplify loan application procedures.
2. Increase financial literacy among entrepreneurs.
3. Strengthen credit monitoring systems.
4. Expand collateral-free lending for small enterprises.
5. Promote cluster-based financing models.
6. Encourage technology upgradation through subsidized credit.
7. Strengthen coordination between banks and government agencies.
8. Develop specialized financing products for agro-processing industries.

Conclusion

Public Sector Banks play a vital role in the development of agro-based processing industries in Ahmednagar District. Through credit support, implementation of government schemes, and promotion of financial inclusion, banks have significantly contributed to industrial growth, employment generation, and rural development. Despite challenges such as NPAs, climatic risks, and procedural complexities, Public Sector Banks continue to remain the backbone of agro-industrial financing. Strengthening

institutional credit mechanisms and improving policy support will further accelerate the growth of agro-based industries and contribute to sustainable rural economic development.

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Original Article

Eco-Tourism Development in India: Opportunities and Environmental Challenges

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Abstract

Eco-tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of the global tourism industry, focusing on responsible travel to natural areas while conserving the environment and improving the well-being of local communities. India, with its rich biodiversity, varied ecosystems, wildlife sanctuaries, forests, mountains, and coastal regions, offers immense potential for eco-tourism development. This paper explores the concept of eco-tourism, its growth in India, and the opportunities it presents for sustainable economic development. It also examines the environmental challenges associated with eco-tourism, including ecological degradation, resource exploitation, pollution, and lack of regulatory enforcement. The study is based on secondary data and conceptual analysis. The findings suggest that while eco-tourism contributes significantly to employment generation, conservation awareness, and rural development, it requires strict environmental policies and sustainable practices to prevent ecological imbalance. The paper concludes that eco-tourism in India can become a powerful tool for sustainable development if properly planned and managed.

Keywords: *Eco-tourism, Sustainable Development, India, Environment, Tourism Industry, Biodiversity.*

Introduction

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world, contributing significantly to economic development, employment generation, and foreign exchange earnings. However, traditional tourism activities often lead to environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and resource overuse. In response to these challenges, the concept of eco-tourism has emerged as a sustainable alternative. Eco-tourism refers to responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, respects local culture, and supports the well-being of local communities. It emphasizes sustainability, conservation, and education. India is endowed with diverse natural attractions such as the Himalayas, Western Ghats, Sundarbans, Thar Desert, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and numerous national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. These natural assets make India a potential global hub for eco-tourism. However, rapid tourism growth without proper planning has led to environmental pressures. Therefore, balancing tourism development with ecological conservation is essential for long-term sustainability.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the concept of eco-tourism.
2. To study the growth and potential of eco-tourism in India.
3. To analyze opportunities offered by eco-tourism development.
4. To identify environmental challenges associated with eco-tourism.
5. To suggest measures for sustainable eco-tourism development in India.

Research Methodology

The present study is **descriptive and conceptual** in nature. It is based on **secondary data** collected from research articles, government reports, tourism department publications, and academic literature. The study focuses on analyzing eco-tourism development in India and its environmental implications.

Concept of Eco-Tourism

Eco-tourism is a form of sustainable tourism that involves visiting natural areas to enjoy and appreciate nature while promoting conservation and minimizing negative environmental impact. According to The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), eco-tourism is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education."

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Key Features of Eco-Tourism:

1. Environmental Conservation

The primary objective of eco-tourism is to protect and conserve natural resources, wildlife, forests, and ecosystems. It promotes responsible tourism practices that support environmental sustainability.

2. Minimal Environmental Impact

Eco-tourism aims to reduce negative effects on the environment by encouraging sustainable travel practices such as reducing waste, conserving energy, and avoiding pollution.

3. Preservation of Biodiversity

Eco-tourism helps protect diverse plant and animal species by promoting awareness and supporting conservation efforts in natural habitats.

4. Community Participation

Local communities actively participate in eco-tourism activities, including guiding, accommodation services, handicrafts, and cultural programs, ensuring their involvement in tourism development.

5. Economic Benefits to Local Communities

Eco-tourism generates income and employment opportunities for local residents, contributing to rural development and improving living standards.

6. Cultural Preservation

Eco-tourism promotes respect for local traditions, customs, heritage, and cultural values. It helps preserve indigenous cultures and lifestyles.

7. Educational and Awareness-Oriented

Eco-tourism provides educational experiences that increase awareness about environmental conservation, biodiversity, and sustainable living among tourists.

8. Sustainable Development

Eco-tourism supports balanced development by integrating economic growth, social welfare, and environmental protection for present and future generations.

9. Responsible Travel

Tourists are encouraged to behave responsibly by respecting nature, wildlife, local cultures, and environmental regulations during their visits.

10. Eco-Friendly Infrastructure

Eco-tourism promotes the use of environmentally friendly facilities such as renewable energy, waste recycling systems, water conservation methods, and green buildings.

11. Support for Wildlife Protection

Revenue generated through eco-tourism often supports wildlife conservation projects, national parks, and protected areas, helping to preserve endangered species.

12. Long-Term Environmental Sustainability

Eco-tourism focuses on maintaining ecological balance and ensuring that natural resources remain available and protected for future generations.

13. Conservation Funding

A portion of the revenue earned from eco-tourism is often used for environmental conservation, habitat restoration, and biodiversity protection programs.

Eco-Tourism Potential in India

India has vast ecological diversity, making it ideal for eco-tourism development. Major eco-tourism destinations include:

1. Rich Biodiversity

India is one of the world's mega-diverse countries, hosting a wide variety of flora and fauna. The presence of numerous national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and biosphere reserves makes India an attractive destination for eco-tourists.

2. Diverse Natural Landscapes

India offers a wide range of natural attractions, including the Himalayas, deserts, forests, rivers, beaches, islands, and wetlands. This geographical diversity enhances its eco-tourism potential.

3. Extensive Forest Resources

Approximately one-fourth of India's land area is covered by forests. These forests provide opportunities for nature tourism, wildlife observation, trekking, and adventure activities.

4. National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries

India has over 100 national parks and more than 500 wildlife sanctuaries. Popular destinations such as Jim Corbett National Park, Kaziranga National Park, and Ranthambore National Park attract nature lovers and wildlife enthusiasts from around the world.

5. Eco-Tourism in Himalayan Regions

States such as Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Sikkim offer excellent opportunities for eco-tourism through trekking, nature walks, mountain tourism, and biodiversity conservation.

6. Coastal and Marine Eco-Tourism

India's long coastline and island ecosystems provide opportunities for sustainable beach tourism, mangrove tourism, and marine biodiversity conservation. The Sundarbans, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep are notable eco-tourism destinations.

7. Rural and Tribal Tourism

Many rural and tribal regions in India offer unique cultural experiences, traditional lifestyles, handicrafts, and indigenous knowledge systems, making them suitable for community-based eco-tourism.

8. Bird Watching Opportunities

India is home to hundreds of migratory and resident bird species. Wetlands, sanctuaries, and national parks attract bird watchers and nature photographers throughout the year.

9. Employment Generation

Eco-tourism creates employment opportunities in guiding services, hospitality, transportation, handicrafts, and conservation activities, particularly in rural and remote areas.

10. Government Support

The Government of India promotes eco-tourism through various initiatives, tourism policies, and conservation programs. Schemes such as the Swadesh Darshan Scheme support sustainable tourism development.

11. Growing Demand for Sustainable Tourism

Modern tourists are increasingly interested in environmentally responsible travel experiences. This trend has significantly increased the demand for eco-tourism destinations in India.

12. Contribution to Sustainable Development

Eco-tourism supports economic growth while preserving natural resources and cultural heritage, making it an important tool for achieving sustainable development goals.

Opportunities of Eco-Tourism Development in India

1. Economic Growth

Eco-tourism contributes to the country's economy by generating revenue from domestic and international tourists. It supports various sectors such as hospitality, transportation, food services, and local businesses.

2. Employment Generation

Eco-tourism creates direct and indirect employment opportunities for local communities. Jobs are generated in areas such as tour guiding, accommodation, transportation, handicrafts, and nature conservation.

3. Rural Development

Many eco-tourism destinations are located in rural and remote areas. Tourism activities help improve infrastructure, increase income levels, and enhance the quality of life of rural populations.

4. Environmental Conservation

Eco-tourism encourages the protection of forests, wildlife, and natural ecosystems. Revenue generated through eco-tourism can be used for conservation and environmental management programs.

5. Biodiversity Protection

The development of eco-tourism increases awareness about the importance of preserving biodiversity and supports efforts to protect endangered species and their habitats.

6. Foreign Exchange Earnings

International tourists visiting eco-tourism destinations contribute valuable foreign exchange earnings, strengthening the country's economy.

7. Promotion of Sustainable Development

Eco-tourism promotes a balance between economic development and environmental protection, ensuring that natural resources are preserved for future generations.

8. Community Empowerment

Local communities actively participate in eco-tourism activities and decision-making processes. This participation increases their income and strengthens community development.

9. Preservation of Cultural Heritage

Eco-tourism helps protect and promote local traditions, customs, art forms, festivals, and indigenous knowledge, thereby preserving cultural heritage.

10. Development of Small and Medium Enterprises

Eco-tourism encourages the growth of local businesses such as homestays, handicraft centers, restaurants, transport services, and eco-friendly enterprises.

11. Infrastructure Development

The growth of eco-tourism often leads to improvements in roads, communication facilities, healthcare services, sanitation, and public utilities in tourist areas.

12. Educational and Research Opportunities

Eco-tourism destinations serve as learning centers for students, researchers, and environmentalists. They provide opportunities for environmental education and scientific research.

13. Promotion of Adventure and Nature Tourism

Activities such as trekking, bird watching, wildlife safaris, nature walks, camping, and river rafting attract tourists and expand tourism opportunities.

14. Increased Environmental Awareness

Eco-tourism educates tourists and local communities about environmental issues and encourages responsible behavior toward nature and wildlife.

15. Strengthening India's Global Tourism Image

Successful eco-tourism initiatives enhance India's reputation as a sustainable and environmentally responsible tourism destination, attracting more visitors worldwide.

Environmental Challenges of Eco-Tourism in India

1. Environmental Degradation

The increasing number of tourists in ecologically sensitive areas can lead to the degradation of natural habitats, forests, mountains, and protected areas. Human activities may disturb the ecological balance.

2. Deforestation

Construction of hotels, resorts, roads, and other tourism infrastructure often requires clearing forest land, resulting in deforestation and loss of natural vegetation.

3. Loss of Biodiversity

Excessive tourist activities can disturb wildlife habitats and threaten plant and animal species. Rare and endangered species are particularly vulnerable to human interference.

4. Pollution

Tourism activities contribute to various forms of pollution:

- **Air Pollution** from vehicles and transportation.
- **Water Pollution** from waste disposal into rivers, lakes, and coastal areas.
- **Noise Pollution** caused by tourist vehicles and recreational activities.

5. Waste Management Problems

Large numbers of tourists generate significant amounts of solid waste, including plastic bottles, food packaging, and other non-biodegradable materials. Improper waste disposal damages the environment.

6. Disturbance to Wildlife

Wildlife may experience stress due to noise, human presence, photography, and safari activities. This can alter animal behavior, migration patterns, and breeding activities.

7. Overcrowding and Over-Tourism

Popular eco-tourism destinations often face overcrowding during peak seasons. Excessive tourist numbers place pressure on natural resources and reduce the quality of the environment.

8. Soil Erosion

Frequent trekking, hiking, and off-road tourism activities can damage vegetation cover and lead to soil erosion, especially in mountainous regions.

9. Water Resource Depletion

Tourist facilities such as hotels, resorts, and recreational centers consume large quantities of water, leading to water shortages for local communities and ecosystems.

10. Climate Change Impact

Increased transportation and tourism-related activities contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, which accelerate climate change and affect fragile ecosystems.

11. Damage to Marine Ecosystems

Coastal and marine eco-tourism activities can harm coral reefs, mangroves, and aquatic biodiversity through pollution, boating activities, and irresponsible tourist behavior.

12. Habitat Fragmentation

Infrastructure development associated with tourism can divide wildlife habitats into smaller areas, affecting animal movement and ecosystem stability.

13. Introduction of Invasive Species

Tourism may unintentionally introduce non-native plant and animal species, which can threaten local biodiversity and disrupt ecological balance.

14. Weak Environmental Regulation and Monitoring

In many tourist destinations, inadequate implementation of environmental laws and poor monitoring systems lead to unsustainable tourism practices.

Government Initiatives for Eco-Tourism in India

The Government of India has launched several initiatives to promote sustainable tourism:

- Incredible India Campaign
- Swadesh Darshan Scheme
- Eco-Tourism Policies by State Governments
- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
- National Action Plan on Climate Change
- Development of Eco-Tourism Circuits

These initiatives aim to promote responsible tourism and environmental conservation.

Strategies for Sustainable Eco-Tourism Development

1. Strong Environmental Regulations

Strict enforcement of environmental laws is necessary.

2. Community Participation

Local communities should be actively involved in tourism planning.

3. Awareness Programs

Tourists and stakeholders must be educated about eco-friendly practices.

4. Waste Management Systems

Proper waste disposal and recycling systems should be implemented.

5. Eco-Friendly Infrastructure

Development of green hotels, renewable energy use, and sustainable transport.

Findings of the Study

1. India has strong potential for eco-tourism due to its biodiversity.
2. Eco-tourism contributes to economic and rural development.
3. It plays an important role in environmental conservation.
4. Environmental challenges such as pollution and over-tourism are major concerns.
5. Lack of proper infrastructure and regulation affects sustainability.
6. Community participation is essential for successful eco-tourism.
7. Sustainable planning is necessary to balance tourism and ecology.

Suggestions

1. Strengthen environmental policies and enforcement.
2. Promote awareness of sustainable tourism practices.
3. Encourage local community involvement.
4. Develop eco-friendly tourism infrastructure.
5. Limit tourist pressure in sensitive areas.
6. Promote digital monitoring of tourist activities.
7. Encourage green certifications for tourism operators.

Conclusion

Eco-tourism in India represents a powerful opportunity for achieving sustainable development. It not only contributes to economic growth and employment generation but also promotes environmental conservation and cultural preservation. However, the expansion of eco-tourism must be carefully managed to avoid ecological damage. Challenges such as pollution, overcrowding, and weak policy enforcement must be addressed through effective governance and sustainable practices. With proper planning, community participation, and environmental awareness, eco-tourism can become a major driver of sustainable development in India.

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3. World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Reports
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Original Article

Tourism Potential of the Hiranyakeshi River Basin: A Geographical Analysis.

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Abstract:
The Hiranyakeshi River Basin, located in the northern Western Ghats and extending across parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka, possesses significant tourism potential due to its unique combination of natural landscapes, biodiversity, cultural heritage, religious sites, and geomorphological features. This study examines the tourism resources of the basin from a geographical perspective and evaluates opportunities for sustainable tourism development. The study integrates physical, cultural, and socio-economic aspects of tourism while drawing upon morphometric and geomorphological findings from previous research conducted by Mavarakar and Chalawadi. The dendritic drainage pattern, rugged relief, waterfalls, caves, and forested landscapes provide a strong foundation for eco-tourism, adventure tourism, educational tourism, and religious tourism. The study concludes that sustainable planning and community participation can transform the Hiranyakeshi Basin into a prominent tourism destination while conserving its environmental resources.

Keywords: *Hiranyakeshi River Basin, Tourism Potential, Eco-tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Geomorphology, GIS, Western Ghats, Geography.*

Introduction:

Tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy and plays a significant role in regional development. River basins often serve as focal points for tourism because of their scenic landscapes, ecological diversity, cultural significance, and recreational opportunities. The Hiranyakeshi River Basin is one such geographical region possessing immense tourism potential.

The Hiranyakeshi River originates near Amboli in the Sahyadri (Western Ghats) region and flows through varied topographic and ecological zones before joining the Ghataprabha River. The basin contains waterfalls, caves, dense forests, sacred sites, and unique geomorphological features. Previous morphometric studies by Mavarakar and Chalawadi revealed that the basin exhibits a dendritic drainage pattern, high relief, steep slopes, and youthful to mature geomorphic characteristics. These physical features contribute significantly to landscape attractiveness and tourism development.

Review of Literature

Morphometric analysis provides valuable insights into basin characteristics, drainage evolution, hydrological behavior, and landscape development. Mavarakar and Chalawadi conducted detailed GIS-based morphometric studies of the Hiranyakeshi Basin using SRTM DEM data and identified significant geomorphological features influencing watershed development and environmental management. Their findings indicated high relief, steep slopes, dendritic drainage patterns, and varied geomorphic conditions.

Panhalkar (2012) emphasized the importance of GIS-based watershed analysis in understanding the Hiranyakeshi Basin and highlighted the potential of its natural resources for sustainable regional development.

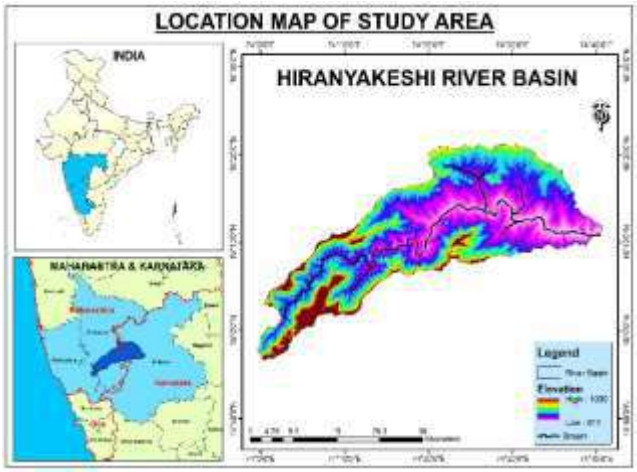
Objectives

- To identify major tourism resources within the Hiranyakeshi River Basin.
- To examine the influence of geomorphological characteristics on tourism development.
- To assess the potential for eco-tourism, religious tourism, adventure tourism, and educational tourism.
- To suggest strategies for sustainable tourism development.

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Study Area:



The Hiranyakeshi River Basin is situated in the northern Western Ghats region. The basin extends through parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka and encompasses diverse topographical features including hills, valleys, waterfalls, caves, forest ecosystems, and agricultural landscapes. The basin's physiography is characterized by:

- Rugged terrain.
- High relief and steep slopes.
- Dense drainage network.
- Tropical monsoon climate.
- Rich biodiversity.

Morphometric studies have shown that the basin possesses well-developed drainage characteristics suitable for hydrological and environmental studies.

Methodology - The study is based on:

- Secondary data from published research articles.
- GIS and Remote Sensing-based morphometric studies conducted by Mavarakar and Chalawadi.
- Review of tourism resources and geographical features.
- Analysis of physical and cultural tourism attractions.

The morphometric parameters such as drainage density, stream order, bifurcation ratio, relief ratio, circularity ratio, and elongation ratio were considered to understand landscape characteristics relevant to tourism development.

Tourism Resources of the Hiranyakeshi River Basin:

1 Geomorphological Attractions -The geomorphological diversity of the basin creates spectacular landscapes that attract tourists, researchers, and photographers. Important features include:

River valleys. , Waterfalls., Gorges., Caves., Escarpments., Hill slopes.

The high relief and rugged terrain identified through morphometric analysis contribute significantly to scenic beauty and adventure tourism opportunities.

2 Waterfall Tourism- Several waterfalls occur within the basin, especially during the monsoon season. These waterfalls provide opportunities for:

Nature tourism., Photography., Recreational activities., Educational excursions.

3 Religious Tourism- The Hiranyakeshwar Temple at the river's source is an important pilgrimage center. The temple attracts devotees and tourists throughout the year. Religious tourism contributes significantly to local economic development through transportation, hospitality, and small-scale businesses.

4 Biodiversity and Eco-tourism- The basin lies within the Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot. The region supports:

Evergreen forests., Rare plant species., Endemic fish species., Wildlife habitats., Bird diversity.

The ecological richness provides excellent opportunities for eco-tourism and environmental education.

5 Educational Tourism- The basin serves as a natural laboratory for students and researchers studying:

Geomorphology., Hydrology., Watershed management., Biodiversity., GIS and Remote Sensing.

The morphometric studies conducted by Mavarakar and Chalawadi provide valuable academic resources for educational tourism.

6 Rural Tourism- Traditional villages along the basin preserve unique cultural practices, agricultural systems, and local cuisine. Potential rural tourism activities include:

Farm tourism., Village homestays., Cultural festivals., Traditional food experiences.

7 Major Tourist Attractions in the Hiranyakeshi River Basin:

1. Hiranyakeshwar Temple and River Origin - The sacred source of the Hiranyakeshi River is located at the ancient Hiranyakeshwar Temple. Water emerges from a cave beneath the temple, forming the origin of the river. The site is a major pilgrimage center and attracts devotees, tourists, and researchers interested in hydrology and geomorphology.

2. Amboli Hill Station- Amboli is one of the most scenic hill stations in the northern Western Ghats. It is famous for its mist-covered valleys, dense forests, viewpoints, and monsoon tourism. The cool climate and rich biodiversity make it an important eco-tourism destination.

3. Amboli Waterfall- This spectacular seasonal waterfall attracts thousands of visitors during the monsoon season. The waterfall provides opportunities for photography, nature appreciation, and recreation.
4. Mahadevgad Fort - Situated near the Hiranyakeshi Basin, Mahadevgad Fort offers panoramic views of the surrounding valleys and forests. The fort has historical significance and potential for heritage tourism.
5. Nangartas Waterfall - Nangartas is a beautiful waterfall formed within a deep gorge. The waterfall and surrounding landscape provide excellent opportunities for adventure tourism and ecological studies.
6. Sunset Point- Sunset Point is among the most visited tourist locations in the region. Visitors can observe panoramic views of the Western Ghats and the Konkan lowlands.
7. Kavalesad Point- This viewpoint is famous for cloud-covered valleys, waterfalls, and scenic landscapes. It is particularly popular during the monsoon season.
8. Ramteerth Waterfall- Located downstream along the Hiranyakeshi River, Ramteerth Waterfall is both a natural and religious attraction. The waterfall demonstrates active fluvial erosion and river incision, making it important for educational tourism.
9. Ramtirth Temple- The temple complex near Ramteerth attracts pilgrims and cultural tourists. The site is associated with local legends and religious traditions.
10. Dajipur Wildlife Sanctuary- Located close to the basin, this sanctuary is known for biodiversity conservation, wildlife observation, and eco-tourism activities. It supports species such as Indian bison (Gaur), deer, and numerous bird species.
11. Amboli Forest Reserve- The dense evergreen forests surrounding the basin contain rich floral and faunal diversity. These forests support trekking, birdwatching, biodiversity studies, and environmental education.
12. Rural and Cultural Tourism Villages- Villages such as Ajra, Uttur, and Chandgad preserve traditional agricultural systems, folk culture, handicrafts, and local cuisine. These settlements have potential for community-based and rural tourism initiatives.

Research Significance

The morphometric characteristics identified by Mavarakar and Chalawadi—high relief, steep slopes, dense drainage networks, and youthful geomorphic features—have directly contributed to the formation of these tourist attractions. Waterfalls, viewpoints, river valleys, caves, and forest landscapes are products of the basin's geomorphological evolution, making tourism development closely linked to the physical geography of the Hiranyakeshi River Basin.

Relationship Between Morphometry and Tourism.

The morphometric characteristics identified by Mavarakar and Chalawadi have direct implications for tourism development.

SL No.	Morphometric Feature	Tourism Significance
1	High Relief	Scenic viewpoints and trekking
2	Dendritic Drainage	Attractive river landscapes
3	Steep Slopes	Adventure tourism
4	River Valleys	Nature tourism
5	Dense Drainage Network	Waterfall formation
6	Diverse Terrain	Educational tourism

The basin's geomorphological diversity provides a strong foundation for sustainable tourism planning.

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Rich natural beauty. Western Ghats biodiversity. Religious significance. Waterfalls and caves. Favorable climate.	Limited tourism infrastructure. Poor promotion. Seasonal accessibility issues.	Eco-tourism development. Adventure tourism. Community-based tourism. Educational tourism circuits.	Environmental degradation. Deforestation. Pollution. Climate change impacts.

Recommendations.:

- Develop eco-friendly tourism infrastructure.
- Promote community-based tourism models.
- Establish interpretation centers for tourists.
- Prepare GIS-based tourism resource maps.
- Improve transportation and accessibility.
- Encourage academic field visits and research tourism.
- Implement strict environmental conservation measures.

Develop integrated tourism circuits linking Amboli, Hiranyakeshwar Temple, waterfalls, and rural villages.

Conclusion:

The Hiranyakeshi River Basin possesses exceptional tourism potential due to its unique combination of geomorphological, ecological, cultural, and religious resources. The morphometric studies conducted by Dr. Prashant Mavarakar and Dr. M. B. Chalawadi provide scientific evidence regarding the basin's landscape characteristics, which support the development of eco-tourism, adventure tourism, educational tourism, and religious tourism. Sustainable planning, environmental conservation, and

community participation are essential for realizing the basin's tourism potential while preserving its natural heritage for future generations.

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Original Article

A Study on Child Protection and Anti-Trafficking Measures in Tourism Law.

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Abstract

Tourism is among the fastest-expanding sectors of the global economy, creating employment opportunities and making substantial contributions to economic growth. Nevertheless, the rapid development of the tourism industry has also increased the risk of criminal activities such as child exploitation, child labour, and human trafficking. Children are especially susceptible to abuse in tourist destinations due to factors such as poverty, social disparities, inadequate regulatory oversight, and the ease with which offenders can travel. This study explores the legal frameworks related to child protection and anti-trafficking measures within tourism law. It examines international conventions, domestic legislation, and industry-led initiatives aimed at preventing the exploitation of children in tourism. Furthermore, the paper assesses the challenges associated with implementing these measures and offers recommendations to strengthen legal and institutional safeguards for child welfare and sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: *Child Protection, Human Trafficking, Tourism Law, Child Rights, Sustainable Tourism, Legal Framework, Child Exploitation.*

Introduction

Tourism plays a significant role in promoting economic growth, cultural interaction, and global cooperation. However, alongside its benefits, the tourism sector may unintentionally create conditions that facilitate crimes such as child trafficking, sexual abuse, forced labour, and illegal adoption. The growing mobility of tourists across national borders has increased opportunities for traffickers and offenders to target and exploit vulnerable children in tourist destinations. As a result, child protection has become a major concern in tourism governance. Governments, international bodies, and tourism industry stakeholders increasingly acknowledge the necessity of strong legal frameworks to prevent child exploitation and trafficking. Consequently, tourism law extends beyond regulating economic activities and encompasses obligations related to human rights, child welfare, and criminal justice. This study investigates the link between tourism and child exploitation, reviews the existing legal and regulatory frameworks, and evaluates anti-trafficking measures implemented at both national and international levels.

Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the forms and prevalence of child exploitation in the tourism sector.
- To examine international legal frameworks aimed at combating child trafficking and safeguarding children's rights.
- To assess the effectiveness of national tourism regulations and anti-trafficking laws.
- To explore the obstacles faced in implementing and enforcing child protection measures.
- To propose measures and policy recommendations for enhancing child safety in tourism destinations.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a doctrinal and analytical research methodology based on secondary sources, including international conventions, statutes, judicial decisions, government reports, academic literature, and publications from international organizations such as the United Nations, International Labour Organization (ILO), and World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking in Tourism

Human trafficking refers to the recruitment, movement, transfer, sheltering, or receipt of individuals through coercion, force, deception, or the exploitation of vulnerable circumstances for exploitative purposes.

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Children are particularly at risk, as their consent is not legally recognized in cases involving exploitation.

In the context of tourism, children may be subjected to exploitation through various forms, including

1. Child Sexual Exploitation in Tourism

Perpetrators may travel within their own country or across international borders to engage in sexual exploitation of minors. Tourist destinations with weak regulatory oversight and limited law enforcement capacity are often more vulnerable to such criminal activities.

2. Child Labor in Tourism

Children are often engaged in work within hotels, restaurants, transport services, entertainment establishments, and other informal segments of the tourism industry, frequently under abusive or exploitative conditions.

3. Forced Begging and Street Exploitation

Children who are victims of trafficking are frequently forced to engage in begging or participate in informal income-generating activities aimed at attracting money from tourists.

4. Online Exploitation Linked to Tourism

Digital technologies can facilitate the planning, promotion, and concealment of child exploitation activities linked to the travel and tourism industry.

International Legal Framework

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

The Convention establishes the right of children to protection from all forms of exploitation, abuse, and trafficking. It obligates states to adopt legislative and administrative measures ensuring child welfare.

Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000)

The Protocol strengthens protections against commercial sexual exploitation and requires states to criminalize related offenses.

Palermo Protocol (2000)

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and provides a comprehensive framework for combating trafficking.

ILO Conventions

ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour require states to eliminate exploitative child labor practices, including those occurring within tourism sectors.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

SDG Target 8.7 calls for immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labor.

Indian Legal Framework

In India, child protection and anti-trafficking measures are supported by the Constitution and various legislations

Constitutional Framework

The Constitution of India provides several safeguards for the protection of children and the prevention of human trafficking. These provisions form the foundation of child welfare and anti-trafficking laws in the country.

1. Article 23 – Prohibition of Trafficking and Forced Labour

Article 23 expressly prohibits trafficking in human beings, begar (forced labour), and other similar forms of forced work. Any violation of this provision is punishable by law. This article serves as a key constitutional safeguard against child trafficking and exploitation.

2. Article 24 – Prohibition of Child Labour

Article 24 prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in factories, mines, or any hazardous occupation. It aims to protect children from economic exploitation and hazardous working conditions.

3. Article 21 – Right to Life and Personal Liberty

Article 21 guarantees every person the right to life and personal liberty. The judiciary has interpreted this provision broadly to include the right to live with dignity, protection from abuse, access to education, health care, and a safe environment for children.

4. Article 21A – Right to Education

Inserted by the 86th Constitutional Amendment, Article 21A guarantees free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6 and 14 years. Education serves as an important tool in preventing child labour and trafficking.

5. Article 39(e) – Protection of Children's Health and Strength

Under the Directive Principles of State Policy, Article 39(e) directs the State to ensure that the health and strength of workers, men, women, and children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity into unsuitable occupations.

6. Article 39(f) – Protection of Childhood and Youth

Article 39(f) mandates the State to ensure that children are provided opportunities and facilities for healthy development in conditions of freedom and dignity and are protected against exploitation, moral abandonment, and neglect.

7. Article 45 – Early Childhood Care and Education

Article 45 directs the State to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they attain the age of six years, thereby promoting their overall development and reducing vulnerability to exploitation.

8. Article 47 – Improvement of Public Health

Article 47 places a duty on the State to improve public health and living standards, indirectly contributing to child welfare and protection from exploitative conditions.

9. Article 51A(k) – Fundamental Duty of Parents and Guardians
Article 51A(k) imposes a fundamental duty on parents and guardians to provide educational opportunities to children between the ages of 6 and 14 years, helping to reduce the risks of child labour and trafficking.

Legislative Framework
a) The legal framework for safeguarding children in India includes
b) The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012,
c) The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015,
d) The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956,
e) The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, along with pertinent provisions of
f) The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and other criminal statutes.
These laws are collectively designed to protect children from abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and hazardous labour while ensuring access to justice, rehabilitation, and legal redress for child victims.

Role of the Tourism Industry
Hotels and Hospitality Establishments
Hospitality businesses can contribute to child protection by implementing comprehensive safeguarding policies, conducting proper guest identification checks, training staff to recognize signs of exploitation, and establishing effective procedures for reporting suspected cases.
Travel Agencies and Tour Operators
Travel agencies and tour operators can promote responsible tourism by adopting ethical business practices and raising awareness among travelers about child rights and protection measures.
Digital Tourism Platforms
Online booking portals and tourism-related digital platforms can help combat child exploitation by detecting suspicious activities, strengthening monitoring systems, and collaborating with law enforcement authorities when necessary.
Industry Standards and Codes of Conduct
Voluntary codes of conduct and industry-led initiatives encourage tourism stakeholders to take proactive measures in preventing child exploitation, abuse, and trafficking within the travel and tourism sector.

Challenges in Implementation
Inadequate Enforcement Machinery
Many regions experience limited availability of trained personnel, financial resources, and institutional capacity to effectively investigate and prosecute trafficking-related offences.
Cross-Border Nature of Crimes
Human trafficking often extends across national boundaries, creating jurisdictional complexities that hinder legal proceedings and the protection of victims.
Poverty and Socio-Economic Disparities
Economic vulnerability remains a major factor contributing to child trafficking and exploitation.
Lack of Awareness
There is a lack of awareness amongst tourism stakeholders and local communities regarding trafficking indicators and reporting mechanisms.
Technological Challenges
The internet and digital communication platforms enable traffickers to evade detection and recruit victims more efficiently.

Conclusion
Child protection is a fundamental aspect of sustainable and ethical tourism governance. Although international instruments and domestic legislation establish important safeguards for children, persistent enforcement gaps often limit their effectiveness. Addressing child exploitation and trafficking within the tourism sector requires coordinated efforts among governments, tourism enterprises, civil society groups, and international organizations. By reinforcing legal and regulatory frameworks, improving enforcement capacities, and increasing public awareness, stakeholders can better protect children's rights and promote a tourism industry that supports inclusive social progress and sustainable economic growth.

Recommendations
1. Compulsory integration of child protection measures into tourism legislation and regulatory frameworks.
2. Strengthening of cross-border collaboration and intelligence exchange among law enforcement authorities.
3. Promotion of specialized training programs to tourism personnel for recognizing and reporting potential cases of exploitation.
4. Mandation of tourism businesses to adopt comprehensive child safeguarding and protection policies.
5. Enhancing public education initiatives on child rights, trafficking threats and preventive measures.
6. Encouragement of ethical and sustainable tourism practices that place children's welfare at the forefront.
7. Expansion of support services for victims through effective rehabilitation, psychological counseling, education, and social reintegration programs.
8. Utilization of advanced technological solutions and digital monitoring mechanisms to detect, track, and disrupt human trafficking networks.

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Original Article

Sustainable Tourism through Green Tourism Models: A Comparative Analysis of International Practices for Sustainable Tourism Development in Goa, India

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the key drivers of economic growth worldwide. The rapid expansion of tourism has led to significant socio-cultural, environmental and infrastructural challenges in the tourist destinations. The regions dependent on tourism highly witness issues such as pollution, scarcity of resources and overtourism. To achieve long-term sustainability there is need to adopt green tourism models. (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2018). Green tourism focuses upon environmentally sustainable practices that balance economic growth with the well-being of the community and ecology. (United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP], 2011). This study does the comparative analyses of two internationally recognised green tourism models of Bhutan and Sweden. It also examines the applicability of the two models for sustainable tourism development in Goa, India, using a qualitative research design based on secondary data sources.

Keywords: *Sustainable tourism, green tourism models, Sustainable destination development, Community participation, Environmental sustainability, Comparative analysis.*

Introduction

The contribution of the tourism industry extends beyond economic growth. Tourism promotes heritage conservation, infrastructure development, cultural exchange and supports local businesses. However, the rapid growth of tourism has also generated significant environmental and social problems. Uncontrolled tourism development has led to habitat destruction, biodiversity loss, excessive resource consumption, increased greenhouse gas emissions, waste generation, traffic congestion, and the commercialization of local cultures (UNEP, 2023). Sustainable tourism seeks to balance economic growth with social equity and environmental conservation. It ensures that tourism development does not compromise the ability of future generations to benefit from natural and cultural resources (WCED, 1987). Sustainable tourism consequently requires responsible governance, efficient long-term planning, stakeholder participation, resource-efficient and responsible tourism practices. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have further reinforced the global commitment toward sustainable tourism. Subsequently, governments across the world are increasingly integrating sustainable tourism principles into tourism policies in order to achieve balanced socio-economic development and reduce environmental impacts. Goa is one of the leading coastal tourism destinations in India which attracts millions of domestic and international visitors annually. Tourism contributes significantly to the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of the State, however concerns regarding excessive resource consumption, beach pollution, traffic congestion and pressure on local communities have greatly intensified (Goa Tourism Department, 2024). Several countries have efficaciously implemented green tourism models to regulate tourism growth with environmental sustainability. The High Value–Low Volume Tourism Model of Bhutan emphasizes on limiting visitor numbers while maximizing economic returns and preserving cultural and environmental integrity (Dorji, 2019). The Green Mobility and Circular Tourism Model focus upon circular economy principles, sustainable transportation, renewable energy and waste reduction within tourism destinations (Visit Sweden, 2023). This study examines these two international models and explores their relevance for sustainable tourism development in Goa.

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Research Objectives

1.To compare the sustainability dimensions of the green tourism models of Bhutan and Sweden and assess their applicability to sustainable tourism development in Goa.

2.To formulate a cohesive Sustainable Green Tourism Framework for Goa based on international best practices.

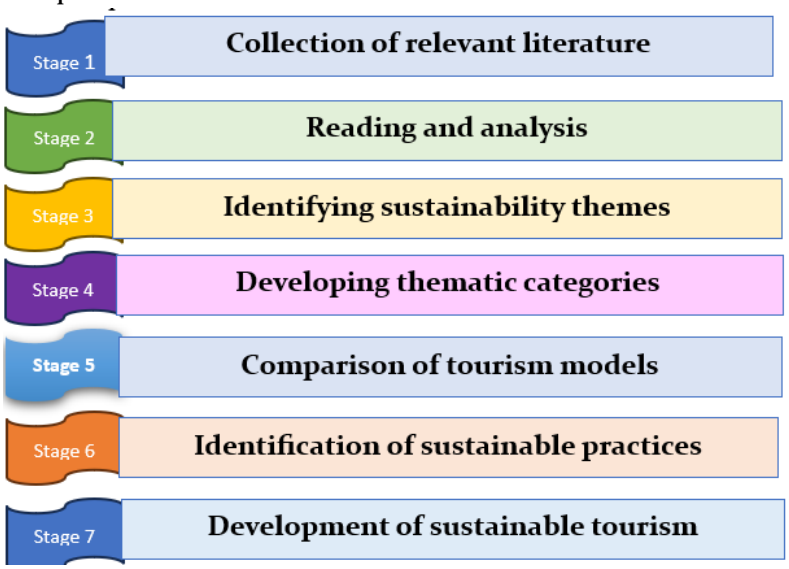
Database and Methodology

To examine the pertinency of international green tourism models for sustainable tourism development in Goa, India, a qualitative research design based entirely on secondary data is used. This study utilizes evidence from multiple secondary sources to compare the High Value–Low Volume Tourism Model of Bhutan and Green Mobility and Circular Tourism Model of Sweden. The study also assesses the implementation of these international practices to the tourism practices adapted in Goa. The secondary data is exclusively collected from a wide range of reliable and authoritative sources which include publications by International Organizations, Government Publications, Academic Sources and other additional sources.

A Comparative Case Study Method is used to do the comparative analysis of the two case studies selected for the study.

Data Analysis Technique: The collected information was analysed using Thematic Content Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method involved:

Fig 1: Data Analysis Technique



Source: Developed by the Author (2026).

Tourism Development in Goa:

Goa has grown to be one of the most recognized tourism destinations in India, attracting millions of international and domestic visitors annually. The tourism appeal of the State is derived from its pristine beaches, Portuguese heritage, biodiversity, culture, wellness tourism, adventure sports, cuisine, nightlife and hospitality infrastructure. Tourism greatly contributes to the State Gross Domestic Product (GSDP), generation of employment, foreign exchange earnings and infrastructure development. Nevertheless, the growth of tourism growth has also posed substantial sustainability challenges. These problems are highly evident in the most visited coastal destinations such as Calangute, Baga, Candolim, Anjuna, Vagator, and Colva.

The coastal ecosystem of the State is increasingly subjected to beach erosion, mangrove degradation, marine pollution, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, waste accumulation, traffic congestion, and seasonal overcrowding. Rapid commercialization has placed added stress on cultural authenticity, local communities and traditional livelihoods. All these issues raise important queries regarding the long-term sustainability of the tourism-dependent economy of Goa. The concentration of tourism activities within the limited geographical areas has surpassed the ecological carrying capacity of several coastal destinations therefore highlighting the urgent need for diverse and environmentally sustainable tourism development strategies.

1.High Value–Low Volume Tourism Model of Bhutan

Bhutan follows a controlled tourism strategy which aims at conserving its cultural and environmental heritage. The key features of the model are: Community-based tourism initiatives, Mandatory Sustainable Development Fee (SDF), Regulated tourist entry, Emphasis on high-spending tourists, preservation of cultural heritage and protection of natural resources.

Application of High Value–Low Volume Tourism Model of Bhutan to Sustainable Tourism Development in Goa

The High Value–Low Volume (HVLV) Tourism Model of Bhutan is internationally recognized for harmonizing economic development with environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and community welfare. Although Bhutan and Goa vary considerably in terms of geography, tourism products and governance, however, several principles of the tourism model of Bhutan can be purposefully adapted to enhance sustainability in Goa.

Unlike Bhutan, where tourism growth has been consciously delimited through controlled visitor numbers and premium pricing, Goa has mainly followed a mass tourism model. The concentration of tourists in coastal areas has produced significant revenue but has concurrently contributed to environmental degradation and declining visitor experiences. Subsequently, rather than duplicating Bhutan's model, Goa should selectively implement its underlying principles while considering its own tourism framework. Bhutan showcases that tourism growth should not be measured only by visitor arrivals. Instead, sustainability depends

on maintaining environmental quality while maximizing economic returns. Several elements of Bhutan's model can be relevantly applied to Goa.

(a) Efficient Environmental Governance: Every aspect of tourism planning in Bhutan focuses on environmental conservation. Similarly, Goa should enforce Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), Environmental Impact Assessments for tourism projects, Plastic-free tourist zones, Sustainable beach certification, monitor biodiversity, protect the wetland ecosystem and conserve rivers. There is a need for effective governance to improve environmental resilience while enhancing destination competitiveness.

(b) Management of Carrying Capacity: During the peak tourist season in Goa, there is high concentration of tourism along its coastline. The visitor management system of Bhutan Showcases the importance of destination carrying capacity to reduce environmental pressure while refining visitor satisfaction. Goa needs to establish limits on beach carrying capacity, daily visitor quotas, good reservation systems and peak season regulation.

(c) Community-Based Tourism: Bhutan highlights community ownership. Goa could promote village tourism, homestays, agro-tourism, eco- tourism, cultural tourism, medical tourism etc. This would diversify tourism and increasing rural incomes.

(d) Sustainable Tourism Fee: The Sustainable Development Fee in Bhutan finances conservation programmes. Goa could introduce a marginal fee for selected tourism services, with revenues reserved for beach restoration, coastal conservation, biodiversity conservation, heritage preservation and waste management etc

e) Heritage Conservation: Bhutan guards' cultural identity and traditional architecture. Similarly, Goa can strengthen conservation of its Indo-Portuguese heritage, churches, temples, local cuisine, traditional houses, festivals, indigenous folklore and crafts through sustainable tourism planning.

2. Green Mobility and Circular Tourism Model of Sweden

Sweden has risen as a worldwide leader in sustainable development through its commitment to principles of circular economy, renewable energy and environmentally accountable urban planning. Sweden focuses on reducing the environmental footprint of tourism through technological invention, sustainable mobility systems, resource proficiency and responsible consumption rather than limiting visitor numbers, (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, 2024). The tourism strategy of Sweden closely aligns with the **European Green Deal** and the national objective of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. Sustainable tourism integrates broader national policies related to waste management, transportation, biodiversity conservation, renewable energy and regional development.

Application of Green Mobility and Circular Tourism Model of Sweden to Goa

While Bhutan focuses upon destination governance and visitor management, Sweden emphasizes upon technological innovation and environmentally responsible infrastructure to transform tourism into a low-carbon industry. Sweden showcases that technological innovation can significantly reduce the environmental footprint of tourism. Goa faces increasing problems associated with traffic congestion, overconsumption of resources and waste generation. The Green Mobility and Circular Tourism Model of Sweden offer practical solutions that can noticeably reduce the ecological footprint of tourism.

a) Circular Economy: The tourism industry of Sweden increasingly follows the circular economy principles. Goa can implement similar practices by encouraging hotels and tourism businesses to adopt rainwater harvesting, greywater recycling, composting, ban on the use of single-use plastics, recycling initiatives, local sourcing of food, eco-friendly packaging etc. Circular tourism reduces waste while minimizing operational costs.

b) Eco-Certification: Eco-certification promotes constant environmental development. Goa should develop certification programmes for hotels, resorts, restaurants, tour operators. beaches, cruise operators. Assessment criteria could include: Energy efficiency, Water conservation, Local sourcing, Waste management, Community engagement, Biodiversity conservation. Certification improves international competitiveness while endorsing responsible and sustainable business practices.

c) Green Mobility: Tourism involves movement of people thus transport is one of the main contributors to tourism-related greenhouse gas emissions. Goa experiences a lot of traffic congestion due to the high usage of private vehicles, diesel-powered tourist transport and limited integration of public transport. Sweden addresses such similar challenges through sustainable transport systems. Goa could adopt electric tourist buses connecting major attractions, electric taxis, solar-powered ferries, good cycling infrastructure, walking corridors, electric vehicle charging stations and smart mobility applications. Such initiatives would improve accessibility and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

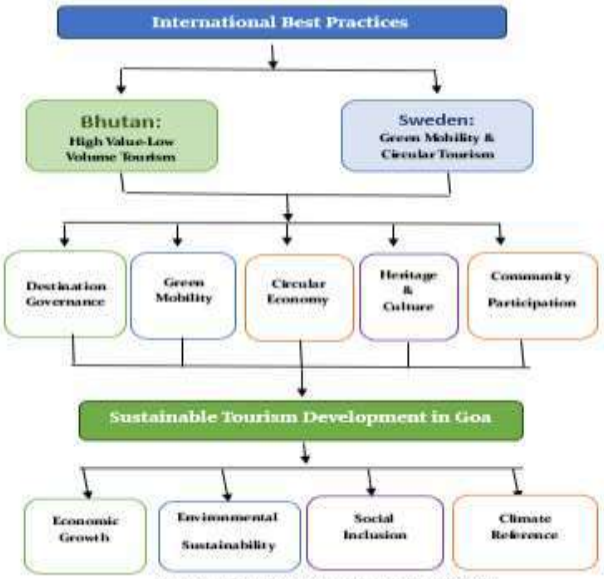
d) Renewable Energy: The tourism infrastructure of Sweden relies heavily on renewable energy thus posing significant potential for Solar-powered hotels, Solar lighting on beaches, energy-efficient accommodation, renewable-powered ferry services and smart energy management. Government incentives could promote adoption of renewable technologies throughout the tourism sector.

e) Digital Tourism: Sweden effectively uses digital technologies to improve tourism sustainability. Goa could introduce: Carbon footprint calculators, Digital beach carrying-capacity dashboards, Real-time visitor monitoring, Mobile applications for sustainable travel, Smart parking systems, GIS-based destination management, electronic ticketing. Digital innovation would improve visitor management at the tourist destinations.

Proposed Sustainable Green Tourism Framework for Goa

Based upon the comparative analysis of **High Value–Low Volume Tourism Model of Bhutan** and **Green Mobility and Circular Tourism Model of Sweden**, this study offers an **Integrated Sustainable Green Tourism Framework (ISGTF)** for Goa. The framework is created to balance economic development, environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and community well-being while aligning with commitments of India to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Unlike adopting either of the international model in its totality, the framework selectively integrates destination governance practices from Bhutan with the technological and environmental innovations of Sweden, thereby creating a context-specific strategy suitable for the coastal tourism economy of Goa.

Figure 2. Integrated Sustainable Green Tourism Framework for Goa



Source: Developed by the Author (2026).

Conclusion

The comparative analysis highlights that High Value–Low Volume Tourism Model of Bhutan and the Green Mobility and Circular Tourism Model of Sweden offer efficient initiatives for sustainable tourism development. Bhutan focuses on controlling visitor numbers and maximizing tourism value while, Sweden emphasizes upon sustainable transportation, resource efficiency and circular economy principles. The models should not be adopted in isolation for Goa. A hybrid approach which integrates the visitor management strategies of Bhutan with the green mobility and circular tourism practices of Sweden would be more effective for Goa. Such a framework can help Goa address its environmental problems, improve tourism quality, promote community welfare and safeguard sustainable growth. The policymakers should prioritize carrying capacity management, waste reduction, eco-friendly transportation, , renewable energy adoption and stakeholder participation to achieve long-term sustainability in tourism.

Tourism remains to be one of the most substantial drivers of economic growth in Goa; however, increasing environmental challenges, climate change, overcrowding, and resource depletion presents a major threat to the long-term sustainability of the destination. This study comparatively analysed two internationally recognized sustainable tourism models—High Value–Low Volume Tourism Model of Bhutan and the Green Mobility and Circular Tourism Model of Sweden to evaluate their pertinency to Goa. The comparative analysis showcased that Bhutan's model highlights the efficiency of destination governance, carrying-capacity management, community participation and cultural preservation in maintaining environmental integrity while generating high economic returns. Sweden exemplifies how technological innovation, renewable energy, green mobility, circular economy principles and eco-certification can significantly minimize the environmental footprint of tourism without restricting tourism development. Neither of the model can be directly applied to Goa due to differences in governance, tourism products, socio-economic conditions and destination characteristics. However, the selective incorporation of Bhutan's conservation-oriented governance with Sweden's innovation-driven sustainability practices provides a real pathway toward sustainable tourism development in Goa. The study contributes to sustainable tourism literature by highlighting ways of integrating the international best practices in Goa rather than replicating and providing policymakers with a real-world framework for promoting the sustainability and competitiveness of Goa as a leading coastal tourism destination.

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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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Original Article

Impact of Religious Tourism on Water Quality of Chandrabhaga River in Pandharpur

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Abstract:
Religious tourism is an important component of cultural and economic development in India. Pandharpur is one of the major pilgrimage centers in Maharashtra and attracts lakhs of devotees during the annual Wari festival. Continuous religious activities and increasing tourist pressure affect the environmental quality of the Chandrabhaga River. The present study focuses on the impact of religious tourism on river water quality. Important physicochemical parameters such as pH, Dissolved Oxygen (DO), Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD), and Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) were analyzed during normal and pilgrimage periods. The study observed increased pollution levels during Wari season due to bathing activities, sewage discharge, plastic waste, and disposal of ritual materials. Higher BOD and COD values indicated increased organic and chemical pollution in the river ecosystem. The paper also discusses environmental impacts and sustainable tourism practices necessary for river conservation and environmental protection.

Keywords: *Religious Tourism; Chandrabhaga River; Water Pollution; Pandharpur; Water Quality; Sustainable Tourism; Pilgrimage Activities.*

Introduction:

Tourism plays a significant role in the social, cultural, and economic development of many regions. Religious tourism is one of the oldest forms of tourism in India and attracts millions of pilgrims every year. Pandharpur is an important religious center famous for the temple of Lord Vitthal and attracts devotees from different states during Ashadhi and Kartiki Wari festivals. The Chandrabhaga River holds great religious importance among pilgrims. Devotees take holy baths in the river believing it to be sacred and spiritually purifying. However, rapid growth in pilgrimage tourism creates environmental stress on the river ecosystem. Activities such as open bathing, disposal of flowers, food materials, plastics, idol immersion, washing activities, and sewage discharge contribute significantly to water pollution. River pollution affects aquatic ecosystems, public health, and overall environmental sustainability. According to Sharma and Gupta [1], tourism-related waste disposal is one of the major causes of river pollution in pilgrimage regions. Patil and Deshmukh [2] reported increased organic pollution in rivers during pilgrimage seasons in Maharashtra. Therefore, monitoring water quality and implementing sustainable tourism practices are necessary for environmental conservation.

Objectives:

The objectives of the present study are:

- To study the impact of religious tourism on water quality
- To identify major pollution sources in the river
- To analyze important physicochemical parameters
- To suggest sustainable tourism measures for river conservation.

Materials and Methods (Methodology)

Study Area

The present study was conducted on the Chandrabhaga River near Pandharpur city.
The river experiences heavy tourist and pilgrimage activities during Ashadhi and Kartiki Wari festivals.

Objectives of the Study

- **To analyze river water quality during normal and pilgrimage periods**
- **To compare pollution levels**
- **To identify tourism-related pollution sources**
- **To suggest sustainable management practices**

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Sample Collection and Analysis

Water samples were collected from selected locations of the river during:

- **Normal days**
- **Wari pilgrimage season**

The physicochemical parameters studied were:

- **pH**
- **Dissolved Oxygen (DO)**
- **Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD)**
- **Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD)**

Methods Used:

- **Collection of water samples in sterilized bottles**
- **Visual observation of tourist activities**
- **Laboratory analysis using standard procedures**
- **Comparison of pollution levels during different periods**

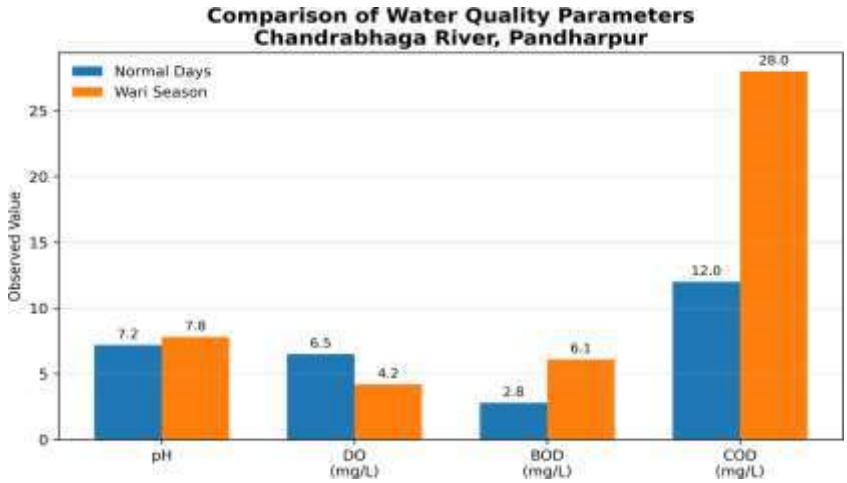
The analysis methods followed standard water quality assessment procedures recommended by American Public Health Association [*5*].

- **Tourism Activities Observed**
- **Holy bathing by pilgrims**
- **Disposal of flowers and ritual materials**
- **Plastic waste accumulation**
- **Food waste generation**
- **Washing clothes and utensils near riverbanks**

Results and Discussion

Water Quality Analysis

Table 1: Physicochemical Parameters of River Water



Conclusion:

Religious tourism has great cultural, spiritual, and economic importance in Pandharpur. However, uncontrolled tourism activities negatively affect the water quality of the Chandrabhaga River. The study observed increased pollution levels during Wari seasons due to improper waste disposal, bathing activities, sewage discharge, and plastic pollution.

Higher BOD and COD values during pilgrimage periods indicate increased organic and chemical contamination. Decreased dissolved oxygen levels also affect aquatic life and environmental health.

The study concludes that proper environmental management, public awareness, and sustainable tourism practices are necessary for river conservation. Regular monitoring of water quality and implementation of pollution control measures can help protect the river ecosystem and maintain environmental balance.

Abbreviations:

Abbreviation Full Form DO Dissolved Oxygen

BOD Biological Oxygen Demand COD Chemical Oxygen Demand pH Potential of Hydroge

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Original Article

Scalpel and Soul: Harmonizing Advanced Surgery and AYUSH Wellness in Indian Medical Tourism.

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Abstract

The convergence of cutting-edge surgical precision and traditional AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) wellness practices represents a distinctive value proposition in Indian medical tourism, termed "Scalpel and Soul." This integrative model combines high-technology curative interventions with holistic, preventive, and rehabilitative therapies to deliver comprehensive patient outcomes that address both disease and overall well-being. India's unique positioning stems from its world-class, often JCI and NABH-accredited hospitals offering advanced procedures—robotic surgery, minimally invasive oncology, cardiothoracic and orthopedic interventions—at 50-90% lower costs than Western nations, alongside its ancient AYUSH heritage. Government initiatives such as the "Heal in India" campaign, dedicated medical and AYUSH visas, and wellness tourism policies actively promote this synergy. Patients increasingly seek not merely clinical resolution but transformative healing experiences that reduce recovery time, complications, and psychological distress while enhancing long-term quality of life. Illustrative models include post-robotic thoracic surgery recovery integrating Ayurvedic herbs, Abhyanga massage, and pulmonary Yoga in Delhi-NCR centers, and total knee replacement followed by intensive Panchakarma and Naturopathy rehabilitation in Kerala's serene Ayurvedic resorts. Integrative oncology pathways similarly pair laparoscopic procedures with Rasayana therapies and mindfulness practices. These hybrid packages appeal particularly to patients from Europe, the Middle East, Australia, and Africa seeking cost-effective, culturally rich care. Benefits encompass accelerated functional recovery, improved patient satisfaction, reduced readmission rates, and differentiation in a competitive global market. However, challenges persist in scientific validation, standardization of protocols, cross-disciplinary training, and international regulatory acceptance. As medical tourism evolves toward value-based, patient-centric care, the "Scalpel and Soul" paradigm positions India as a global leader in holistic healing. Future success hinges on rigorous outcome research, digital integration, quality assurance, and strategic international marketing. This approach not only boosts economic growth but also redefines healthcare as a harmonious blend of modern science and ancient wisdom.

Keywords : *AYUSH, Indian Medical Tourism, Wellness, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), and Ministry of AYUSH*

Introduction

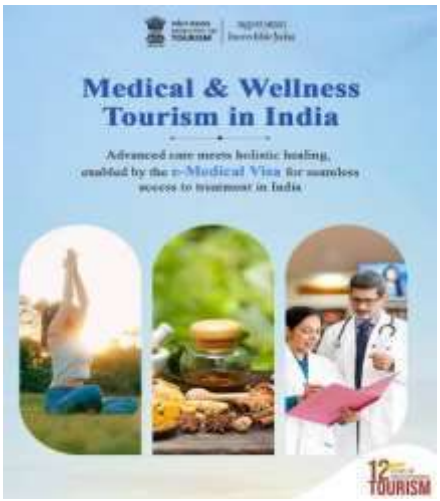
Modern medicine excels in diagnostics, emergency care, and surgical precision, while AYUSH systems emphasize balance, prevention, personalization, and mind-body-spirit harmony. India's medical tourism leverages both: patients undergo advanced procedures (e.g., cardiac bypass, joint replacements, oncology surgeries) in JCI/NABH-accredited hospitals and then access Ayurvedic therapies, yoga, and wellness protocols for enhanced recovery and rejuvenation.The "Heal in India" initiative, supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), and Ministry of AYUSH, promotes this integrated approach. The introduction of the dedicated AYUSH Visa in 2023 further facilitates access for wellness and traditional treatments. In an era where healthcare increasingly seeks to bridge cutting-edge technology with time-tested wisdom, India stands as a unique global destination.

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The concept of "Scalpel and Soul" captures this powerful synergy: the precision of modern surgical excellence paired with the holistic healing traditions of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy). This integration is redefining **Indian Medical Value Travel (MVT)**, offering international patients not just treatment, but transformative wellness journeys.



India has emerged as a powerhouse in medical tourism, with the market estimated around USD 8.7–11 billion in 2025 and projected to nearly double or more by 2030–2031, driven by world-class infrastructure, skilled specialists, and cost advantages of 60–80% compared to Western countries. Hundreds of thousands of medical tourists arrive annually for complex procedures in cardiology, oncology, orthopedics, and organ transplants at NABH- and JCI-accredited hospitals.

Yet, what truly distinguishes India is its pluralistic medical heritage. While the "scalpel" represents advanced allopathic interventions—robotic surgeries, minimally invasive techniques, and evidence-based protocols that deliver rapid, life-saving results—the "soul" embodies AYUSH systems. These focus on root-cause healing, prevention, balance of body-mind-spirit, personalized diet, herbal therapies, yoga, meditation, and rejuvenation (Rasayana). Patients can undergo a cardiac bypass or joint replacement with top surgeons, then transition seamlessly into Ayurvedic post-operative care, yoga-based rehabilitation, or Panchakarma detoxification to accelerate recovery, reduce complications, manage pain, and build long-term resilience.

This harmonization addresses modern healthcare's limitations. Advanced surgery excels in acute care and structural corrections but may overlook lifestyle, stress, and chronic imbalances that fuel many conditions. AYUSH complements it by supporting perioperative care, immunity boosting, mental well-being, and holistic recovery. Government initiatives actively promote this blend through the **Heal in India** campaign, dedicated AYUSH Visas (introduced for easier access to traditional treatments), wellness centers, insurance coverage for AYUSH therapies, and integrated hubs that combine multi-specialty hospitals with authentic Ayurvedic and yoga facilities.

For the medical tourist, this means a comprehensive experience: world-class clinical outcomes paired with cultural immersion, personalized wellness programs in serene settings (from Kerala backwaters to Himalayan retreats), and often faster, more sustainable healing. It appeals especially to those seeking affordable high-quality surgery alongside rejuvenation for lifestyle diseases, stress-related issues, or post-treatment vitality.

"Scalpel and Soul" is more than a catchy phrase—it represents India's evolving model of integrative medicine on the global stage. As patients increasingly demand care that treats the whole person rather than isolated symptoms, India offers a compelling vision: where advanced science meets ancient wisdom, precision meets presence, and healing becomes a journey of body, mind, and spirit. This unique fusion positions India not merely as a cost-effective treatment hub, but as a leader in truly holistic global healthcare.

Overview of AYUSH Systems and Modern Surgery in India

AYUSH encompasses diverse traditional systems with millennia of practice. Ayurveda, the most prominent, uses herbal medicines, Panchakarma detoxification, diet, yoga, and lifestyle interventions. Yoga and Naturopathy focus on non-invasive wellness; others like Unani and Siddha offer complementary approaches. India has over 755,000 registered AYUSH practitioners, thousands of hospitals/dispensaries, and growing integration into public health via Ayushman Bharat and Health & Wellness Centres.

Advanced Surgery thrives in facilities like Apollo, Fortis, Medanta, and AIIMS, offering world-class outcomes in cardiology, orthopedics, oncology, neurology, and transplants at 60–90% lower costs than in Western countries. Many hospitals hold JCI accreditation.

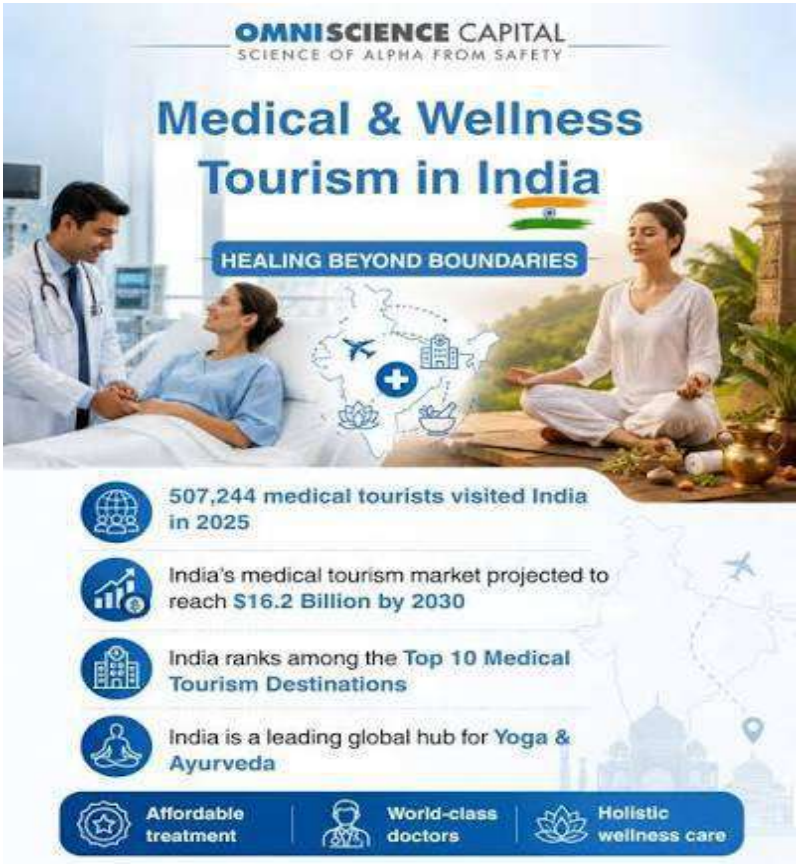
Integration bridges these: AYUSH supports pre-operative optimization (e.g., stress reduction, immunity building) and post-operative recovery (wound healing, pain management, reduced complications).

Policy Framework and Government Initiatives

1. **National AYUSH Mission** and co-location of AYUSH services in allopathic facilities.
2. **Integrated AYUSH departments** in central hospitals (e.g., Safdarjung, AIIMS collaborations).
3. **Heal in India and AYUSH Visa** — Streamlines entry for medical value travel (MVT), with dedicated portals and pre-verified hospitals.

4. **Accreditation** — NABH and other standards for wellness centers; promotion of AYUSH Mark for quality.
5. **Infrastructure** — Support for integrated hospitals and wellness hubs (e.g., in Kerala, Uttarakhand, Jammu & Kashmir).

These policies create a supportive ecosystem for medical tourism clusters combining surgery with rehabilitation.



Models of Integration in Practice

Apollo AyurVAID: A pioneer in precision Ayurveda and integrative care, with NABH and JCI-accredited centers. It partners with major hospitals for co-managed care, offering post-operative rehabilitation, chronic disease management, and Ayurvedic surgical specialties (e.g., anorectal disorders).

Other Examples: Medanta's integrative programs, I-AIM Healthcare Center (Bangalore), HIIMS hospitals (integrated Ayurveda-naturopathy-allopathy), and government initiatives at All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) with centers for integrative oncology, orthopedics, etc.

Post-Surgical Integration: Evidence from case studies shows Ayurvedic interventions accelerate wound healing, reduce pain and inflammation, minimize antibiotic use in some cases, and improve quality of life after procedures like cardiac surgery, prostate surgery, or joint replacements. Panchakarma, herbal formulations, yoga, and dietary protocols aid tissue repair and emotional resilience.

Benefits for Medical Tourism

1. **Clinical**: Faster recovery, fewer complications, holistic outcomes addressing physical, mental, and spiritual aspects.
2. **Economic**: Cost savings plus bundled "surgery + wellness retreat" packages appeal to patients from the Middle East, Africa, CIS countries, Europe, and North America.
3. **Experiential**: Cultural immersion, yoga retreats, and destinations like Kerala's backwaters enhance appeal.
4. **Market Growth**: India attracts hundreds of thousands of medical tourists annually, with wellness tourism adding significant volume. The combined sector is projected to grow at double-digit CAGRs.

Challenges and Limitations

1. **Evidence Base:** Need for more rigorous RCTs on integrative protocols.
2. **Regulatory and Epistemological Differences:** Varying standards, potential interactions between herbs and drugs, and practitioner training gaps.
3. **Quality Control:** Risk of unqualified providers in wellness tourism.
4. **Infrastructure and Coordination:** Uneven integration across regions and hospitals.
5. **Perception:** Skepticism in some allopathic circles or among international patients.



6. Addressing these requires standardized protocols, joint research, unified ethics, and robust accreditation.
7. **Case Studies (Illustrative)**
8. **"Scalpel and Soul"** refers to the integration of advanced, precision-based modern surgery ("scalpel") with holistic AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) wellness practices ("soul") in Indian medical tourism. This model combines high-tech curative interventions with traditional preventive, rehabilitative, and mind-body therapies for comprehensive healing, faster recovery, reduced complications, and enhanced patient satisfaction.
9. India's strengths—internationally accredited hospitals (many JCI-accredited), cost advantages (procedures often 50-90% cheaper than in Western countries), skilled specialists, and AYUSH heritage—position it uniquely for this approach. Government initiatives like "Heal in India," e-Medical and AYUSH Visas, and wellness tourism policies support it. Below are **elaborate, realistic case studies** (drawn from real integrations like those at Medanta and Kerala models, with plausible patient scenarios for illustration).
10. **Case Study 1: Post-Robotic Thoracic Surgery Recovery with Ayurveda and Yoga (Medanta-Inspired Model, Gurugram/Delhi NCR)**

Patient Profile : A 62-year-old European male executive with early-stage lung cancer, a history of smoking, and comorbidities (hypertension, mild obesity). He sought treatment in India for advanced robotic surgery at lower cost with better holistic support than available at home **Treatment Pathway**:

- **Surgical Phase (Scalpel)**: Minimally invasive robotic-assisted thoracic surgery (e.g., VATS or robotic lobectomy) performed by a high-volume cardiothoracic team. Procedure duration ~3-4 hours; hospital stay 4-5 days. Advanced imaging and precision tools minimized trauma.
- **Integrative AYUSH Phase (Soul)**: Pre-operative Ayurvedic preparation (e.g., herbal formulations like Ashwagandha for stress resilience and immunity, tailored diet). Post-operative: Daily Yoga/Pranayama sessions for pulmonary rehabilitation, Abhyanga (oil massages) and Panchakarma elements for detoxification and pain management, plus herbal support for wound healing and inflammation reduction.
- **Wellness Integration**: 10-14 day stay in a dedicated integrative wing or partnered resort, with nutritionists blending modern post-op diets and Ayurvedic principles. Mindfulness and Yoga nidra addressed anxiety.

Outcomes:

- Faster recovery: Improved pulmonary function, lower pain scores, and reduced post-op complications compared to controls in similar studies.
- Patient reported higher satisfaction, better sleep, and sense of holistic healing.
- Total package cost: Significantly lower than equivalent Western care + separate rehab.
- Follow-up: Telemedicine with both allopathic and AYUSH doctors; patient returned for a wellness retreat 6 months later.

Medical Tourism Impact: Attracted the patient plus family (who enjoyed Delhi tourism). Highlights Delhi NCR's strength in tertiary care + wellness integration.

Case Study 2: Orthopedic Joint Replacement with Kerala Ayurvedic Rehabilitation (Kerala Model)

Patient Profile : A 55-year-old Australian woman with severe knee osteoarthritis, seeking surgery plus long-term pain relief and lifestyle change, avoiding long NHS waits and high costs.

Treatment Pathway:

- **Surgical Phase**: Total knee replacement at a multispecialty hospital in Kochi or Thiruvananthapuram using imported implants and computer navigation for precision.
- **AYUSH Rehabilitation (Soul)**: Transfer to a NABH-accredited Ayurvedic center or beachside resort for 3-4 weeks of intensive Panchakarma (e.g., Kati Basti for localized treatment, herbal steam therapies), Yoga therapy for joint mobility and strength, and Naturopathy (diet, hydrotherapy). Kerala's backwaters and climate enhance the serene recovery environment.
- **Holistic Package**: Personalized Ayurvedic medicines, stress management via meditation, and education on sustainable lifestyle changes aligned with dosha balance.

Outcomes:

- Enhanced mobility and reduced chronic pain faster than standard physiotherapy alone.
- Improved overall well-being, weight management, and mental health.
- High repeat potential: Many patients return for annual wellness check-ups or companion treatments.

Medical Tourism Impact: Kerala leverages its Ayurvedic heritage as a global wellness hub, combining it with modern hospitals. Packages often include airport transfers, accommodation, and sightseeing, boosting local economy.

Case Study 3: Oncology Support – Surgery + Integrative AYUSH for a Middle Eastern Patient (Apollo/Medanta-Style Chain Model)

Patient Profile : A 48-year-old male from the UAE with colorectal cancer requiring surgery, concerned about side effects and recurrence.

Treatment Pathway:

- **Surgical Phase**: Laparoscopic or robotic colectomy at a major chain hospital with advanced oncology support.
- **Integrative Phase**: Adjuvant care including Ayurvedic Rasayana therapies for immunity and vitality, Yoga for fatigue management, and nutritional counseling. Some centers offer integrative oncology departments combining chemotherapy/radiation with supportive AYUSH.
- **Longer-Term**: Post-discharge wellness program with follow-up consultations, possibly via medical value travel extensions.

Outcomes:

- Better tolerance to conventional treatments, improved quality of life, and potentially lower recurrence risk through lifestyle integration (evidence-building area).
- Cost savings and a "healing journey" narrative appealing to patients seeking more than clinical cure.

Medical Tourism Impact: Chains like Apollo and Medanta market "integrated care" packages internationally, with dedicated international patient desks handling visas, logistics, and cultural needs.

Broader Benefits, Challenges, and Success Factors

- **Benefits**: Faster recovery, reduced complications, higher patient satisfaction, differentiation in a competitive global market, and promotion of preventive health. It addresses lifestyle diseases prevalent among medical tourists.
- **Challenges**: Standardization and evidence for AYUSH integration, practitioner training, regulatory harmonization, and international acceptance of outcomes.
- **Enablers**: NABH/AYUSH accreditation, public-private partnerships, digital platforms for seamless journeys, and marketing India as a "holistic healing destination."

This "Scalpel and Soul" approach transforms medical tourism from transactional procedures into transformative experiences, capitalizing on India's dual heritage for sustainable growth. Real-world scaling depends on continued research, quality assurance, and targeted promotion. Real-world outcomes often include reduced hospital stays, lower readmission rates, and higher patient satisfaction.

Future Prospects and Recommendations

- Expand PPP models for integrated medical-wellness clusters.
- Invest in digital platforms for personalized treatment planning and telemedicine follow-up.
- Strengthen research through WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM) in Jamnagar and collaborative trials.
- Enhance marketing of "Heal in India" globally, targeting high-potential regions.
- Develop cross-training curricula for doctors in both systems.

By 2030+, India could capture a larger share of the global medical and wellness tourism market (projected to grow substantially) through this unique harmonisation.

Conclusion: Embracing the Future of Healing

The integration of advanced surgery (scalpel) and AYUSH wellness (soul) represents a powerful evolution in healthcare—one that is culturally authentic to India and highly attractive globally. It moves beyond mere cost arbitrage to deliver truly holistic healing.

With continued policy support, evidence-building, and stakeholder collaboration, this model can redefine medical tourism, benefiting patients, the economy, and global health practices alike.

"Scalpel and Soul" is far more than a harmonious blend of advanced surgery and AYUSH wellness it represents a visionary paradigm for 21st-century healthcare. India has positioned itself at the forefront of integrative medicine, where the precision of modern medical technology meets the profound wisdom of traditional systems to deliver not merely treatment, but complete transformation.

As patients worldwide grow disillusioned with fragmented, symptom-focused care, India offers a compelling alternative: world-class clinical outcomes in cardiology, orthopedics, oncology, and beyond, seamlessly complemented by personalized Ayurvedic therapies, yoga-based rehabilitation, Panchakarma detoxification, and holistic lifestyle guidance. This approach accelerates recovery, minimizes complications, enhances mental and emotional well-being, and fosters long-term vitality. International medical travelers benefit from substantial cost savings, shorter waiting times, cultural richness, and serene recovery environments from Kerala's tranquil backwaters to Himalayan wellness retreats.

Government initiatives such as the Heal in India campaign, the dedicated AYUSH Visa category, expanded wellness infrastructure, and policy support for integration are accelerating this momentum. India's medical and wellness tourism sector is on a strong growth trajectory, with projections highlighting its potential to become a multi-billion-dollar engine of economic growth, job creation, and global health diplomacy.

Challenges remain standardizing protocols for true integration, generating more robust clinical evidence, ensuring quality consistency across providers, and addressing accessibility. Yet, with ongoing advancements in research, digital health platforms, and collaborative frameworks aligned with global strategies like the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy, these hurdles are surmountable.

In the end, Scalpel and Soul embodies India's unique gift to the world: a healthcare model that honors both science and spirituality, technology and tradition, intervention and prevention. It invites patients not just to heal their bodies, but to rediscover balance, resilience, and wholeness. As the world seeks more humane, sustainable, and effective approaches to health, India stands ready not only as a destination for medical excellence, but as a beacon for holistic well-being.

The scalpel saves lives with unmatched precision. The soul restores harmony and purpose. Together, in the Indian experience, they offer the promise of truly complete healing for individuals, for systems, and for a healthier global future. India does not merely treat the visitor; it invites them on a journey to heal in body, mind, and spirit and to carry that harmony back home.

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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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Original Article

The Role of Agro-Tourism in Agricultural Entrepreneurship and Rural Transformation

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Abstract:
This research paper examines the important role of agro-tourism in promoting agricultural entrepreneurship and supporting rural transformation. Farmers today face many challenges, including climate change, unstable market prices, increasing production costs, and lower profit margins. As a result, rural communities are looking for alternative ways to increase income and improve their economic stability. Agro-tourism has emerged as an effective solution by combining agricultural activities with tourism services. Through agro-tourism, farmers can offer farm visits, educational activities, rural experiences, and direct sales of agricultural products to visitors. This helps farmers move beyond traditional farming and develop entrepreneurial skills by managing tourism-related businesses. The findings suggest that agro-tourism can significantly improve farmers' income, generate employment opportunities for local people, and reduce migration from rural to urban areas.

Keywords: *Agro-Tourism, Agricultural Entrepreneurship, Rural Transformation, Rural Development, Sustainable Tourism, Farmer Entrepreneurship etc.*

Introduction:

Agro-tourism has become an important tool for rural development by connecting traditional farming activities with the modern tourism industry. Today, agriculture faces many challenges such as climate change, unstable market prices, and small landholdings. Due to these problems, farmers are increasingly looking for additional sources of income beyond conventional farming. Agro-tourism provides an effective solution by allowing farms to serve as tourist destinations where visitors can participate in farm activities, attend educational programs, and experience rural life through farm stays. This combination of agriculture and tourism transforms farms into diversified business enterprises and encourages farmers to become agricultural entrepreneurs rather than relying solely on crop production. This development also contributes significantly to the transformation of rural communities. Agro-tourism attracts visitors and investment from urban areas, creating direct income opportunities for farmers without depending entirely on traditional agricultural markets. As a result, more money remains within rural economies and supports local development. The benefits of agro-tourism extend beyond farm income, as it encourages improvements in infrastructure, promotes local arts and crafts, and creates employment opportunities for rural youth and women.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the concept, nature, and development of agro-tourism in rural areas.
2. To analyze the role of agro-tourism in promoting agricultural entrepreneurship among farmers.
3. To evaluate the impact of agro-tourism on employment creation and rural economic development.
4. To identify the major challenges associated with agro-tourism development.

Hypotheses of the Study

H_1: Agro-tourism significantly promotes agricultural entrepreneurship among farmers.
H_2: Agro-tourism plays a significant role in rural transformation.

Research Methodology

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature and is based exclusively on secondary data.

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Relevant information has been collected from books, research articles, journals, government publications, policy documents, reports, theses, dissertations, and authentic online sources related to agro-tourism, agricultural entrepreneurship, and rural development.

Scope & Limitations:

a) **Scope of the Study:** The study examines the role of agro-tourism in promoting agricultural entrepreneurship and rural transformation. It focuses on the economic, social, and entrepreneurial benefits of agro-tourism and its contribution to sustainable rural development.

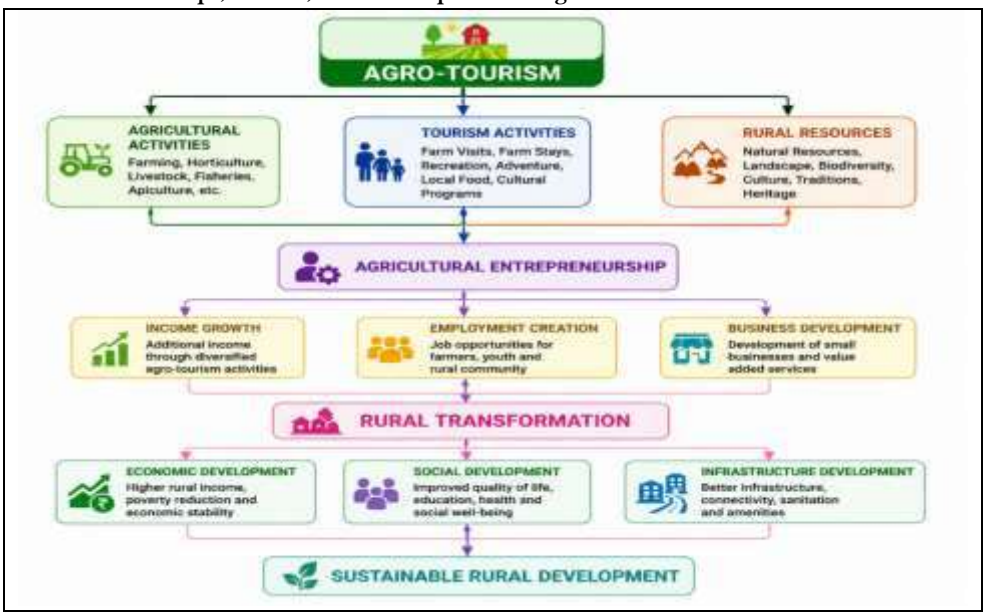
b) **Limitations of the Study:**

1. The study is based only on secondary data.
2. The findings depend on the availability and reliability of published sources.
3. Primary data from farmers, tourists, or agro-tourism operators have not been included.
4. The conclusions may not be applicable to all regions due to regional variations in agro-tourism development.

Review of Literature:

1. **Philip S., Hunter C. and Blackstock K. (2010),** "A Typology for Defining Agritourism" examined the concept and typology of agro-tourism and highlighted its role in diversifying farm income and strengthening rural economies. The study emphasized that agro-tourism provides farmers with alternative sources of revenue while promoting rural culture and agricultural heritage.
2. **Barbieri C. and Mshenga P. M. (2008),** "The Role of the Firm and Owner Characteristics on the Performance of Agritourism Farms" analyzed the economic benefits of farm-based tourism enterprises. Their findings revealed that agro-tourism contributes significantly to income diversification, business sustainability, and entrepreneurial development among farming households.
3. **Tew C. and Barbieri C. (2012),** "The Perceived Benefits of Agritourism: The Provider's Perspective" investigated factors influencing the success of agro-tourism operations. The study found that visitor satisfaction, quality services, effective marketing, and community support are important determinants of agro-tourism sustainability and growth.
4. **Karampela S., Kizos T. and Spilanis I. (2021)**, "Agritourism from the Perspective of Providers and Visitors: A Typology-Based Study" explored the relationship between agro-tourism and rural development. The study concluded that agro-tourism promotes local employment, preserves cultural traditions, and supports sustainable development in rural areas.
5. **Bhatta K. and Ohe Y. (2020)**, "A Comparison of Agritourism and Other Farm Entrepreneurs: Implications for Future Tourism and Sociological Research on Agritourism" examined the contribution of agro-tourism to rural entrepreneurship and livelihood improvement. The findings indicated that agro-tourism encourages innovation, creates employment opportunities, and enhances the economic resilience of rural communities.

Concept, Nature, and Development of Agro-Tourism in Rural Areas:



a) **Concept of Agro-Tourism:** Agro-tourism is a form of rural tourism that combines agriculture and tourism activities. It provides visitors with an opportunity to experience farming practices, rural lifestyles, local traditions, and natural surroundings. Agro-tourism allows farmers to utilize their agricultural resources for tourism-related activities such as farm visits, farm stays, crop harvesting experiences, educational tours, recreational activities, and the sale of farm products. It serves as an alternative source of income for farmers while promoting awareness about agriculture and rural culture among tourists.

b) **Nature of Agro-Tourism:** Agro-tourism is characterized by its close connection with agricultural activities and rural life. It is generally conducted on working farms and involves direct interaction between farmers and visitors. Agro-tourism is nature-based, educational, and experience-oriented in nature. It encourages tourists to participate in farming activities and gain knowledge about agricultural practices. The sector supports sustainable development by generating additional income,

creating employment opportunities, preserving local culture, and promoting environmental conservation. Agro-tourism also strengthens the relationship between urban and rural communities by providing authentic rural experiences.

c) **Development of Agro-Tourism in Rural Areas:** The development of agro-tourism has gained momentum in recent decades due to the growing demand for nature-based and experiential tourism. Increasing urbanization, changing lifestyles, and interest in rural experiences have encouraged tourists to visit agricultural regions. At the same time, challenges such as declining farm income, market uncertainties, and climate-related risks have motivated farmers to diversify their economic activities through tourism.

In India, agro-tourism has emerged as an important strategy for rural development. Several states, particularly Maharashtra, have taken initiatives to promote agro-tourism by encouraging farmers to establish agro-tourism centers. These centers offer visitors opportunities to experience rural life, traditional food, agricultural activities, and local culture. The growth of agro-tourism has contributed to income diversification, entrepreneurship development, employment generation, and overall rural transformation.

Role of Agro-Tourism in Promoting Agricultural Entrepreneurship Among Farmers:

1. **Income Diversification and Financial Stability:** Traditional farming is often affected by uncertain weather conditions, crop failures, and changing market prices. Agro-tourism provides farmers with an additional source of income through tourism activities, helping them maintain financial stability and reduce dependence on farming alone.
2. **Direct Marketing and Higher Profits:** Agro-tourism enables farmers to sell their products directly to visitors. By offering fresh produce, processed foods, and farm experiences, farmers can earn higher profits and reduce their dependence on middlemen.
3. **Development of Entrepreneurial Skills:** Managing agro-tourism activities encourages farmers to develop important business skills such as planning, marketing, communication, customer service, and financial management. These skills help them become successful rural entrepreneurs.
4. **Better Use of Farm Resources:** Agro-tourism allows farmers to utilize available farm resources more effectively. Open spaces, natural landscapes, traditional buildings, and agricultural activities can be converted into attractions that generate additional income.
5. **Employment Generation and Youth Retention:** Agro-tourism creates employment opportunities in areas such as hospitality, guiding, food services, and recreational activities. These opportunities encourage rural youth to remain in villages and participate in local economic activities instead of migrating to cities.
6. **Promotion of Innovation:** To attract more visitors, farmers often introduce new services, products, and experiences. This encourages creativity and innovation in both agricultural and tourism-related activities.
7. **Support for Local Businesses:** The growth of agro-tourism benefits other local enterprises such as transportation services, handicraft producers, local food vendors, and small businesses. This strengthens the rural economy and promotes community development.
8. **Contribution to Rural Transformation:** By generating income, creating employment, developing entrepreneurial skills, and supporting local businesses, agro-tourism contributes significantly to the overall economic and social transformation of rural areas.

Impact of Agro-Tourism on Employment Generation and Rural Economic Development:

The impact of agro-tourism on employment generation and rural economic development is an important aspect of rural transformation. Agro-tourism connects agriculture with the service sector, allowing rural communities to reduce their dependence on traditional farming. By attracting visitors from urban areas, it brings additional income into rural economies and helps farmers cope with challenges such as climate uncertainty and fluctuating market prices. Direct interaction with consumers enables farmers to earn higher returns and retain a greater share of income within the local economy. From an employment perspective, agro-tourism creates a wide range of job opportunities beyond conventional farming. Unlike seasonal agricultural work, tourism-related activities provide more regular employment in areas such as hospitality, food services, tour guiding, event management, and digital marketing. These opportunities help reduce rural unemployment and encourage young people to remain in their villages rather than migrate to cities. Agro-tourism also plays a significant role in empowering rural women. Through activities such as managing homestays, preparing traditional food, selling handicrafts, and providing visitor services, women can earn independent incomes and actively participate in decision-making processes. This improves their economic position and social status within the community. Similarly, agro-tourism offers new opportunities for rural youth by creating careers that combine agriculture with modern business and service skills. Young people can engage in tourism management, marketing, customer services, and innovative farm-based enterprises. As a result, agro-tourism makes agriculture more attractive and supports long-term rural development.

Challenges Faced by Agro-Tourism Enterprises:

Despite its growing importance, agro-tourism faces several challenges that limit its development and long-term sustainability. Those are following -

1. **Deficit in Infrastructure and Rural Connectivity:** A fundamental obstacle to scaling agro-tourism is the lack of reliable rural infrastructure. Many promising agricultural regions suffer from poorly maintained roads, erratic electricity grids, substandard waste management systems, and a lack of high-speed digital connectivity. This deficit not only discourages urban travelers who expect baseline comfort and accessibility but also prevents farmers from running smooth online booking systems and digital marketing campaigns.

2. **Inadequate Financial Support and Capital Constraints:** Transitioning a working farm into a tourist destination requires considerable upfront capital to renovate facilities, build guest accommodations, and meet health and safety standards. However, smallholder farmers often struggle to secure credit, as traditional financial institutions lack specialized lending frameworks for agro-tourism, frequently viewing these dual-sector ventures as high-risk, unconventional investments.
3. **Skills Gap and Lack of Professional Training:** Successful agro-tourism requires a unique blend of skills that traditional farmers rarely possess. Farmers are experts in agronomy, crop management, and animal husbandry, but they often lack formal training in hospitality, customer relations, culinary safety, and international languages. Without specialized capacity-building programs, operators struggle to deliver the high service standards required to retain visitors and secure positive reviews.
4. **Regulatory Inconsistency and Complex Bureaucracy:** In many regions, there is a distinct lack of clear policy frameworks specifically tailored to agro-tourism. Operators are often forced to navigate a confusing web of bureaucratic regulations spanning both the agricultural and tourism ministries. This policy vacuum leads to severe regulatory hurdles regarding land-use zoning laws, commercial taxation on agricultural property, and complex liability and insurance requirements for hosting public visitors on working farms.
5. **Seasonal Dependence and Unpredictable Cash Flow:** Agro-tourism is doubly exposed to seasonality, as it relies on both the cyclical nature of agricultural harvest periods and the seasonal fluctuations of global tourism demand. This dual vulnerability creates highly erratic cash flows, where a farm might experience overcrowding during peak harvesting or holiday seasons and complete inactivity during planting phases or off-peak travel months, complicating long-term financial planning.
6. **Environmental Degradation and Cultural Dilution:** Unmanaged or rapid growth in visitor numbers can lead to negative ecological impacts, such as soil compaction, excessive water usage, increased local pollution, and damage to natural ecosystems. Furthermore, over-commercialization risks diluting the authentic cultural heritage of the rural community, turning sacred local traditions and genuine farming practices into staged, artificial performances for tourists.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this research paper demonstrates that rural agro-tourism is far more than a temporary trend or a basic side-income for farmers; it serves as a powerful, transformative framework for modern agricultural entrepreneurship and holistic rural development. By blending primary farming operations with service-focused hospitality, agro-tourism allows traditional farmers to break away from their historical role as passive price-takers and step into a new role as active business innovators. This strategic shift effectively helps rural communities manage the ongoing risks of climate change, crop disease, and fluctuating market prices by building a more resilient, diversified economy.

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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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Original Article

Tripura's Rajmala, Cultural Memory and Heritage Tourism as Pathways to Sustainable Development in Viksit Bharat 2047.

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Abstract:

Rajmala is a historical royal chronicle that contains the history of the royal family of Tripura, India. The writing of this book started in 1498 AD during the time of King Dharma Manikya. It was originally written in old Bengali prose. Under the instruction of the royal priest Durlobhendra Narayan, two scholars named Baneswar and Shukreswar wrote this chronicle. It contains the family lineage and war stories of 149 kings of the Manikya dynasty. It is a very important historical document to know about the medieval history of Northeast India. First written in the 15th century by the initiative of King Dharma Manikya, "Rajmala" is a historical record of regional lineage, myths, and governance system. It shows a rich mix of the region's indigenous Kirat (Indo-Mongoloid) traditions with the larger pan-Indian cultural flow. Keeping this shared memory alive helps protect the oral traditions, folklore, and historical identity of Tripura's 19 indigenous communities (like Tripuri, Chakma, Reang, Jamatia etc.) and the Bengali community from disappearing. It is not just a list of kings' histories; it is a valuable storehouse of Tripura's trade history, folk beliefs, religious rituals, social customs, and cultural heritage. In today's world of globalization, heritage tourism is not only important for saving culture, but it is also a great way for economic growth, creating jobs, and developing local resources. This research paper studies the historical places, legends, and cultural elements mentioned in Rajmala to understand the potential of heritage tourism and its importance for Viksit Bharat 2047.

Keywords: *Rajmala Heritage Tourism, Cultural Memory, Sutainable Development, Vikshit Bharat 2047, Heritage Conservation, Tourism Policy,Tripura Cultural Tourism.*

Introduction:

What is Heritage Tourism? In the current globalization age, tourism is not limited within travel or entertainment; rather it has established as an important medium of economic growth, cultural exchange, and heritage saving. Specially, heritage tourism is such a tourism-flow, through which any region's historical structures, archaeological remains, religious centers, folk traditions, and cultural memories turn into the main attraction of tourism. Heritage tourism on one side like saves the past heritage, on the other side it also creates new possibilities for local economy, job creation, and social development. That means, its main purpose is to save the past historical elements, and at the same time involve the local community to make them economically self-reliant.

This research paper mainly focuses on three matters, such as—

- The historical places, royal structures, and cultural landscapes mentioned in Rajmala have been evaluated as potential tourism resources.
- The possibility of connecting indigenous knowledge systems, folk culture, rituals, and the participation of local communities with the tourism value chain has been analyzed.
- The strategy for sustainable coordination between heritage preservation and modern tourism management has been searched. Methodologically, history-based analysis, comparative method, and secondary data analysis have been used in this research. On the other hand, the main challenges of heritage tourism—weak communication system, limited accommodation, insufficient promotion, and environmental risks—have been identified. Along with this, the role of PPP Model, Tourism Governance, Digital documentation, and cultural branding has been evaluated.

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In the last part of the research, it is said that Rajmala-based heritage tourism, along with saving the cultural heritage of Tripura, can play an effective role in strengthening the local economy, increasing employment, rural and urban development, and attracting international tourism. As a result, to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat-2047, 'Rajmala' can be established as a potential cultural and tourism resource. In every line of Rajmala, the co-existence of humans with Tripura's nature, hills, rivers, and wildlife has been told. Besides this, various historical places described in Rajmala like - Unakoti, Chabimura, Tripureswari Temple etc. are located in remote areas of Tripura. If the development of the tourism industry can be done centering this source of Rajmala, then the local indigenous community will get direct income opportunities through homestays, guides, and traditional bamboo-cane handicrafts, which will strengthen the marginal economy.

1. Rule of Tourism in Vikshit Bharat -2047:

The main goal of the Government of India's Viksit Bharat 2047 program is to turn India into a developed, self-reliant, and inclusive nation on the centenary of independence. In this plan, along with economic development, special importance has been given to cultural heritage saving, tourism expansion, job creation, and regional development. As a result, this heritage tourism is currently being considered as a strategic element of national development.

Whose main goals are----

- Economic empowerment- By the year 2047, collecting billion-dollar revenue from the tourism sector and creating lakhs and lakhs of jobs at the marginal level.
- Digital and sustainable transformation-- Making the heritage sites world-class by modernizing historical places, using digital tracking, and virtual reality.
- Creative economy-- Bringing local indigenous art, handloom industry, and craft industry to the international market.

The Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Culture of the Government of India have already started some specific steps and projects to implement the blueprint of Viksit Bharat 2047-

Among which it is notable that, according to the official group of the Ministry of Tourism, a goal has been taken to transform India into a 3 trillion-dollar tourism economy by 2047.

Crores of rupees are being allocated under "Swadesh Darshan-2.0" and PRASHAD Scheme for the development of the Ministry of Tourism.

2. Tripura and Rajmala background:

Tripura is a unique hilly state of Northeast India. This state is unique for its 19 tribal communities and long royal history. The main basis of history is "Rajmala" which is known as Tripura's "Buranjis". This is an ancient historical royal chronicle of Tripura's Manikya dynasty. In this Rajmala, it is not just the war details of kings, but rather it has the history of Tripura's ancient temples (like - Tripureswari Temple, Kasba Kali Temple, Bhuvaneswari Temple etc.), lakes, and festivals spread inside it. These places are the main elements of Tripura's "cultural memory" or heritage tourism. For example, Unakoti rock carvings, Neermahal, or Ujjayanta Palace, everything has a deep historical connection with this Rajmala.

Research Gap-- Even though there are discussions about tourism at the passenger level, there is a lack of some specific research in the case of Tripura.

- **Practical lack of Rajmala,** there is not enough academic research on how the historical and cultural descriptions of Rajmala can be used in the branding and promotion of modern heritage tourism.
- **Lack of sustainable model---** There is no specific blueprint on how these temples, pilgrimage sites, or religious and historical places like Unakoti can be linked with the sustainable development model of "Viksit Bharat - 2047" while keeping the environment and tribal culture undamaged.
- **Local participation--** There is a lack of effective research on how the economic benefits of tourism growth can directly reach the tribal and marginal people of Tripura.

Objectives of the Study -- The main objectives of this research paper are as follows:

- **To assess the Historical Significance of Rajmala,** To analyze the historical importance of this ancient Royal Chronicle Rajmala of Tripura. At the same time, to identify the social and religious background of the mentioned ancient temples, lakes, and historical places.
- **To analyze the cultural memory of Tripura,** To analyze how the history described in Rajmala is creating a common "Cultural Memory" bond among the 19 tribal communities and non-tribal populations of Tripura. To evaluate how these elements of memory are still alive today through festivals, traditions, and folk culture.
- **To Evaluate the heritage tourism Potential,** To measure the tourism potential of Tripura's sites (such as temples of Udaipur, Tripureswari Temple, Unakoti, Pilak etc.) centering the historical framework of Rajmala. To evaluate these tourisms not just as general tourism, but as a deep cultural and historical tourism resource.
- **To link Heritage tourism with sustainable development,** To search how the economic empowerment of Tripura's ancient and tribal communities is possible by making traditional tourism a tool. To create a model of how this tourism model can be directly related to the economic and social goals of "Viksit Bharat-2047" while keeping the environment and tribal culture safe.
- **To formulate strategic policy suggestions,** To propose a specific policy and guidelines for saving the resources of the places by using modern technology (such as digital archive, virtual reality) to bring Tripura's heritage tourism to the stage. Which will contribute to the state and national tourism policy.

3. Source of Data and Methodological Framework:

In this research paper, mainly Qualitative Research Methodology has been followed. To fulfill the purpose of the research, both primary and secondary data have been used.

- **Primary Sources--** The main primary source of this research is Rajmala. Which is the historical royal chronicle of Tripura's Manikya dynasty. Besides this, different translations of Rajmala, archival records, and historical documents have been used.
- **Secondary Sources-** As secondary data, various books, research papers, peer-reviewed journals, government reports, tourism policy documents, and data published by Tripura Tourism Development have been used.

Methodology:

- **Historical Textual Analysis ---** Through the text analysis of Rajmala, Tripura's history, royal continuity, cultural memory, and heritage record narrative have been identified.
- **Comparative method ---** To do a comparative analysis of Tripura's heritage tourism model with other heritage models of India. So that best practices can be identified.
- **Secondary data Review ---** By reviewing published books, journals, government reports, and tourism-related literature, it has been used to analyze the current status of Heritage tourism.
- **Policy Analysis --** By analyzing Viksit Bharat 2047, Ministry of Tourism policies, and Tripura Tourism Development Strategies, necessary policy recommendations for Sustainable Heritage Tourism have been prepared.

Result and Discussion:

1 Rajmala as Cultural Memory-- French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs has mentioned in his Collective Memory theory that human memory is not any single or isolated matter; rather it is created through social structure and group interaction. If we analyze Tripura's royal history book "Rajmala" within this theoretical framework of Maurice, it is seen that this is not just a family list of kings or details of wars; it is a long document of social memory of the people of Tripura's plains and hilly areas. The stories described in Rajmala have created a specific social structure through oral tradition, social customs, and royal patronage for hundreds of years. This has been transferred from generation to generation.

In Rajmala, there is a wide description of the origin of the Manikya dynasty, political expansion, religious behavior, administrative structure, and social relations. These details are not just data of the past but keep alive the collective historical mind of the people of Tripura. Especially, the cultural interaction of the tribal and Bengali communities is reflected in Rajmala. Which still plays a role in forming social unity today.

One of the elements of Collective Memory is "shared symbols" or joint symbols. The royal palaces, temples, worship of gods and goddesses, royal festivals, and stories of war victory described in Rajmala are working as these "shared symbols". Through this, the people of Tripura feel themselves as a part of a historical continuity.

The importance of Rajmala is also immense in Identity Formation. The community of a region builds their current identity based on their past. In the case of Tripura also, Rajmala is one of the main bases for forming regional identity, historical glory, and cultural branding. From the perspective of heritage tourism, this collective identity can turn into a powerful tourism asset. That means, tourists will not come only to see structures or sightseeing places; they can become a part of a living history and cultural experience.

From the Textual Analysis of this research, it is proved that Rajmala is working as a bridge between the tribal and non-tribal people of Tripura. According to Maurice Halbwachs, material or geographical elements are needed to keep joint memory alive. Rajmala has done exactly this work. The various religious rituals, festivals, and royal decrees mentioned in it have mixed with the own social rules of Tripura's 19 tribal communities (such as - Reang, Tripuri, Chakma etc.). This is such a joint memory, which reminds the people of every community of the state about their common past and helps to maintain social cohesion.

2 Mapping Rajmala Heritage site-- One of the main importances of Rajmala is that the various historical places, religious centers, and royal routes mentioned in it are still a part of Tripura's heritage landscape today. Through the Historical Textual Analysis and comparative mapping of the research, some important heritage sites can be identified.

Firstly, The Udaipur region has received special importance in Rajmala as the ancient capital of Tripura. Its ancient name was Rangamati. In 1567 AD, Tripura's Maharaja Uday Manikya changed the name of Tripura's capital Rangamati and kept it 'Udaipur' after his own name. According to the royal history book Rajmala, in the sixth century, King Jujar Pha came here from Magadha and established the capital. This was a religious and administrative center. The royal lakes, temples, and architecture here still carry the history of medieval Tripura today.

Secondly, Tripura Sundari Temple or Matabari is one of the most sacred places in the description of Rajmala. Built during the time of Maharaja Dhanya Manikya, this temple is one of the 51 Shakti Peethas of India. Along with religious tourism, it has a huge potential for cultural tourism as well. If connected with the narrative of Rajmala, tourists can know the historical explanation of the temple along with its religious importance.

Thirdly, Neermahal, although not present in the ancient volumes of Rajmala, is still a part of the continuous architectural heritage of the Manikya royal tradition. Located in the middle of Rudrasagar, this royal palace or water palace is an important symbol of Tripura's royal heritage. If the royal continuity of Rajmala is connected with this, the narrative of heritage tourism becomes more powerful.

Fourthly, Unakoti, located in the North-East district of Tripura state, is an extraordinary rock-art based religious center. The huge Shiva statues carved out of the hill and Shaiva sculptures carry a symbolic testimony of Tripura's ancient art heritage. Its connection with the mythological elements of Rajmala is specially effective for heritage storytelling.

Although the exact founder or time of establishment of this Unakoti is historically unknown, but the sculptures were built between the 7th to 9th centuries according to estimated calculations. According to Tripura's royal family history Rajmala, the ancient kings of Tripura were followers of Lord Shiva. The mythological story says that Mahadev started a journey towards Kashi taking one crore gods and goddesses with him, but because they could not wake up at the scheduled time, the others were cursed and turned into stone, resulting in one less than a crore, which is how the origin of the name "Unakoti" happened. This mythological

narrative, along with the Shaiva cultural tradition of Rajmala and the state memory of Tripura, is establishing Unakoti as an important Heritage and religious tourism destination.

3 Indigenous knowledge and tourism value chain-- Tripura's heritage tourism is not only architecture-based; rather it is connected with the indigenous knowledge system of the local communities. Inside this, the political, military, and cultural roles of the tribal groups are mentioned in Rajmala. If this knowledge-based heritage can be linked with the value chain, new areas of sustainable development can be created. The own cultural traditions of Tripura's Tripuri community, Reang community, and Jamatia community are important assets for tourism. Their lifestyle, folk knowledge, agricultural methods, and social rituals are capable of providing an authentic cultural experience.

Among the folk dances, Garia festival, Hojagiri dance, and Lebang Boomni festival can be the main attractions of heritage tourism. Especially, the dances of these communities are known at the international level also. Which can increase seasonal tourist inflow through cultural festival-based tourism. On the other hand, religious rituals like Ker Puja, Biju festival, Garia Puja, etc. are symbols of cultural unity between tribal and non-tribal communities. If these festivals are connected with the historical descriptions of Rajmala, the cultural interpretation will become deeper.

Food culture is also a big part of Tripura's tourism value chain. Traditional foods like - Mui Borok, Guduk, and Chakwi create a potential for culinary tourism. Tourists can enter deep into the culture through local food experiences.

There is a strong potential for Tripura tourism development in the case of handicrafts as well. The perfect items made of bamboo and cane, and the clothes woven by the tribal people on their own looms like Risa (which recently got the GI Tag) are highly attractive products for tourists. This can directly boost the ancient rural economy.

Challenges in Heritage Tourism Development—

In the case of Tripura Heritage tourism, by reviewing secondary data and analyzing the current situation, five main challenges of Tripura's tourism sector have been identified;

Firstly: Connectivity Bottlenecks, the geographical distance of Tripura from mainland India and the lack of developed and high-speed road or rail communication to travel between heritage sites within the state (such as from the main capital Agartala to Udaipur, Unakoti, Pilak in South Tripura) discourage tourists.

Secondly: Hotel and hospitality shortage, Outside Agartala or Udaipur, there is a severe shortage of world-class hotels, resorts, or homestays near the main tourism fields. Which is a huge barrier to attracting international tourists.

Thirdly: Promotion and marketing gap, compared to the heritage sites of other states of India (such as Rajasthan or Kerala), the royal history of Tripura and the narrative of Rajmala have not been properly promoted at the national and international levels.

Fourthly: Lack of skilled man-power, At the local level, there is a lack of professional heritage guides, skilled workers for the hospitality industry, and interpreters.

Fifthly: Ecological and cultural Risks, as a result of uncontrolled tourism, there is a risk of damaging the ecological balance of sensitive hills like Unakoti, river routes like Chabimura, or wetlands like Rudrasagar. At the same time, because of the commercialization of tribal culture, there is a fear of losing their original heritage.

5 Policy Suggestions--

- ***PPP, Governance and Digital Branding,*** to face these challenges, Policy-Driven Governance is very important. Public private partnership (PPP) model can be effective in Heritage tourism development. The government will give infrastructure, conservation and policy support; the private sector will improve hospitality, branding and service delivery.

In the case of tourism governance, inter-departmental coordination is needed. Integrated work of tourism department, cultural department, Panchayat institutions and local community is urgent.

- ***Digital Archive and AR/VR,*** one of the main goals of Viksit Bharat 2047 is the use of technology. At present, creating a digital archive is the demand of time. If the manuscripts of Rajmala, archival documents and royal records are digitalized, heritage preservation will be strong. Through this, both research and global accessibility will increase.
- ***AR/VR,*** AI-powered audio sound and Virtual Reality (VR) booths can be set up for tourists at Unakoti or Tripura Sundari Temple. Through this, a tourist can see the history of Tripura's Manikya dynasty period coming alive in front of their eyes. Which is one of the main features of current world-class tourism. For example, an AI-based Audio Guide can explain the history of Rajmala in different languages.

Besides, it is possible to transform Rajmala into a global cultural brand through digital branding. Social media campaigns, immersive storytelling, documentary content and virtual exhibitions will help in attracting international tourists.

6 Sustainable Development and Vikshit Bharat 2047-- One of the main goals of Viksit Bharat 2047 is economic development, social inclusion, and cultural preservation. Heritage tourism can play an important role in all these three areas. According to Tripura's "Viksit Tripura 2047" blueprint, the state government has set a target to take the state's economy to 124 billion dollars by the year 2047. Where the contribution of the tourism sector will be 15% of the GSDP. According to the economic indicators in the official vision document "Viksit Tripura @ 2047" report published jointly by the Government of Tripura and Niti Aayog, keeping in line with the tourism policy, it can be said that the main driving force and historical basis for achieving this target is hidden in the narrative of the ancient "Rajmala" book. Because the Tripura Sundari Temple, Unakoti, or the traditional tribal culture described in Rajmala are the main raw materials of current heritage tourism. By using this history of Rajmala, it is possible to fulfill the government's goal. The tourism model built centering the historical narratives of Rajmala and the traditional sites of Tripura basically implements the *"Tourism Multiplier Effect"* and the World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) *"Sustainable Tourism Development"* theory, which is capable of boosting the rural economy of marginal tribal regions.

The main goals of Viksit Bharat 2047 can play an important role in these three areas: economic development, social inclusion, and cultural preservation.

Firstly - GDP Growth, the income of the state will increase through the expansion of the tourism sector. Heritage tourism creates a multiplier effect-- economic activities increase in all sectors like hotels, transport, food, handicrafts, and guide services.

Secondly - Employment Generation, Heritage tourism creates many direct and indirect employments. Tourist guides, hotel staff, transport operators, artisans, and performers-- everyone will be the beneficiaries of this.

Thirdly - Rural Development, most of the heritage assets of Tripura are located in rural or semi-rural areas. If tourism revenue directly reaches the villages, the local economy will become strong. Homestay models and craft-based entrepreneurship can ensure rural empowerment.

Fourthly - International Tourism Expansion, If Tripura can do cultural branding based on Rajmala, then it can take a strong position in the international heritage tourism map. Especially, it is possible to attract tourists from Southeast Asia, Bangladesh, Nepal, and global heritage tourists.

By the year 2047, India wants to see itself as one of the main global leaders or "Vishwaguru" on the world stage. Therefore, international tourism expansion will accelerate this international goal of India.

The geographical location of Tripura is very close to Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand which is Southeast Asia. If the royal narrative in Rajmala and the unique culture of Northeast India can be branded internationally, then it will strengthen India's Act East Policy. This will take India's "soft power" and cultural diplomacy to a new height on the global tourism map.

Although historical research has been done on Rajmala, analytical research on sustainable development in the context of Viksit Bharat-2047 by connecting Rajmala with cultural memory and heritage tourism is comparatively limited. The current research is trying to fill that gap.

Viksit Bharat 2047: Grassroots Reality and Preconditions for Development:-

Through Viksit Bharat 2047, the Government of India has set a target to build the country into a developed, self-reliant, and inclusive nation on the centenary of independence. However, to achieve this goal, only the expansion of big industrial groups or urban-centric infrastructural development is not enough. For real development, strengthening the rural economy and delivering direct economic power into the hands of the marginal communities of the society is essential.

World economist Amartya Sen has shown in his famous book "Development as Freedom" that development does not mean only income growth; rather it means the increase of people's education, health, capability, and opportunity for independent decision-making. That means, if the quality of life of common people does not improve, then only statistical growth cannot be the indicator of real development. In his Capability Approach, he has shown that if a village laborer does not get wages on time even after working, then despite statistical development, it cannot be counted as real development.

Similarly, Jean Drèze was associated with the London School of Economics (LSE) and he is a development and welfare economist. He has repeatedly mentioned that the centerpiece of India's development should be "inclusive growth," where the rural poor, working-class people, and marginal communities will be direct partners of development. According to him, if social security, employment, and food security are not ensured, development remains limited only on paper.

The UGC-NET examination was canceled only one day after it was held because the question paper was leaked on the Darknet and Telegram. Apart from this, big examinations like CSIR-UGC NET and NEET-PG were postponed. This has put the future of lakhs and lakhs of youth in the country into uncertainty. According to paper leak data, more than 40 question paper leaks have happened in India in the last five years, affecting the futures of nearly 1.5 crore youth.

If the National Testing Agency (NTA), which is the main body for national level exams, fails to maintain transparency, then how can "Viksit Bharat 2047" be successful? If the future human resource of the country is destroyed through paper leaks and corruption, then statistical growth cannot bring real development. Amartya Sen's "Capability Approach" and Jean Drèze's "Inclusive Growth" theory show that the main foundation of an advanced nation is to ensure quality education, transparent examination systems, and fair opportunities for its youth.

Therefore, to achieve the dream of Viksit Bharat 2047, along with developing heritage tourism, it is highly necessary to ensure transparency at the grassroots level, control corruption in national institutions like NTA, and stop paper leaks. Only when the common people and the meritorious youth get their fair rights, will the dream of a developed India become a reality at the grassroots level.

To escape from this dangerous situation, the Parliamentary Standing Committee and the prominent educationist Dr. K. Radhakrishnan Committee have recommended radical and wartime reforms in the country's education and examination system. In India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020) also, it is told to remove this rote learning and examination-centric defects, but its proper implementation is still very far away.

The famous quote of our India's supreme father and father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi, "India Lives in its villages"-- is still equally relevant today as the real strength of India lies in villages. Therefore, if the village economy is weak, the national economy also cannot be strong in the long run. The grassroots level reality highlights the same picture. For example: I myself from the past year 2008 till today, that means for 19 years, am working at the grassroots level as a Gram Rozgar Sahayak (GRS) under the Government of India's "Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act". This long career's field-level experience has given me the opportunity to observe the real picture of the rural economy from very close. Based on that experience, I am raising this statement.

Even today, though many rural laborers work very hard, in many cases their wages do not reach their hands on time; sometimes instead of 7 days, it delays up to two months, or even three months. As a result of this, their purchasing power decreases, the flow of money in the local market drops, and overall, the rural economy becomes weak.

Not only payment delay, currently due to the introduction of various digital tools, such as e-KYC, Aadhaar linking, digital attendance etc., many common laborers are facing extra harassment. Although the use of technology is important for increasing

transparency, in reality, it is seen that many remote villages do not even have a stable electricity connection yet; internet or network facility is a matter of even further away. In this reality, digital obligations are creating new problems for laborers in many cases.

Many laborers have to run to the Panchayat office, Block office, and Aadhaar center repeatedly to solve problems related to e-KYC or Aadhaar. Yet this is not the personal mistake of the laborers; rather it is the result of administrative and systemic limitations.

In many cases, it is seen that after a new government rule or guideline is introduced, the district administration or block level officials only issue orders on paper and forward them to the lower-level employees. But in the case of real implementation, a severe lack of necessary awareness-raising programs, training workshops, or field-level orientation programmes is observed.

In my field-level experience, I have seen that if the administration had conducted regular awareness programs by personal initiative or government funding, then the common people and grassroots level employees could have adapted to the new rules and technological changes much faster. Through this, confusion, administrative complexities, and unnecessary harassment could have been reduced significantly.

Unfortunately, in most cases, this type of initiative is not seen in reality. As a result, many policies remain limited only on paper, and their full benefits do not reach the common people.

From this long field-level experience, I can strongly say that if the rural economy is not strengthened, it is not possible to build Viksit Bharat in the true sense.

Conclusion: -

In conclusion, it can be said that Rajmala is not only a historical document of Tripura state; it is an important foundation of Tripura's cultural memory, tradition, and social identity. If the historical places, religious centers, and cultural elements described in Rajmala can be effectively linked with heritage tourism, it can play an important role in Tripura's economic development, job creation, and cultural preservation.

It is evident in this research that heritage tourism is not only through the expansion of the tourism industry; rather it is an effective tool for using resources in rural development and economic empowerment of marginal communities. Especially, it can open doors of new possibilities for the tribal population of Tripura, local handicraftsmen, homestay entrepreneurs, and tourism-dependent small businessmen.

However, in the case of implementing the goals of Viksit Bharat 2047, only big industries, urban development, or technology-dependent policies are not enough. For real development, strengthening the rural economy, ensuring timely wages for laborers, quality education, administrative transparency, and effective programs at the grassroots level are essential. Because the true indicator of development is--- its benefits reaching the last person of the society.

Therefore, it can be said that if the sustainable development of heritage tourism centering Rajmala and the strengthening of the grassroots economy can be taken forward together, it will be capable of contributing importantly not only to Tripura's development but also to achieving the larger goals of Viksit Bharat 2047.

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Original Article

Rural Economics of Gandhiji and Challenges Today

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Abstract:
Gandhiji's thoughts about economy, though more than 75 years old, are still relevant today, considering the concepts of capitalism and Marxism. Gandhiji's thoughts revolved around village population. He emphasized on an economy where all the adult males and females seeking work should get work and the system should be decentralized. There should be collective control by village communities over the use of natural resources. Every family in the village should have its basic necessities fulfilled. Every village should be self-sufficient in its primary needs. The important feature of this concept of economic system suggested by Gandhiji was based on morality and included justice and equality.

Key words: *Village population, Rural Economics, Gandhiji, Rural Development.*

Introduction

Even though Gandhiji's thoughts about economy are more than 75 years old, they are still new considering the concepts of capitalism and Marxism. The concepts of similar methodology, financial dealing without the middlemen are necessary and useful even today. Especially, Gandhiji's concepts in respect of rural development can be implemented even today.

Since most of the population of India resided in villages, Gandhiji's thoughts about development revolved around village population. After returning from Africa, during his travels around the India to understand the country, he observed a dreary picture of village population, namely poverty, filthy surroundings, exploitation of unemployed, social and economic disparity, illiteracy and mental slavery. The solutions he suggested on this situation, after a thorough thought process, were far different than those that were used in various places around the world.

During the period of Gandhiji, the capitalist market economy based on the big industries that emerged because of Industrial Revolution prevailed in the Western World. In this centralized system, the manufacturing capacity and production increased tremendously with the help of modern machines. Similarly, goal of eradicating poverty and saving labour from their exploitation was achieved to a large extent. Even though this system had achieved mesmerizing material progress in the developed world, the motivation behind that was just making profit. While achieving that purpose, the fundamental rights of people in village to sustain themselves by the use of natural resources and their employment was being snatched away. That is why, it can be observed that in the western countries, during the period of Industrial Revolution, the people from villages migrated to cities in search of an employment. Even though, in the modernized automated industries, to get huge production with less number of labour was considered as an embellishment and was a thing of pride, the purpose behind this economic management was enhancing the productivity of individual employee in the process and thereby reducing employment opportunities and for those who were working, forcing them to increase the production through exploitation of their lobour power. Karl Marx has written in detail about this surplus value in respect of the inherent disparity and exploitation in this system. Though the capital and profit were not concentrated in the hands of few people in communist and socialist rule and all the natural resources belonged to people (in fact, the Government), the nature of industrial management was similar to capitalism. Hence the basic trend of modern process of economic development was the reason of shrinking employment opportunities. Attempts were made in Soviet Russia to increase the pace capital creation by exploiting labour force and these attempts increased a lot during the period of Stalin. Both of these economic systems also get impacted by boom and bust and the people in lowest layer of the society get affected.

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The Outline of Alternate Rural Economics of Gandhiji

On the abovementioned background, the outline of rural development and rural economics suggested by Gandhiji had been on a different footing. There should an economic system where all the adult males and females who are seeking work will get work. Gandhiji emphasized that such a system should be decentralized. This system should be based on conservation of natural resources and their limited use in the village and surrounding areas and for the purpose, their should be collective control by the village communities over the use of natural resources such as land, water, forest, grazing land reserved for cattle. This is what Gandhiji thought. It was Gandhiji's dream that every person who is eligible and ready to work, should get the work and every family in a village should have its basic necessities fulfilled. In this format of village development included a neat and clean village, the houses built through the resources available around, food for the people in the village and fodder for the cattle produced in the village organically, healthy villagers, and education based on experience and hard work. He always felt a village should be self-sufficient for its primary needs. To achieve this, he considered Khadi and Village Industries as the means. Gandhiji expected the scope for happiness and creativity through work. Even during the zest of fighting for freedom, he had inspired his followers to bring this concept into practice. He had an ideal dream for all the villages in the Independent India that there should be a decentralized and autonomous economic system that would result a simple, happy and content life for villagers. The important feature of this concept of economic system suggested by Gandhiji was based on morality and included justice and equality.

The development format based on modern economic model that we have implemented since independence till date; if you try to seek answer whether this model has solved the basic issue of reducing our unemployment problem, poverty, malnutrition and economic disparity, it will most likely be negative. On the contrary, these problems seem to have aggravated while we are celebrating 75th anniversary of independence. In this context, if we look at rural areas, you will observe a heart-rending picture.

Rural India has changed, but …….

Today, villages are totally dependent on cities. Since the processing industries based in villages at one time have been shifted to cities, the primary burden of rural employment rests on agriculture. Today, while considering the 'Supply Chain' management, the Government talks about encouraging warehouses and processing industries. However, it could create a chain of middlemen. Since most of the agriculture is rainfed or unirrigated, it cannot provide all the villagers year-round employment. Further since the market economy has its hold on agriculture, the rates of agricultural inputs and its produce are decided by the market. In the process, the farmer is looted. Because of soil erosion and absence of irrigation facilities, agriculture production has seen reduction over the years. In addition to that, the cost of agricultural production has been increasing and thereby reducing the profit margin making agriculture a loss-making proposition. Since the buying of outputs in modern farming such as seeds, fertilisers, insecticides have become inevitable, it has led to farmers becoming debt-ridden. Further the agriculture is dependent on rain, in the event of deficient rains, the debt-ridden farmers are prone to suicides.

Generally, the agriculture system that prevailed 50 years ago and could fulfill the need of food for a farmer's family, and had the tradition of cultivating 10/12 different types of crops, now is limited to 2/3 crops based on the market demand and this has resulted in malnutrition and reducing immunity for diseases in the villages. Today the healthcare costs of a farmer's family in villages have increased to a large extent to become next to the cost of farming. In the absence of requisite facilities at the primary health centres in villages, the farmers have no alternative but to visit private clinics and the cost thereto is much higher compared to Government clinics. The education levels of children in schools in villages can be observed from the Annual Education Status Report (ASER). As the unemployment and inflation levels have increased tremendously, the population in villages have also suffered from their impact. In search of employment, young people and adults are moving to cities and they are living there like refugees. To sustain the fierce competition, industrial units, with an aim of reducing cost of production are resorting to automation and artificial intelligence which is going to increase on large scale in future, the urban unemployment will increase even though gross domestic product (GDP) may increase.

Options for Equality based and fair Village Development.

If villages are to be developed according to the plan compatible with Gandhiji's thoughts, you may have to return to basic point of establishing rights of villagers on the local resources and on the basis of that, establishing agriculture and industries. During the eighties of last century, the topic of appropriate technology emerged around the world. The formula behind this was utilizing local resources easily available locally for solving local problems with the help of local people. Using this concept, it is possible to create new industries by giving appropriate training to local people. For example: Every year 20 million tons of agriculture waste is generated in rural areas around the country. Since it is burnt, 3.85 million tons of organic Carbon, 59,000 tons of Nitrogen and 2,000 tons of Phosphate and 34,000 tons of Potash is destroyed. Now the technology is available to convert this agriculture waste into best bio-fertiliser and it could be used at a village level. If we could do that, not only villages will be cleaned, not only nutrients necessary for the growth of crops will become available, but also thousands of youth from villages could get employment. There are many technologies developed with the assistance of the Science and Technology division of Government of India during the last 60 years that are useful for rural areas and have potential to generate employment. However, their utility reports are lying locked the cupboards of the division. Watershed Development and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MNREG) schemes have the potential of transforming the whole picture of rural area. The villages such as Ralegan Siddhi and Hivare Bazar have already proved this. With the compensation received by Tribals and clearing obstacles in the implementation of Recognition of Forest Rights Act 2006 (The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006), by the Government, the Tribal villages also can become self-sufficient by generating employment and fulfilling financial needs with the appropriate use of forest assets. This has already been displayed by villages from Vidarbha such as Pachgaon, Medha-Lekha, and other villages. Under the guidance of Timbaktu Collective, a NGO in Telangana State, over 25,000 poor families from 285 villages of drought prone Anantpur District in Telangana State have made

their own development possible with conservation of soil, water and forests and multiple cropping pattern in agriculture. In this development, there is a large share of businesses allied to agriculture run on cooperative basis. A successful attempt has been made by Chhattisgarh Government, during the last four years, to create alternate parallel rural economy in 20,000 villages with the use of available local resources.

In view of the all the examples mentioned hereinabove, it can be noticed that if we walk in the direction shown by Gandhiji, we can change the picture of our rural area even today. However, it needs the appropriate support from the Government.

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Original Article

An Analysis of Street Vendors' Economic Conditions During War-Induced Inflation in Western Maharashtra

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Abstract

Street vendors constitute a significant segment of India's informal economy, providing affordable goods and services while generating self-employment opportunities. However, global conflicts and geopolitical tensions often lead to disruptions in supply chains, rising fuel prices, and increased commodity costs, resulting in inflationary pressures. This study examines the economic conditions of street vendors in India during periods of war-induced inflation. The paper analyses the impact of rising prices on vendors' income, purchasing power, operational costs, and business sustainability. The findings indicate that inflation has significantly increased the cost of raw materials, transportation, and daily necessities, reduced profit margins and affecting the overall livelihood of street vendors. The study suggests policy interventions such as financial assistance, subsidized credit, and social security measures to support this vulnerable sector.

Keywords: *Street Vendors, Inflation, War-Induced Inflation, Informal Sector, Livelihood, India*

Introduction

The contemporary global economy operates within a highly interconnected web of trade, supply chains, and financial flows. Consequently, geopolitical conflicts are no longer localized crises; they trigger extensive macroeconomic ripples worldwide. The transition from the COVID-19 pandemic directly into major prolonged geopolitical conflicts—such as the Russia-Ukraine war—unleashed severe global economic disruptions. These events caused unprecedented shocks to the supply chains of critical commodities, including crude oil, natural gas, chemical fertilizers, and agricultural staples. The resulting global commodity price surge triggered a wave of imported cost-push inflation across both developed and developing nations.

In India, this war-induced inflation manifested rapidly. Rising international fuel prices increased domestic transportation and logistics costs, driving headline Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation past the Reserve Bank of India's upper comfort threshold of 6%. While inflation strains all socio-economic strata, its impact is profoundly regressive. The hardest hit are those within the informal sector, an ecosystem that employs over 80% of India's workforce but lacks structural financial buffers. Within this informal layer, street vendors occupy a highly exposed position. Vending serves as an essential urban safety net and a primary source of self-employment for marginal populations, yet it operates on thin profit margins, minimal cash reserves, and heavily relies on daily consumer spending.

Street vending plays a crucial role in India's economy by providing employment to millions of individuals, particularly those with limited education and financial resources. According to various estimates, street vendors contribute significantly to urban and semi-urban markets by offering affordable products and services.

Global conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine war have disrupted international trade and supply chains, leading to increases in fuel prices, food prices, and transportation costs. These inflationary pressures have directly affected informal workers, especially street vendors, who often operate with limited capital and minimal institutional support.

This study explores how war-induced inflation has affected the economic conditions of street vendors in India.

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Review of Literature

Conducting a **Review of Literature** for your study requires contextualizing how macro-level global shocks (like war-induced inflation) filter down to micro-level informal economies, specifically focusing on the vulnerabilities of street vendors in an emerging economic hub like Western Maharashtra.

Devereux, (2001).

When macro-level inflation spikes, the informal sector bears a disproportionate burden. In development economics, livelihood insecurity is analyzed not merely as a symptom of poverty, but as a compounding cause that accelerates vulnerability

Bhowmik (2012)

The structural outline below organizes existing literature into thematic pillars, highlighting the academic foundation for your research.

The study highlighted the importance of street vendors in urban economies and emphasized their vulnerability to economic shocks and policy changes.

Martínez & Short, (2022; Peimani & Kamalipour,(2022).

A systematic review of informal street vending demonstrates that the sector is defined by high socioeconomic diversity and structural segmentation **Peimani & Kamalipour, (2022).**

Street vending functions as an essential, omnipresent safety net and a form of economic "self-help" for low-income households in the Global South

Al-Jundi et al., (2022).

During inflationary periods, street vendors face a severe dual pressure:

- **The Cost-Push Squeeze:** Rising wholesale prices and elevated transportation costs (driven by oil shocks) increase the cost of goods sold.
- **The Demand-Side Constraint:** Because their primary consumer base consists of low-income populations, vendors cannot easily pass these costs onto customers without facing a drastic drop in sales volume Furthermore, a critical barrier highlighted in the literature is the systemic **lack of microfinance** and formal credit channels for informal traders

Martínez & Short, (2022).

When working capital is eroded by inflation, vendors are frequently forced into cycles of deep indebtedness to exploitative, illegal payday lenders, severely impeding their ability to move out of poverty or sustain their business operations

Chatterji et al., (2023).

While India enacted the landmark ***Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act in 2014,*** the on-ground implementation remains deeply contested (Chatterji et al., 2023). In highly urbanized and industrial regions like Western Maharashtra (encompassing major economic zones like Pune, Nashik, and parts of Mumbai's periphery), street vendors routinely clash with state hegemony and changing urban aesthetics. As cities attempt to project a "world-class" image to attract global investment, the informal spaces that vendors occupy shrink, subjecting them to administrative harassment and eviction threats alongside economic pressures.

International Labor Organization (ILO, 2023)

The report noted that inflation disproportionately affects workers in the informal sector due to unstable incomes and lack of social security protection.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI, 2023)

RBI reports indicated that global conflicts contributed to rising inflation through increased fuel and commodity prices, affecting household consumption and small businesses.

National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI)

Research by NASVI found that street vendors face challenges such as rising operating costs, fluctuating demand, and inadequate financial support.

Algieri et al., (2025).

Recent macroeconomic literature underscores that modern inflation is increasingly synchronized across borders due to exogenous global shocks

Banerjee & Bhattacharya, (2025).

The transition from the COVID-19 pandemic directly into geopolitical conflicts, such as the Russia-Ukraine war, triggered severe supply chain disruptions and a global surge in international commodity prices—particularly crude oil, fertilizers, and agricultural staples

Banerjee & Bhattacharya, (2025).

In the context of the Indian economy, these twin shocks altered the domestic inflationary process, causing headline Consumer Price.

Algieri et al., (2025).

Index (CPI) inflation to breach the Reserve Bank of India's upper tolerance band of 6% Scholars point out that when global factors drive inflation, domestic fiscal and monetary policies face limited efficacy, leaving the local economy highly vulnerable to imported cost-push shocks

However, because informal workers lack structured social protections or asset control, their capacity to smooth consumption during sharp economic contractions is remarkably weak (Devereux, 2001). This lack of insulation means that price hikes strip away the marginal profits of self-employed traders almost instantly.

Statement of the Problem

War-induced inflation has increased the prices of essential commodities, transportation, and business inputs. Street vendors, who largely depend on daily earnings, face significant economic difficulties in maintaining their livelihoods and sustaining their businesses.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the impact of war-induced inflation on street vendors in India.
2. To analyze changes in income and expenditure patterns of street vendors.
3. To identify challenges faced by vendors due to rising costs.
4. To suggest measures for improving the economic resilience of street vendors.

Research Methodology

Descriptive and analytical research

To effectively execute the study on **"An Analysis of Street Vendors' Economic Conditions During War-Induced Inflation in Western Maharashtra,"** we must explicitly separate and execute both the **Descriptive** and **Analytical** components of research design.

In research methodology, combining these two creates a powerful framework: the descriptive phase maps out *what* the reality is on the ground, while the analytical phase uncovers *why* it is happening and *how* different variables are interacting.

1. The Descriptive Research method

The primary goal here is to construct an accurate, data-driven demographic and financial baseline profile of the street vendors. Because these workers operate in the informal sector, this phase documents facts that are otherwise missing from official municipal records.

A. Key Descriptive Parameters to Measure

- **Socio-Demographic Profile:** Age distribution, gender ratios, education levels, migration status (e.g., intra-state migrants from Marathwada vs. local residents), and family size.
- **Operational Typology:** Type of vending unit (mobile cart, stationary roadside stall, head-load hawker) and product classification (perishable food, cooked food, non-perishable goods).
- **Basic Financial Baseline:** Average daily turnover, daily working capital requirements, and number of working hours per day since the 2026 inflation surge.

B. Statistical Tools Used

To present descriptive data clearly in your thesis, you will use **Univariate and Bivariate Descriptive Statistics**:

- **Frequency Distributions & Percentages:** To show the proportion of women vendors or the share of vendors selling perishable items.
- **Measures of Central Tendency (Mean, Median):** To identify the true "average" daily income of a vendor (the median is critical here, as high-earning stalls can skew the mean).
- **Cross-Tabulations (Contingency Tables):** To compare two descriptive variables simultaneously—for example, *Vending Location (Pune vs. Solapur)* cross-tabulated with *Primary Credit Source (Formal Bank vs. Local Money Lender)*.

2. The Analytical Research method

Once the descriptive data builds the foundation, the analytical phase goes deeper. It tests hypotheses to establish **cause-and-effect relationships** between the global inflationary shock (the cause) and the vendors' economic degradation (the effect).

A. Formulating Research Hypotheses

To drive the analytical component, you must test specific, measurable assumptions. For example:

- **H_0 (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant difference in the net profit margins of vendors relying on formal credit versus those relying on informal money lenders during inflationary spikes.
- **H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis):** Vendors relying on informal money lenders experience significantly greater compression of net profit margins due to high debt-servicing costs during inflationary spikes.

B. Statistical and Econometric Modeling

Analytical design requires inferential statistics to prove your hypotheses valid. You can employ two primary tools:

1. Chi-Square Test of Independence (χ^2)

Used to see if there is a statistically significant association between two categorical variables.

- *Application:* Test if a vendor's **Product Category** (Perishable vs. Non-Perishable) is dependent on their **Coping Mechanism** (Reducing household food intake vs. Taking out new loans).

Data Sources

- **Primary Data:** Structured questionnaire administered to street vendors.
- **Secondary Data:** RBI reports, Government publications, research articles, journals, and newspaper reports.

Sampling

Convenience sampling method.

Sample Size

100 street vendors from selected urban areas.

Data Analysis Tools

- Percentage Analysis
- Mean and Average Analysis
- Graphical Representation

6. Impact of War-Induced Inflation on Street Vendors

1 Increase in Cost of Goods

Street vendors experienced a substantial rise in the prices of fruits, vegetables, food ingredients, clothing materials, and other commodities due to disruptions in global supply chains.

Effects:

- Reduced profit margins.
- Increased selling prices.
- Difficulty maintaining inventory.

2 Rise in Transportation Costs

Fuel price increases led to higher transportation expenses.

Effects:

- Increased procurement costs.
- Reduced frequency of stock purchases.
- Higher dependence on local suppliers.

3 Decline in Consumer Purchasing Power

Inflation reduced the disposable income of consumers.

Effects:

- Lower demand for non-essential products.
- Reduced sales volume.
- Greater price sensitivity among customers.

4 Reduction in Savings

As household expenses increased, vendors had fewer opportunities to save money.

Effects:

- Financial insecurity.
- Increased dependence on informal borrowing.
- Difficulty handling emergencies.

5 Business Sustainability Challenges

Many vendors struggled to sustain their businesses due to increasing operational expenses.

Effects:

- Reduced working capital.
- Business closures in some cases.
- Lower overall profitability.

That title sounds like a solid academic thesis, policy paper, or research proposal. It focuses on a highly specific, vulnerable segment of the informal economy (street vendors) in a distinct geographic region (Western Maharashtra) during a macro-economic crisis (war-induced inflation, likely referring to global supply chain shocks from recent conflicts).

Advantages (The Strengths)

- **High Social & Economic Relevance:**

Street vendors are the backbone of the informal economy in India. Studying how global macro-shocks (like war-driven oil or fertilizer price spikes) trickle down to local micro-economies (like a vegetable vendor in Pune or Kolhapur) provides incredibly valuable, real-world insights for policymakers.

- **Clear Geographic & Demographic Focus:**

By limiting the scope to "Western Maharashtra" and "Street Vendors," the research avoids becoming too broad. It gives you a manageable, distinct population to survey or interview.

- **Addresses a Research Gap:**

While there is plenty of data on how inflation affects corporate sectors or formal employment, the granular impact of *war-induced* inflation on informal, daily-wage workers is often under-researched.

- **Strong Potential for Primary Data:**

This topic allows for rich, qualitative, and quantitative primary data collection through direct field surveys, interviews, and case studies.

Disadvantages (The Challenges)

- **Data Collection Hurdles:**

Street vendors are a highly transient, unorganized population. They don't keep formal financial ledgers or tax records. Gathering accurate data on their profit margins, daily earnings, and changing operational costs over time will require immense patience and trust-building.

- **Isolating the Variable ("War-Induced"):**

Inflation rarely has a single cause. It will be methodologically difficult to prove that a vendor's economic distress is strictly due to *war-induced* inflation versus local factors (like a bad monsoon, local municipal crackdowns, fuel price hikes from domestic policy, or post-pandemic recovery cycles).

- **Language and Cultural Barriers:**

Conducting field research in Western Maharashtra requires fluency in Marathi and an understanding of local socio-economic dynamics (e.g., how weekly markets, or * आठवडी बाजार*, operate) to get honest, accurate responses.

- **Hyper-Local Generalizability:**

Because Western Maharashtra has its own unique economic drivers (heavy industrialization, affluent sugar-belt agriculture, major urban hubs like Pune), the findings might not accurately reflect the conditions of street vendors in poorer or more rural regions of India, limiting how widely your conclusions can be applied.

Findings of the Study

1. War-induced inflation significantly increased the cost of goods and services for street vendors.
2. Transportation costs increased due to rising fuel prices.
3. Consumer demand declined because of reduced purchasing power.
4. Profit margins decreased despite increased selling prices.
5. Many vendors experienced financial stress and reduced savings.
6. Access to formal credit remained limited.
7. Street vendors were among the most vulnerable groups affected by inflation.

Suggestions

1. Provide low-interest loans through banks and microfinance institutions.
2. Expand social security coverage for street vendors.
3. Introduce inflation-linked financial assistance programs.
4. Establish vendor support centers for business guidance and training.
5. Improve access to affordable transportation and market infrastructure.
6. Strengthen implementation of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014.

Conclusion

Street vendors form an essential component of India's informal economy and contribute significantly to employment generation and urban commerce. However, war-induced inflation has adversely affected their economic conditions through rising costs, declining purchasing power, and shrinking profit margins. The study concludes that without adequate policy support and financial protection, street vendors remain highly vulnerable to external economic shocks. Government intervention, financial inclusion, and social security measures are necessary to ensure the sustainability and welfare of street vendors in India.

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Original Article

Tourism As a Catalyst for Economic Growth and Viksit Bharat 2047: A Study of India

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Abstract
One of the service sectors with the quickest rate of growth is tourism, which plays a significant role in sociocultural development, job creation, and economic expansion. In India, the tourist industry contributes significantly to regional development, foreign exchange profits, and revenue generation. The present study looks at how tourism affects the Indian economy and how it might help realise Viksit Bharat 2047. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Economic Impact Report 2025, the India Tourism Data Compendium 2024, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and other published sources provided secondary data for this descriptive analysis. The results show that the tourist industry supported over 46.3 million jobs, or 9.1% of all employment, and contributed 6.6% of India's GDP in 2024. The study investigates the positive and negative economic, social, and environmental effects of the tourism industry's post-pandemic recovery. In order to support the realisation of Viksit Bharat 2047, it finds that tourism can play a significant role as a driver of sustainable and equitable development through the creation of jobs, infrastructure development, entrepreneurship, and investment promotion.

Keywords: *Tourism, Economic Growth, Employment Generation, GDP, Viksit Bharat 2047.*

Introduction

One of the sectors with the fastest rate of growth in the world, tourism is widely acknowledged as a potent force behind equitable socioeconomic development. It greatly aids in the development of infrastructure and generates a large number of job possibilities. Tourism promotes overall economic growth through its robust forward and backward connections with different economic sectors. Additionally, the industry has a large multiplier effect, creating jobs and extra revenue for the economy. Over the years, tourism in India has grown steadily and is now a significant factor in the country's development. Significant social, cultural, and economic changes result from tourists' ongoing interactions with host communities. Cook et al. (2010) and Kumar and Kumar (2014) claim that tourism strengthens host communities' value systems in addition to improving their socioeconomic circumstances. Individual and communal values, behavioural patterns, social structures, lifestyles, and people's general quality of life are all impacted by tourism, according to Hall and Page (1999). In a similar vein, Leavitt (2003) emphasised that tourism fosters racial tolerance and cultural understanding, generates new job possibilities, enhances infrastructure, and significantly boosts local economies.

Economic Growth

India's tourism industry has grown to be a significant contributor to the nation's inclusive and sustainable development. India has managed to emerge as the top travel destination for both domestic and foreign tourists. Travellers from other countries are introduced to India's unity in diversity idea through tourism. Like in many other emerging economies, the tourist industry has played a significant role in producing foreign exchange, job opportunities, and household income for Indians over the years. It has helped in regional and economic development and provided the chance to build infrastructure. As a result, the growth of the tourist industry seems to have been just as significant as the growth of other Indian economic sectors. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Economic Impact Report 2025; Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, the travel and tourism industry generated around US$249.3 billion in economic value in 2024, accounting for 6.6% of India's GDP. About 46.3 million jobs were supported by the industry, making about 9.1% of all jobs in the nation.

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Statement Of the Problem

One of the main forces behind India's economic expansion, job creation, and regional development is tourism. However, the tourism industry was badly interrupted by the COVID-19 epidemic, which led to a dramatic drop in visitor numbers, revenue creation, and job prospects. The loss brought to light the sector's vulnerability and its substantial influence on livelihoods and national income.

As India strives to realise the goal of Viksit Bharat 2047, tourism has become a key industry that can support infrastructural development, job creation, inclusive growth, foreign exchange earnings, and cultural promotion. Therefore, the present study is necessary to evaluate tourism sector potential, pinpoint obstacles, and develop strategies that can increase its contribution to achieving Viksit Bharat 2047's goals.

Literature Survey

Recent research has repeatedly shown how important tourism is to India's economic expansion. The tourism-led growth theory was found to be strongly supported by Mishra, Rout, and Chaini's (2021) analysis of the connection between tourism, governance, and economic growth. They underlined that tourism's economic impact may be further strengthened by improved governance, corporate confidence, and economic freedom. After analysing tourism variables including international visitor arrivals, foreign exchange profits, GDP contribution, and employment creation, Negi and Bhat (2022) came to the conclusion that tourism is a significant driver of both employment and economic growth. According to Tiwari and Bisen (2023), tourism makes a significant contribution to infrastructure development, foreign exchange profits, and the lessening of regional inequities.

Das and Ghosh (2024) discovered that increased tourism, bolstered by both public and private investment, had a beneficial impact on long-term GDP growth. In order to guarantee sustainable and inclusive tourism growth, Chaitanya and Swain (2024) emphasised the problem of economic leakages and the necessity of increased local involvement and retention of tourism revenue.

Objectives Of the Study

The present study is based on following objectives

5.1 To assess how the tourist industry contributes to the expansion and advancement of the Indian economy.

5.2 To examine how tourism contributes to job creation and foreign exchange profits in India.

5.3 To assess the benefits and drawbacks of tourism for the nation's social, economic, and environmental facets.

5.4 To evaluate the tourism industry's potential to support Viksit Bharat 2047.

Methodology

The present study is descriptive one and is based on the secondary data published by various agencies and organizations. The present study makes use of data and information provided by, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Economic Impact Report 2025, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. (2024), India Tourism Data Compendium 2024, Government of India, Government of India and other agencies report, Newspapers, Research paper and Articles. Statistical data collected is presented in the form of table.

Present Scenario of Impact of Tourism Industry on Indian Economy

According to the Indian government's Ministry of Tourism. (2024) In the India Tourism Data Compendium 2024 study, India is home to a number of significant tourist locations that produce significant revenue and job possibilities. Every year, the famous Taj Mahal draws millions of visitors from both domestic and foreign countries, boosting local companies, hotels, transportation, and handicrafts. Goa's beach attractions generate a substantial amount of tourism revenue through the hospitality, leisure, and event management sectors.

Kerala's backwaters and cultural attractions offer jobs in traditional handicrafts, healthcare tourism, and tourism. Through pilgrimage tourism, religious sites like Vaishno Devi Temple, Tirumala Venkateswara Temple, and Kashi Vishwanath Temple provide significant economic activity. Historical, cultural, and architectural tourists are drawn to heritage cities like Jaipur and Udaipur, which generate employment in the hospitality, transportation, tourism, and handicraft industries. In a similar vein, locations like the Golden Temple, Mysore Palace, and the hill towns of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh directly and indirectly sustain millions of people's livelihoods.

When taken as a whole, these tourism centers are vital for producing income, encouraging regional growth, and opening up job opportunities in a number of Indian economic sectors.India's tourism industry is currently expanding rapidly as a result of government programs encouraging both domestic and international travel, better transport options, digital booking platforms, and upgraded infrastructure. Spiritual travel, adventure travel, medical travel, eco-tourism, and heritage travel have all become quite popular.

The growth of roadways, airports, and hospitality services has improved tourists' travel experiences.By creating jobs in lodging, dining, transportation, handicrafts, and local companies, tourism promotes economic growth and the well-being of the community. Tourist locations are becoming more visible due to the growing usage of social media and digital marketing. India's tourist business continues to be a crucial sector with enormous potential for sustainable growth, cultural interchange, and economic prosperity in the upcoming years, despite obstacles including seasonal swings and environmental concerns.

Discussion And Interpretation

Contribution of Tourism Sector to GDP and Employment in India and Foreign Exchange
Earnings given in following tables.

Table – 1: Tourism Performance Indicators in India (2020–2024)

Year	Foreign Tourist Arrivals (Million)	International Tourist Arrivals (Million)	Domestic tourist Visits (Billion)	Foreign Exchange Earnings (₹ Crore)
2020	2.75	6.34	0.61	95,738
2021	1.53	7.01	0.68	63,978
2022	6.44	14.33	1.73	1,69,917
2023	9.52	18.90	2.51	2,66,045
2024	9.95	20.57	2.95	2,93,033

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2025); Bureau of Immigration; Reserve Bank of India.

Following the COVID-19 epidemic, India's tourism industry steadily recovered and expanded, as seen in the above table. The number of foreign visitors rose dramatically from 1.53 million in 2021 to 9.95 million in 2024. Additionally, the number of International Tourist visitors rose from 7.01 million in 2021 to 20.57 million in 2024. In 2024, domestic tourism reached 2.95 billion visitors, a tremendous increase. Tourism-related foreign exchange earnings rose from ₹63,978 crore in 2021 to ₹2,93,033 crore in 2024. These numbers show that tourism has once again become a significant factor in India's economic expansion, job creation, and foreign exchange profits.

Table – 2: Contribution of Tourism Sector to GDP and Employment in India

Year	Share in GDP (%)	Direct Contribution (%)	Indirect Contribution (%)	Employment Supported (Million)
2020	2.7	1.4	1.3	32.1
2021	3.5	1.8	1.7	34.8
2022	5.0	2.6	2.4	39.5
2023	6.2	3.1	3.1	43.7
2024	6.6	3.3	3.3	46.3

Source: World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Economic Impact Report 2025; Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

The tourism industry's growing contribution to India's GDP and national income after the post-pandemic recovery is depicted in the above table. By 2024, tourism accounted for 6.6% of GDP, up from 2.7% in 2020. During the same period, the indirect contribution increased from 1.3% to 3.3%, while the direct contribution increased from 1.4% to 3.3%. From 32.1 million jobs in 2020 to 46.3 million jobs in 2024, the tourism industry boosted employment. These numbers show that tourism is still a major factor in India's economic expansion, revenue generation, and job creation.

Table – 3: Share of Employment in Tourism Sector in India

Year	Share in Employment (%)	Direct Employment (%)	Indirect Employment (%)	Employment Supported (Million)
2020	7.3	3.1	4.2	32.1
2021	7.8	3.4	4.4	34.8
2022	8.4	3.7	4.7	39.5
2023	8.8	3.9	4.9	43.7
2024	9.1	4.1	5.0	46.3

Source: World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Economic Impact Report 2025; Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

The aforementioned table shows how the tourist industry is increasingly contributing to India's job creation. From 7.3% in 2020 to 9.1% in 2024, tourism accounted for a larger portion of all jobs. While indirect employment rose from 4.2% to 5.0% during the same period, direct employment created by hotels, airlines, travel agencies, tour operators, restaurants, and other tourism-related services climbed from 3.1% to 4.1%. In 2020, the tourism industry supported 32.1 million employments; by 2024, that number had risen to 46.3 million. This illustrates how important tourism is to India's economic growth and job creation.

Positive And Negative Impacts Of Tourism

Tourism is one of the most important service industries in the world. It contributes significantly to economic development, employment generation, cultural exchange, and infrastructure growth. However, tourism also creates certain social, cultural, and environmental challenges.

1Positive Impacts of Tourism

1 Income Generation

For people, companies, and governments, tourism is a significant source of revenue. Travellers spend money on lodging, travel, dining, entertainment, and shopping. This expenditure supports regional companies and advances a nation's economy as a whole.

2 Foreign Exchange Earnings

One significant source of foreign exchange gains is tourism. Foreign exchange reserves are strengthened and the country's balance of payments is improved by foreign visitors bringing in foreign currency. This promotes economic growth and aids in the financing of imports.

3 Employment Generation

Numerous direct and indirect job possibilities are generated by the tourism industry. Hotels, restaurants, tourism agencies, tour guides, transportation services, handicrafts, and local markets all create jobs. Thus, tourism is essential to lowering unemployment and raising living standards.

4 Infrastructure Development

Governments and private investors are encouraged by tourism to build infrastructure, including roads, airports, railroads, medical facilities, communication networks, and recreational centers. These developments enhance the standard of living for locals as well as tourists.

5 Improvement in Standard of Living

By raising income levels and generating job opportunities, tourism raises living standards. Additionally, technology makes it possible for people to engage with others from various cultures and lifestyles, which increases social awareness and broadens their knowledge.

6 Contribution to GDP

A nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is greatly influenced by tourism. Taxes, user fees, licensing, and tourism-related activities are how governments make money. These monies can be used for public welfare initiatives, infrastructure upkeep, and conservation initiatives.

7 Development of Entrepreneurship

By encouraging people to launch companies like travel agency, homestays, restaurants, souvenir stores, and transportation services, tourism fosters entrepreneurship. It fosters creativity and opens doors for self-employment and company expansion.

2 Negative Impacts of Tourism

1 Undesirable Social and Cultural Changes

Local traditions, customs, and lives may be impacted by excessive tourism. Local culture may occasionally become diluted or commercialized. For instance, societal issues like drug misuse, prostitution, and human trafficking have been linked to the fast expansion of tourism in some places.

2 Increase in Tension and Hostility

Misunderstandings and disputes may arise from cultural, behavioural, and lifestyle differences between visitors and locals. Local communities may experience conflict, animosity, and unfavourable views as a result of a lack of respect for one another and cultural awareness.

3 Creation of Social Antipathy

In many tourist sites, hotels, tour operators, and international corporations receive a disproportionate amount of tourism earnings rather than local communities. Locals may become resentful of visitors and authorities as a result of feeling left out of the advantages of tourism.

4 Environmental and Ecological Degradation

Ecosystems and natural resources may be overburdened by tourism. Deforestation, habitat destruction, waste production, water pollution, and air pollution could result from increased building, transportation, and tourism. In addition to endangering biodiversity, tourism can disrupt wildlife habitats in environmentally sensitive locations.

5 Seasonal and Unstable Employment

Many tourism-related jobs are seasonal and depend on tourist arrivals. During off-seasons, economic downturns, or crises such as pandemics, workers may face unemployment and income loss.

6 Social Problems

Rapid tourism growth can sometimes lead to issues such as overcrowding, crime, exploitation of local resources, and disturbances to the traditional way of life of local communities.

Contribution Of Tourism Towards Viksit Bharat 2047

The goal of Viksit Bharat 2047, which is to make India a developed country by the year of its centenary, depends heavily on tourism. GDP growth, employment creation, foreign exchange profits, entrepreneurship development, infrastructure expansion, and regional development are all greatly aided by the tourism industry. India offers a plethora of chances for sustainable economic growth due to its different cultures, natural attractions, spiritual sites, medical tourism facilities, and rich cultural history. The Indian government has launched a number of programs. such as the Prashad program, Swadesh Darshan 2.0, Incredible India, digital tourist promotion, and enhanced connectivity to bolster the tourism ecosystem. By generating employment possibilities in rural and isolated areas through the hospitality, handicrafts, transportation, wellness, and cultural sectors, tourism also supports inclusive development. With a projected GDP of USD 30–40 trillion by 2047, India's tourism industry is predicted to become a significant growth engine by drawing investment, creating millions of jobs, enhancing India's reputation abroad, and promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Therefore, tourism is a key component in achieving the goals of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Suggestions To Improve the Tourism Industry in India

One of the most significant service sectors in the world is tourism. It makes a substantial contribution to infrastructural expansion, employment creation, cultural interchange, and economic development. But there are also social, cultural, and environmental issues brought forth by tourism. The tourist industry can undoubtedly help make India Viksit Bharat by 2047 if the following recommendations are implemented.

1 Improve public transportation, railroads, airports, and highways.
2 Make tourist destinations more hygienic and sanitary.
3 Strengthen safety and security measures for domestic and international tourists.
4 To lessen crowding at well-known locations, promote lesser-known tourist spots.
5 Promote sustainable and environmentally friendly travel methods.
6 Offer training courses to local service providers, tour guides, and employees in the hotel industry.
7 Improve digital services including travel apps, virtual guides, and online reservations.
8 Maintain and safeguard natural landmarks, historical monuments, and heritage areas.
9 Run successful domestic and international marketing initiatives to draw in more tourists.
10 Enhance lodging options at reasonable costs.
11 Make the visa process easier and encourage international visitors to use e-visa services.
12 Promote community involvement and assist regional handicrafts and cultural endeavours.
13 Plan events, fairs, and cultural festivals to highlight India's many customs.
14 Grow the fields of adventure, spiritual, medicinal, and rural tourism.
15 Set up visitor centres at important locations.
16 Make sure that tourism destinations have appropriate waste management and environmental preservation.
17 Boost public-private collaborations to promote tourism.
18 Make travel more accessible for visitors with disabilities and senior persons.

Conclusion

Tourism is an important part of the Indian economy and has enormous potential to create jobs, earn foreign currencies, and boost the country's economy as a whole. The government's efforts to enhance infrastructure, connectivity, and marketing campaigns like the Incredible India campaign are reflected in the consistent increase in visitor arrivals and tourism earnings. In addition to generating income and jobs, tourism promotes social advancement and cross-cultural interaction. The Central and State governments, private businesses, and nonprofit organisations must actively participate in this multifaceted service sector's sustainable growth in order for India to solidify its standing as a top travel destination worldwide.

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Tourism Development in India: Problems and Prospects in View of Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy, contributing significantly to economic growth, employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and socio-cultural development. In India, tourism occupies a strategic position due to the country's rich cultural heritage, diverse natural landscapes, historical monuments, religious destinations, and growing infrastructure. The Government of India's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 aims to transform the nation into a developed economy by the centenary year of independence. Within this framework, tourism is recognized as a key driver of inclusive growth, sustainable development, and regional economic transformation. Despite its vast potential, the tourism sector faces numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, environmental degradation, safety concerns, skill shortages, regional disparities, and limited promotion of emerging destinations. This paper examines the current status of tourism development in India, identifies the major challenges confronting the sector, and analyzes its future prospects in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047. Using secondary data from government reports, academic literature, policy documents, and international tourism publications, the study explores how sustainable tourism, digital innovation, public-private partnerships, and community participation can contribute to achieving the objectives of Viksit Bharat. The findings indicate that tourism can become a major pillar of India's economic transformation if appropriate policy interventions and sustainable development strategies are effectively implemented. The study concludes that a comprehensive and integrated approach to tourism development is essential for realizing India's aspiration of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

Keywords: *Tourism Development, Viksit Bharat 2047, Sustainable Tourism, Economic Growth, Cultural Heritage, Employment Generation, India.*

Introduction

Tourism is widely recognized as one of the fastest-growing industries in the world and serves as an important catalyst for economic and social development. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism contributes substantially to gross domestic product (GDP), employment creation, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development. In developing economies, tourism plays a crucial role in reducing poverty, improving livelihoods, and fostering cultural exchange.

India possesses immense tourism potential due to its unique combination of natural beauty, historical monuments, cultural diversity, religious significance, and traditional knowledge systems. The country's tourism sector encompasses various forms of tourism, including cultural tourism, heritage tourism, religious tourism, eco-tourism, adventure tourism, medical tourism, wellness tourism, and rural tourism. These diverse tourism products contribute significantly to the national economy and support millions of livelihoods across the country. The Government of India has articulated an ambitious vision known as Viksit Bharat 2047, which aims to transform India into a developed nation by the year 2047. This vision emphasizes economic prosperity, social inclusion, technological advancement, environmental sustainability, and global competitiveness. Tourism is expected to play a central role in achieving these objectives because of its multiplier effects on employment, infrastructure development, entrepreneurship, and cultural preservation. Despite notable progress in recent decades, India's tourism sector continues to face several structural and operational challenges.

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Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, environmental concerns, safety and security challenges, limited skilled workforce, and uneven regional development hinder the sector's full potential. Therefore, understanding the problems and prospects of tourism development within the framework of Viksit Bharat 2047 is essential for policymakers, researchers, and industry stakeholders.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

1.Examine the current status of tourism development in India.

2.Analyze the economic significance of tourism in the Indian context.

3.Identify major challenges affecting tourism development.

4.Explore future prospects of tourism under Viksit Bharat 2047.

5.Suggest policy recommendations for sustainable tourism development.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. Secondary data have been collected from government reports, Ministry of Tourism publications, NITI Aayog documents, academic journals, books, conference proceedings, and reports published by international organizations such as UNWTO and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). The collected information has been critically analyzed to understand the present condition, challenges, and future opportunities of tourism development in India.

Conceptual Framework: Tourism and National Development

Tourism contributes to national development through multiple channels. Economic benefits include income generation, employment creation, investment attraction, and foreign exchange earnings. Social benefits include cultural preservation, community development, and improved quality of life. Environmental benefits arise through conservation initiatives and sustainable resource management.

The Viksit Bharat 2047 vision emphasizes inclusive and sustainable development. Tourism aligns closely with this vision because it integrates economic growth with social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Consequently, tourism can function as a strategic sector supporting India's long-term developmental aspirations.

Literature Review

Several scholars have examined the role of tourism in economic development and sustainable growth. Sharma (2021) argued that tourism contributes significantly to employment generation and regional development in emerging economies. Singh and Verma (2022) highlighted the importance of sustainable tourism practices in balancing economic benefits with environmental conservation.

Kumar (2023) observed that India's tourism sector possesses considerable growth potential due to increasing domestic travel demand, digital transformation, and government initiatives. However, challenges such as infrastructure deficits and skill shortages continue to impede progress.

Research on Viksit Bharat 2047 emphasizes the need for strategic sectors to contribute to national development goals. Mishra et al. (2025) identified tourism as a critical pillar for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth under the Viksit Bharat framework. Similarly, Joseph and Hermit (2025) argued that tourism services can significantly contribute to employment creation and regional economic development.

The existing literature demonstrates that while tourism offers substantial opportunities for economic transformation, effective policy interventions are necessary to address persistent challenges and ensure sustainable growth.

Tourism Development in India: Current Scenario

India has emerged as one of the world's leading tourism destinations due to its rich cultural and natural resources. The country's tourism sector includes several important segments.

Cultural and Heritage Tourism

India's historical monuments, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, museums, and cultural festivals attract millions of domestic and international visitors annually. The Taj Mahal, Red Fort, Ajanta and Ellora Caves, and Khajuraho Temples represent significant heritage attractions.

Religious Tourism

Religious tourism constitutes one of the largest segments of India's tourism industry. Pilgrimage destinations such as Varanasi, Tirupati, Vaishno Devi, Golden Temple, Ajmer Sharif, and Bodh Gaya attract visitors from across the world.

Medical and Wellness Tourism

India has become a preferred destination for medical tourism due to affordable healthcare services and internationally recognized medical professionals. Ayurveda, Yoga, and wellness tourism further enhance India's attractiveness.

Eco-Tourism and Adventure Tourism

National parks, wildlife sanctuaries, Himalayan regions, beaches, and biodiversity hotspots provide opportunities for eco-tourism and adventure tourism activities such as trekking, rafting, mountaineering, and wildlife safaris.

Rural Tourism

Rural tourism promotes local culture, handicrafts, traditional lifestyles, and community-based development while generating additional income for rural populations.

Economic Significance of Tourism

Employment Generation

Tourism is a labor-intensive sector that creates direct and indirect employment opportunities across hospitality, transportation, retail, entertainment, and related industries. It provides livelihoods for both skilled and unskilled workers.

Contribution to GDP

Tourism contributes significantly to India's GDP through tourist expenditure, investments, and associated economic activities. The sector's multiplier effects stimulate growth in multiple industries.

Foreign Exchange Earnings

International tourism generates substantial foreign exchange earnings, strengthening India's balance of payments and supporting economic stability.

Infrastructure Development

Tourism encourages investments in transportation, communication, accommodation, and public utilities, thereby enhancing overall infrastructure development.

Regional Development

Tourism facilitates balanced regional growth by creating economic opportunities in rural and remote areas that may otherwise remain underdeveloped.

Problems of Tourism Development in India

Inadequate Infrastructure

Many tourist destinations continue to face deficiencies in transportation, accommodation, sanitation, waste management, and digital connectivity. Such limitations negatively affect tourist experiences.

Environmental Degradation

Rapid tourism growth has contributed to pollution, waste accumulation, ecosystem degradation, and pressure on natural resources. Unsustainable tourism practices threaten environmental sustainability.

Safety and Security Concerns

Concerns related to tourist safety, crime, harassment, and disaster management influence destination attractiveness and international perceptions.

Shortage of Skilled Human Resources

The tourism industry requires trained personnel with expertise in hospitality management, foreign languages, customer service, and digital technologies. Skill gaps remain a significant challenge.

Regional Imbalances

Tourism development remains concentrated in a limited number of states and destinations, resulting in unequal distribution of tourism benefits.

Limited International Promotion

Although India possesses diverse tourism resources, many destinations remain under-promoted in international markets due to insufficient marketing and branding efforts.

Climate Change Impacts

Climate change poses risks to coastal tourism, mountain tourism, biodiversity conservation, and heritage preservation. Rising temperatures and extreme weather events threaten tourism sustainability.

Tourism Development in the Context of Viksit Bharat 2047

The Viksit Bharat 2047 vision aims to position India among the world's leading developed nations. Tourism can contribute significantly to this objective through multiple pathways.

Economic Transformation

Tourism stimulates entrepreneurship, investment, and employment, thereby contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction.

Inclusive Development

Tourism generates opportunities for women, youth, tribal communities, and rural populations, supporting inclusive development goals.

Cultural Preservation

Tourism encourages the conservation of cultural heritage, traditional arts, indigenous knowledge systems, and local customs.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable tourism practices align with environmental conservation objectives and support responsible resource utilization.

Global Competitiveness

A vibrant tourism industry enhances India's international image and strengthens its position in the global economy.

Future Prospects of Tourism Development

Digital Tourism

Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, augmented reality, big data analytics, and smart tourism platforms are transforming tourist experiences and destination management.

Sustainable Tourism

Increasing awareness of environmental sustainability is driving demand for eco-friendly tourism products and responsible travel practices.

Growth of Domestic Tourism

Rising incomes, improved transportation networks, and changing lifestyle preferences are contributing to rapid growth in domestic tourism.

Expansion of Medical Tourism

India's healthcare excellence and cost advantages create substantial opportunities for expanding medical and wellness tourism markets.

Development of Rural and Community-Based Tourism

Community participation can enhance tourism sustainability while generating local employment and preserving cultural traditions.

North-East Tourism Development

The North-Eastern region offers significant opportunities due to its unique landscapes, biodiversity, and cultural diversity. Improved connectivity and infrastructure can unlock the region's tourism potential.

Public-Private Partnerships

Collaboration between government agencies and private enterprises can accelerate investment, innovation, and infrastructure development.

Policy Recommendations

1.Strengthen transportation and tourism infrastructure.
2.Promote sustainable tourism practices and environmental conservation.
3.Enhance tourism education and skill development programs.
4.Improve destination safety and security mechanisms.
5.Expand digital tourism initiatives and smart destination management.
6.Encourage public-private partnerships in tourism development.
7.Promote lesser-known destinations through targeted marketing campaigns.
8.Support community-based and rural tourism initiatives.
9.Strengthen climate resilience and disaster preparedness.
10.Develop integrated tourism policies aligned with Viksit Bharat 2047 objectives.

Findings

The study reveals that India possesses extraordinary tourism resources capable of supporting long-term economic growth and national development. However, infrastructure deficits, environmental challenges, skill shortages, and regional imbalances continue to constrain the sector's performance. The Viksit Bharat 2047 vision provides a strategic framework for leveraging tourism as an engine of inclusive and sustainable development. Digital innovation, sustainable practices, community participation, and policy reforms are likely to shape the future trajectory of tourism development in India.

Conclusion

Tourism represents a strategic sector capable of contributing significantly to India's developmental aspirations under Viksit Bharat 2047. Its potential to generate employment, stimulate economic growth, preserve cultural heritage, and promote regional development makes it an essential component of national progress. Nevertheless, realizing this potential requires addressing existing challenges through comprehensive policy interventions, sustainable development strategies, and stakeholder collaboration. By investing in infrastructure, promoting innovation, enhancing skills, and ensuring environmental sustainability, India can transform its tourism sector into a major driver of economic prosperity and social inclusion. The successful integration of tourism into the Viksit Bharat framework will contribute substantially to India's journey toward becoming a developed nation by 2047.

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Original Article

Geographical Analysis of Religious and Natural Tourism Places in Koregaon Village, Barshi Taluka, Solapur District

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Abstract

Tourism is now widely recognized as a key driver of growth in rural and regional areas. It supports local economies, helps preserve cultural heritage, and encourages communities to protect their natural surroundings. In recent years, more travellers have shown interest in visiting rural destinations. They prefer places that offer genuine cultural experiences rather than crowded urban attractions. This shift has brought attention to village-level tourism as a practical path toward inclusive development. Koregaon village is situated in Barshi Taluka of Solapur District in Maharashtra. The village holds strong tourism value due to its religious sites, cultural heritage, and natural surroundings. It has several old temples that are important to the local community. The area also includes sacred spots, open farmlands, seasonal and permanent water bodies, and rural landscapes. Local festivals, folk traditions, and community practices further add to the cultural richness of the place. However, the village has not been able to fully use these resources for tourism purposes. Roads and basic facilities remain underdeveloped. The area receives little promotion at regional or state levels. Tourism activities are not well organized, and local stakeholders have limited involvement in planning efforts. These issues have slowed the growth of tourism in the area. This study looks at the geographical features and tourism resources found in and around Koregaon village. It examines the scope of religious and nature-based tourism in the area. The study also checks how easily visitors can reach the village and what facilities are currently available. It identifies gaps in infrastructure and suggests ways to address them. The research further explores how tourism can support local livelihoods through farming-based activities and the promotion of traditional crafts. Data for this study was gathered through field visits, spatial observation, and interaction with local community members. The results of this research are intended to help planners, local authorities, and community groups make better decisions about tourism development. The study provides a practical base for developing Koregaon as a sustainable and community-friendly tourism destination.

Keywords: *Religious Tourism, Natural Tourism, Geographical Study, Eco Tourism, Koregaon Village, Barshi Taluka.*

Introduction

Rural development in India has been significantly strengthened by the tourism sector. Religious tourism draws pilgrims who seek spiritual fulfilment through their faith. Natural tourism brings visitors who wish to experience scenic landscapes and environmental beauty. Koregaon village located in Barshi Taluka possesses strong tourism prospects. The village benefits from its rich cultural heritage, presence of religious sites, agricultural areas, and natural beauty. The local temples function as vital hubs for religious worship. These temples attract many devotees traveling from neighbouring villages. The village's religious festivals and annual fairs play an important role in preserving its cultural identity. Throughout the year, religious gatherings, festivals, traditional practices, educational trips, picnic and trekking take place. These events promote pilgrimage tourism and strengthen social bonds within the community. **Study Area**

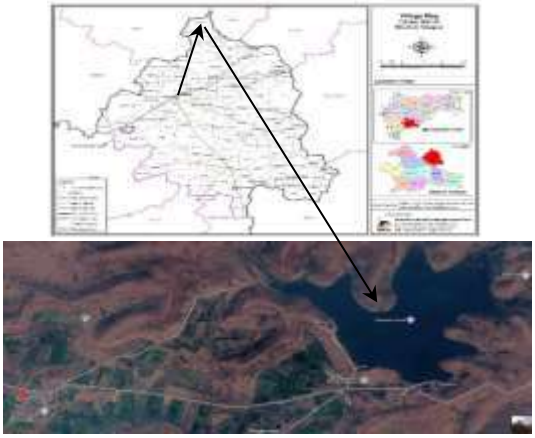
Koregaon is a small village in Barshi Taluka of Solapur district in Maharashtra. It is located at 17.88° North and 75.07° East with an elevation of 528 meters. The village covers an area of 7.67 square kilometres and has a population of about 1115 people. There are 582 men and 533 women, and the literacy rate is around 67 percent. Farming is the main occupation in Koregaon. The village has 305 hectares of farmland, and 210 hectares are irrigated using canals and wells.

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The land is semi-arid and part of the Bhima River basin, where farmers grow sorghum, pulses, and oilseeds. The Yemai Devi



temple is a famous cultural site in Koregaon. It attracts many pilgrims, especially during Navratri and Dev Diwali. This temple brings extra income to the village through religious tourism. There is also a natural formation of Water Tank and also a religious place like Bhagwanbaba Gad. Koregaon is about 29 kilometres from Barshi and 101 kilometres from Solapur. Its postal code is 413409. The village shows a mix of farming life and commerce cantered around pilgrimage, which is common in rural Maharashtra. **Location Map of Study Area**

Objectives

1. To identify religious and natural tourism resources in Koregaon village.
2. To study the geographical characteristics influencing tourism.
3. To examine tourism infrastructure and accessibility.
4. To assess tourism potential for local development.
5. To suggest measures for sustainable tourism planning.

Methodology

The research gathered information through two main approaches. Primary data came from field surveys, direct observations, tourist questionnaires, and conversations with local residents. Secondary data included the Census of India, government reports, village records, tourism materials, and published research papers. This combined method brought together direct feedback from people involved in tourism with existing statistical and written records. This created a strong base for the analysis. The study included 100 respondents chosen through random sampling. The average score was calculated for each survey question. This average helped show what the respondents generally thought about tourism infrastructure.

Religious Tourist Places in Koregaon

Yemai Devi Temple

Koregaon has four temples, with Yamai Devi Temple being the most significant. Located 2 km away, it is recognized as the village deity and called "Talayachi Aai" (Mother of the Lake). Built 200 to 300 years ago in traditional stone and Hemadpanthi style, the temple sits on the edge of a lake in the Balaghat Hills. It serves as the religious and cultural centre of Barshi taluka. The temple celebrates a grand Chaitra Ashtami festival with a large fair and palanquin procession. Traditional offerings of Ambil and Ghugri accompany the festivities, which last two days with wrestling matches on the third day. Thousands of devotees from nearby villages attend. The temple remains active throughout the year. Devotees visit during every full moon and perform circumambulation around the surrounding hills as an act of worship. The sacred idol is carved from a single unbroken stone and



adorned with ornaments. This reflects the deep spiritual importance of this ancient temple in the region.

Bhagwanbaba GAD

Bhagwanbaba Gad is a picturesque fort situated on a lake bank opposite Yamai Devi Temple. It can only be reached on foot, making it a trekking destination with natural beauty and spiritual value. The fort houses the Samadhi of Shamnath Maharaj, a respected spiritual leader from Samangaon. Devotees visit monthly during Amavasya for religious activities like Bhajans, Kirtans,

and Jagaran. The site belongs to the Vaishnava sect and has good infrastructure including a large shed for Prasad distribution and a Samadhi Mandap. Unlike the Yamai Devi Temple across the lake where animal sacrifices occur, Bhagwanbaba Gad does not practice such rituals, reflecting its distinct spiritual traditions.

Koregaon Lake - Nature Tourism Spot

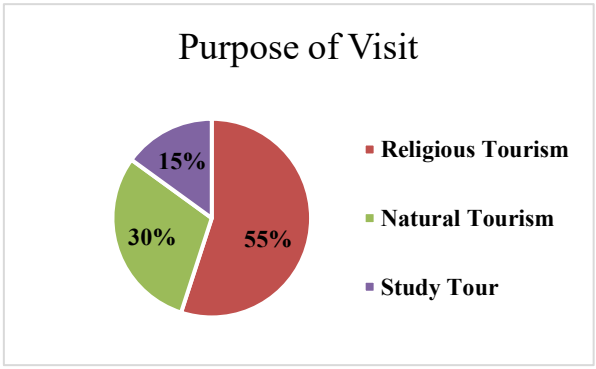
The agricultural fields surrounding Koregaon create beautiful rural scenery that attracts agro-tourism and educational tourism. Koregaon Lake is the main water source for the village. Built in 1885 during British rule, this lake sits in the Balaghat mountain range and is being developed for tourism. Its location between hills has helped it survive without drying up. The lake's scenic beauty, medicinal plants, cool breeze, bird songs, and peaceful atmosphere draw many tourists. Hills and dense vegetation surround the lake. Water activities like boating and fishing are being introduced to boost tourism. The lake is known for its natural beauty and rich biodiversity. Koregaon has received eco-village status due to its natural charm. This recognition will create economic opportunities in nature tourism, water tourism, and trekking. A local belief exists that bathing in the lake's water cures skin diseases like itching and ringworm in infants, children, and adults. This belief attracts many visitors to the lake.



Result And Discussion

Purpose Of Vist

Purpose	Percentage
Religious Tourism	55
Natural Tourism	30
Study Tour	15



Religious tourism is the dominant attraction (55%), indicating that temples and religious festivals are the primary tourism resources of Koregaon village.

Tourism Infrastructure

Tourism infrastructure comprises five key dimensions: road connectivity for accessible transportation, cleanliness for hygienic environments, religious facilities for visitor spiritual needs, accommodation for lodging, and tourist information services for guidance. These elements collectively form the foundation of a comprehensive tourism system.

Satisfaction Level Of Tourism Infrastructure (N = 100)

Satisfaction Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Highly Satisfied	10	10
Satisfied	35	35
Neutral	20	20
Dissatisfied	23	23
Highly Dissatisfied	12	12
Total	**100**	**100**

Survey respondents showed mixed views on tourism infrastructure: 45% were satisfied (10% highly, 35% moderately), 20% remained neutral, and 35% were dissatisfied (23% moderately, 12% highly) due to inadequate accommodation, roads, and tourist information services. This balance between satisfaction and dissatisfaction indicates a need for substantial infrastructure improvements.

The tourism infrastructure in Koregaon is rated with moderate satisfaction (mean score of 3.11), indicating that while basic facilities are in place, considerable enhancements are needed to improve the overall visitor experience.

The study found that nearly four out of ten visitors come to Koregaon during festival seasons. One third of respondents travel to Koregaon between the months of June and February. Approximately three out of ten visitors travel to Koregaon at any time during the year.

Suggestions

1. Develop as a Commercial Eco-religious Tourism Circuit for Koregaon
2. Improve road connectivity, parking facilities, food services, and local retail infrastructure to strengthen sustainable tourism development in Koregaon village.
3. Promote local festivals and cultural events.
4. Encourage agro-tourism projects.
5. Install tourist information boards.
6. Develop digital tourism promotion.
7. Involve local youth and self-help groups in tourism activities.
8. Develop boating facilities, botanical gardens, and bird-watching viewpoints to enhance Koregaon's natural tourism potential.
9. Prohibit ropeway development near temples-tanks-Bhagwanbaba Gad to conserve biodiversity and natural landscapes.
10. Develop the Yemai Devi Temple to Bhagwanbaba Gad road as a green corridor with weather shelters.
11. Implement waste management systems near Yemai Devi Temple.
12. Develop Bhagwanbaba Gad as a Meditation Centre.

Conclusion

Koregaon village in Barshi Taluka possesses considerable potential for religious, rural, and natural tourism development. The combination of religious traditions, agricultural landscapes, and rural culture provides opportunities for sustainable tourism. Proper planning, infrastructure development, and community participation can transform Koregaon into a recognized Eco-Religious tourism destination in Solapur District. For this, an integrated master plan is required for development.

Koregaon's peaceful rural setting offers considerable potential for sustainable tourism through eco-tourism, village tourism, and cultural experiences. Growing community interest in positioning it as an "eco-village" demonstrates commitment to community-based tourism initiatives.

Future development in Koregaon can create many new jobs and income sources. Better infrastructure for religious shopping will bring more visitors and retail work. More food services will generate jobs in restaurants and food production. Improved travel networks will need more drivers, guides, and travel staff. Boating and water tourism growth will open roles in hospitality services. A strong local economy will emerge as these industries expand. Training programs can teach tourism and hospitality skills to local people. Koregaon can become a top destination for sustainable tourism. The whole community will benefit from higher living standards and long-term growth.

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Climate-Resilient Tourism in the Fiction of Amitav Ghosh: Reading the Hungry Tide and Gun Island as Narratives of Adaptive Coastal Tourism.

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Abstract

Coastal and delta destinations across South Asia face mounting threats from sea-level rise, cyclones, and ecosystem degradation, making climate-resilient tourism an urgent area of study. While most research on this topic comes from policy and environmental science, literary fiction offers a complementary lens. It captures the lived, human dimension of climate vulnerability that statistics alone cannot convey. This paper examines two novels by Amitav Ghosh, The Hungry Tide (2004) and Gun Island (2019), to explore how fiction represents the tension between tourism, conservation, and climate adaptation in fragile ecosystems such as the Sundarbans and Venice. Using close reading and thematic analysis, the paper identifies three recurring concerns in Ghosh's work that map directly onto climate-resilient tourism frameworks: community-centred adaptation, ecological fragility as a tourism asset and risk, and the displacement of local populations by both climate change and outside visitors. The paper argues that Ghosh's fiction anticipates and dramatizes debates that later became central to sustainable tourism policy, offering literary scholars and tourism researchers a shared vocabulary for discussing resilience. The study concludes that literary narratives can supplement empirical tourism research by humanizing climate risk and foregrounding the voices of communities most affected by both ecological change and tourism development.

Keywords: *climate-resilient tourism, Amitav Ghosh, The Hungry Tide, Gun Island, ecotourism, Sundarbans, literary ecocriticism*

Introduction

Climate-resilient tourism refers to tourism development that anticipates climate risks such as rising seas, extreme weather, and ecosystem loss, and adapts infrastructure, livelihoods, and visitor behaviour. The subject is drawn from environmental science, urban planning, and tourism management. This paper takes a different route. It asks what literary fiction, specifically the novels of Amitav Ghosh, can contribute to the conversation. Ghosh is a writer whose work consistently engages with environmental crisis, migration, and the relationship between human communities and fragile landscapes. Two of his novels are especially relevant here. The Hungry Tide is set in the Sundarbans, a mangrove delta in the Bay of Bengal that is repeatedly cited in climate science as one of the most vulnerable regions on earth. Gun Island moves between the Sundarbans and Venice, a city that has become a global symbol of both climate vulnerability and tourism overcrowding. This paper argues that these two novels, read together, dramatize the central dilemmas of climate-resilient tourism. It showcases how to balance visitor access with ecological protection, how to keep tourism revenue from displacing the people who already live in a place, and how to plan for a future where the landscape itself is changing. The paper does not claim that Ghosh wrote these novels as tourism case studies. Rather, it shows that his fiction independently arrives at the same questions tourism researchers are now asking, and that this uniformity is useful for both fields.

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Literature Review

1 Climate-Resilient Tourism

Climate-resilient tourism is generally understood as tourism planning that reduces vulnerability to climate impacts while maintaining the economic and cultural benefits tourism provides to a destination. Common strategies discussed in the literature include diversifying tourism activities away from a single fragile attraction, involving local communities in planning decisions, limiting visitor numbers during ecologically sensitive periods, and building infrastructure that can withstand flooding or storms. Coastal deltas, small islands, and historic cities built on water are repeatedly identified as the destinations facing the highest risk.

2 Literature and Climate Change

Ghosh's own nonfiction book The Great Derangement (2016) argues that modern fiction has struggled to represent climate change because the novel as a form developed around the idea of a stable, predictable everyday life. Ghosh suggests that climate change demands new kinds of stories that can hold catastrophe and the everyday together. This argument provides a useful frame for reading his own novels, which attempt exactly this kind of storytelling.

3 Tourism in Ghosh's Fiction: A Gap in the Scholarship

Existing literary criticism on The Hungry Tide focuses mainly on postcolonial identity, translation, and human-animal relationships. Criticism on Gun Island focuses on migration and myth. Neither novel has been substantially analyzed through the lens of tourism studies, despite both containing characters who are, in effect, tourists or tourism-adjacent visitors moving through climate-vulnerable landscapes. This paper addresses that gap.

Methodology

This paper uses qualitative close reading and thematic analysis. Passages from The Hungry Tide and Gun Island were selected based on their relevance to three themes drawn from climate-resilient tourism literature: (1) community involvement in environmental and tourism decisions, (2) the dual role of fragile ecosystems as both tourism assets and tourism risks, and (3) displacement, whether caused by climate change, conservation policy, or tourism development. These themes were then compared against real-world examples from the Sundarbans and Venice, drawing on existing tourism and climate adaptation literature, to show where fiction and policy concerns overlap.

Analysis

The Hungry Tide: Conservation, Community, and the Limits of Outside Expertise

The Hungry Tide is set among the tide country islands of the Sundarbans, where the characters Piya, a cetologist studying river dolphins, and Kanai, a Delhi businessman, encounter Fokir, a local fisherman whose knowledge of the tides and waterways exceeds anything available in scientific instruments or maps. The novel repeatedly shows outside experts depending on local knowledge to survive and navigate the delta. This dynamic mirrors a core principle of climate-resilient tourism: that adaptation planning fails when it excludes the communities who have generations of lived experience with a changing landscape. Piya's research, however well-intentioned, only succeeds because of Fokir's labor and knowledge, a relationship the novel treats with both admiration and discomfort, since Fokir is never compensated or credited in proportion to what he contributes.

The novel also stages a conflict between tiger conservation and the survival needs of the human population, dramatized through the Morichjhapi episode, in which settlers are violently evicted from a forest reserve. This subplot illustrates a recurring tension in climate-resilient and conservation-based tourism: protecting an ecosystem that attracts visitors can come at the direct expense of the people already living there. Tourism resilience frameworks that ignore this tension risk repeating the novel's tragedy in policy form.

Gun Island follows Deen Datta, a rare-book dealer, as he travels from the Sundarbans to Los Angeles and Venice, tracing a folk legend tied to climate disruption, wildfires, and migration. Venice functions in the novel as a counterpart to the Sundarbans: both are water-bound landscapes whose long-term survival is uncertain, and both depend heavily on tourism revenue. Venice is one of the most studied real-world examples of climate-vulnerable tourism, facing chronic flooding and, before later restrictions, the strain of overcrowding from cruise ships and day-trippers. Ghosh's depiction of the city as simultaneously beautiful, commercially dependent on visitors, and physically endangered captures the central paradox climate-resilient tourism planning must resolve. Destination cannot protect itself by closing off tourism entirely, since tourism often funds the very conservation and infrastructure needed to survive, yet unmanaged tourism accelerates the damage.

The novel's climate refugees, who travel the same routes as goods and tourists, also blur the line between voluntary travel and forced displacement. This pairing is instructive for resilience planning, which tends to treat tourists and climate migrants as entirely separate populations, even though both groups move through the same vulnerable infrastructure and compete for the same dwindling resources.

Read together, the two novels suggest three contributions fiction can make to climate-resilient tourism research. First, they humanize risk by attaching it to specific characters rather than statistical projections, which can make abstract resilience planning more persuasive to the public. Second, they foreground the perspectives of local communities, such as Fokir and the residents of the tide country, who are frequently underrepresented in tourism policy documents. Third, they reveal blind spots in existing resilience frameworks, particularly the tendency to treat conservation, tourism, and displacement as separate problems when, in Ghosh's fiction, they are shown to be deeply entangled.

Discussion

These findings suggest that tourism researchers could benefit from treating literary narratives as a form of qualitative data, alongside interviews, surveys, and case studies. Ghosh's novels do not offer policy solutions, but they do offer a detailed, emotionally grounded account of what is at stake when resilience planning gets the balance between conservation, community, and

commerce wrong. Future resilience frameworks for deltas and water-bound heritage cities might draw on this literary perspective to ensure that local knowledge, like Fokir's, is built into planning processes rather than treated as an afterthought.

This study has limitations. It focuses on two novels by a single author and does not claim to represent the full range of postcolonial or climate fiction. The analysis is also interpretive rather than empirical, and its conclusions about tourism policy are suggestive rather than prescriptive.

Conclusion

Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide and Gun Island do not set out to be tourism case studies, yet both dramatize the central concerns of climate-resilient tourism. The need for community-centered planning, the double-edged role of fragile ecosystems as tourism assets, and the displacement risks that accompany both climate change and conservation policy. By reading these novels alongside tourism and climate adaptation literature, this paper has shown that fiction can sharpen and humanize the questions resilience planners must answer. Future research could extend this approach to other climate-vulnerable destinations represented in literature, building a broader bridge between literary studies and tourism planning.

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Original Article

Agri-Tourism Potential in Sangli District: Problems and Prospects for Rural Development in the Context of Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

Agri-tourism is now a fast-growing rural development activity mainly because it integrates all the following ideas: farming, village life, local foods, culture, ecology, and rural business. Due to its numerous farm produce, such as grapes, raisins, turmeric, sugarcane, jaggery, pomegranate, religious places, riverscapes, and village cultures, the Sangli district of Maharashtra holds a lot of potential in agri-tourism. The article talks about the sustainability, challenges and opportunities of agri-tourism in the Sangli area in the Viksit Bharat 2047 context. The data set that was applied in the compilation of the study was founded on primary sources, including official records, census data, district statistics releases, papers on tourist policy, books, research articles and doctoral dissertations. The results of the study reveal that Sangli has a strong agricultural industry, large rural community, variety of crops, unique market, and the government support of agro-tourism programs. However, the district faces a number of issues, which it has to overcome. These include: a drought predisposition, seasonal tourist demand, inadequate rural infrastructure, lack of skilled labor, ineffective branding initiative, inadequate online marketing, and ineffective integration of tourism and agricultural sector. The report indicates that some of the potentials that the report can recommend that Sangli can consider becoming a tourist destination include farm stay, rural food tourism, educational farm visits, turmeric tourism, sugarcane jaggery tourism, grape-raisin tourism and women led village businesses. Some of the objectives have been Viksit Bharat 2047; to help the rural areas to get employment, boost agricultural income, empower women, promote young entrepreneurship and guarantee sustainable development in rural areas through agri-tourism.

Keywords: *Agri-Tourism, Farming, Rural Entrepreneurship, Maharashtra, Sangli District, And Viksit Bharat 2047.*

Introduction

According to Phillip, Hunter and Blackstock (2010), agri-tourism entails the type of vacation where individuals visit farms or other agricultural settings in the rural locality where they get to enjoy the culture of the area, the local foods, farming activities, and the natural scenery. According to Barbieri and Mshenga (2008), this idea is significant since it allows farmers to supplement their income without having to quit farming altogether. Rural tourism is at times viewed to be a village development tool due to small business development, conservation of cultures and other positive effects that the tourism has on the rural areas (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997).A large part of the Indian rural economy, society and culture revolves around agriculture and rural life so agri-tourism is particularly eminent in this country (Kumbhar, 2009).Now that Maharashtra has the Maharashtra Agri-Tourism Policy 2020, the state has become one of the most prominent states in India that has adopted agri-tourism (Government of Maharashtra, 2020).Agri-tourism is a related activity that the government of Maharashtra (2020) lists and which can contribute to the rural development, sale of farm products, creation of employment and tourism diversification. The Sangli district is agric-tourism friendly due to its strong agricultural image whose concentration is to grapes, raisins, turmeric, sugarcane, pomegranate and jaggery (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2025).

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People have cultural values such as religious sites, village fairs, river landscapes, food culture of the locals and village livelihoods (Zilla Parishad Sangli, 2025). By 2023 when India will celebrate a hundred years of independence, the Viksit Bharat 2047 program aims to have developed a powerful, prosperous, independent nation (MyGov, 2023). According to the Ministry of Tourism (2021), agri-tourism can contribute to this aim by raising local revenues, fostering rural entrepreneurship, empowering women, offering employment opportunities to children, and sustainable development of villages.

Study Area

As per the Directorate of Economics and Statistics (2025), Sangli district is an important agricultural district in Maharashtra, which is located in the southwestern part of the state. According to the Government of Maharashtra (2024), the district has a variety of agricultural activities and rural landscape due to the mixture of riverine and drought-prone eastern lands. District Sangli (2025) states that Sangli is the prolific producer of agricultural products, such as grapes, raisins, turmeric, sugarcane, pomegranate, jowar, bajra, groundnut and soybean.

Settlers and farmers have flourished on the banks of the Krishna, Warana and Yerla rivers in the various parts of the district (Gazettes Department, 1969).In the western and central sections of the district, the agricultural practices are more commercialized and improved with irrigation, but the drought is being rife in Jat, Atpadi and Khanapur (Mane, 2018).Examples of agri-tourism that can take advantage of this geographical and agricultural diversity can include vineyard tourism, dryland farming tourism, farm stays, and educational rural tourism (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015).

Research Methodology

Since it outlines the present condition, challenges and the future prospects of agri-tourism in Sangli district, this study is analytical and descriptive in nature (Kothari, 2004). In this work, there are no primary surveys or field questionnaires used, only secondary data is used (Johnston, 2014). The secondary data were screened based on a variety of sources, including official websites, census data, research articles, books, governmental reports, statistical summaries, and tourist policy reports (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). A literature analysis and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the material, a list of sources and interpretative discussion (Bryman, 2016).

The statistics of the Sangli district with regard to demographic, agricultural and tourist base are tabled in the statistics as indicated by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics (2025). The interlinking of agri-tourism and rural jobs, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development is implemented in the wider context of development Viksit Bharat 2047 (MyGov, 2023).

Data Collection

The official and scholarly sources of secondary data are found in the article.

Sr. No.	Type of Data	Source	Use in the Study
1	Population and literacy	District Social and Economic Review, Sangli	To understand rural development base
2	Land use and agriculture	DES Maharashtra and district reports	To identify agricultural potential
3	Crop information	Sangli district official information	To identify agri-tourism products
4	Tourism resources	Zilla Parishad Sangli and Maharashtra Tourism	To identify tourism linkages
5	Policy information	Maharashtra Agri-Tourism Policy 2020	To understand government support
6	Rural tourism framework	Ministry of Tourism, Government of India	To connect with national tourism strategy
7	Academic literature	Research papers, books and Ph.D. theses	To support theoretical discussion

tatistical Profile of Sangli District

Table 1: Basic Demographic Profile of Sangli District

Indicator	Value
Geographical area	About 8,572 sq. km
Total population	28,22,143
Male population	14,35,728
Female population	13,86,415

Rural population share	About 73.44%
Urban population share	About 26.56%
Sex ratio	966 females per 1000 males
Literacy rate	About 81.48%
Number of talukas	10

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Maharashtra, 2025.

Table 2: Agricultural Base of Sangli District

Agricultural Indicator	Importance for Agri-Tourism
Grapes and raisins	Vineyard visits, raisin processing and direct sales
Turmeric	Spice tourism, turmeric processing and market visits
Sugarcane	Sugarcane harvesting, juice and jaggery experience
Pomegranate	Fruit garden visits and farm photography
Agricultural Indicator	Importance for Agri-Tourism
Millets and dryland crops	Dryland farming education and climate-resilient agriculture tourism
Dairy and livestock	Rural livelihood learning and children's educational tours
River-based agriculture	Riverside farm meals, village walks and rural circuits

Source: Compiled from DES Sangli, District Sangli official information and Maharashtra tourism resources.

Table 3: Possible Agri-Tourism Circuits in Sangli District

Circuit	Main Theme	Possible Activities
Grape-Raisin Circuit	Grapes and raisins	Vineyard visit, raisin drying, grape tasting
Turmeric Circuit	Turmeric cultivation and trade	Cultivation visit, drying, polishing and spice market visit
Sugarcane-Jaggery Circuit	Sugarcane farming	Harvesting, juice extraction and jaggery making
Krishna River Rural Circuit	River and village life	Farm lunch, river-side village walk and local food
Dryland Farming Circuit	Drought-prone agriculture	Millet farms, goat rearing and water conservation learning
Eco-Rural Circuit	Nature and farming	Dandoba, Sagareshwar and nearby farm visits
Pilgrimage-Farm Circuit	Religious tourism and rural food	Tasgaon, Audumbar and farm meal experiences

Source: Author's compilation based on secondary information.

Results and Discussion

1 Agricultural Strength of Sangli District

According to the Directorate of Economics and Statistics (2025), Sangli district is agrarian and therefore agri-tourism development of the area is founded on its agrarian nature.Vineyard and farm products tourism could take advantage of the popular grapes and raisins of the area (Kumbhar, 2010).Sznajder, Przezborska, and Scrimgeour (2009) remark that in most cases, urbanites resort to agricultural tourism to learn how grapes are cultivated, how raisins are made, and how farm products are sold.Turmeric is one of the most important elements of Sangli as it supports the spice-themed tourism that involves farm tours, processing-demonstrations, and the local market experience (Sathe, 2012).

The production of sugarcane and jaggery might also be a fascinating and informative venture to their tourists who are accompanied by their children as well as the tourists who are intrigued with the local food (Busby and Rendle, 2000). Fleischer and

Tchetchik (2005) also add that pomegranate orchards, nurseries, goat rearing, dairy production, and dryland agriculture can also be added to the list of the agricultural tourism packages.

2 Rural Development Potential

According to the Directorate of Economics and Statistics (2025), balanced development of Sangli has to be made through diversification of the rural livelihoods since the rural population is a large percentage of the total population.Agri-tourism gives the farmers a chance to earn more by arranging farm tours, which also involve eating, accommodation, entertainment and selling farm products (Nickerson, Black, and McCool, 2001).

Tew and Barbieri (2012) indicate that the rural communities can use the young people as tour guides, drivers, internet marketers, photographers, assistants of events and planners of farm experiences.McGehee, Kim, and Jennings (2007) suggest that women can participate in a number of ways which include serving traditional food, homestay services, sales of local snacks and crafts, cultural events and self-help group items.The added benefit of farm tourism is that the rural-urban divide can be bridged as tourists can gain a direct experience of farming (Madan, 2014).

3 Cultural and Natural Tourism Linkages

When all these factors are integrated together like local festivals, cuisine, culture and agriculture, agri-tourism prospers (Roberts and Hall, 2001).Potential links to Sangli in terms of agricultural tourism and village dishes could be the village fairs, and the city might be home to cultural and religious heritage such as Tasgaon Ganapati, Audumbar, Sangli Ganapati temple (Zilla Parishad Sangli, 2025).The Dandoba hills, the Sagareshwar region, the Krishna river landscape, and the Chandoli region are some of the natural resources that can be used to support eco-rural tourist circuits (Maharashtra tourist, 2025).

(Lane, 1994) Farm lunches, village tours, traditional cuisine experiences, and short-stay rural tourism may all be facilitated by the Krishna River belt. Water conservation, drought-resistant, millets, and climate resistant agriculture are some of the issues that can form the basis of tourism education in the Jat, Atpadi, and Khanapur arid regions (Irshad, 2010).

4 Policy Support

Government of Maharashtra (2020) states that Maharashtra Agri-Tourism Policy 2020 is the official policy of establishing agri-tourism as an agricultural and rural related activity.The Government of Maharashtra (2020) says that the strategy will help rural communities, agricultural institutions, farmer organizations, and individual farmers develop farm-based tourist experiences.Homestays, rural clusters, local culture, crafts, community involvement, and livelihood production are all pillars of the rural tourism plan put out by the Ministry of Tourism (Ministry of Tourism, 2021).Sangli can benefit from these policy recommendations as the area offers high-quality agricultural goods but could need some help with marketing and organization (Hall, Roberts, & Mitchell, 2003).

5 Major Problems of Agri-Tourism in Sangli District

The principal menace plaguing the eastern section of Sangli is incoherent rainfall and the threat of drought particularly the dryland talukas (Mane, 2018).According to Irshad (2010) water scarcity can affect the charm of farms, cleanliness of gardens, tourist facilities and sustainability of year-round tourism.The second challenge is small and scattered landholding, as not all farmers might have enough land or finances to build independent tourist amenities (Barbieri, 2013).The third challenge revealed in the study by Havale, Chaudhari, and Jadhav (2022) is the deficit in training in the hospitality, cleanliness, communication, visitor management, safety, and digital advertisement.

The fourth issue is poor branding because Sangli, though an ardent farmer, who has never been promoted as a major agri-tourism destination has never been branded (Page and Getz, 1997).

The fifth Rural roads, signage, parking, toilets, water, first aid, online booking system etc. are all sub-standard and this brings us to our fifth problem (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004).

The sixth concern is seasonal demand since there are many farm experiences that relate to crop calendars. This implies that visitors might not be interested in such experiences at other times of the year (Ollenburg and Buckley, 2007).

The seventh problem is the absence of cooperation among various government agencies such as the organizations that deal with agriculture and tourism, farmers, self-help groups and private operators (Saxena, Clark, Oliver, and Ilbery, 2007).

Prospects in the Context of Viksit Bharat 2047

Among the two paths in which agri-tourism can help Viksit Bharat 2047 is through the generation of local jobs and alleviating the migration pressure between the rural and urban areas (MyGov, 2023).According to George, Mair and Reid (2009) this may aid in diversifying the source of revenue that farmers are getting since it will bridge the gap that exists between agriculture and other industries such as food processing, lodging, education and sale of localized products.Fostering small farm stays, village restaurants, farm stores, guided tours, cultural programs, and educational visits are all ways it might help rural enterprises (Clarke, 1996).Packaging of local products, homestays, selling crafts, self-help organization and food businesses can all be a source of empowering the women (McGehee and Kim, 2004).Its assistance can save the rural sports, folk songs, rural food, farm tools, and village customs and traditions, and even the celebrations and village activities (Bramwell and Lane, 1994). Sustainable tourism could also be achieved by small scale, environmentally conscious, community based activities, which are locally owned and managed (UNWTO, 2020).

Recommendations

Sangli might also consider establishing agri-tourism clusters where other towns and farms neighbors contribute their resources and knowledge on such topics as marketing, administration of tourists and exchange of facilities.The vineyard tours, demonstrations of the raisin-making and farm-product stores where the grape-growing is most favorable should be included in a grape-raisin tourist circuit. It would be prudent to establish a turmeric tourist circuit that would include trade and production of turmeric, processing and market experiences. Good ideas to promote sugarcane-jaggery tourism include farm tours,

demonstrations on jaggery-making, and rural food festivals. The local foods, snacks, arts and crafts, homestays, and processed agricultural products should be linked to the women self help organizations.

Local institutions and schools should be encouraged to have educational farm visits about crops, irrigation, soil, biodiversity, and rural lives. Examples of the fields that can be trained by farmers are hospitality, cleanliness, digital marketing, pricing, and communication, as well as visitor safety. You can put the ads on websites, Google Maps, make a booking on WhatsApp, Instagram accounts, and online settlement. Simple facilities which should be enhanced are toilets, water, parking, approach roads, signage and garbage control.

Instead of being restricted to commercial farm entertainment, agri-tourism may be developed further to enhance sustainability and unite peopl.

Conclusion

The Sangli district is a perfect agri-tourism site owing to its agricultural expertise, rural inhabitants, agricultural diversity, cultural character and natural wealth. The dairy, dry land farming, pomegranate, sugarcane, turmeric, grapes, raisin, jaggery and sugarcane can all serve as an important student and visitor attraction. Agri-tourism can lead to creation of jobs to the rural youth, women, self-help organizations and local entrepreneurs that can also boost the revenue of farmers. Extreme weather events, inadequate infrastructure, misguided marketing, insufficient education, cyclical demand, and disjointed government agencies are the key issues.

Agri-tourism is a rural development method whereby every citizen can be involved in the development of the Sangli district within Viksit Bharat 2047. An effective sustainable tourist management in Sangli must be based on cluster-based planning, governmental assistance, online marketing, women participation and farmers participation.

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Original Article

Constitutionalizing Sustainable Tourism: Evaluating the Enforceability of the Carrying Capacity Principle and the Public Trust Doctrine under Article 21 by 2047

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Abstract

"We borrow the environment from our children, not inherit it from our ancestors."
- -Mahatma Gandhi

Tourism is the fastest growing sector where tourism is now done for many reasons where people travel to explore new places, to make their mind fresh, to see new traditional cultural practice, try new foods and many other reasons. Tourism will make the economic growth of a country by employment generation, promote local business etc. However, the uncontrolled over tourism leads to environmental degradation, plastic waste accumulation, pressure on water and natural resources, make the life of the animals of that area difficult etc. In this paper the main agenda is to promote sustainable tourism for 2047. Sustainable tourism require balance between development and environmental protection through the principal of carrying capacity. In Indian Constitution the interpretation of Article 21 goes beyond the right to life and personal liberty which includes right to clean and healthy environment. Article 21 creates an obligation to State to the natural resources for present as well as future generations and the Public Trust Doctrine requires the State to protect natural resources for present and future generation.

This paper examines the extent to which Carrying Capacity Principle and Public Trust Doctrine can be integrated into Article 21 jurisprudence and environmental governance. It analyses relevant judicial decisions, constitutional principles, and environmental doctrines to determine whether restrictions on tourism activities exceeding sustainable limits can be legally justified. The study also incorporates empirical observations through a survey to understand public perspectives on sustainable tourism practices. And this argues that constitutional environmental protections can play a crucial role in shaping responsible tourism policies and ensuring sustainable tourism development in India towards 2047.

Keywords: *Sustainable Tourism, Carrying Capacity, Article 21, Public Trust Doctrine*

Introduction

Now, tourism is the fastest growing sector, which is contributing to the economic development, employment generation, culture exchange, regional growth and promotion of regional businesses. However, the rapid growth of tourism especially in the ecologically sensitive area. Have also created a serious concern regarding environmental degradation, Overuse of natural resources, loss of biodiversity, and disturbance to local communities. There is a need for sustainable tourism in India, this takes India to its vision of development by 2047. By promoting proper use of resources as we all know that resources are limited and we need to make best use of those resources and preserve for future, conserving biodiversity, participation of local communities to hold the interest of them and creates long term economic benefits. Ministry of tourism has introduced sustainable tourism practices India.

Carrying Capacity Principle

Carrying capacity in tourism means the maximum number of tourists that a particular destination can accommodate without causing serious damage to its environment, culture, resources, or the quality of life of local people.

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We know that tourism spots like hill station, beach or heritage site attract thousands of tourists, but if the number of tourists exceeds the capacity a place can manage, it may harm the very attractions that draw tourists to that destination Sustainable tourism aims to keep tourism within the capacity. Need of carrying capacity can be understood by an example that Maya Bay, Thailand is one of the famous tourist destinations known for its marine ecosystem and scenic beauty, experienced severe environmental degradation due to excessive tourist footfall resulted in the damage of coral reef, and disturbance to marine life. And the visitor number has exceeded the ecological carrying capacity of the area and the Thailand authority in 2018 temporarily closed the entry of visitors to Maya Bay. This provides comparative perspective to India. Where environmentally sensitive tourist destinations such as hill station, coastal areas, and protected eco system require carrying capacity-based regulation. Such methods can be supported through the constitutional interpretation of Article 21 which includes the right to clean and healthy environment.

Article 21 and Environmental Protection

Article 21 under Indian Constitution stands for "No *person shall be deprived for his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law".*

Article 21 of the Indian constitution which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, has been expanded by Supreme court to include right to clean and healthy environment. In context of tourism, it highlights the importance of sustainable tourism practices that protect natural resources preserve biodiversity and safeguard the interest of local communities."

In *Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar*, the supreme court recognized that right to life under Article 21 includes right to enjoy pollution free water and air. The court held that environmental pollution which affect the quality of life will violate the fundamental right mention under Article 21. This principle becomes significant in tourism sector where excessive and unregulated tourism leads to environmental degradation, and harm the local communities.

Similarly in *M C Mehta V. Union of India*, the supreme court stressed the need to protect the environment and held that development cannot come at the cost of ecological balance. This supports the idea that tourism must follow sustainable practices and remain within the carrying capacity of destinations.

This judicial precedence show that environmental protection is not merely a policy object but a constitutional obligation under Article 21. Tourism requires authority to control activities that may cause harm to environment and damage natural resources. Carrying capacity helps maintain a balance between tourism growth and environmental protection by ensuring that destinations are not overused beyond their ecological and social limits.

When tourism exceeds the environmental limits of a place, it can harm the right to a clean and healthy environment. Therefore, regulating tourism through carrying capacity is necessary to maintain a balance between development and environmental protection.

Public Trust Doctrine

The Public Trust Doctrine recognizes that natural resources such as forests, rivers, lakes, and coastal areas are held by the State as a trustee for present and future generations. The State has a duty to protect these resources and ensure their sustainable use. The Public Trust Doctrine requires the State to regulate activities that harm the environment. Uncontrolled tourism can lead to resource depletion, pollution, and biodiversity loss. Therefore, carrying capacity limits help balance tourism development with environmental protection.

In the case of *M C Mehta v. Kamal Nath* Supreme court applied a principle of Public Trust Doctrine and the judgement held that the state is a trustee of natural resources and cannot allow private interests to damage them where state plays a role of trustee to protect the natural resources for future.

In case of the *Intellectuals Forums*, *Tirupathi v State of Andhra Pradesh* the supreme court applied this doctrine of Public Trust Doctrine, where natural resource is held by a state in trust for public and future generations.

This doctrine introduces an integrational responsibility, needed development policies to consider future needs rather than focusing on a present economic goal. Carrying capacity helps the state perform its duty as a trustee by limiting excessive tourism and protecting fragile ecosystem from environment.

Enforceability of Carrying Capacity Principle

India has environmental laws but carrying capacity is often only a guideline. Carrying capacity in sustainable tourism means determining the maximum level of tourism activity that a destination can handle without causing serious harm to an environment, local communities, or cultural heritage. Although it has traditionally been treated as a tourism planning tool, it is now being considered as a principle that can have legal importance in environmental governance. In India, the idea of enforcing carrying capacity can relate to Article 21 of the Constitution, which protects the right to life. Through judicial interpretation, Article 21 has been expanded to include the right to a clean and healthy environment. Therefore, tourism projects that exceed ecological limits and cause environmental damage may conflict with constitutional duties to protect the environment. The Public Trust Doctrine further supports this approach by placing responsibility on the State to safeguard natural resources such as forests, rivers, coastal areas, and biodiversity for current and future generations. Applying carrying capacity under this doctrine would require authorities to regulate tourism not only for economic growth but also according to environmental limits. However, the main challenge is transforming carrying capacity from a scientific concept into a legally binding standard. Although Indian courts have recognized principles like sustainable development and the precautionary principle, there is still a need for clearer laws, monitoring systems, and enforcement mechanisms specifically addressing tourism limits. By 2027, recognizing carrying capacity as a constitutional environmental obligation could strengthen sustainable tourism by ensuring that development takes place within ecological boundaries while protecting the rights of future generations.

In the case of *Ashok Kumar Raghav v. Union of India* where Supreme court of India demanded an evaluation of carrying capacity of 13 Himalayan states because unplanned development was causing severe landslides and ecological collapse.

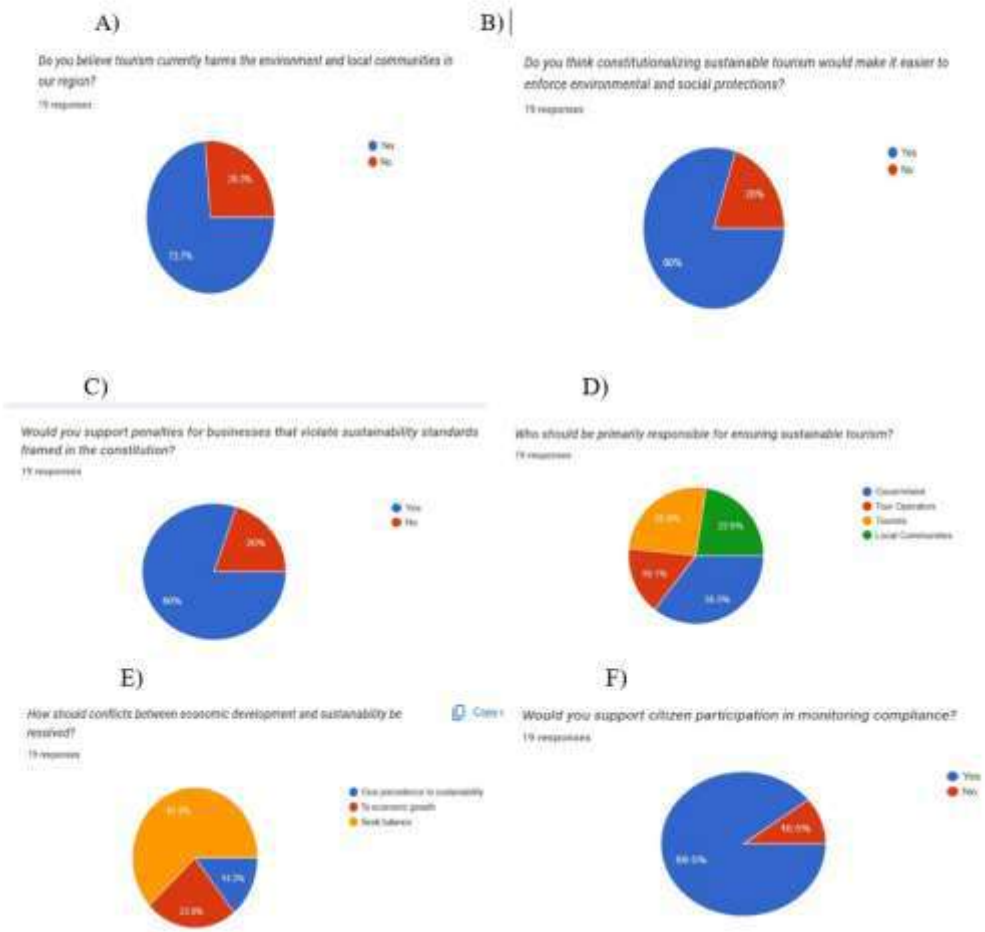
Research objective

1. To understand the connection between Article 21 of the Indian Constitution and the right to a clean and healthy environment in relation to sustainable tourism.
2. To examine how tourism activities influence environmental protection, biodiversity, and the well-being of local communities.
3. To study how sustainable tourism can help maintain a balance between development and the constitutional duty to protect the environment.
4. To analyse the importance of carrying capacity in regulating excessive tourism and preventing harm to ecological, social, and cultural resources.
5. To explore the role of the Public Trust Doctrine and judicial decisions in ensuring protection of natural resources in tourism-related activities.
6. To suggest measures for encouraging responsible tourism while safeguarding environmental interests and the rights of future generations.

Data and Methodology

1) Primary data includes the sample survey conducted by google form. where primary data collected by sending google forms to fill. Some questions were asked to the respondents; the survey responses regarding the relationship between tourism development, environmental protection and legal enforcement.
2) Secondary data which include analysis of constitutional provisions, judicial decisions, government policies and research articles and reports.

Result and Discussion



A) The majority of people believe that tourism activities can negatively affect the natural resources and local communities. This indicates that uncontrolled tourism may create pleasure on ecosystems leading to resource depletion, pollution, and disturbance to local life. Therefore, the concept of carrying capacity becomes important to regulate tourism within ecological limits and ensure that development does not violate the right to a clean and healthy environment under Article 21 of the Constitution.

B) The response shows strong public support for giving sustainable tourism a stronger legal foundation. Recognising sustainable tourism within constitutional interpretation can help strengthen the duty of the State to protect natural resources and ensure that tourism development takes place without harming environmental and community interests.

C)The findings suggest that people support holding tourism operators accountable for activities that exceed environmental limits. This supports the idea that carrying capacity should not remain only a policy guideline but should have enforceable legal consequences when tourism activities cause ecological damage.

D) Responses show that Government - 35.5%, Tourists - 25.8%, Local Communities - 22.6%, Tour Operators - 16.1%

The responses indicate that the government is viewed as having the primary responsibility for protecting tourism resources. This connects with the Public Trust Doctrine, under which the State acts as a trustee of natural resources and has a duty to preserve them for present and future generations.

E) 61.9% respondents preferred seeking a balance. This reflects the understanding that tourism contributes to economic growth but cannot be allowed to operate at the cost of environmental destruction. Sustainable tourism requires a balance between development and conservation, which is the central purpose of carrying capacity regulation.

F) Result: 89.5% respondents answered Yes. The high level of support for citizen involvement highlights the importance of community participation in enforcing sustainable tourism practices. Public participation can improve transparency and ensure that tourism authorities and businesses follow environmental standards.

These findings demonstrate that there is public acceptance for stronger legal regulations of tourism and support the argument that Carrying capacity can function as an enforceable tool under Article 21 and public trust doctrine.

Suggestions /Recommendations for the way towards 2047 Viksit Bharath

1. Introducing scientific Carrying capacity limits for sensitive places
2. To promote cleanliness and reduce littering
3. Installation of clear instructions for tourists regarding environmental responsibility
4. Increases power and responsibility of forest and Environmental authorities
5. To encourage local community participation
6. Creation of policies which creates a balance between tourism economy and Environmental authorities

Conclusion

Tourism in a country should be promoted to increase the tourism economy, but it should not come at the cost of the environment. Tourism plays an important role in the growth of a country's economy, but it should not develop by damaging the environment. There is a need for proper planning and regulations that maintain a balance between tourism growth and the protection of nature. If tourism expands without considering environmental limits, it can negatively affect natural resources, local communities, and the economy in the long run. Sustainable tourism does not mean stopping tourism or making it difficult; rather, it encourages responsible tourism practices. It highlights the responsibility of the tourism sector to protect the environment, conserve resources, and ensure that future generations can also benefit from and enjoy these natural spaces. Sustainable tourism creates a balance between tourism growth and environmental protection. Article 21 and the public trust doctrine require the state to manage tourism responsibility by following carrying capacity and protecting natural resources for future generation.

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Original Article

The Role of Archaeological Site Interpretation in Promoting Heritage Tourism in Haryana

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Abstract

Haryana is one of the most archaeologically rich states in India with a remarkable crucible of sites that represent a number of civilizations and range from Harappan urban centres to early historic settlement to medieval monuments. Despite this extraordinary archaeological heritage, the potential for the island as a tourist attraction remains undervalued by the state, especially for the lack of a solid framework for the interpretation of archaeological sites. Archaeological site interpretation processes, including the provision of signage, guided tours, museums, digital media and community engagement, is the pivotal link between tangible and intangible heritage resources and the visitors' experience. There is this review paper which focuses on conceptual and applied aspects of archaeological site interpretation in Haryana with special reference to how it can make the passive archaeological sites dynamic assets of the tourism industry. Based on the international principles and guidelines from Freeman Tilden and Burra Charter and on Indian context involving National Tourism Policy and Archaeological Survey of India guidelines, the paper examines the status of the interpretive practices in key sites including Rakhigarhi, Kurukshetra, Hansi, Pinjore etc. The analysis identifies that there are suboptimal areas of multilingual signage, visitor management, community engagement, and digital infrastructure. The paper suggests a comprehensive approach that includes inclusive interpretation, technology-enabled storytelling, and stakeholder cooperation in order to boost the heritage tourism in Haryana. The results have implications for heritage planners, tourism policy-makers and cultural resource managers that aim to use archaeological heritage for sustainable development.

Keywords: *Archaeological site, Heritage, tourism, Haryana, India*

Introduction

The growth of heritage tourism has been identified as one of the most compelling trends in the global tourism industry and has resulted from the increased interest in cultural identity, history, and authentic travel (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Archaeological sites, then, are a physical record of human history in the world, and thus qualify for a special place in this terrain, one that can in no way be fully transmitted by a museum duplicate or a simulation on screen (Silberman 2012). However, archaeological remains alone do not draw visitors or sustain their interest; they reveal and serve to inspire visitors when they are presented and interpreted. (Tilden 1957). A case study of Haryana state in India is illustrative in this context. Haryana is enveloped with archaeological values in Indo-Gangetic Plains and is a part of the ancient trade routes of the subcontinent spreading between north west and core places of the country. Some important and largest Harappan sites of the world, including Rakhigarhi, which is believed to be the largest settlement of Indus Valley Civilisation, are present within the state (Shinde et al., 2018). In addition to the Harappan legacy, the land of Haryana contains early historic cities, Mahabharata civilization era sites, medieval fort settlements, architectural monuments representing several thousand years of human activities. For example, Kurukshetra is regarded as sacred not only as a battlefield of the Mahabharata, but also as a holy pilgrimage, and is therefore revered as a meeting place of myth, history, and religion (Sharma, 2006).

But the archaeological bounty of Haryana has not matched the development of its heritage tourism. Many archae sites in the state are not completely understood and not being successfully explained by a wealth of untrained local volunteers and are poorly signed, and lacking any organised visitor routes (Archaeological Survey of India [ASI]; Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2020).

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When it does exist it tends to consist of a few simple, dated stone plaques that contain technical specifications rather than for the public at large (Uzzell, 1989). This gap between the richness of the resource and the poverty of its presentation is both a loss of culture and a lost opportunity economically, especially for a State who actively promotes tourism as a means to stimulate the regional economy. In this context, the present paper aims at examining the role of archaeological site interpretation as one of the activities which can stimulate the culture tourism in the context of Haryana in the state of Haryana. It identifies, discusses and evaluates the conceptual literature on heritage interpretation, establishes an inventory of the state's archaeological resources, evaluates current interpretations and its shortcomings, and suggests evidence-based strategies for improving the interpretive landscape that can offer advantages to both heritage and tourism. The paper uses a cross-disciplinary approach, supported by tourism studies and heritage management and archaeology and cultural policy analysis.

Archaeological Heritage Resources of Haryana

The archaeological site of Haryana is remarkable in terms of both its antiquity as well as thematics. In general, the state's heritage resources fall within four temporal and cultural spheres: prehistoric and proto-historic sites, early historic settlements, medieval heritage, sacred-pilgrimage landscapes.

The Harappan sites or the Indus Valley Civilisation sites of Haryana are the most globally important contribution of Haryana to the world heritage. More than 340 Harappan and pre-Harappan sites are found in the state and its density is unprecedented in India (Possehl, 2002). The most significant of these is Rakhigarhi, about 350 ha in size, with indications of advanced urban organization, some sort of sewage system, uniform weights and measures, and an abundant material culture (Shinde et al., 2018). More recently, through Rakhigarhi archaeogenomic studies, have further raised the scientific profile of the site globally through input in the debate of the origins and migrations of ancient populations (Narasimhan et al., 2019). Other important sites in Harappan culture in Haryana, known to have such complementarities for understanding the Indus civilisation in spatial and temporal perspectives, include Banawali, Mitathal, Farmana, and Kunal (Bhatt, 2015).

Prehistoric rock art, though little studied, has been documented in parts of Aravalli foothills in southern Haryana, further enriching the pre-historic heritage of the state (Kumar, 2013).

The early first millennium BCE remains from the Painted Grey Ware (PGW) culture have been found throughout Kurukshetra. During the Kushan, Gupta period and earlier, Kurukshetra district was archaeologically layered, with sites dating from this period (Lal, 1954). Historically the town of Thanesar (Sthanvishvara) was the capital of Harsha Vardhana's empire in the 7th century CE and has been repeatedly attested to in the writings of the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (Watters, 1904). Another significant medieval center is Hansi in Hisar district—it is known from the medieval period because of its fort and other structures, which are associated with the military and commercial importance of the area during the sultanate and Mughal period (Nath, 1990).

Though mainly known as the Mughal Garden, Pinjore (Yadavindra Gardens) in Panchkula district has archaeological stratigraphy even of the time that has come before the Mughals, and it exemplifies natural and built heritage in one landscape, (Haryana Tourism, 2022).

The historic context of Kurukshetra, the epic of Mahabharata, which took place on the land, and the occurrence of the Bhagvad Gita, the discourse of the Lord, makes this significant location one of the most significant pilgrimage sites of Hinduism. The Brahma Sarovar is one of the largest man-made tanks built in India and it is a focus of religious congregations, especially during the solar eclipse when millions of pilgrims gather (Sharma, 2006). Pehowa, Panipat (where three historical battles were fought) and Kurukshetra is a historical and spiritual heritage corridor of immense value.

Their diversity, ranging from prehistoric archaeology to medieval military history, religious landscapes and garden architecture, allows for an unusually rich-base for the development of heritage tourism. This potential still imparts itself, however, has not yet been fully realised partly due to the lack of full development of interpretation at these sites (ASI, 2020).

Concepts and Approaches to Archaeological Site Interpretation

Intellectual elements of heritage interpretation find their roots in the mid-twentieth century in the seminal work of Freeman Tilden (1957) who developed six principles, which continue to shape interpretive practice around the world. Tilden stated that it was not just about presentation of information, but of ideas or feelings, and that it should illuminate a universal truth from a specific instance. These principles made a distinction between interpretation as art of teaching and interpreting and simple fact reporting.

Later researchers have built upon and modified Tilden's model in the changing social, cultural, and technological environment. The concept of thematic interpretation, which was developed by Ham (1992), in which effective interpretation is centerd on a dominant theme or message, and visitors process their experience of heritage into meaningful constructions, is especially relevant to the idea of enabling visitors to make sense of the visit. Uzzell (1989) took the concept further with his notion of a 'hot interpretation' to shape heritage in ways that give room to visitors to consider certain histories in an 'intrusive' and critical manner rather than simply the sanitised version that the tourist industry serves up.

The Burra Charter (ICMOSA 1999) is an interpretation of other aspects of cultural management that does not override the requirement for cultural significance to underpin, or form the basis for all cultural management decisions, including decisions about interpretation. ICOMOS Australia (1999) considers the principle of 'compatible use' (stated in the Charter) as pertinent to the design and delivery of interpretations at archaeological sites.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) supervises the management and understanding of centrally protected monuments and sites as per the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act), 1958 amended in 2010, in the Indian context. The ASI's efforts in the interpretation field have always emphasized informational plaques and site museums, and more dynamic interpretive approaches have been slowly added, with the launching of the 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme and affiliations with the State Tourism Departments of India (Ministry of Culture, Government of India, 2018).

But, modern methods of interpreting an archaeological site acknowledge the diversity of interests, media and backgrounds of site visitors. Poria et al. (2003) identify three classes of visitors: those who want to experience a particular topic in a heritage site; those who are interested in the topic either as a general educational experience; and those who are after aesthetic or recreational experiences. Good interpretation needs to come to grips with this diversity, balancing rich material for the specialist with accessible material for the non-specialist. The methods of interpretive layering (from surface level markings to detailed guided description, audio guides, interactive displays and academic literature) are now becoming core to good practice in heritage site management (Moscardo, 1996).

The use of digital technologies has radically changed the interpretive possibilities since the early aughts. Today augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), geographic information systems (GIS)-based visitor trails, and applications on smartphone are available to offer visitors an extended interpretation beyond time and space (Bekele et al., 2018). For archaeological sites, especially where a lot of the original remains have now disappeared, digital reconstruction opens doors to what is not physically visible, to the reconstruction of ancient streetscapes, ritual scenes, and the like, though such re-construction does still require a lot of imagination (Champion, 2011).

Heritage Tourism and Visitor Experience

From a broader tourism perspective, heritage tourism is travel to the cultural or historical phenomena of a destination, and has been recognised by the UNWTO as one of the most important and long lasting types of tourism worldwide. In Smith (2009), 'heritage tourism' is seen as a process of 'identity-making' where tourists try to situate themselves in a larger story of cultural continuity and historical evolution. In the context of archaeological locations, this dimension of identity becomes even more significant, as the experience of encountering material trace of distant historical times can inspire powerful learning about continuity and change in humankind.

Visitor experience, one of the complex multidimensional constructs in the field of heritage tourism, can be broken down into three dimensions (cognitive, affective, conative and sensory) (Poria et al., 2006). In the study of heritage tourism, quality of interpretation has been regularly identified as a key component of visitor satisfaction and educational experience (Moscardo 1996; Ballantyne & Uzzell 1999). Cultural experiences that are high-quality, providing visitors with 'grounding' or an 'encounter', result in much higher levels of place attachment, willingness to return and heritage advocacy (Ballantyne et al., 2011).

The notion of the 'mindful visitor' (Moscardo, 1996) is especially relevant in the context of the archaeological heritage, cultural artefacts and places in which cognitive involvement should be active at intervening with abstract historical narratives. More engaged learning experiences result from interpretation that promotes mindful engagement—asking questions, making links, building meaning—than simply delivering information. Regardless of the interpretive style, there are techniques that lead to more mindful engagement with the exhibits: interactive exhibits, guided discovery approaches, and narrative storytelling.

The National Tourism Policy (2002) and its subsequent revision (2015) place a high significance on heritage tourism as a priority area which can contribute to foreign exchange, employment generation in the rural and semi-urban areas and incentivise the conservation of cultural resources (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2015). Policy framework promotes state tourism authorities to create archaeological circuit connection, monument, culture traditions among living cultures and create a uniform circuit to visit their archaeological sites. The state tourism department has created some of these circuits and most importantly the circuit from Kurukshetra to Panipat to Karnal, but while some have been implemented successfully, others have not (Haryana Tourism, 2022).

Heritage tourism can thus play an important role in the development plan for Haryana's economy. Research on the same types of sites in India and elsewhere has shown that High Currents can be achieved from entry fees, guided tours, site museums and ancillary retail sales, which in turn can create significant local economic benefits as well, in the accommodation, food and craft sectors (Apostolakis, 2003; Chhabra et al., 2003). The World Bank (2001) has also cited examples of economic multipliers of 3-4 times the investment over five years in the case of investment in heritage interpretation.

Role of Archaeological Site Interpretation

The interpretation of archaeological sites has multiple roles in heritage tourism, which are addressed in this section in an interrelational manner.

As a manifestation of an archaeological world, a site communicates its messages partly as a result of the physical remains that are visible to the visitor, including potsherds, structural foundations, middens, stratigraphic sections, etc., which have meaning only if considerable specialist knowledge is acquired. Interpretation acts as an essential intermediary, linking the technical-language of archaeology to experiences and narratives for a variety of publics of visitors (Hodder, 1999). For example, at Rakhigarhi the apparent excavation sites, brick structures and museum objects assume new meaning when viewed in relation to the scale, sophistication and significance of the Harappan civilisation. If not interpreted, some of the physical remains can represent to the untrained visitor nothing more than eroded walls and pottery shards.

The key to creating and conveying the identity of a heritage destination, or what MacCannell (1976) describes as the site's 'tourist gaze', is effective interpretation. Interpretive identity is important for Haryana for which the presence of well known tourist destinations like Rajasthan and Agra in the proximity makes it very difficult to attract tourists from the domestic and foreign markets. The state's Harappan heritage is truly a unique selling point; the Haryana potential to be named UNESCO's World Heritage Site would make a huge difference in the state's international visibility in the world of tourism and cultural heritage. Meaningful interpretation that communicates the importance of Harappan urbanism and technology, as well as its art, can elevate the region of Haryana to a first-class venue for culture-driven visitors (Prideaux & Coghlan 2010).

One of Tilden's original concepts was to seek to inspire respect for and stewardship of the resource being presented through interpretation (Tilden, 1957). Such an interpretation function, of hanging on to what has been conserved, is particularly important

at archaeological sites where unwelcome visitors fail to follow the paths or leave behind litter and touch the surfaces that in many cases can never be reconstructed. Numerous studies have found that visitors given good interpretation have more positive attitudes to conservation and are much less likely to undertake behaviours which damage the site (Ballantyne et al., 2011). Where the physical resources required to monitor visitor impact are less developed at more remote locations or less managed sites in Haryana, awareness of conservation efforts through interpretation might be the primary protection against damage from visitors.

In recent years, good practice for heritage programming increasingly acknowledges that that the role of the archaeologist and of practised professionals is not the sole domain of interpretation, and that interpretation should reflect communities' knowledge, views and verbal expressions (Smith & Waterton, 2009). Community interpretation models also enhance visitor experiences by incorporating the 'lived' and 'real' nature of heritage, while the distribution of economic returns is done with greater equity (Bauer, 2006). Community interpretation programmes have the potential to bring together sites, local communities, and cultural co-creation with the benefit of visitors, local communities, and the sites, especially in rural heritage zones where communities adjacent to archaeological sites may have deep oral traditions of their local history and mythology.

Archaeological sites have the potential to generate a higher level of educational and research tourism in that they are located in a niche market that is more price inelastic, takes longer trips, and spends more money per person. Interpretation on the scientific aspects of archaeology – explanations of dating techniques, archaeological investigation, and problems archaeologists encounter in interpretation – is of considerable interest to university groups, school trips, professional archaeologists as well as to the scientifically curious public (Silberman, 2012). Since the attention gained on the digs at Rakhigarhi in 2019 after the archaeogenomic study, other Indian scholars from across the world have turned their gaze upon the excavations, offering opportunities for further research tourism if the infrastructure is right, and the interpretation is sound.

Conclusion

The archaeological treasure trove of Haryana, home to the Harappan megacities of Rakhigarhi and Banawali, the multi-layered sacred landscape of Kurukshetra, the battlegrounds of Panipat and even the medieval forts of Hansi is one of the largest concentrations of cultural heritage in the Indian subcontinent, with this potential largely yet to be realised as a heritage tourism asset, and the "interpretive infrastructure" – tools to illuminate different sites for diverse audiences – yet to be developed in a systematic and resourceful way. The analysis has shown that archaeological site interpretation is not the end of a site's existence, but is instead one of the crucial processes that turns a physical heritage asset into an educational, memorable and satisfying resource for visitors, and that without interpretation, and in its absence, archaeological sites will suffer reduced visitation and visitor satisfaction, reduced conservations outcomes and reduced economic benefits that it can bring to the local communities and wider regional economy. Addressing the challenges identified, requires sustained multi-stakeholder commitment towards creating thematic interpretive master plans, updating of physical and digital interpretive media, development of professional capacity of the interpretors, institutionalizing the involvement of communities, and the institutional framework of funding and governance that has neglected to prepare the sites for the number of visitors which they deserve. However, with the international scientific profile of Rakhigarhi and its potential of being inscribed on the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites, the opportunity to protect the invaluable archaeological heritage is unique and fleeting; only by investing in interpretation—bringing to life the ruins, to life the artifacts, to life the landscape—can Haryana become a world-class heritage tourism destination and hold onto its unreplaceable archaeological value for generations to come.

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Original Article

Assessment of Tourism Accessibility in Bengaluru Urban District: The Role of BMRCL Metro

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Abstract

Tourism accessibility is a crucial factor influencing visitor mobility, destination attractiveness, and sustainable urban tourism development. In Bengaluru Urban District, the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) has become an important component of the urban transport system, providing opportunities to improve connectivity to major tourist attractions and reduce dependence on private vehicles. However, existing studies have largely focused on urban mobility, with limited attention given to tourism accessibility. This study assesses tourism accessibility in Bengaluru Urban District and evaluates the contribution of the BMRCL Metro to improving connectivity between metro stations and major tourist destinations. The study is based on secondary data collected from BMRCL, Karnataka Tourism, and other published sources. A GIS- analysis was employed to classify tourist attractions according to their proximity to metro stations and accessibility levels. The results indicate that nearly 47.6% of the selected tourist attractions are located within 1 km of metro stations, demonstrating high accessibility. Attractions such as Cubbon Park, Lalbagh Botanical Garden, etc. benefit from excellent metro connectivity. In contrast, destinations such as Bannerghatta Biological Park, HAL Aerospace Museum, etc. exhibit lower accessibility due to inadequate feeder services and poor last-mile connectivity. The study highlights spatial disparities in tourism accessibility and emphasizes the need for integrated transport planning, improved feeder services, and enhanced multimodal connectivity to support sustainable urban tourism in Bengaluru.

Keywords: *Tourism Accessibility, BMRCL Metro, GIS Analysis, Urban Tourism.*

Introduction

Metro rail systems represent high-capacity, fixed-guideway urban transit networks operating on exclusive right-of-way corridors, predominantly underground or elevated, designed to provide fast, reliable, and high-frequency mobility within metropolitan regions (Teodorović & Janić, 2017). Metro rail systems have become a fundamental component of sustainable urban transportation, providing fast, reliable, and high-capacity mobility in rapidly growing metropolitan regions. By 2020, more than 190 metro systems were operational worldwide, serving major cities such as Tokyo, London, Paris, and Seoul, where public transport constitutes a significant share of daily travel. The expansion of metro networks has been widely recognized as an effective strategy for reducing traffic congestion, improving accessibility, and supporting sustainable urban development. From a transport geography perspective, metro systems enhance spatial connectivity by reducing travel time and improving access to urban opportunities, thereby promoting social and economic integration (Saif et al., 2019; Singh et al., 2020). Efficient public transport systems also improve accessibility between residential areas, commercial centers, and recreational destinations, contributing to more inclusive urban mobility. Tourism, one of the fastest-growing economic sectors, is highly dependent on efficient transport systems for destination competitiveness and visitor satisfaction. Accessibility is a key determinant of tourist mobility, influencing travel decisions and the overall visitor experience (Thompson & Schofield, 2007). Recent studies further emphasize that metro systems support sustainable tourism by improving accessibility, reducing dependence on private vehicles, and strengthening urban tourism networks (Romão & Bi, 2021). In this context, metro systems provide a critical mobility backbone for tourists in large urban destinations by offering cost-effective, time-efficient, and environmentally sustainable access.

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Sustainable tourism development has further intensified interest in low-carbon transport systems due to rising urban congestion, environmental degradation, and climate change impacts.Increasing motorization and urban expansion have led to severe mobility constraints in many cities, negatively affecting both resident populations and tourism attractiveness. Congested transport networks often degrade visitor experience and reduce destination competitiveness. As a result, metro systems have emerged as an environmentally sustainable alternative for tourist mobility in global cities such as New York, Barcelona, and Munich (Kagermeier & Gronau, 2017). Bengaluru functions as an important urban tourism destination, with key attractions such as Cubbon Park, Lalbagh Botanical Garden, Bangalore Palace, Vidhana Soudha, ISKCON Temple, and Bannerghatta Biological Park. However, access to these destinations remains constrained due to fragmented transport networks, weak last-mile connectivity, and high travel impedance. The Bengaluru Metro (Namma Metro), operated by the BMRCL, has significantly restructured urban mobility patterns. While metro primary function is commuter transport, the system also holds significant potential to improve tourism accessibility by reducing travel time, lowering generalized travel cost, and improving spatial integration between metro stations and tourist destinations. However, systematic empirical evidence assessing its effectiveness in enhancing tourism accessibility remains limited. This study addresses this gap by developing a comprehensive analytical framework to evaluate tourism accessibility in Bengaluru with respect to the BMRCL metro network. The framework integrates network-based accessibility modeling, origin–destination travel impedance analysis, service area delineation. This integrated approach enables a multidimensional evaluation of spatial accessibility patterns between metro infrastructure and urban tourist destinations. The study is guided by the following objectives:

- To construct a structured spatial database of metro stations, transit corridors, and major tourist destinations in Bengaluru.
- To evaluate spatial accessibility of tourist destinations using Buffer Analysis.

Study Area

Bengaluru is the capital city of Karnataka, is located in southern India on the Deccan Plateau between 12°39′N–13°14′N latitude and 77°22′E–77°52′E longitude, at an average elevation of approximately 920 m above mean sea level. Bengaluru has evolved into one of the country's leading metropolitan regions due to rapid growth in information technology, biotechnology, aerospace, and service sectors. Administratively, the city falls under the jurisdiction of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and forms part of Bengaluru Urban District. To address growing mobility challenges, the Government of Karnataka established the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL), which introduced the Bengaluru Metro (Namma Metro) in 2011. The metro network currently consists of the Purple Line connecting Challaghatta to Whitefield (Kadugodi) and the Green Line connecting Madavara to Silk Institute, with Nadaprabhu Kempegowda (Majestic) serving as the primary interchange station.

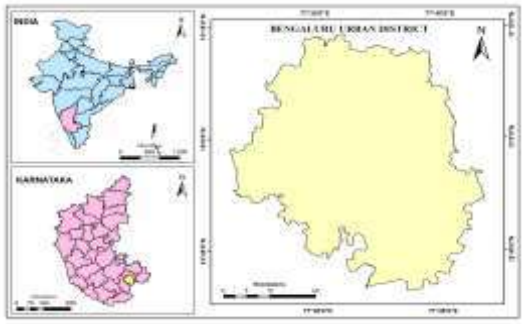


Fig. 1. Location map of Bengaluru Urban District

Bengaluru is an important urban tourism destination, hosting attractions such as Cubbon Park, Bangalore Palace, Vidhana Soudha, ISKCON Temple, etc. While several attractions are located within walking distance of metro stations, others remain dependent on road-based transport and face last-mile connectivity challenges. The diversity of tourism resources, expanding metro infrastructure, and varying accessibility levels make Bengaluru an ideal case study for assessing tourism accessibility and examining the role of metro systems in promoting sustainable urban tourism development.

Data and Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and spatial analytical approach to assess tourism accessibility in Bengaluru Urban District and evaluate the role of the BMRCL metro network in improving access to major tourist destinations. Secondary data were collected from BMRCL, the Karnataka Tourism Department, official tourism websites, government reports, and published literature. Geographic coordinates of tourist attractions and metro stations were obtained using Google Maps and integrated into an ArcGIS Pro database. A total of 21 major tourist attractions representing historical, cultural, religious, recreational, wildlife, museum, and nature-based categories were selected for analysis. A GIS-based buffer analysis was conducted in ArcGIS Pro to evaluate the accessibility of major tourist attractions in relation to the BMRCL metro network. A 1 km buffer was generated around all operational metro stations to represent a reasonable walking distance for tourists. Descriptive statistical methods were used to determine the number and percentage of attractions within each accessibility zone. The results were interpreted to evaluate spatial accessibility patterns and assess the contribution of the BMRCL metro network to sustainable tourism mobility in Bengaluru Urban District.

Results and Discussion

Tourist attractions located within this buffer were classified as **High accessible**, while those situated beyond the 1 km buffer were considered **less accessible** and dependent on feeder transport or other road-based modes. The spatial overlay of tourist attractions with the 1 km buffer enabled the identification of destinations that directly benefit from metro connectivity and those experiencing

last-mile accessibility challenges. The buffer map was used to assess the spatial distribution of tourism resources and the effectiveness of the BMRCL metro network in providing access to major tourist destinations across Bengaluru Urban District.

Table 1. Accessibility of Major Tourist Attractions through the BMRCL Metro Network in Bengaluru Urban District

Tourist_Place	Category	Nearest_Metro_Station	Distance_km	Accessibility
Lalbagh Botanical Garden	Nature & Botanical Garden	Lalbagh	0.2 km	Very High
Cubbon Park	Nature & Urban Park	Cubbon Park	0.3 km	Very High
Vidhana Soudha	Heritage & Government Landmark	Vidhana Soudha	0.1 km	Very High
Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum	Museum	Cubbon Park	0.5 km	Very High
Government Museum Bengaluru	Museum	Cubbon Park	0.3 km	Very High
Ulsoor Lake	Nature & Recreation	Trinity	0.8 km	High
Tipu Sultan's Summer Palace	Historical Monument	Krishna Rajendra Market	0.7 km	High
Bengaluru Fort	Historical Monument	Krishna Rajendra Market	0.8 km	High
Dodda Ganesha Temple	Religious	National College	1 km	High
Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium	Science & Education	Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Station	1 km	High
Bangalore Palace	Historical & Heritage	Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Station	2.5 km	Moderate
ISKCON Temple Bangalore	Religious	Mahalakshmi	1.5 km	Moderate
Bull Temple	Religious	National College	1.2 km	Moderate
Snow City Bengaluru	Recreation	Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Station	2.5 km	Moderate
National Gallery of Modern Art	Art & Culture	Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Station	1.5 km	Moderate
Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath	Art & Culture	Mantri Square Sampige Road	1.2 km	Moderate
Shivoham Shiva Temple	Religious	Indiranagar	4.5 km	Low
HAL Heritage Centre and Aerospace Museum	Museum	Indiranagar	7 km	Low
Bannerghatta Biological Park	Wildlife	Silk Institute	9 km	Low
Bannerghatta National Park	Wildlife	Silk Institute	10 km	Low
Muthyala Maduvu (Pearl Valley)	Nature & Waterfall	Silk Institute	22 km	Low

Source: *BMRCL Metro Station Data, Karnataka Tourism Department and GIS-based proximity analysis in ArcGIS Pro (2026).*

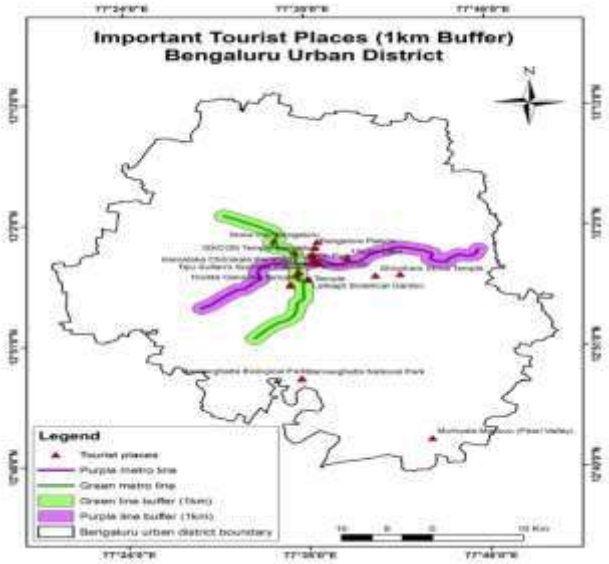


Fig .2 Important tourist places (1km buffer) Bengaluru Urban District

High level of accessibility: The GIS buffer analysis demonstrates that the BMRCL Metro substantially enhances accessibility to major tourist destinations in Bengaluru Urban District. The analysis shows that **10 tourist attractions (47.6%) are located within 1 km of the nearest metro station**, demonstrating a high level of accessibility. These include Lalbagh Botanical Garden,

Cubbon Park, Vidhana Soudha, Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum, Government Museum Bengaluru, Ulsoor Lake, Tipu Sultan's Summer Palace, Bengaluru Fort, Dodda Ganesha Temple, and Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium. Most of these attractions are situated within the central part of the city and can be conveniently accessed on foot or with minimal travel from metro stations.

Moderate accessibility: A further **six tourist attractions (28.6%)** are located between **1 km and 2.5 km** from metro stations, representing moderate accessibility. These destinations generally require short feeder trips by auto-rickshaw, bus, taxi, or non-motorized transport.

Low accessibility: The remaining **five attractions (23.8%)** are located **beyond 2.5 km** from the nearest metro station and exhibit relatively low accessibility. Destinations such as Bannerghatta Biological Park, Bannerghatta National Park, HAL Heritage Centre and Aerospace Museum, Shivoham Shiva Temple, and Muthyala Maduvu (Pearl Valley) remain highly dependent on road-based transportation.

Overall, the findings indicate that the BMRCL metro network effectively serves the core tourism corridor of Bengaluru, while peripheral attractions continue to experience accessibility challenges due to limited metro coverage and inadequate last-mile connectivity. Strengthening feeder services and multimodal transport integration would further enhance tourism accessibility and support sustainable urban tourism development.

Conclusion

The study reveals that the BMRCL Metro plays a significant role in improving tourism accessibility in Bengaluru Urban District. Overall, the GIS outputs demonstrate that while the BMRCL metro has improved urban mobility, its contribution to tourism accessibility remains spatially uneven. The system currently benefits centrally located attractions more than peripheral tourism destinations, indicating a clear need for strategic transport–tourism integration to achieve balanced and sustainable urban tourism development.

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Original Article

A Comprehensive Review Article on Carbon Neutral Tourism A Sustainable Approach to Reducing Environmental Impacts in the Tourism Industry

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing economic sectors, contributing significantly to employment, income generation, and cultural exchange. However, the industry also contributes substantially to greenhouse gas emissions through transportation, accommodation, recreational activities, and infrastructure development. As concerns regarding climate change intensify, the concept of carbon-neutral tourism has emerged as a sustainable solution to reduce the environmental footprint of tourism activities. Carbon-neutral tourism refers to tourism practices that minimize carbon emissions and offset unavoidable emissions through environmental initiatives such as renewable energy projects, afforestation, and carbon credit programs. This thesis examines the concept, significance, challenges, and implementation strategies of carbon-neutral tourism. It explores the role of governments, tourism businesses, and travelers in achieving sustainability goals and discusses practical measures for reducing carbon emissions within the tourism sector. The study concludes that carbon-neutral tourism can contribute significantly to climate change mitigation while ensuring long-term sustainability of tourism destinations.

Keywords: *Carbon Neutral Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Climate Change, Carbon Footprint, Environmental Sustainability, Green Tourism.*

Introduction

Tourism has become a major contributor to global economic development. It generates employment opportunities, promotes cultural understanding, and stimulates infrastructure growth. According to international tourism reports, millions of people travel annually for leisure, business, education, and recreation. Despite these benefits, tourism contributes considerably to environmental degradation.

Transportation, particularly air travel, accounts for a large proportion of tourism-related carbon emissions. Hotels and resorts consume substantial amounts of energy and water, while tourism activities often generate waste and disturb natural ecosystems. These impacts have raised concerns among policymakers, environmentalists, and industry stakeholders.The growing awareness of climate change has encouraged the development of sustainable tourism practices. Carbon-neutral tourism has emerged as an innovative approach that seeks to balance tourism-related emissions by reducing and offsetting carbon dioxide emissions.The tourism industry contributes significantly to global greenhouse gas emissions. Without effective mitigation measures, tourism-related emissions are expected to increase as global travel demand grows. There is a need to understand how carbon-neutral tourism can reduce environmental impacts while maintaining economic and social bene The main objectives of this study are: To examine the concept of carbon-neutral tourism. To identify major sources of carbon emissions in tourism,To evaluate strategies for achieving carbon neutrality, to analyse challenges associated with implementing carbon-neutral tourism,To provide recommendations for sustainable tourism development. This study contributes to understanding sustainable tourism practices and offers practical recommendations for policymakers, tourism operators, researchers, and travelers. It highlights the importance of reducing carbon emissions to support global climate goal.

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Literature Review:

Carbon-neutral tourism refers to tourism activities that result in net-zero carbon emissions. This is achieved by measuring emissions, reducing them through sustainable practices, and offsetting unavoidable emissions through environmental projects.The concept aligns with global sustainability goals and climate agreements aimed at limiting global warming.

Tourism and Climate Change: Climate change and tourism share a complex relationship. Tourism contributes to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions, while climate change affects tourism destinations through rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and ecosystem degradation.Popular tourist destinations such as coastal regions, mountain areas, and wildlife habitats are particularly vulnerable to climate-related impacts Sources of Carbon Emissions in Tourism:

Transportation is the largest source of tourism-related emissions. Air travel contributes significantly due to high fuel consumption. **Other transportation modes include:**

Private vehicles,Cruise ships,Buses,Rail transport.

Tourist Activities**:**Activities such as boating, adventure sports, and recreational events may generate additional emissions.

Infrastructure Development**:**Construction of hotels, airports, roads, and tourism facilities often involves carbon-intensive materials and processes.

Sustainable Tourism Principles: Sustainable tourism aims to minimize environmental impacts,preserve cultural heritage,Support local communities, promote economic viability. Carbon-neutral tourism represents an advanced form of sustainable tourism focused specifically on climate change mitigation.

Methodology

Research Design: This study adopts a qualitative research approach based on secondary data analysis.

Sources of Data: Data were collected from Academic journals, Government reports, Environmental organizations, Tourism industry publications, Sustainability reports. **Data Analysis:** The collected information was analyzed through thematic analysis to identify key trends, strategies, and challenges associated with carbon-neutral tourism.

Limitations of the Study: Reliance on secondary data, limited availability of standardized carbon accounting methods, differences in reporting practices across tourism organizations.

Strategies for Achieving Carbon Neutral Tourism Sustainable Transportation: Reducing transportation emissions can be achieved through encouraging rail travel, promoting electric vehicles, supporting sustainable aviation fuels, developing cycling and walking infrastructure.

Energy-Efficient Accommodation: Hotels can reduce emissions through Solar energy systems, LED lighting, Smart energy management systems,energy-efficient appliances.

Waste Management: Tourism businesses can implement **Recycling** programs, Composting systems, Plastic reduction initiatives, Food waste management strategies.

Renewable Energy Adoption: Tourism facilities can transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources such as Solar power, Wind energy.

Carbon Offset Programs invest in projects such as Forest restoration, Renewable energy, Methane capture, Community clean energy initiatives**.** These initiatives compensate for unavoidable tourism emissions.

Challenges: High Initial Investment: Renewable technologies require substantial capital.

Limited Awareness: Many travelers remain unaware of their carbon footprint.

Policy Gaps: Inconsistent environmental regulations slow implementation.

Sources of Carbon Emissions in Tourism: The tourism industry generates emissions from multiple sources.

Transportation: Transportation is generally the largest contributor to tourism-related emissions. Air travel, private vehicles, cruise ships, and long-distance buses consume substantial quantities of fossil fuels. Aviation alone represents a significant share of tourism's carbon footprint due to high fuel consumption on long-haul flights.

Accommodation: Hotels, resorts, and guesthouses consume large amounts of electricity and water. Heating, cooling, lighting, laundry services, kitchens, and recreational facilities increase energy demand, particularly where electricity is generated from fossil fuels.

Food and Beverage Services: Restaurants and tourism facilities contribute emissions through food production, refrigeration, transportation, packaging, and food waste. Imported food products often carry a higher carbon footprint than locally sourced alternatives.

Recreational Activities: Adventure tourism, motorized water sports, snow tourism, and recreational transport can consume substantial energy and fuel, increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

Waste Management: Tourism destinations often generate large quantities of solid waste, wastewater, and plastic pollution. Improper disposal contributes to methane emissions. **Benefits of Carbon Neutral Tourism:** Carbon-neutral tourism provides environmental, economic, and social benefits. Environmentally, it reduces greenhouse gas emissions, conserves biodiversity, improves air quality, and protects ecosystems. Economically, sustainable tourism lowers operating costs through energy efficiency, attracts environmentally conscious travelers, and strengthens destination competitiveness. Socially, it supports community participation, creates green employment opportunities, and enhances environmental awareness among visitors and residents.

Financial constraints: Despite its benefits, implementing carbon-neutral tourism presents several challenges. Many tourism businesses face financial constraints when investing in renewable energy and sustainable technologies. Small enterprises often lack technical expertise and access to funding. In developing regions, inadequate infrastructure and limited policy support slow the

adoption of sustainable practices. Accurately measuring tourism-related emissions can also be difficult because emissions occur across multiple sectors and supply chains. Furthermore, not all carbon offset programs provide equivalent environmental benefits, making transparency and verification essential. Consumer behavior presents another challenge. Although many travelers express support for sustainability, purchasing decisions may still prioritize convenience and lower prices over environmentally responsible options.

Policy Recommendations: Governments can accelerate carbon-neutral tourism by integrating climate objectives into tourism planning and providing incentives for sustainable investments. Policies should encourage renewable energy, strengthen environmental standards, improve public transportation, and support research and innovation. Tourism businesses should adopt sustainability management systems, monitor emissions, engage employees in environmental initiatives, and communicate their sustainability efforts transparently. Educational campaigns can encourage tourists to choose lower-carbon travel options, reduce waste, and support conservation activities. Collaboration among governments, industry, researchers, and local communities is essential to ensure that carbon-neutral tourism contributes to broader sustainable development goals.

Conclusion

Carbon-neutral tourism represents an important strategy for addressing the environmental impacts of travel while preserving the economic and cultural benefits of tourism. By reducing emissions through renewable energy, sustainable transportation, efficient resource management, and responsible visitor behavior, destinations can improve resilience to climate change and enhance their long-term competitiveness. The transition to carbon-neutral tourism will require investment, innovation, effective governance, and public participation. Although challenges remain, the growing demand for sustainable travel presents an opportunity for destinations to adopt practices that protect natural resources, support local communities, and contribute to global climate goals. Carbon-neutral tourism is therefore not only an environmental responsibility but also a strategic approach to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry.

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Original Article

Agro-Ecology and Tourism: A Review of Sustainable Rural Development Practices

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Abstract

The growing demand for sustainable agricultural practices and environmentally responsible tourism has led to increased interest in the integration of agro-ecology and tourism. Agro-ecology promotes ecological farming methods, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable resource management, while tourism provides economic opportunities and cultural exchange. The combination of these sectors, commonly referred to as agro-ecological tourism or agritourism, has emerged as a viable strategy for sustainable rural development. This review paper examines the evolution of agro-ecology and tourism, analyzes existing literature, identifies major benefits and challenges, and highlights future research directions. The findings suggest that agro-ecological tourism can contribute significantly to environmental sustainability, rural livelihoods, and community empowerment when supported by effective policies and stakeholder participation.

Keywords: *Agro-Ecology, Agritourism, Sustainable Tourism, Rural Development, Ecotourism, Sustainability.*

Introduction

Agriculture and tourism are among the most significant sectors contributing to global economic development. However, intensive agricultural practices and mass tourism have often resulted in environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, and socio-cultural challenges. In response to these concerns, agro-ecology and sustainable tourism have emerged as alternative approaches aimed at balancing economic growth with environmental conservation and social well-being [1]. Agro-ecology applies ecological principles to agricultural production systems, emphasizing biodiversity, soil health, sustainable resource utilization, and community participation [2]. At the same time, sustainable tourism promotes environmentally responsible travel experiences that preserve natural and cultural resources while benefiting local communities [3]. The convergence of agro-ecology and tourism has created new opportunities for rural development. Agro-ecological tourism enables visitors to experience sustainable farming practices, local culture, organic food production, and natural ecosystems. Such initiatives provide additional income for farmers, create employment opportunities, and increase awareness of environmental sustainability [4]. Recent studies indicate that agritourism and agro-ecological tourism contribute to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including poverty reduction, responsible consumption, climate action, and ecosystem conservation [5]. Consequently, researchers and policymakers have increasingly focused on understanding the potential of agro-ecological tourism as a tool for sustainable rural transformation. This review paper synthesizes existing research on agro-ecology and tourism, evaluates current trends, discusses benefits and challenges, and identifies future research opportunities.

a. Motivation of the Paper

Concerns about environmental pollution, climate change, extinction of wildlife, and decreasing profitability of rural areas have highlighted the necessity of adopting sustainable development policies. Agro-ecology provides environmentally sustainable practices which help conserve nature and increase the resilience of ecosystems; on the other hand, sustainable tourism provides an opportunity for developing new sectors and conserving the culture.

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Combining both agriculture and tourism is seen as one way to solve these two problems. The purpose of this research paper is to highlight the importance of adopting an approach that combines the practice of agro-ecology and tourism in order to ensure sustainability.

a. Objectives of the Paper

1. To learn about the basic concepts and principles of agro-ecology and sustainable tourism.
2. To understand the importance of agro-ecological tourism as an element of sustainable rural development.
3. To determine the advantages of implementing agro-ecology with tourism from the point of view of economy, environment, society, and education.
4. To outline difficulties related to agro-ecological tourism.
5. To suggest sustainable approaches to implement agro-ecological tourism.

Literature Review

A. Agro-Ecology: Concept and Principles

Agro-ecology is defined as the application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agricultural systems [2]. It integrates scientific knowledge with traditional farming practices to enhance biodiversity, ecosystem resilience, and food security.

According to Gliessman [6], agro-ecology promotes:

- Biodiversity conservation
- Soil fertility management
- Efficient resource utilization
- Reduced chemical dependency
- Community participation

Researchers have highlighted that agro-ecological systems contribute significantly to climate resilience and sustainable food production while minimizing environmental impacts [7].

B. Sustainable Tourism and Rural Development

Sustainable tourism focuses on minimizing negative environmental impacts while maximizing socio-economic benefits for host communities [3]. Rural tourism and ecotourism have gained popularity as alternatives to mass tourism, offering authentic experiences that support local economies and environmental conservation.

Studies show that sustainable tourism contributes to:

- Employment generation
- Cultural preservation
- Environmental awareness
- Economic diversification [8]

The integration of tourism into rural areas creates opportunities for local entrepreneurship and community-based development.

C. Agritourism as a Link Between Agriculture and Tourism

Agritourism refers to tourism activities conducted on farms and agricultural landscapes where visitors participate in farming experiences, educational programs, and recreational activities [9].

Research indicates that agritourism:

- Diversifies farm income
- Enhances rural employment
- Promotes local products
- Preserves traditional agricultural practices [10]

A systematic review by Ammirato et al. [11] found that agritourism supports sustainable development by integrating environmental conservation with economic growth.

D. Agro-Ecological Tourism

Agro-ecological tourism combines agro-ecological farming systems with tourism activities. Visitors engage in sustainable agriculture practices, organic farming demonstrations, biodiversity conservation programs, and local cultural experiences.

According to Karampela et al. [12], agro-ecological tourism contributes to sustainability through:

- Environmental education
- Conservation of natural resources
- Promotion of local food systems
- Strengthening community participation

Several studies have reported increased tourist interest in environmentally responsible travel experiences that emphasize sustainability and authentic rural lifestyles [13].

E. Environmental Benefits

The literature identifies several environmental advantages of agro-ecological tourism:

- Conservation of biodiversity.
- Improved soil and water management.
- Reduced chemical pollution.
- Increased environmental awareness among tourists.

- Support for ecosystem restoration.

Agro-ecological farms often serve as demonstration sites where visitors learn sustainable agricultural practices and environmental stewardship [14].

F. Economic Benefits

Agro-ecological tourism creates multiple economic opportunities, including:

- Additional income for farmers.
- Employment generation.
- Promotion of local products and handicrafts.
- Increased rural investment.
- Diversification of agricultural businesses.

Research suggests that tourism-related income can improve the financial stability of rural households and reduce migration from rural areas [15].

G. Social and Cultural Benefits

Social benefits reported in the literature include:

- Preservation of traditional farming knowledge.
- Cultural heritage conservation.
- Community empowerment.
- Strengthening of local identity.
- Educational opportunities for visitors and residents.

These benefits contribute to sustainable community development and social cohesion [16].

H. Challenges and Limitations

Despite its advantages, agro-ecological tourism faces several challenges:

1. Limited infrastructure in rural regions.
2. Lack of technical knowledge and training.
3. Insufficient government support.
4. Marketing and promotion difficulties.
5. Seasonal fluctuations in tourism demand.
6. Risk of environmental degradation due to excessive visitor numbers.

Researchers emphasize the importance of sustainable planning and stakeholder collaboration to address these challenges effectively [17].

Discussion

The reviewed literature demonstrates that agro-ecological tourism represents a promising approach to sustainable rural development. By integrating ecological agriculture with tourism activities, communities can simultaneously achieve environmental conservation, economic growth, and social development. However, successful implementation requires coordinated efforts among governments, local communities, tourism operators, researchers, and agricultural stakeholders. Policies supporting sustainable farming, infrastructure development, digital marketing, and capacity building can significantly enhance the effectiveness of agro-ecological tourism initiatives. Furthermore, emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Internet of Things (IoT), and smart tourism platforms can improve farm management, visitor experiences, and sustainability monitoring.

Limitations Of Existing Systems

The traditional models of rural tourism and agricultural development exist separately from each other, meaning that there is little synergy between agriculture and tourism activities. Conventional practices of agriculture are based on intensive exploitation of resources, thus negatively affecting biodiversity. Agritourism programs are often concentrated on generating revenues without paying sufficient attention to ecological sustainability considerations. The absence of proper infrastructures, lack of e-marketing tools, inadequate policies, training for stakeholders, and impact assessment methods also undermine the sustainability of agro-ecotourism programs.

Problem Statement

Rural areas are confronted by a number of issues such as decreased revenue from farming, destruction of the environment, reduction in biodiversity, migration to towns, and unemployment problems. Even though agro-ecology and tourism can help to ensure sustainability, the missing link is the integration of agro-ecology with tourism initiatives for sustainable development. The question here then becomes how best to incorporate the two elements into a sustainable initiative that would help to promote socio-economic growth in rural areas.

Technical Solution

1. The solution recommended entails the development of an Integrated Agro Ecological Tourism Framework. This framework will include:
2. Smart Agro-Tourism Management System that will be used to manage tourism activities, farming and engagement of tourists.
3. GIS & Remote Sensing Technologies that will help monitor land use and environmental sustainability.
4. IoT Based Smart Farming Systems that can show sustainable agricultural practices.
5. Website and Mobile Applications for digital marketing, online booking, virtual farm tours, and promoting local products.

6. Data Analysis and AI Decision Support System for the analysis of tourism preferences, environmental impacts, and farming productivity.
7. Sustainability Measurement Models for calculating indicators in terms of economic, environmental, and social dimensions.
8. Community Collaboration Platforms for cooperation between farmers, tourists, local firms, and governmental organizations.

The combined strategy can boost rural income creation, environmental protection, tourists' experience quality, and sustainability, thus helping SDG implementation

Future Research Directions

Future studies should focus on:

- Quantitative assessment of environmental impacts.
- AI-based smart agritourism systems.
- GIS-enabled agro-tourism planning.
- Sustainable business models for rural tourism.
- Climate change adaptation strategies.
- Community participation frameworks.
- Digital marketing strategies for agro-ecological destinations.

Conclusion

Agro-ecology and tourism are increasingly interconnected in the pursuit of sustainable rural development. The reviewed literature confirms that agro-ecological tourism offers substantial environmental, economic, and social benefits. It promotes biodiversity conservation, supports local livelihoods, preserves cultural heritage, and enhances environmental awareness. Nevertheless, challenges related to infrastructure, policy support, and management remain significant. Future efforts should focus on integrating innovative technologies, strengthening stakeholder collaboration, and developing evidence-based policies to ensure the long-term sustainability of agro-ecological tourism initiatives.

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Original Article

Tourist Police, Criminal Justice, And Legal Accountability in Indian Tourism: Reforming Public Safety Frameworks for Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

Tourism is an essential component of India's development vision because it contributes to employment, regional growth, cultural exchange, and global visibility, all of which are recognized in the conference theme on tourism development in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047. Yet the sustainability of this vision depends on a credible public safety system capable of protecting domestic and foreign travelers from harassment, theft, sexual violence, fraud, and procedural exclusion. This paper addresses the legal problem created by fragmented jurisdiction, the lack of a uniform statutory foundation for tourist police, and the vulnerability of travelers within ordinary criminal justice processes. The study adopts a doctrinal and analytical legal methodology based on the Constitution of India, the Police Act, 1861, state policing structures, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, Ministry of Tourism materials, and police reform jurisprudence. The paper finds that tourist policing in India is largely executive and uneven, with substantial variation in training, complaint handling, victim support, and inter-agency coordination across States and Union Territories. It argues that Article 21, when read with rule-of-law and equal protection principles, requires a more coherent legal architecture for tourist safety. The paper recommends the enactment of a Model Tourist Police Act for State adoption, mandatory multilingual and victim-sensitive training, digital grievance and tracking systems, effective use of zero-FIR principles, remote testimony frameworks for transitory victims, and fast-track dispute and crime redressal mechanisms at major destinations.

Keywords: *Tourist Police; Criminal Justice Reform; Constitutional Accountability; Viksit Bharat 2047; Victim Protection; Tourism Governance*

Introduction

India's aspiration to emerge as a developed nation by 2047 places tourism within a broader constitutional and public policy framework that extends beyond destination promotion and infrastructure creation. The conference brochure expressly presents tourism as a catalyst for employment generation, rural transformation, cultural diplomacy, and sustainable development, while also identifying policy gaps, governance deficits, safety concerns, and institutional reform as central barriers to achieving this vision. Tourism, therefore, is not merely an economic sector; it is a governance-sensitive field in which public trust, regulatory coherence, and rule-of-law institutions directly influence growth outcomes. A secure tourism ecosystem is indispensable to this project. Tourist movement depends on the expectation that public spaces, transit nodes, accommodation zones, heritage sites, pilgrimage circuits, and recreational destinations will be reasonably safe and supported by responsive legal institutions. Where travelers encounter theft, sexual harassment, assault, cheating, extortion, cyber-fraud, or ineffective complaint mechanisms, the impact extends beyond individual harm. Such incidents diminish destination credibility, weaken international confidence, affect travel advisories, discourage repeat travel, and reduce the attractiveness of tourism-linked investment. In this sense, tourist victimization has consequences for India's cultural diplomacy and for the broader ecosystem of tourism-related capital flows, including hospitality, transport, events, and local enterprise development. The constitutional dimension of this issue is equally significant. Article 21 of the Constitution of India guarantees the protection of life and personal liberty, and constitutional jurisprudence has consistently interpreted this guarantee to include dignity,

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humane treatment, procedural fairness, and security of the person. The State's obligation to create conditions of reasonable safety is especially compelling where mobility is actively encouraged through policy, destination branding, and public infrastructure. Tourism policy that invites global and domestic travelers into managed public spaces necessarily generates correlative duties of protection, emergency response, and legal accessibility. Although some fundamental rights are limited to citizens, Article 21 extends to all persons, including foreign nationals physically present within Indian territory. Despite this normative foundation, India does not yet have a uniform national legal framework for specialized tourist law enforcement. The reason lies partly in the federal scheme: 'Police' and 'Public Order' fall within the State List under the Seventh Schedule, and operational policing remains primarily a State responsibility. As a result, tourist police have emerged in an ad hoc, state-specific manner. The Ministry of Tourism's study on the functioning of tourist police shows that States and Union Territories vary widely in the existence, design, deployment pattern, and capability of tourist policing units. In some jurisdictions tourist police function as visible destination patrols; in others they exist as help desks or designated personnel without statutory separation, specialized training, or consistent powers.

This historical absence of uniformity has practical legal consequences. A tourist who is victimized often confronts uncertainty regarding which police authority is competent, whether the complaint will be immediately registered, whether translation and victim support will be available, and whether the criminal process can accommodate the victim's transitory presence. Police reform concerns identified by the Ministry of Home Affairs , including non-registration of complaints, weak accountability, and inadequate professionalization, become especially acute when the complainant is a traveler unfamiliar with local geography, language, and procedure. The continued relevance of structural police reform, reflected in reports and in Prakash Singh v. Union of India , underscores that specialized tourist policing cannot succeed unless embedded in a broader framework of accountable and professionally managed policing.

Accordingly, the present study proceeds from the premise that tourist safety must be understood as a constitutional, criminal justice, and public policy issue. In the context of Viksit Bharat 2047 , India's ambition to become a globally competitive tourism destination will remain incomplete unless public safety is secured through legal design, institutional coordination, and enforceable accountability.

Objectives

1. To examine the existing structural, jurisdictional, and legal loopholes in the current tourist police mechanisms across different Indian States.
2. To evaluate the intersection of the criminal justice administration under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 with the rights and legal safeguards of transit tourists.
3. To analyze the governance gap in implementing uniform national safety guidelines under public-private tourism models.
4. To propose a robust statutory framework for specialized tourist police forces to achieve a secure tourism ecosystem by 2047.

Data And Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative doctrinal and analytical research methodology. The doctrinal component is based on primary legal materials including the Constitution of India, the Police Act, 1861, State police enactments and amendments, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. Constitutional analysis focuses particularly on Article 21, equal protection norms, and the federal distribution of legislative and executive responsibility in matters concerning police, public order, and administrative accountability.

The paper also relies on institutional and policy materials. These include the Ministry of Tourism's study on the functioning of tourist police in States and Union Territories, parliamentary answers concerning tourist police deployment and crime against tourists, and official materials concerning multilingual helplines and safety facilitation for domestic and foreign travelers. Broader police reform discussions identified by the Ministry of Home Affairs, including structural concerns relating to complaint registration, professionalization, and accountability, are used to situate tourist policing within the larger criminal justice framework.

The analytical component compares jurisdictions with visible tourist policing arrangements against those where tourism safety is managed primarily through ordinary police stations, ad hoc tourist desks, or coordination between local police and tourism departments. The study also engages with available crime trend materials concerning offences affecting foreign tourists and foreigners in India, not for statistical modeling but to identify recurring categories of vulnerability such as theft, sexual offences, harassment, and process-related attrition. Although this paper is not an empirical field survey, it draws normative conclusions from legal texts, official reports, parliamentary materials, and criminal justice reform literature to propose a more coherent statutory and institutional framework for tourist safety under Viksit Bharat 2047. Result And Discussion

A. Jurisdictional Fragmentation and the Absence of Uniform Statutory Backing

The first major finding of this study is that tourist policing in India lacks a uniform legal identity. The Ministry of Tourism's study on the functioning of tourist police demonstrates that different States and Union Territories have adopted uneven models of tourist safety, ranging from dedicated tourist police units to help desks, designated personnel, or ordinary police officers performing additional duties at destinations. This diversity may appear administratively flexible, but in legal terms it produces uncertainty regarding powers, duties, training, supervision, and accountability.

The root cause lies in India's federal structure. Under the Seventh Schedule, 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects, and operational responsibility for policing rests primarily with State governments. Tourism, however, is often promoted through overlapping central and state initiatives, public-private partnerships, urban bodies, monument authorities, transport agencies, and hospitality operators. The result is a governance field in which responsibility is shared in practice but diffused in law. The Union

may encourage tourist police deployment, commission studies, or issue advisories, yet without a model statute or formally harmonized framework, implementation standards vary sharply from one State to another.

This fragmented arrangement generates several institutional deficiencies. First, tourist police units often lack clear statutory powers and may function more as facilitation bodies than law enforcement agencies. Second, there is no nationally standardized operating procedure governing complaint registration, emergency response, liaison with women and child protection units, document theft protocols, or coordination with hotels and transport operators. Third, recruitment and training standards are inconsistent. The Ministry of Tourism study indicates that states differ widely in language preparedness, visitor-handling skills, behavioral orientation, and legal awareness among personnel deployed for tourist assistance. Fourth, there are no common performance benchmarks or independent complaint structures specifically designed for tourist policing.

The absence of legal uniformity is especially troubling because tourist safety is not a marginal issue. The conference's Track 12 specifically highlights safety laws for tourism, tourist police initiatives, grievance redressal systems, environment and accessibility norms, and monitoring frameworks, thereby acknowledging that governance architecture is central to tourism development. A rights-based tourism economy cannot depend on informal administrative improvisation.

Accordingly, there is a strong case for the preparation of a Model Tourist Police Act by the Union Government for State adoption. Such a model law would not violate federalism because it would respect State legislative choice while setting minimum standards for constitution, deployment, jurisdiction, powers, training, digital reporting, victim assistance, coordination with local police, and disciplinary oversight. The model should also require each State to notify major tourist destinations where specialized tourist police services are mandatory. This would convert tourist protection from a discretionary executive initiative into a structured public law commitment.

B. Criminal Justice Bottlenecks for Transitory Victims

The second major finding concerns the mismatch between ordinary criminal procedure and the specific vulnerability of tourists as transitory victims. The tourist who becomes a victim of theft, cheating, sexual harassment, assault, cyber-fraud , extortion, or document loss usually lacks the temporal stability required by conventional criminal procedure. Unlike a local resident, the traveler may leave the district, State, or country within a short period. Yet police and trial processes remain heavily dependent on territorial jurisdiction, physical attendance, repetitive paperwork, and delayed institutional coordination.

One persistent problem is non-registration or delayed registration of complaints. Police reform materials recognized by the Ministry of Home Affairs have long noted that non-registration of crime remains a recurring institutional failure. For tourists, this problem is aggravated by confusion about the correct police station, language barriers, pressure from intermediaries to "settle" matters informally, and fear of losing travel time. The legal principle of zero-FIR is intended to reduce territorial obstruction by allowing a complaint to be recorded at any police station irrespective of where the offence occurred. However, in practice, this mechanism is often underutilized or poorly explained. When registration itself is delayed, justice effectively begins with exclusion.

A second bottleneck is the inability of criminal process to accommodate mobility. Even after registration, the tourist may be unable to repeatedly appear for statement verification, identification proceedings, or trial evidence. This is particularly severe for foreign tourists, women travelers, and elderly pilgrims. Although digital technologies now make remote interaction feasible, local criminal justice institutions are not consistently organized to support video-recorded statements, authenticated electronic evidence submission, remote witness coordination, or time-bound prosecutorial follow-up.

A third bottleneck is the lack of integrated victim support. Official materials show that India has taken steps such as multilingual helplines and deployment of tourist police in several States and Union Territories. These are valuable beginnings, but travelers often need much more than a phone contact. Effective support requires translation, medical referral, legal aid linkage, safe accommodation assistance, emergency transport, replacement-document guidance, digital acknowledgment of complaints for insurance or embassy purposes, and communication with family or consular authorities where necessary.

A fourth bottleneck concerns adaptation to the new criminal law framework. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 have replaced the earlier IPC and CrPC structure with updated provisions and procedures. But the legal transition itself does not solve tourist vulnerability unless tourist-facing police units are specifically trained to process travel-related offences, digital frauds, sexual offences in transit settings, passport and identity theft, and offences involving multiple jurisdictions. Specialized operational manuals are therefore essential.

The criminal justice response to tourism-related offences should therefore include mandatory zero-FIR compliance; destination-level victim liaison officers; digital complaint receipts; secure remote statement and testimony procedures; translation facilities; and priority coordination between police, prosecution, and tourism departments. Without such adaptation, criminal law remains formally available but practically inaccessible for transient victims.

C. Constitutional Accountability and State Liability

The third major finding is that tourist safety must be conceptualized as an issue of constitutional accountability rather than mere administrative facilitation. The constitutional guarantee of life and personal liberty under Article 21 has been interpreted to include dignity, fair procedure, and state responsibility for conditions affecting bodily security. Although Indian constitutional doctrine has not formally created a separate category of "tourist rights," the normative structure of Article 21 clearly extends to all persons, including non-citizens. This means that foreign and domestic travelers are entitled to protection against avoidable institutional indifference in public spaces.

The public law argument becomes stronger when the State actively promotes tourism. Once governments market monuments, pilgrimage routes, heritage cities, eco-destinations, festivals, and adventure circuits, and once public funds are invested in their accessibility and branding, there arises a corresponding obligation to ensure reasonable standards of security, emergency response, and complaint access. Failure to provide minimum safety infrastructure at known high-risk destinations is not simply a matter of unfortunate crime incidence; it can amount to governance failure. State liability also has an equality dimension. Travelers do not

experience safety uniformly. Women tourists, elderly pilgrims, persons with disabilities, solo travelers, foreign nationals unfamiliar with local languages, and economically weaker domestic tourists are far more vulnerable to exclusion from legal remedies. A destination that is navigable only for the informed and affluent fails the constitutional promise of equal protection and dignified access to public spaces. The conference track's inclusion of accessibility laws, grievance systems, ethical tourism frameworks, and safety norms reflects this broad constitutional perspective.

D. Smart Governance and Technology Integration in Tourist Safety

The fourth major finding is that digital governance can substantially improve tourist safety, but only when technology is embedded in enforceable legal and administrative systems. The conference materials place strong emphasis on digital transformation, smart tourism, innovation, and technology-enabled governance as integral to future tourism planning. In a public safety context, this requires more than symbolic use of apps or portals. It requires legally supervised, interoperable, and accountable digital systems. One important tool is GIS-based crime hotspot mapping. Tourist destinations often display patterned risk zones such as transport nodes, late-night commercial corridors, isolated access roads, crowded festival areas, waterfronts, parking zones, and locations where unregulated guides or intermediaries operate. Mapping these patterns can improve patrol design, CCTV placement, emergency kiosk distribution, crowd control planning, and signage strategy. It also enables destination managers to shift from reactive policing to evidence-based prevention. A second pillar is the creation of multilingual digital grievance architecture. Official materials already indicate a 24x7 multilingual tourist helpline and continuing efforts to strengthen on-ground tourist police deployment. These initiatives should evolve into integrated complaint systems using QR codes, mobile applications, WhatsApp reporting, kiosk-based distress access, and web portals that connect tourism departments, local police stations, district administration, and emergency medical services. Every complaint should generate a common tracking number, a response timeline, and an escalation mechanism for non-action.

Conclusions

The success of India's tourism vision under Viksit Bharat 2047 depends not only on infrastructure, branding, and destination diversification, but also on the legal and institutional quality of public safety. The conference framework itself recognizes tourism as a driver of inclusive growth, cultural exchange, and national visibility, while also identifying governance and policy reform as indispensable to sustainable development. Within that framework, tourist safety cannot remain a peripheral matter handled through fragmented executive arrangements. It must become an integral part of constitutional governance and criminal justice design. The analysis reveals three interrelated deficiencies. First, tourist policing in India remains structurally uneven because there is no uniform statutory basis defining powers, duties, training standards, accountability norms, or destination-wise deployment criteria. Second, ordinary criminal procedure does not adequately serve transient victims, who often face delayed FIR registration, confusion over jurisdiction, lack of translation and legal support, and inability to remain available for investigation and trial. Third, the absence of destination-specific accountability and digital integration weakens both public confidence and actual law enforcement effectiveness. A developed India by 2047 cannot be realized without a legally secure travel environment for domestic and international tourists. Safety is a precondition for mobility, investment, destination credibility, and cultural diplomacy. Public law must therefore respond to the reality that tourism-related spaces are not ordinary administrative zones; they are nationally significant sites of economic and constitutional interaction.

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Original Article

The Role of Mathematics in Tourism Development in India.

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Abstract:

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing service industries in India and contributes significantly to employment generation, GDP growth, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development. Mathematics plays an essential role in tourism development through statistical analysis, forecasting, optimization, budgeting, data interpretation, geographical mapping, and economic planning. This research paper examines the role of mathematics in tourism development in India and highlights how mathematical tools and models support tourism management, sustainable planning, and policy formulation. The study is based on secondary data collected from research journals, government reports, and academic publications. The paper concludes that mathematical applications such as statistics, linear programming, probability, econometrics, and data analytics are becoming increasingly important for the future growth of Indian tourism in the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Keywords: *Mathematics, Tourism Development, India, Statistics, Data Analysis, Forecasting, Econometrics, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Planning.*

Introduction:

Tourism is a major economic activity that promotes employment, cultural exchange, infrastructure development, and regional growth. India possesses rich natural, cultural, historical, and spiritual tourism resources. The tourism sector contributes significantly to India's GDP and supports millions of jobs. Mathematics is widely used in tourism planning and management. It helps governments, tourism companies, and researchers analyze tourist behavior, forecast tourist arrivals, optimize transportation systems, manage hotel pricing, and evaluate tourism policies. Modern tourism development increasingly depends on mathematical techniques such as:Statistical analysis, Forecasting models, Probability theory, Linear programming, Econometric analysis, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Data analytics and Artificial Intelligence.Thus, mathematics acts as a scientific foundation for effective tourism development.

Objectives of the Study:

- To understand the relationship between mathematics and tourism development.
- To analyze the role of mathematical models in tourism planning in India.
- To examine the importance of statistics and forecasting in tourism management.
- To study the contribution of mathematics toward sustainable tourism development.
- To identify future opportunities of mathematical applications in Indian tourism.

Research Methodology:

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature. Secondary data has been used from:

- Research journals
- Government tourism reports
- Academic books
- Published articles
- Online databases

Mathematical and tourism-related literature has been reviewed to understand the practical application of mathematics in tourism development.

Concept of Tourism Development:

Tourism development refers to the improvement of tourism infrastructure, tourist facilities, transportation, accommodation, and destination management to attract more visitors and generate economic benefits.

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Tourism development in India includes:

- Heritage tourism
- Religious tourism
- Eco-tourism
- Rural tourism
- Medical tourism

Adventure tourism

Tourism acts as an important source of employment and regional economic development. Studies show that tourism contributes positively to urban and rural development in India.

Problems in Tourism Development in India:

Tourism development in India faces several major problems:

1 Inadequate Infrastructure:

Poor roads, insufficient transport facilities, and lack of accommodation affect tourism growth.

2 Overcrowding:

Popular tourist destinations often experience overcrowding, leading to environmental damage and poor tourist experience.

3 Transportation Problems:

Traffic congestion, inefficient routes, and poor transport management affect tourism growth.

4: Seasonal Fluctuations:

Tourism demand changes according to seasons, causing imbalance in revenue and employment.

Mathematical Use:

Seasonal index calculations help identify peak and off-peak tourist seasons.

5 Financial Management Issues:

Hotels and tourism businesses face difficulties in pricing, budgeting, and profit management.

6 Lack of Data and Planning:

Improper tourism statistics and weak forecasting systems reduce planning efficiency.

7 Environmental Problems:

Unplanned tourism creates pollution and harms natural resources.

Over-tourism causes pollution, waste generation, and ecological imbalance.

8 Safety and Security Issues:

Tourist safety concerns negatively impact India's global tourism image.

Role of Mathematics in Tourism Development:

1 Statistical Analysis in Tourism:

Statistics is one of the most important branches of mathematics used in tourism.

It helps in:

I. Measuring tourist arrivals

II. Calculating tourism revenue

III. Studying tourist behavior

IV. Understanding seasonal trends

V. Evaluating customer satisfaction

Example:

If the number of foreign tourists visiting India is recorded yearly, statistical methods can identify growth patterns and future trends.

Formula of Mean

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

Where:

$\bar{X}$ = Mean number of tourists

$\sum X$ = Total tourist visits

N = Number of years

Statistical tools help policymakers make scientific tourism decisions.

2 Forecasting Tourist Arrivals:

Forecasting uses mathematical and statistical models to estimate future tourist inflow

Methods include:

- Time series analysis
- Regression analysis
- Trend projection
- Probability models
- Forecasting helps
- Hotel management
- Transportation planning

- Tourism budgeting
- Event management

Research indicates that mathematical modelling improves tourism planning and predictive analysis.

3 Mathematical Models in Tourism Planning:

Tourism planning requires efficient allocation of resources such as hotels, roads, transport, and tourist services.

Linear programming and optimization techniques are used to:

- Minimize costs.
- Maximize tourist satisfaction.
- Improve transportation routes.
- Optimize hotel occupancy..

Research on tourism management in North-East India demonstrates the use of fuzzy linear programming for tourism planning and decision-making.

4 Econometrics and Tourism Economics:

Econometrics combines mathematics, statistics, and economics.

It helps study:

- Tourism demand
- Foreign exchange earnings
- Impact of infrastructure
- Tourism contribution to GDP

Studies in India have used econometric techniques such as ARDL models and vector error correction models to analyze tourism demand and infrastructure development.

5 GIS and Geospatial Mathematics:

Geographical Information Systems (GIS) use mathematical mapping and spatial analysis techniques.

GIS helps in:

- Tourism route planning
- Destination mapping
- Disaster management
- Smart tourism development

Recent studies highlight the importance of geospatial analysis in tourism planning in India.

6 Budgeting and Financial Management:

Mathematics helps tourism organizations in:

- Cost calculation.
- Profit estimation.
- Tax management.
- Revenue forecasting.
- Investment planning.

For example:

Profit Formula:

$$Profit = Total\ Revenue - Total\ Cost$$

Hotels and travel agencies use mathematical calculations for financial sustainability.

Applications of Mathematics in Indian Tourism:

1.Area
2.Mathematical Application
3.Hotel Industry
4.Occupancy rate analysis
5.Transportation
6.Route optimization
7.Tourism Marketing
8.Data analytics
9.Government Planning
10.Statistical forecasting
11.Eco-tourism
12.Resource management
13.Event Tourism
14.Crowd estimation
15.Online Booking
16.Algorithm-based pricing

Tourism Development and Viksit Bharat 2047:

India's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 emphasizes sustainable economic growth, digital transformation, infrastructure development, and global competitiveness.
Mathematics supports this vision through:

- Smart tourism analytics
- Artificial Intelligence
- Big data analysis
- Sustainable tourism modelling
- Digital payment systems
- Tourism forecasting systems
- Modern mathematical tools can improve tourism efficiency and global competitiveness.

Challenges:
Despite the growing importance of mathematics in tourism, several challenges remain:
1. Lack of quality tourism data.
2. Limited technological infrastructure.
3. Shortage of trained professionals.
4. Regional inequalities in tourism development.
5. Limited use of advanced analytics in rural tourism.
Research literature also points out insufficient tourism databases and weak analytical frameworks in tourism studies.

Suggestions:

- Increase use of data analytics in tourism planning.
- Develop smart tourism systems using AI and mathematics.
- Promote GIS-based tourism mapping.
- Improve tourism statistics collection.
- Encourage interdisciplinary tourism research.
- Introduce mathematical tourism studies in higher education.

Conclusion:
Mathematics plays a vital role in tourism development in India. Statistical analysis, forecasting, optimization, econometrics, and geospatial mathematics help improve tourism planning, infrastructure management, and policy formulation. The integration of mathematics with digital technology and artificial intelligence will strengthen India's tourism sector in the coming decades. Therefore, mathematical applications are essential for achieving sustainable tourism development and realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

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Original Article

Digital Preservation of Cultural Heritage Resources for Tourism Development in India: A Library and Information Science Perspective

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Abstract:
India's rich cultural heritage, including monuments, manuscripts, traditional knowledge, folk arts and archaeological resources, faces challenges such as environmental damage, urbanization and inadequate documentation. Digital preservation has become an effective solution for protecting these valuable assets while supporting tourism development. This study explores how technologies such as digitization, digital repositories, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and metadata management can preserve cultural heritage and improve its accessibility. It proposes a ***Digital Heritage Tourism Framework (DHTF)*** *that connects heritage conservation with tourism promotion. The study concludes that digital preservation enhances public access, tourist engagement, destination visibility, and sustainable tourism, while emphasizing the importance of collaboration among libraries, museums, archives, tourism agencies, and technology providers.*

Keywords: *Digital Preservation, Cultural Heritage, Tourism Development, Digital Libraries, Heritage Tourism, India, Library and Information Science*

Introduction:
Cultural heritage reflects a nation's identity and history, including both tangible assets such as monuments, museums, manuscripts, archaeological sites and intangible elements such as folklore, traditional knowledge, languages and cultural practices. In India, these resources are increasingly threatened by environmental changes, urbanization, tourism pressure and inadequate preservation methods. Digital preservation offers effective solutions through technologies like digitization, artificial intelligence, cloud storage, virtual reality and digital repositories, ensuring long-term conservation and wider accessibility. Libraries and information centers play a vital role in managing and disseminating heritage information, thereby supporting heritage tourism. This study examines the potential of digital preservation to protect cultural heritage and promote sustainable tourism development in India.

Background of the Study:
India's cultural diversity is reflected in thousands of heritage sites, manuscripts, folk traditions, and local knowledge systems. Tourism associated with cultural heritage contributes substantially to economic growth, employment generation, and regional development.
However, several challenges limit the effective utilization of heritage resources:

- Physical deterioration of historical artifacts
- Loss of indigenous knowledge
- Limited documentation
- Restricted accessibility
- Inadequate technological infrastructure
- Fragmented heritage information systems

Digital preservation addresses these issues by ensuring long-term accessibility and facilitating innovative tourism experiences.

Statement of the Problem:
Despite significant investments in tourism promotion, many cultural heritage resources remain underutilized due to inadequate documentation and limited digital accessibility.

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The absence of integrated digital preservation strategies restricts public engagement and tourism potential. There is a need for a comprehensive framework that connects digital preservation practices with tourism development objectives.

Objectives of the Study:

- To examine the significance of digital preservation in safeguarding cultural heritage resources.
- To analyze the role of libraries and information centers in heritage digitization.
- To identify technological tools used in digital preservation.
- To evaluate the impact of digital heritage access on tourism development.
- To propose a Digital Heritage Tourism Framework for India.

Research Questions:

How does digital preservation contribute to cultural heritage conservation?
What role do libraries play in preserving digital heritage resources?
How can digital technologies enhance tourism experiences?
What factors influence the success of digital heritage tourism initiatives?

Review of Related Literature:

Research on digital heritage preservation highlights the growing role of technology in safeguarding cultural assets. Previous studies emphasize digitization, metadata standards, digital repositories and virtual exhibitions as essential preservation strategies.
Tourism researchers have observed that digital access to heritage information influences destination awareness and visitor decision-making. Virtual heritage experiences, augmented reality applications and online cultural repositories increasingly support tourism promotion.
However, existing studies often examine preservation and tourism independently. Limited attention has been given to integrating digital preservation practices with tourism development from a Library and Information Science perspective.

Theoretical Foundation:

Information Lifecycle Theory- Explains the creation, organization, preservation, access and reuse of information resources.
Heritage Interpretation Theory- Suggests that effective presentation of heritage information enhances visitor understanding and engagement.
Technology Acceptance Theory- Indicates that users are more likely to adopt digital heritage platforms when they perceive them as useful and easy to use.
Sustainable Tourism Theory- Emphasizes balancing conservation objectives with tourism development goals.

Research Methodology:

Research Design- The study adopts a conceptual and descriptive research design.
Data Sources- Government reports, Tourism statistics, Library digitization projects, Heritage preservation initiatives, Academic publications.
Analytical Approach- Thematic analysis is used to identify major dimensions linking digital preservation and tourism development.

Digital Preservation Technologies for Heritage Resources:

1- Digitization
Conversion of physical materials into digital formats through scanning and imaging.
2- Digital Repositories
Centralized platforms for storing and managing heritage content.
3- Metadata Standards
Structured descriptions facilitating retrieval and interoperability.
4- Cloud Computing
Secure storage and long-term accessibility.
5- Artificial Intelligence
Automated tagging, classification, language translation, and image recognition.
6- Virtual Reality
Immersive experiences enabling virtual exploration of heritage sites.
7- Augmented Reality
Real-time enhancement of visitor experiences through mobile devices.
8- 3D Documentation
Digital reconstruction of monuments and artifacts.

Role of Libraries in Digital Heritage Preservation:

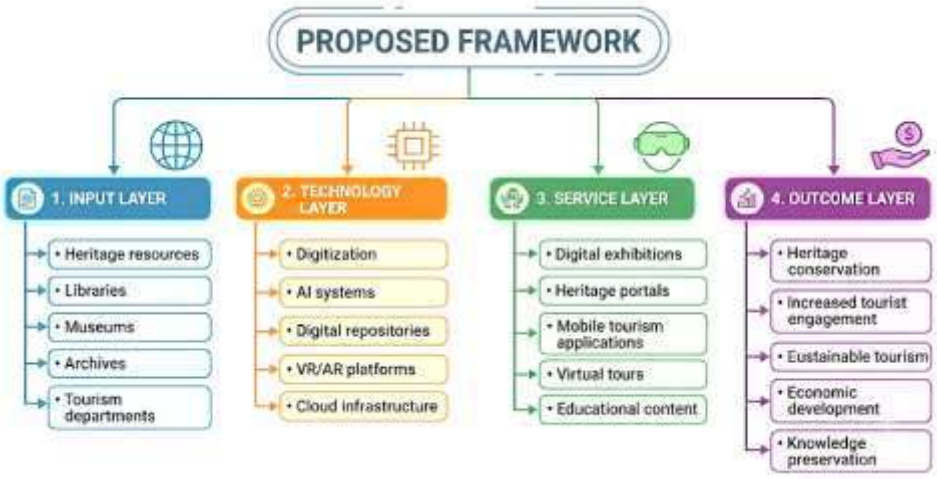
Libraries serve as knowledge custodians and can significantly contribute to heritage preservation through:
Digitization projects- Prevents wear and tear on fragile originals while making them easily replicable and accessible.
Digital archive development- Ensures data integrity, prevents digital decay, and organizes files systematically.
Metadata creation- Acts as a data label, making it possible for search engines and users to find specific items efficiently.
Information organization- Establishes a clear, user-friendly navigation system so information is intuitive to browse.
Public access services- Bridges the gap between stored data and the community, promoting open education and research.

Community heritage documentation- Ensures marginalized or unwritten histories are actively preserved from the community's own perspective.
Preservation training programs- Builds local capacity and ensures standardization, keeping preservation efforts sustainable over time.
Academic and public libraries can act as digital heritage hubs supporting tourism information dissemination.

Digital Preservation and Tourism Development:
Digital preservation contributes to tourism development through:
Enhanced Accessibility-
Tourists can access heritage information before visiting destinations.
Global Visibility-
Digital platforms increase international awareness of heritage sites.
Visitor Engagement-
Interactive content encourages deeper cultural understanding.
Sustainable Tourism-
Digital experiences reduce pressure on fragile heritage resources.
Economic Benefits-
Improved destination marketing supports local economies.

Proposed Digital Heritage Tourism Framework (DHTF):
This framework presents a layered approach to integrating modern technology into heritage and tourism, showing how inputs are transformed into specific public services, which then result in positive conservation and economic outcomes.
The proposed framework consists of four major components

Hypotheses:



H1: Digital preservation positively influences heritage accessibility.
H2: Heritage accessibility positively affects tourist engagement.
H3: Tourist engagement positively influences tourism development.
H4: Technology adoption positively moderates the relationship between digital preservation and tourist engagement.
H5: Library participation significantly enhances the effectiveness of digital heritage initiatives.

Findings and Discussion:
The study identifies digital preservation as a strategic mechanism for integrating cultural conservation and tourism development. Libraries emerge as key institutions capable of facilitating digital access to heritage information.
Technological innovations such as AI, virtual reality, and digital repositories enhance tourist experiences while preserving cultural assets. The proposed framework demonstrates that effective collaboration among stakeholders can create sustainable heritage tourism ecosystems.

Implications for Library and Information Science:
- Expansion of digital preservation responsibilities.
- Development of heritage information services.
- Increased collaboration with tourism authorities.
- Integration of AI-driven knowledge organization systems.
- Creation of digital heritage literacy programs.

Recommendations:
- Establish national digital heritage repositories.

- Strengthen digitization initiatives in libraries.
- Promote AI-enabled heritage information systems.
- Develop virtual tourism platforms.
- Encourage public-private partnerships.
- Implement metadata standardization.
- Enhance funding for digital preservation projects.

Conclusion:

Digital preservation offers unprecedented opportunities for safeguarding India's cultural heritage while promoting tourism development. By integrating technological innovation with library and information services, heritage resources can become more accessible, engaging and sustainable. The proposed Digital Heritage Tourism Framework provides a comprehensive model for connecting preservation activities with tourism objectives. Future efforts should focus on building collaborative digital ecosystems that ensure both cultural conservation and socio-economic development.

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Original Article

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India: A Sociological Analysis in the Context of Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

The current study seeks to analyse from a sociological lens the situation of gender equality and women empowerment in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047 by highlighting the emerging gender issues and the opportunities for improvement in the field. The method used in the study was a qualitative one, which used in-depth interviews with the key informants, focus group discussions and literature review on gender issues in India. The study also utilized secondary data obtained from the government reports and documents to give a holistic picture on the status of gender equality and empowerment in the country. The findings of the study highlight the complex nature of gender relations in India, with deep-rooted patriarchal norms and practices continuing to hinder progress towards gender equality. Although there have been notable strides in recent times, there remain challenges preventing equal participation by women in social, economic and political life. The study also highlights a number of promising initiatives and interventions which hold the promise of driving positive change in the coming years. This paper will contribute to the body of work on gender equality and women empowerment in India with its qualitative and sociological study on the issue, keeping the Viksit Bharat 2047 in mind. The study helps shed light on the challenges and the opportunities in this field; it will have lessons for policy makers, researchers and practitioners seeking gender equality and women's empowerment in India.

Keywords: *Gender equality, empowering women, India, Viksit Bharat 2047.*

Introduction

Gender equality and empowerment of women have been in discussion for a long time in India. The issue of gender equality has been a constant issue in Indian society where the women population has been treated unequally and put on the margins in various instances. Despite a tremendous leap of last few years, India still has ample room for much improvement to ensure gender equality and female empowerment. The "Vision for a developed and progressive India" 2047 which is Viksit Bharat 2047 cannot be complete without addressing the issue of gender equality and empowerment. Viksit Bharat 2047 aims to provide equal opportunities and rights to every individual irrespective of gender so that they can grow and prosper to make India a developed nation. To fulfill this vision, it is essential to understand the sociological factors, which leads to gender inequality and empowerment of women in Indian context. The study is based on the sociological understanding of gender disparities in India.

The gender gap in India is prevalent in the society and is deeply rooted in the norms and practices which are inter passed from generation to generation. Indian society is much more patriarchy and women have been kept on the fringes in all aspects of life—education, profession, political arena and others. Women are encouraged not to have their own dreams and aspirations.

India suffers from gender inequality which is one of the prime reasons because of the occurrence of Gender-based violence. Woman is a frequent victim of domestic violence, sexual harassment and other gender violence issues in India daily. This impacts women's health and well-being as well as their ability to fully engage in society. Lack of access to education and employment opportunities for women is another aspect that causes inequality between the genders in India. While the movement has been gaining pace to make learning more accessible for the girl, there are Indian women who are yet to have quality learning opportunities. This curtails their income earning potential in terms of better jobs and financial independence. In addition, there are fewer women leaders in the country as compared to men. Discrimination and bias against women is present in the political arena, in the workplace and in society as a whole despite the presence of women there.

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Women's marginalization hinders their participation to voice their concerns in the policy making process focusing on gender equality.

India, a sociological way of women empowerment.

Empowerment of women is directly connected with gender equality and whether or not women can have agency and autonomy in their lives in India. Empowerment is about providing women with access to information and able to exercise their choice and control over their life trajectory. Empowering women is a key element to ensure gender equality and enabling a more inclusive and equitable society in India.

Education is one of the crucial ones for it to empower the women in India. Education plays a significant role in empowering women; providing them knowledge and skills to help them do well in life. Investing on girls' education will allow the women to change the traditional gender roles and achieve their dreams.

Another contributing factor for empowering the women in India is economic independence. Employed and financially independent women have more options in using other resources, in making choice decisions, and have more agencies in their relationship. It's a fairer society when women have the same opportunities to thrive – and increasing economic empowerment of women is one pathway to this.

Besides this, empowerment of Indian women is in the direct correlation with empowerment of women's rights and gender equality. India's actions to promote gender equality and ensure rights can lead to a more inclusive and equitable society where women can thrive in all spheres of life.

Literature Review

In India where patriarchal norms and practices have been prevalent for a long time, this issue of gender equality and women empowerment has been gaining importance. With the vision of a developed and progressive India (Viksit Bharat 2047), the issue of gender equality and empowerment of women in the different fields of society is important. This literature review will discuss the current situation of Gender Equality and empowering the women in India along with the sociological factors affecting these issues.

Indian society is plagued by deep-rooted patriarchy which is one of the major obstacles in achieving gender equality in the country. This mindset is often reflected in the underrepresentation of women in educational and occupational opportunities and in decision-making. In India it has been found that women have a less share in education and that they are encouraged to take care of their household duties instead of their career destination and objective (Kabeer, 2005). This limits their opportunity to be economically empowered and socially mobile.

Indian women can be discriminated against in the sphere of employment because they are paid less than men and have less opportunity for promotion in the job (Chaudhary, 2021). This gender pay gap helps to perpetuate the gender wage gap and to reaffirm the traditional gender roles and norms. Besides, India and other countries have women's role in decision making limited due to their underepresentation in leadership positions in public and private sectors as well (Agarwal, 2010).

In India several action plans/policies have been taken up to promote gender equality and empowerment of women. For instance NREGA has given women access to the labour market as well as provided them with wage income (a living wage) (Duflo, 2012). Similarly, one campaign under 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (Save the daughter, Educate the daughter)' is to put an end to the issue of girl child foeticide and to girl education.

Method

This study will focus on the status of women empowerment and gender equality in India in this study with the backdrop of the concept of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'. To accomplish this goal, a multi-methods design will be used that is a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study will be conducted in two phases: a large-scale survey to collect quantitative data on the situation of women's equality today in India and in-depth interviews with people engaged in key stakeholders to better understand the concerns and issues at hand.

Sampling Strategy

In the survey stage of the study, a stratified random sampling method will be used to ensure that representation is achieved across various regions, socio-economic status and gender during the sampling process. The breakdown of respondents will be equal for male and female and 1000 people will be targeted. The survey will be obtained through the face to face interview and an online survey, in order to maximize participation.

Data Collection

Based on the literature review on gender equality and empowerment of women, the survey questionnaire will be drafted taking the vision of 'Viksit Bharat 2047' into consideration. The questionnaire will have closed and open-ended questions to capture quantitative data pertaining to Gender equity issues relating to access to education, healthcare, employment, political participation etc. The survey will also address issues around attitude to gender role and perception of women empowerment.

In-depth interviews will be conducted with key informants including community leaders, activists, government officials and policy/process makers with the purpose of incorporating a qualitative element of the study. Participants will be selected by verbiage of purposive sampling technique that has involvement in the field regarding Gender equality & empowerment issues and knowledge about the same field. The interviews will be semi-structured, to enable a flexible and in-depth analysis of the issues.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected from the survey will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) which will provide a general outlook on the gender imbalance in India in the current times. Chi-square test will be used for the significant association of variables and regression analysis will be used in exploring the factors affecting gender equality.

Interviews will be transcribed and analyzed qualitatively in accordance with thematic analysis so as to extract the key themes and patterns at hand. The data will be coded and classified to determine similarities and differences of participants' perspective. Both the quantitative and qualitative data will be later triangulated to have a full picture of problem of gender equality and women empowerment in India.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues will be stated in the process of research. Informed consent will be given to ALL participants and CONFIDENTIALITY and anonymous will be maintained. The research will adhere to the principle of beneficence, non-maleficence and respect for autonomy of the research participants. There will be disclosure of potential conflicts of interest and research will be undertaken in open and ethical fashion.

Discussion

In India, where the gap between genders and gender inequality have been evident in the society for long years, gender equality and women empowerment play a crucial role. There have certainly been marked progress over the last few years in the quest for gender equality and empowerment for women in a variety of areas. But there are still problems to be solved as a thorough sociological analysis is required to grasp the intricacies of gender in Indian society.

This goal of "Viksit Bharat by 2047" that translates into a developed and empowered India by the year 2047 can be used to understand the objectives and targets of gender equality in India and women empowerment. This vision is gender equal rights for women's empowerment and inclusive sustainable growth and development from social, economic and political side. It requires a comprehensive strategy which aims at tackling the causes of gender inequality and discrimination, and at fostering gender justice and equality in all areas of life.

Deep-rooted patriarchal mindset prevailing in the society is one of the major problems to achieve gender equality and women empowerment in India. This behavior strengthens gender norms and stereotypes that continue to limit the opportunities, women's freedom and agency. Those patriarchal attitudes and beliefs should be challenged and dismantled as a result of education, awareness and advocacy activities. Supporting women to change and question gender roles and norms is essential for strengthening gender equality and a more inclusive and equitable society.

Safety and equality for women are another issue as a large number of women are victims of gender-based violence and discrimination in India. Despite existing laws and policies regarding the rights of women which protect their safety and security, there is still GBV reported in the country. In order to address this issue, a comprehensive plan should be put in place with an emphasis on new laws, awareness-raising campaigns and services for women survivors of violence. It is important that men and boys play their part in preventing gender-based violence and norms of positive masculinity need to be promoted to ensure that gender rights and gender dignity are respected.

In the context of gender equality and women empowerment in India, the next important aspect is economic empowerment of the women. There is still a long distance to go till women can be given equal opportunities to other economic pursuits and the workforce. In the economic sector, among other areas, gender wage gaps are a challenge for women, limited access to credit and financial services, and women's entrepreneurs' lack of supportization. Economic empowerment needs policies and programmes that will tackle these barriers and put women on a level playing field to succeed and do well in the economy.

Political empowerment is also important to promote gender equality and women's rights in India. Women continue to be under-represented and have limited participation in political leadership and decision making at all levels. More attention ought to be paid to increasing the political involvement and representation of women so that women's voice is heard and their interests are represented in the policy making process. There is a need for affirmative action measures such as women reserve/quota system and women capacity development which would enhance women political participation and capabilities. Results

This study on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in India in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047 highlights some important findings. It was also brought to light that despite remarkable improvements in the last few years in women's rights and empowerment there remain various issues that the Indian women have to deal with when it comes to gender equality. High rates of gender-based violence and discrimination, lack of access to education and/or economic opportunities and health care services are some of these challenges.

Furthermore, this study showed that the norms and beliefs of the society/culture are still affecting the gender inequality in India. Continuing attitudes and expectations about gender have limited women's independence and their potential to be empowered, particularly in highly patriarchal rural communities. The above highlights the importance of engaging women in larger numbers and combating the deeply entrenched cultural narratives and norms to make gender inclusive and empower women in India.

Moreover, the study indicated that the Government's policies and programmes relating to gender equality and women's empowerment have been more or less effective. There have been various initiatives and efforts in the education, health and economy sectors to include women, but yet there are a lot of issues to fight for gender equality in India.

To sum up the study's findings the researchers state that there is a need for continuous efforts in order to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women in India. Moving towards inclusive and equitable society and towards addressing the root causes of gender inequality is important if all the women in India are to have opportunities in life for improvement and possibilities to achieve their potential.

Conclusions

Lastly, the issue of gender equality and empowerment of women in India is very complex and multifaceted; it is a question which requires a careful sociological study. Keeping in mind the vision of 'Viksit Bharat 2047', it is evident that while some strides have been taken up in certain areas, there are still numerous hurdles in the way to create a significant move toward gender equality.

The main idea discovered in this study is that there is an element of culture norms that needs to be taken into consideration as well as the attitude on gender roles in the society. Some laws/policies exist to promote gender equality but are counterbalanced by patriarchal ideologies and limitations for women that therefore limit their opportunities and empowerment. These attitudes relating to gender roles need to be questioned and supported with changes in the norms where gender empowerment is concerned.

Furthermore, the findings of this analysis was that Education is one of the factors that have contributed to the success of Gender Equality. Educational programs may be an advantage to educate women, boost their earning capability and break gender stereotypes. In spite of positive strides towards access to quality education, it remains a struggle for many women from rural households to access quality education in India. A mobilization effort also needs to be undertaken to improve access for women and girls to education; gender sensitivity of the curriculum and gender equality need to be promoted.

Additionally, economic empowerment of women is one of the components of women empowerment. Women in India still suffer from a multitude of problems in the workplace—discrimination in hiring and promotion, a lack of access to credit and financial resources, and wage discrimination. In the interest of filling these lacunas and gradually bridging the gap towards women empowerment in economic activities, policy and programme can be developed in favour of creation of economic opportunities for women which include microfinance schemes or skill training programmes.

In addition, the status of gender parity remains a huge challenge in India due to violence against women. Although there are legislation and campaigns to raise awareness of gender-based violence, the rate of G.B.V. is still high. This can only be achieved if society's attitudes towards women violence are changed in addition to strengthening resources and support for women who have been subjected to violence.

A multi-pronged approach to the issue of Gender Equality and empowerment of women in India will be required, which will seek to tackle cultural norms, education, economic empowerment and violence against women. Policymaking and/or civil society and individual efforts need to be linked and executed jointly to create a more equal society, equal opportunities and equal rights for women. Gender and gender equality initiatives should be undertaken in a "gender-mainstreaming" approach that is integrated and has a crosscutting character, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society for all.

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Original Article

Challenges and Opportunities of Agro-Tourism Business in Maharashtra State

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Abstract:
The contribution of agricultural sector towards GDP is decreasing day-by-day and the farmers are facing it difficult and problematic to carry out the agricultural business activities without an extra and additional income. These are along with very good beautiful scenic surrounding because of flower garden, presence of river, lake, mountains, hills, sea-beach, mustard field, paddy field fruit garden etc. The peoples and their families want to take relax or vacation for some days away from city live, office and home. Indian people and many tourist like to visit generally the place of temple and pilgrimage. The senior citizen and every age group of people of our country have prefer to visit many tourist places along with Agro-Tourism, these makes increase in Agro-Tourism business activities. Because of stressful life especially the working class people like or want to visit the places which provide basic medical services which are better for health with low cost of food and accommodation facilities. They are very much interested to like or visit those Agro-Tourism places which provide silence or peaceful mind with better business activities and efficient services. Campaign of Agro-Tourism business consist of some important factors namely Rural Development Ministry and Ministry of Agriculture with Central and State Government development. With the upcoming or arrival of Agro-Tourism business activities, the regions or places will not be the same or common places as in the past days. The Agro-Tourism business activities and it's challenges and opportunities are to be anticipated for local people and communities while developing a better plan to support or enhance Agro-Tourism business and its services.

Keywords: *Agro-Tourism Business, Farmer, Additional Income, Employment etc.*

Introduction:

Niche - Tourism and its new form is known as Agro-Tourism business activities are considered as growing industry throughout the world. Taware Pandurang, Sangvi, Baramati - father and innovator of Agro-Tourism business in India, he says "The simple concept of engaging in farming activities, stay like farmer, ride tractor, the bullock cart, eat authentic food, fly kites, wear traditional costumes and clothes, purchase fresh farm produce, understand the culture of local area and in turn help or support the farmer, maintain the expenses of household and increase the capacity of additional income".

A rural tourism is one of the biggest tourism industries is called as Agro-Tourism business. With all of these reasons we have all know the importance of tourism business activities and it's all factors which increase the GDP of the country. The demand and supply in this respect is for inclusive and sustainable development which is strongly related towards growth and development in rural and agricultural economy with its investment and capitalization for both combined benefits and development for tourism and agricultural sector. The tourism and agriculture sector combines Agro-Tourism business which contributes to rural sustainable development and increase farm productivity with diversification of income at scale of very large quantity. Since Agro-Tourism business is accepted by more farmers across the Maharashtra state which gained nearly 25% growth in its incomes. These Agro- Tourism business centers achieved nearly 9.4 lakhs, 10.6 lakhs and 15.8 lakhs visitor of tourists in 2023, 2024 and 2025 respectively. These contributes directly or indirectly helped the farmers to accelerate the larger quantity of additional income through Agro-Tourism business activities. This tourism business industry is becoming now an increasingly popular with globally and almost cover every states of our country along with Maharashtra State. The agriculture sector as such has been growing relatively low rate as a comparison to other sector of the economy. (Kengapur & Honyal, 2022)

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In this agricultural sector other business activity can generate income to farmers by farming only once or two times in a calendar year, but Agro-Tourism business activities can generate the income monthly with a scale of large quantity.Agro-Tourism business provide unique business opportunities through combination of Agricultural and Tourism industry which presents many social benefits with larger number of financial educational facilities to visitors, producers, tourists and many communities. Agro Tourism Development Corporation(ATDC) shows research in year 2014 that only 43% population in urban area did not have any family relative in the same village and above 97% of population of urban area wants to enjoy the experience of Indian rural area i.e village life style. Hence according to these, there is an important need for the farmers to achieve and start a business that could support the agricultural farm business by generating additional extra income. In Agro-Tourism business activities Maharashtra state is the bigger contributor to promote and develop Agro-Tourism business throughout the country. At present there is nearly 328 Agro-Tourism business centers in around 30 districts of Maharashtra state, which is good in comparison with rest states of India. Agro-Tourism business activities contribute to rural sustainable development and diversification of farm income in a large scale of quantity.

Objectives of the study:

This research paper aims to identify the challenges and opportunities of Agro-Tourism business activities in Maharashtra, with knowing about the present status of Agro-Tourism business in Maharashtra state.

Research Methodology:

In this study of research paper the secondary data has been collected from various newspapers, books, websites, E-Journals and various reports etc. Also this research paper provide the need and importance with scope of Agro-Tourism business activities with its income and employability in Maharashtra state.

Analysis and Discussions:

Agro-Tourism business in Maharashtra:

This tourism activities in Maharashtra have the larger resources, more ability to attract the visitors or tourist and some opportunities to achieve the growing industry of tourism in a large scale. The beautiful scenario, importance of historical places can attract the population of rural and urban areas which can attract and provide the peaceful body and mind during the tourism period of people in their busy lifestyle. Agro-Tourism business activities can also improve the quality of lifestyle of people in local residential areas. New cottages and restaurants can provide entertainments and recreation opportunities for local residents of people. To promote and increase the domestic tourism, the resource areas must be identified by the government and developmental project with diversification of infrastructural development, diversification of product development, eco-adventure and sports development, presentations of cultural activities, accommodation with less expensive facilities etc, must be started which makes the government for better realization and importance of Agro-Tourism business activities and its development. According to these reasons the tourism sector makes high priority as an instrument for employment generation and removal for poverty in backward and rural areas by providing the potential and growth of Agro-Tourism business for development and to increase heritage tourism with promotion of village development along with additional farm incomes.

Agro-Tourism business and its Benefits in Maharashtra State:

The business of Agro-Tourism has the ability to change the economic growth of traditional agricultural activities. The Agro-Tourism business and its benefits can develop and could bring the direct and indirect benefits to the Agro farmers people. Some benefits of this sector are as follows:-

1) Generation of employment opportunities to the youths and their family members including Agro farmers people.
2) Promotion and transformation of cultural activities between rural and urban areas of people including more values of social ethics and morality.
3) These activities can improve the standard of living of farmers through various contacts and relations with urban areas of people.
4)Provide benefits to the urban area peoples, which can understand about the agricultural business activities with Agro life style.
5)It encourage and supports the process of Agro and Agricultural growth and development.
6) It may reduce the burden on the other traditional tourism tourist centers.
7) Through Agro-Tourism business activities demand for other services and goods may increase and also the expenditure on internal housing may also increase.
8)It may generate governmental revenue and services of public sector may also improve.
9) Modernization of various agro and other agricultural development of business activities which will be benefited to small businessman of local areas.
10)It provide additional source of income for the Agro-farmers which can help to protest against irregularity of income.

Agro-Tourism business activities and it's Challenges in Maharashtra State:

Although the business of Agro-Tourism activities can bring many benefits such as employment generation, higher education activities, government revenue generation, increase in foreign exchange income and can transform the agricultural sector into a modern business of service industry, it may also damages Some important factors. Major problems and challenges are as follows:-

1) Low Trained and Lack of Manpower:

The appointment of manpower for this Agro-Tourism business activity must be property trained. Cottage decorating or maintenance of suites must be done properly. Food services and other related facilities must be provided properly to the tourists or visitors with accurate manner of continental dishes or any local dishes. Different type of visitors or tourists may attract, whether it is Agro-Tourism, nature tourism or health tourism business activities whereas everyone want or expects quality services or facilities at the same time. For completion of proper duties and its dischargement Agro manpower need proper training of short term programme which could be affordable to manpower of this sector.

2) Insufficient and disbalance financial support:

Central and state government with local authorities must provide financial assistance at the low interest rates. Agro-Tourism business activities not only creating more employment but also it decreasing rural to urban migration.

3)Underdeveloped and uneducated people :

The Agro population and its risk bearing capacity is very low hence it support to avoid risk in this types of agricultural business. Although the customerization of Agro area is changing but still in Agro-Tourism business area because of financial and social barriers, illiteracy, poverty these activities not developed in a required manner.

4) Low skills of Business Planning:

Any type of business management and maintenance require proper skills and technical knowledge. If any Agro-Tourism business centre is started then the villagers should participate in development and implementation of project, otherwise problems will arise. Local newspaper advertisement, print media, leaflets may help for this type of business planning.

5) Requirement of qualified trained Guide of tourist :

Well trained tourist guide support to create interest in the mind of visitors or tourist in Agro-Tourism business activities. He require some basic tricks to attract more and more visitors or tourist. According to offers given by guide it must be completed during the visit or tour. Attractive personality, good communication skill, confidence are the basic elements for the requirement of good guide.

6)Problems of legislation:

The government and local authorities should encourage Agro-Tourism business to grow and develop. At tourist place law and order problems could arise because many tourist or visitors may pollute the social, local and environmental atmosphere. The female worker or women could be wrongly abused, exploitation of labour, underpayment, exploitation of children etc, can be happen, it must be control by government as well as local people.

Opportunities of Agro-Tourism business activities in Maharashtra State:

1) Farmers have good option to improve their economic condition:

From 2005 it is accepted that in Maharashtra state farmers gained more than 25% growth in their income through Agro-Tourism business. Many districts like Raigad, Satara, Pune have achieved the Agro-Tourism business positively but it impacts farmers income and lives as whole rural development from economic and social perspective.

2) Combination of Tourism Industry and Agricultural Industry:

Agro-Tourism business is combination of tourism sector and agriculture sector as both are separate but their accumulation provide us number of social benefits, education and financial assistance to communities. The share of agriculture in Indian economy is major which is directly or indirectly depends on agricultural activities where as tourism industry in India is growing at the rate of more than 10% which is good at global level hence Agro-Tourism business have great potential for economic development and growth.

3) Employment generation for Village population:

Agro-Tourism business is a part of rural tourism and it support farming through many aspects hence this sector is providing employment for village population that is youth, women as well as other members of family. Agro-Tourism business initiative increases more than 1 lakh employment for youths and women in rural areas.

4) Creation of additional or extra income:

Agro-Tourism business contributes to farm income diversification and Sustainable rural development in many aspects. Other income of agricultural activity to farmers is twice or only once in a year but earning from Agro-Tourism will generate income monthly.

5) Agro-Tourism business is a type of Niche tourism:

Niche tourism and its new version i.e. Agro-Tourism business is considered as fast growing business industry in many countries of the world including Philippines, United States, Australia, India etc.

For the success of Agro-Tourism business these Policies should be adapted:

The income from Agro-Tourism business activities is higher than those traditional agricultural activities of farmers. If by mistake Agro-Tourism business wrongly planned it would occurs problems of long term in Agro-business system. Visitors or tourist of every age and younger population attracted urban culture and high profile life style. But they should also understand the impact and importance of Agro-Tourism business development for the growth and survival of rural area culture. For the better upliftment and success of Agro-Tourism business activities people should follow the following policies.

1) Develop contacts and relationships with the other organizations, unions, NGOs, clubs, colleges, schools etc.

2) Provide a large publicity of Agro-Tourism business centers by advertisement means of new papers, television and all types of possible advertisement.

3) Understand customers needs and requirements and their expectations and services.

4) Agro-Tourism business owners should trained their staff or family members for hospitality and reception for cost cutting business model and employment generation inside the family.

5) This business should charge optimum money or rent for facilities or services provided on commercial base.

6) Create your official websites and develop with updated information from time to time to attract domestic as well as foreign tourist periodically.

7) For the entertainment and refreshment of visitors or tourist provide artificially uses of available resources and other facilities and services.

8) Create a better relationship with the visitors or tourist for chain publicity and future business activities.

9) Provide various different types of Agro-Tourism tour packages for various types of visitors or tourist according to their needs and expectations.
10) Save or preserve an address and phone books according to their remarks, comments and suggestions of visited tourists for improvement and better up gradation in our Agro-Tourism business centers.
11) During visit behave sincerely or according to visitors or tourist for good feeling and better atmosphere of mood.
12) Small unit or farmers can create or develop their centre of Agro-Tourism business with the help of co-operative societies.
13) Receive feedback, remarks and comments regarding services and facilities with suggestions for better modification and growth.

Solutions with reference to Agro-Tourism business:

Agro-Tourism business is one of the business activities which is difficult for farmers hence they must apply commercial mindset up for some new marketing techniques for doing the successful business operations. They need capital requirements along with new marketing strategy for promotion of their business and also they requite skilled and qualified employees and staff with most important factor of financial support. Owners or farmers can promote Agro-Tourism business by use of E-mails, Brochures, Business cards, Newspapers, Radio, Newsletter, Internet etc.

Conclusion:

Agro-Tourism business activities and its growth and development in rural areas is still in its childhood stage. Maharashtra State has many challenges but have some opportunities to encourage and enhance its Agro-Tourism business offer with representation of better states, which identifies socio-cultural entities, natural characteristics with variation of different climatic conditions. Although there has been low initiative taken by the central government for this Agro-Tourism business growth, but the farmers of Maharashtra states has taken potential efforts for the development of Agro-tourism services and facilities in this sector. It will be the supportive and beneficial model for visitors or tourist and residential farmers of the Maharashtra state. It also provide better source of platform for socio-economic development of people who belongs to rural areas of Maharashtra. Around more than 50% of population involved directly or indirectly in agricultural activities hence Agro-Tourism business must be initiated with potential work to develop agricultural earning with tourist activities which will bring new futures and hopes for the farmers of Maharashtra. These types of devoted approaches work and inclusive initiatives by farmers of Maharashtra give rise to nongovernment and government organization to facilitate or Support to some extent towards growth of Agro-Tourism business activities. The best Agro-Tourism business practices always create something informative and interesting to do as well as provide awareness regarding social responsibilities about rural and urban area development. With the help of Agro-Tourism business activities rural people also receive additional income that will help or enhance their life style and knowledge in rural areas. The difference and increasing gap between rural and urban areas can be reduced with the help of Agro-Tourism business models which the support the people to live happy and peaceful life.

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Original Article

The Necessity of Tourism Expansion: A Study of The Ancient Mahadev Temple at Chinke Village, Sangola Taluka, Solapur District

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Abstract

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) identify travel and tourism as one of the largest economic sectors globally. The present study investigates the tourism development potential of the ancient Mahadev Temple located in Chinke village, Sangola Taluka, Solapur District, Maharashtra, India. The study area lies within a drought-prone region yet possesses considerable historical, cultural, and archaeological significance. Primary data were collected through intensive fieldwork and personal interviews, supplemented by secondary data drawn from published books, research papers, and official government records. The findings reveal that the temple exhibits architectural features attributable to the Chalukya period (11th–12th centuries CE) and comprises five principal components: the Nandi Mandap, Mukh Mandap, Antaral, Sabha Mandap, and Ghabhara. Despite its remarkable cultural heritage, the site remains relatively obscure due to inadequate infrastructure and limited promotional outreach. The study underscores the urgent need for government intervention and tourism department support to transform this temple into a prominent rural tourism destination, thereby stimulating socioeconomic development in an economically underserved region.

Keywords: *Tourism Development; Mahadev Temple; Chinke Village; Cultural Heritage; Drought-Prone Area; Solapur District; Chalukya Architecture; Rural Tourism*

Introduction

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines tourism as "the activities of a person travelling outside his or her usual environment for less than a specified period of time and whose main purpose of travel is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from the place visited" (WTO, 2023). Recognized by both the WTO and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) as one of the most significant global industries, tourism plays an indispensable role in economic growth, employment generation, and cross-cultural exchange. In India, the tourism sector contributes approximately 6.23% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounts for around 8.78% of total employment. Tourism-linked industries encompassing transport, storage, communication, trade, accommodation, and hospitality engage approximately 20–22% of persons involved in related domestic economic activities (WTO, 2023). Tourism thus constitutes a multi-dimensional phenomenon encompassing economic, social, cultural, technological, and environmental dimensions. Its significance as an instrument of economic expansion and employment generation is particularly pronounced in regions that possess latent or underutilized tourism assets.

Since ancient times, reverence for nature and the preservation of ecological values have formed an integral part of Indian thought and social tradition. The roots of this ethos can be traced to the earliest civilizations of the subcontinent, which nurtured a philosophy centered on the unity of all life (Londhe, n.d.). The Indian cultural tradition has consistently held that human society is an inseparable component of the natural order, and that all creation is deserving of care, love, and respect. The present study focuses on the ancient Mahadev Temple situated in Chinke village, Sangola Taluka, Solapur District, Maharashtra. This historically significant religious monument, exhibiting architectural characteristics consistent with the Chalukya period (11th–12th centuries CE), is located in a drought-prone region primarily known for pomegranate cultivation (Shinde, n.d.; Dev, n.d.).

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Despite attracting pilgrims and visitors from neighboring villages, talukas, districts, and other states, the temple lacks adequate infrastructure and institutional tourism support. This study examines the archaeological and cultural significance of the temple, documents its principal architectural components, and proposes systematic measures to develop it into a prominent rural tourism destination.

Objectives

The present study was undertaken with the following primary objectives:

1. To examine the historical, cultural, and architectural significance of the Mahadev Temple at Chinke village, Sangola Taluka, Solapur District.
2. To document and describe the principal structural components of the temple and assess their current physical condition.
3. To evaluate the existing tourism infrastructure and identify gaps impeding the site's development as a viable tourist destination.
4. To assess the potential for developing this site into a distinguished rural and heritage tourism destination within Sangola Taluka.
5. To propose actionable recommendations for the improvement and promotion of tourism in this drought-prone region of Solapur District.

Study Region

Sangola Taluka constitutes a core segment of the drought-prone zone of Solapur District, Maharashtra. The taluka is situated in the southwestern corner of the district (Fact Finding Committee, 1973) and is drained by the Man River basin. Its latitudinal extent ranges from 17°06'17″ N to 17°40'35″ N, while its longitudinal extent spans from 74°51′ E to 75°20'25″ E. The taluka occupies a total area of approximately 1,594.10 sq. km, constituting 10.71% of the total district area, and comprises 103 revenue villages (Census of India, 2011).

Chinke village is situated approximately 12 km to the west of Sangola town and lies in close proximity to the Solapur–Kolhapur Highway. This strategic location along a major arterial road significantly facilitates tourist access to the site from the broader region. Physiographically, Sangola Taluka presents a pediment plain with a dissected range of the Shambhu Mahadev hills forming its southwestern and southern borders, oriented towards the east and northeast with a moderate slope. Scattered residual hills are found in the northwest, lending the landscape an undulating character. Lithologically, the entire region belongs to the Deccan Trap volcanic formation (Gazetteer, 1975).

The taluka's average annual rainfall is 595.31 mm, received primarily in September and October from the retreating northeast monsoon winds. Peak summer temperatures exceeding 42°C are typically recorded in April and May, while minimum temperatures drop below 16°C in January. The prevailing climate is classified as semi-arid, with hot and dry conditions dominating through most of the year. The soils of Sangola Taluka are predominantly derived from Deccan Trap volcanic parent material and exhibit a distinct toposequence: shallow soils on ridges and upper hill slopes, moderately deep soils on mid-slopes, and deep black cotton soils in the lower reaches of stream valleys. Chinke village itself is well known across the region for its thriving pomegranate cultivation, attracting agricultural visitors and traders from neighboring talukas, districts, and even other states. This agricultural prominence, combined with the historical eminence of the Mahadev Temple, provides a strong dual foundation for rural and heritage tourism development.

Data Sources and Methodology

The present study is based on a systematic combination of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through intensive fieldwork conducted in Chinke village during which direct observations of the temple complex were recorded and personal interviews were conducted with local residents, temple trustees, and regular visitors. These interviews yielded qualitative insights pertaining to the historical background of the temple, patterns of visitor footfall, and community perceptions of its tourism potential.

Secondary data were obtained from published books, academic research papers, government gazetteers, official district records, and census publications relevant to the study area (Barakhade, n.d.; Advitot, n.d.; Londhe, n.d.). A descriptive-analytical research design was adopted. Fieldwork observations and interview data were synthesized with available secondary literature to document the architectural characteristics of the temple, assess its present physical condition, and evaluate the feasibility and scope of tourism development at the site. On the basis of this analysis, evidence-based recommendations are proposed for infrastructural improvement, heritage conservation, and tourism promotion.

Discussion

1 Historical and Cultural Context of Tourism in the Study Region

Tourism is among the oldest forms of purposive human mobility, with its origins traceable to ancient pilgrimage traditions, trade journeys, and cultural exploration across civilizations. In the contemporary era, the tourism industry encompasses a broad spectrum of activities and services including transport, hospitality, communication, and trade, and plays an increasingly pivotal role in national and regional economies worldwide (WTO, 2023).

The region under investigation lies within the drought-prone belt of Solapur District, an area characterized by water scarcity and limited agricultural diversity. Despite these environmental constraints, the region possesses considerable latent cultural and heritage assets that hold the potential to catalyze tourism-led economic development (Advitot, n.d.). Chinke village, the primary study site, is regionally renowned for its pomegranate cultivation and attracts agricultural visitors, traders, and casual tourists from neighboring villages, talukas, districts, and other states. The Mahadev Temple, situated on the northern side of the village, represents the principal religious and cultural landmark of the settlement and has functioned as a center of devotional and community life for several centuries.

2 Architectural Description of the Mahadev Temple, Chinke

The Mahadev Temple at Chinke comprises five principal structural components, commonly referred to as mandaps, each distinguished by its unique spatial function and architectural character. The following subsections document these components in detail, based on direct field observation.

1 Nandi Mandap

The Nandi Mandap constitutes the formal entry point of the temple complex. The mandap houses a large and finely sculpted statue of Nandi, the sacred bull and principal vehicle (vahana) of Lord Shiva. The mandap occupies a square plan area of approximately 20 × 20 feet, providing a spacious threshold through which devotees and visitors access the inner precincts of the temple. The imposing scale of the Nandi sculpture and the open character of this mandap establish a powerful ceremonial introduction to the sanctuary.

2 Mukh Mandap

The Mukh Mandap, also measuring approximately 20 × 20 feet in plan, is structurally supported by sixteen pillars hewn from schist (locally referred to as shila or stepping-stone). Each pillar stands approximately 9.5 feet in height and is characterized by careful stone-cutting craftsmanship. The mandap is surmounted by an ornate decorative canopy that rests upon these pillars, creating a visually striking architectural ensemble. This assembly hall serves as the primary space for congregational worship preceding entry into the inner temple.

3 Antaral

The Antaral is a compact transitional vestibule measuring approximately 6 × 6 feet, interposed between the Mukh Mandap and the inner sanctum. It is notable for its elaborate decorative stonework and intricate sculptural ornamentation. Architecturally, the Antaral functions as a spatial and symbolic boundary demarcating the outer public precincts of the temple from its innermost sacred zone, effecting a progressive transition from the profane to the sacred realm.

4 Sabha Mandap

The Sabha Mandap, measuring approximately 20 × 20 feet with a square plan, is supported by sixteen rock-cut stone pillars arranged in a symmetrical configuration. This hall serves as the principal communal gathering space for devotees participating in religious ceremonies and festivals. It is widely regarded by local informants as one of the most aesthetically distinguished components of the temple complex, combining structural solidity with refined architectural detailing.

5 Ghabhara (Garbhagriha Sanctum Sanctorum)

The Ghabhara, known in canonical Sanskrit architectural terminology as the Garbhagriha or sanctum sanctorum, constitutes the innermost and most sacred chamber of the Mahadev Temple. It houses an imposing image of Harihar a syncretic deity combining aspects of Vishnu and Shiva along with the primary Mahadev Pind (Shivalinga), which measures approximately 2.5 to 3.5 feet in height. The Ghabhara occupies an area of approximately 7.5 feet and is surmounted by a robust boulder canopy that imparts a distinctive visual character to the temple's exterior profile.

In addition to the five principal mandaps, the temple complex contains subsidiary shrines dedicated to Saraswati, Ganesha, and Lakshmi-Vishnu, along with a Garuda figure positioned in the traditional supplicant posture. The complex is enriched by numerous decorative floral motifs and smaller votive sculptures distributed throughout the precincts. An extensive stone compound wall encloses the entire temple precinct, though sections of this wall have been observed to be in a deteriorated condition requiring urgent conservation intervention.

3 Archaeological and Heritage Significance

Based on a synthesis of local testimonial evidence and direct architectural observation, the Mahadev Temple at Chinke is understood to be of considerable antiquity. Detailed examination of the structural elements particularly the style of pillar construction, the design of the decorative canopies, and the iconographic conventions evident in the sculptural program reveals features characteristic of the Chalukya architectural tradition of the 11th–12th centuries CE (Shinde, n.d.; Dev, n.d.). If confirmed through formal archaeological investigation, this attribution would establish the temple as a heritage monument of regional and potentially national significance.

The temple is an active center of religious life in the community. Major festivals celebrated at the site include Mahashivratri and Chaitra Purnima, both of which attract substantial gatherings of devotees from Chinke village and the surrounding region. These festivals serve not only as occasions for religious observance but also as informal tourism events that generate local economic activity and reinforce communal bonds (Barakhade, n.d.).

4 Tourism Potential and Development Needs

Notwithstanding its considerable historical, architectural, and religious significance, the Mahadev Temple at Chinke remains substantially underdeveloped as a formal tourism destination. Several enabling conditions exist that render this site amenable to strategic tourism development. Its location along the Solapur–Kolhapur Highway facilitates accessibility for visitors traveling by road. The agricultural reputation of Chinke village for pomegranate cultivation offers opportunities to develop integrated agro-tourism and heritage tourism packages that would appeal to a diversified visitor profile (Barakhade, n.d.). Furthermore, the broader drought-prone context of Sangola Taluka heightens the imperative for alternative economic activities, making the development of this site not merely a cultural priority but also an economic necessity.

The principal tourism development needs identified through the present study are as follows:

1. Restoration and conservation of the temple's deteriorated compound wall and damaged structural elements, in accordance with recognized heritage conservation principles.
2. Development of essential tourism support infrastructure at the site, including well-maintained approach roads, adequate parking facilities, visitor reception and information facilities, clean sanitation amenities, and appropriate lighting.
3. Formal documentation of the temple's architectural and archaeological features, and pursuit of official heritage recognition at the state and national levels.

4. Dissemination of information about the temple through tourism promotion materials, digital and social media platforms, and its formal inclusion within the Maharashtra Tourism Department's regional tourism circuits.
5. Conduct of community awareness programs to cultivate local stewardship of the heritage site and foster pride in its cultural significance.
6. Active institutional engagement from the Government of Maharashtra and the Maharashtra Tourism Department to provide financial support, administrative facilitation, and professional expertise for the site's systematic development.

Conclusion

The Mahadev Temple at Chinke village, Sangola Taluka, Solapur District, represents a site of exceptional historical, cultural, and architectural significance. Its structural features, consistent with the Chalukya architectural tradition of the 11th–12th centuries CE, situate it within the broader lineage of Maharashtra's rich medieval heritage. The temple's location in a drought-prone area along the Solapur–Kolhapur Highway, combined with the agricultural reputation of the surrounding region for pomegranate cultivation, provides a compelling basis for the development of an integrated rural and heritage tourism product.

Despite its considerable assets, the temple remains inadequately developed as a tourism destination owing to deficient infrastructure, limited public awareness, and insufficient institutional support. The present study concludes that there is considerable scope for transforming the Mahadev Temple site into a prominent rural tourism destination within Sangola Taluka. The realization of this potential requires coordinated and strategic interventions encompassing heritage conservation, infrastructure development, digital promotion, and community engagement.

Active and sustained support from the Government of Maharashtra and the Maharashtra Tourism Department is indispensable to the achievement of these objectives. The development of this site as a heritage tourism destination would generate local employment, stimulate ancillary economic activities, and cultivate a sense of cultural pride and identity among the communities of Sangola Taluka and Solapur District. It would also serve as a model for leveraging cultural heritage as a sustainable development resource in economically disadvantaged, drought-prone regions.

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Original Article

Tourism Development of Beed District: A Green Tourism Model

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Abstract:

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors contributing significantly to regional economic development, employment generation, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation. Beed district, situated in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra, possesses rich natural, religious, historical, and cultural tourism resources. Despite having important destinations such as Parli Vaijnath Jyotirling, Yogeshwari Temple of Ambajogai, Kankaleshwar Temple, Kapildhar and Sautada waterfalls, Dharur Fort, and several heritage monuments, tourism development in the district remains comparatively underdeveloped due to inadequate infrastructure and limited promotion. The present study aims to examine the tourism potential of Beed district and propose a sustainable Green Tourism Model for balanced regional development. The study is based on secondary data collected from government reports, tourism publications, and related literature. The findings indicate that eco-tourism, religious tourism, heritage tourism, and rural tourism can collectively transform Beed into a sustainable tourism destination while preserving environmental resources and benefiting local communities.

Keywords: *Green Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Eco-Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Religious Tourism.*

Introduction:

Tourism is recognized as a powerful instrument for economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability. In recent decades, the concept of Green Tourism has gained global importance due to increasing environmental concerns and the need for sustainable utilization of natural resources. Green Tourism promotes responsible travel practices that minimize ecological damage, conserve biodiversity, preserve cultural heritage, and improve the quality of life of local communities.

Beed district possesses a unique combination of natural landscapes, waterfalls, forests, historical monuments, pilgrimage centers, and rural cultural traditions. The district has the potential to develop as a model destination for sustainable tourism in the drought-prone Marathwada region. By integrating eco-tourism principles with local participation and environmental conservation, Beed can emerge as a successful Green Tourism destination.

Objectives:

1. To identify tourism resources of Beed district.
2. To analyze the present status of tourism development.
3. To examine the prospects of Green Tourism in Beed district.
4. To propose a sustainable Green Tourism Model.
5. To suggest measures for tourism-led regional development.

Data and Methodology:

Sources of Data: The study is primarily based on secondary data collected from:

- Maharashtra Tourism Department Reports
- District Gazetteers
- Government Tourism Websites
- Research Papers and Journals
- District Statistical Abstracts
- Books and Reports related to Sustainable Tourism

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Methodology:

The following analytical methods were employed:

- Descriptive Analysis
- Spatial Analysis
- Sustainable Tourism Framework
- SWOT Analysis

Results and Discussion:

Tourism Resource Base of Beed District

Religious Tourism

Beed district is one of Maharashtra's important pilgrimage destinations. Major religious attractions include Parli Vaijnath Temple, Yogeshwari Temple at Ambajogai, Kankaleshwar Temple, Shahenshahwali Dargah and Mukundraj Samadhi. These sites attract thousands of pilgrims annually and contribute significantly to the local economy.

Natural Tourism Resources: Important natural attractions include:

- Kapildhar Waterfall
- Sautada Waterfall
- Bendsura Dam
- Majalgaon Dam
- Manjarsumbha Ghat
- Forest and Plateau Landscapes

These destinations provide opportunities for eco-tourism, trekking, camping, bird watching, photography and environmental education.

Heritage Tourism: The district possesses several heritage attractions such as:

- Dharur Fort
- Dharmapuri Fort
- Jama Masjid
- Historic Gates of Beed
- Mansur Shah Tomb

These monuments reflect the historical and architectural heritage of the region.

Rural Tourism

The villages of Beed preserve traditional agricultural practices, folk arts, local cuisine, village festivals and indigenous knowledge systems. Rural tourism offers opportunities for community participation and income diversification.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Rich religious heritage
- Scenic waterfalls
- Historical monuments
- Diverse rural culture

Weaknesses

- Poor tourism infrastructure
- Limited accommodation facilities
- Lack of destination promotion
- Poor connectivity to some tourist sites

Opportunities

- Eco-tourism development
- Rural tourism circuits
- Homestay programmes
- Heritage conservation initiatives

Threats

- Environmental degradation
- Water scarcity
- Unplanned tourism growth
- Climate change impacts

Green Tourism Model

The proposed Green Tourism Model consists of five major components:

Phase I: Resource Conservation

- Protection of waterfalls
- Forest conservation
- Biodiversity mapping
- Heritage restoration

Phase II: Sustainable Infrastructure

- Eco-friendly resorts
- Solar energy facilities

• Rainwater harvesting
• Scientific waste management

Phase III: Community Participation

• Village tourism committees
• Local guide training
• Women self-help groups
• Promotion of local handicrafts

Phase IV: Tourism Product Development

Eco-Tourism Circuit: Kapildhar – Sautada – Bendsura – Manjarsumbha Religious Tourism Circuit: Parli Vaijnath – Ambajogai – Kankaleshwar Heritage Tourism Circuit: Dharur Fort – Dharmapuri Fort – Jama Masjid Phase V: Digital Promotion

• GIS-based Tourism Mapping
• Mobile Applications
• Online Booking Platforms
• Social Media Marketing

Benefits of Green Tourism

Economic Benefits

• Employment generation
• Increased local income
• Entrepreneurship opportunities
• Growth of allied sectors

Social Benefits

• Community empowerment
• Cultural preservation
• Improved quality of life

Environmental Benefits

• Conservation of ecosystems
• Reduced environmental degradation
• Sustainable resource utilization

Conclusions:

The study reveals that Beed district possesses immense potential for sustainable tourism development due to its rich religious heritage, historical monuments, natural attractions and rural cultural landscapes. However, inadequate infrastructure, poor connectivity and limited promotion have restricted tourism growth. The proposed Green Tourism Model emphasizes environmental conservation, community participation, sustainable infrastructure and digital promotion. The adoption of this model can transform Beed into a sustainable tourism destination while generating employment, enhancing local income, conserving biodiversity and preserving cultural heritage. Therefore, Green Tourism can serve as an effective strategy for achieving sustainable and inclusive regional development in Beed district.

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Original Article

Investment Potential in Coastal and Eco-Tourism Destinations of Palghar District

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors and plays a vital role in socio-economic development, employment generation & regional growth. Palghar District of Maharashtra has its own very unique geographical advantage as it contains a mix of maritime resources, eco-tourism based products and tribal culture along with close proximity to the urban centers like Mumbai and Thane. This research investigates the potential of coastal and eco-tourism destinations from Palghar District as an investment option. The analysis investigates key tourist destinations, detects potential areas for investment related to hospitality, recreation, cultural tourism and agro-tourism sectors and evaluates the economic impact of developing such tourism segment. Tourism prospects have been analyzed with the help of both primary and secondary data.

Keywords: *Coastal Tourism, Eco-Tourism, Palghar District, Investment Potential.*

Introduction

Tourism is an essential element in the socio-economic evolution of nations and territories. This creates jobs, it builds infrastructure, increases tax revenues and encourages local entrepreneurship. The growing interest in coastal tourism and eco-tourism can be attributed to the changing population of tourists who prefer more nature-based tourist experiences as well as sustainable travel products.

Palghar District was formed in 2014 located in northern Maharashtra. There is long coastal tract, beautiful beaches, forests area, waterfalls, hill station and the tribal heritage in the district. The faster development of palghar can be attributed to its place near Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Despite possessing abundant tourism resources, the district remains relatively underdeveloped from an investment perspective. This study seeks to analyze the investment opportunities available in Palghar's coastal and eco-tourism destinations.

Objectives

- To analyse tourism of Palghar District.
- To locate major sea and green tourist places in the district.
- To assess investments on tourism-related sectors.
- To quantify the economic contributions of tourism expansion.
- To propose methods to enhance sustainable tourism investment

Research methodology

Research Design

It is a descriptive and analytical study.

Sources Data

Primary Data:

Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to tourists, local residents, and tourism stakeholders.

Secondary Data:

Secondary information was collected from government reports, tourism publications, research articles, Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) reports, websites, and tourism statistics.

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Sample Size

A sample of 58 respondents was selected using convenience sampling.

Tourism Profile of Palghar District

Palghar District is strategically located between Mumbai and Gujarat, making it easily accessible by road and rail. The district is known for its natural landscapes, beaches, tribal culture, agricultural activities, and biodiversity.

Major Tourism Resources

- Coastal Beaches
- Forest Areas
- Waterfalls
- Tribal Villages
- Historical Forts
- Agricultural Tourism Sites

The district's connectivity with Mumbai, Thane, Nashik, and Gujarat increases its attractiveness for weekend tourism and short-duration travel.

Major Coastal Tourism Destinations

Kelwa Beach

Kelwa Beach is one of the most popular beaches in Palghar District. The beach attracts domestic tourists due to its scenic beauty and peaceful environment. Investment opportunities exist in resorts, restaurants, and recreational facilities.

Dahanu Beach

Dahanu Beach is known for its clean coastline and chikoo plantations. It offers significant potential for beach tourism, cultural tourism, and hospitality investments.

Bordi Beach

Bordi Beach has emerged as an eco-friendly tourism destination. Development of eco-resorts and wellness tourism can enhance its attractiveness.

Shirgaon Beach

The beach is known for its historic fort and coastal landscape. Investment opportunities include heritage tourism and hospitality services.

Satpati Coast

Satpati is an important fishing center with tourism potential. Seafood tourism and coastal recreational activities can attract visitors.

Major Eco-Tourism Destinations

Jawhar Hill Station

Jawhar is known for its pleasant climate, waterfalls, and scenic viewpoints. The destination has high potential for eco-resorts and nature tourism.

Vikramgad

Vikramgad offers trekking routes, forests, and cultural experiences. Sustainable tourism projects can generate local employment.

Kohoj Fort

The fort attracts adventure tourists and trekkers. Investment opportunities include guided trekking services and camping facilities.

Warli Tribal Villages

The unique Warli art and tribal lifestyle provide opportunities for cultural tourism and handicraft promotion.

Forest and Waterfall Tourism

Natural attractions can support eco-lodges, nature camps, and adventure tourism activities.

Investment Opportunities

Hospitality Sector

Hotels	Homestays
Resorts	Eco-Lodges

Recreation Sector

Water Sports	Trekking Activities
Adventure Tourism	Camping Facilities

Food and Beverage Sector

Restaurants	Local Cuisine Tourism

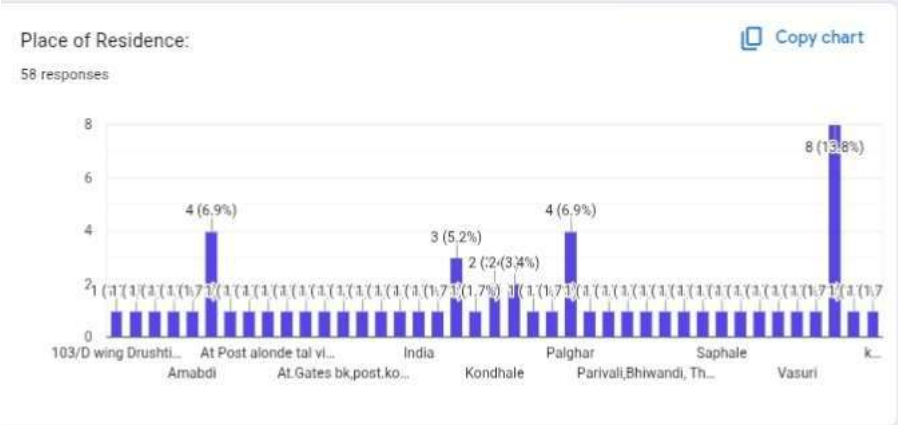
Cultural Tourism

Warli Art Centres	Handicraft Markets

Agro-Tourism

Farm Stays	Rural Tourism Activities

Data Analysis



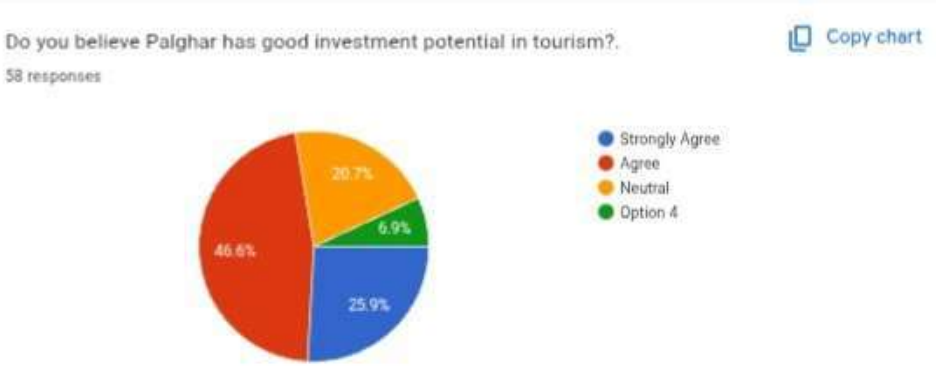
Analysis

The survey received responses from 58 respondents belonging to different villages and towns of Palghar District. The majority of the respondents were from Palghar town, while the remaining respondents belonged to places such as Amabadi, Kondhale, Saphale, Vasuri, Parivali, Alonde, and other villages in the district.



Analysis:

Out of the 58 respondents, 82.8% stated that they have visited a coastal or eco-tourism destination in Palghar District, whereas 17.2% reported that they have not visited any such destination. The findings indicate that a large majority of respondents are familiar with the tourism attractions in the district. This suggests that Palghar's coastal and eco-tourism destinations enjoy considerable public awareness and visitor interest, highlighting their potential for further tourism investment and infrastructure development.



Analysis

The findings show that the majority of respondents believe Palghar District has strong investment potential in tourism. 46.6% of respondents agreed and 25.9% strongly agreed, while 20.7% remained neutral and only 6.9% disagreed. This indicates a positive public perception of tourism investment opportunities in the district and suggests good prospects for future tourism development.

Results and Discussion

The primary data collected from 58 respondents indicate that Palghar District has significant potential for coastal and eco-tourism development. Most respondents were familiar with the district's major tourist destinations, especially Kelwa Beach, Dahanu Beach, Bordi Beach, and Jawhar Hill Station. A majority of respondents had visited at least one coastal or eco-tourism destination in the district.

The findings show that respondents rated the natural beauty and environmental attractiveness of Palghar positively. However, many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with tourism infrastructure, including transportation, accommodation facilities, sanitation, and recreational amenities. These limitations were identified as major barriers to attracting a larger number of tourists and private investors.

A significant proportion of respondents agreed that tourism has the potential to generate employment opportunities for local communities through hotels, homestays, restaurants, transport services, handicrafts, and agro-tourism activities. Many respondents also believed that increased investment in tourism infrastructure would contribute to regional economic development.

The survey further revealed that respondents support sustainable tourism practices, environmental conservation, and the promotion of Warli culture and eco-tourism. Most participants suggested improving road connectivity, digital marketing, tourist facilities, cleanliness, and public-private partnerships to enhance tourism development.

Overall, the analysis indicates that Palghar District possesses strong investment potential in coastal and eco-tourism. With appropriate government support, infrastructure development, and sustainable planning, the district can emerge as a major tourism destination in Maharashtra while generating employment, increasing local income, and promoting inclusive regional development.

Suggestions

1. Develop tourism infrastructure through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP).
2. Strengthen digital marketing and destination branding.
3. Promote sustainable tourism practices.
4. Encourage private sector participation through incentives.
5. Organize skill development programs for local communities.
6. Improve transportation and basic tourist amenities.
7. Establish eco-tourism guidelines for environmental conservation.

Conclusion

Palghar District possesses immense potential for coastal and eco-tourism development. The district's natural resources, cultural heritage, and strategic location provide favourable conditions for tourism investment. Development of hospitality, recreation, cultural tourism, and agro-tourism sectors can generate substantial economic benefits for local communities and the regional economy. However, sustainable planning, infrastructure development, environmental conservation, and stakeholder participation are essential for realizing the district's tourism potential. Effective implementation of tourism policies and investment promotion strategies can transform Palghar into a leading tourism destination in Maharashtra.

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Original Article

Towards Zero-Waste Shores: Strategies for Implementing Effective Plastic-Free Tourism in Coastal Karnataka.

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Abstract

Over the past decade, Karnataka's 320-kilometer coastline has transformed into a major tourist destination. While this travel boom has significantly boosted local economies, it has also triggered a severe environmental crisis, primarily through the heavy accumulation of single-use plastics across fragile marine ecosystems. This study reviews secondary data to assess the real-world impact of plastic-free campaigns and waste management policies currently active across Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada. By pulling together government reports, NGO case studies, and local administrative records, the research highlights a stark gap between ambitious state-level plastic bags and the practical challenges of enforcing them—especially for resource-strapped village councils (Gram Panchayats). The paper also examines how this pollution directly affects local livelihoods, particularly in the fishing and hospitality sectors. The findings suggest that while there are pockets of success, such as the heavily funded Blue Flag beaches, a unified coastal strategy is still missing. Progress is currently stalled by poor stakeholder coordination, a lack of basic waste infrastructure, and ingrained tourist habits. Ultimately, the research argues that to achieve genuine zero-plastic tourism, the region needs a localized, community-led approach. By holding corporations accountable through Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), integrating circular economy practices, and actively nudging tourists toward better behavior, coastal Karnataka can turn sustainable tourism from a policy goal into a reality.

Keywords: *Sustainable Tourism, Single-Use Plastics, Coastal Karnataka, Waste Management, Circular Economy*

Introduction

Coastal Karnataka, historically known as the Karavali region, is a unique and ecologically fragile stretch where the Western Ghats meet the Arabian Sea. Covering the districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada, this coastline is famous for its beautiful beaches, thick mangroves, and sacred estuaries. While the local economy traditionally relied on fishing, farming, and maritime trade, the early 2000s brought a major shift. The state government began aggressively promoting the Karavali coast as a top-tier tourist destination to compete with neighboring Goa and Kerala. Thanks to this push, along with better highways and the expanding Konkan Railway, tourists have been flocking to the area in record numbers. Gokarna has morphed from a quiet temple town into an international backpacker hotspot; Udupi draws millions for its temples and food; and Mangaluru has grown into a busy hub for leisure and medical tourism. But this massive, mostly unregulated wave of visitors comes with a heavy environmental price tag. The most obvious and stubborn sign of this unchecked growth is plastic pollution. Single-use plastics everything from water bottles and crinkly snack wrappers to the disposable cutlery handed out at beach shacks are now scattered across Karnataka's shores. Unlike natural waste, plastic doesn't just rot away. Instead, sunlight breaks it down into tiny microplastics that poison the marine food chain, suffocate coral reefs, and literally change the chemical makeup of the beach sand. For a region that depends on the ocean for both its livelihood and its cultural identity, this is a very real threat to its survival. Recognizing the crisis, the last few years have seen a wave of "plastic-free" campaigns driven by state rules, district efforts, and passionate locals. In fact, back in 2016, Karnataka was one of the first Indian states to completely ban single-use plastics. Since then, various tourism-focused initiatives have tried to enforce this ban on the beaches. However, the results have been incredibly mixed.

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This research dives into the secondary data surrounding these campaigns to figure out what is actually working, what is failing, and how the coastal region can realistically achieve a sustainable, plastic-free tourism model.

Research Objectives

To keep this analysis focused and clear, the research is built around three main goals:

- **To evaluate** how well current plastic-free tourism campaigns and waste management policies are actually working on the ground in Karnataka's coastal districts.
- **To assess** the real socio-economic and environmental toll that plastic pollution—and the efforts to clean it up—takes on local coastal communities, marine life, and the hospitality industry.
- **To identify** the deep-rooted systemic and behavioral roadblocks standing in the way of zero-plastic tourism, and to offer practical, community-driven solutions for managing the coast sustainably.

Methodology

This study takes a qualitative approach, relying entirely on reviewing and connecting existing secondary data. Because the Karavali coast is so vast and tourism involves so many different players, using secondary research gives us a bird's-eye view of broad trends and policy results that would be almost impossible to capture through small-scale primary surveys.

The information gathered for this paper covers the period from 2016 (when Karnataka first banned plastics) up to the present day. The main sources include:

- **Government and Policy Documents:** Reports from the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB), guidelines from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), and Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules.
- **Academic Literature:** Peer-reviewed studies that look at marine trash, how much tourism a coast can handle, and models for sustainable travel in India.
- **NGO and Institutional Reports:** Impact assessments and white papers from conservation groups, like the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) which runs the Blue Flag program, as well as local environmental organizations.
- **Media and Civic Records:** News coverage of beach cleanups, records from local village councils (Gram Panchayats), and public statements from local tourism operators.

By organizing this data into specific themes, the study can critically compare what the policies say on paper versus what actually happens on different types of beaches—whether it's a crowded religious site or a relaxed recreational shore.

Literature Review

1. Global and National Contexts

Researchers worldwide have thoroughly documented how tourism fuels coastal plastic pollution. Globally, over 80% of marine plastic comes from land, a problem that spikes dramatically during tourist seasons in places like Bali or the Mediterranean. Looking closer to home, studies focusing on Goa and Kerala reveal a major administrative headache in India: overlapping jurisdictions between city councils and coastal authorities. The literature makes one thing very clear, Indian states only succeed in managing waste when local communities are given a financial reason to participate in the rules.

2. The Karnataka Coastal Narrative

Historically, academics studying Karnataka's coast focused on other things, but attention has recently pivoted to the environmental damage caused by tourism. Unlike Goa, which is mostly about leisure, Karnataka gets a massive amount of "pilgrimage tourism" alongside the usual backpackers. This creates a very specific type of garbage problem, heavily featuring the plastic bags used for religious offerings and the disposable plates from large-scale community meals. On top of that, the steep geography of the region means that fast-flowing rivers quickly wash inland trash straight out to the estuaries. The existing literature points out a glaring issue: the state has tough anti-plastic laws on the books, but the local village councils (Panchayats) tasked with enforcing them simply don't have the funding or the resources to actually do the job.

Geographical Context of the Karavali Coast

To understand these campaigns, we must recognize the diverse operational theaters across Karnataka's three coastal districts:

- Dakshina Kannada (Urban/Commercial): Centered around Mangaluru, beaches here see a mix of local and domestic tourists. Better baseline municipal infrastructure exists, but heavy industrialization complicates purely tourism-focused environmental campaigns.
- Udupi (Pilgrimage/Educational): Home to major temple complexes and the university town of Manipal. Beaches like Malpe face the dual challenge of managing massive tourist footfall and commercial fishing waste (ghost nets).
- Uttara Kannada (Ecological/Alternative): The least urbanized district, featuring destinations like Gokarna. The isolated, rugged beaches attract backpackers but present a logistical nightmare for waste collection, often leading to localized burning or burying of trash.

District	Primary Tourism Demographic	Dominant Plastic Waste	Key Governance Barrier
Dakshina Kannada	Urban locals, commercial travelers	PET water bottles, food delivery containers	Industrial and port jurisdiction overlap
Udupi	Pilgrims, university students	Carry bags for offerings, disposable feeding plates	Managing extreme seasonal footfall spikes
Uttara Kannada	Backpackers, international eco-tourists	Multi-Layered Plastics (MLPs), liquor bottles	Remote geography, severe Panchayat funding deficit

1. State Policy and Implementation Gaps

On paper, Karnataka's 2016 blanket ban on single-use plastics looks incredibly strong. Out in the real world, however, the story is very different. Tourists regularly bring in plastic items from neighbouring states, and local vendors quietly continue to sell them because they lack affordable alternatives. To show they are doing something, district officials often conduct temporary raids on beachside shacks, confiscating plastics and handing out fines. But this approach is fundamentally flawed. Placing the entire burden of compliance on small-time vendors while massive corporations continue to flood the market with multi-layered plastic packaging creates a deeply unfair and ineffective regulatory environment.

2. The Blue Flag Certification: A Beautiful, Isolated Success

If you want to see what a genuinely plastic-free beach looks like, you can visit Padubidri in Udupi or Kasarkod in Uttara Kannada. These beaches have earned the prestigious 'Blue Flag' certification, meaning they have their own solid waste management plants, strict "no-plastic" entry checkpoints, and dedicated maintenance crews. However, the data points to a troubling "oasis effect." These beaches are heavily funded, micro-managed bubbles. While they are beautiful, they don't reflect the messy, unregulated reality of the vast majority of Karnataka's coastline.

3. Grassroots Initiatives: Passion Without Processing

Where official infrastructure falls short, local communities naturally step in to fill the void. Surfing clubs in Mulki and dynamic youth networks like 'Clean Kundapura' run regular, highly visible beach cleanups. While inspiring, waste management NGOs express a deep, recurring frustration with relying on this volunteer model. The harsh truth is that picking up trash is only half the battle. Without proper recycling and processing facilities backing them up, these dedicated volunteers are essentially just moving the plastic from a scenic beach to an already overflowing municipal landfill.

4. The Hidden Threat of Multi-Layered Plastics (MLPs)

Of all the trash found on the shore, Multi-Layered Plastics think shiny potato chip bags, gutkha packets, and candy wrappers are the most stubborn and widespread. Because these packets are a fused mix of plastic and aluminum, they are nearly impossible to recycle and hold absolutely zero resale value for local scrap dealers or waste pickers. As a result, they are simply left behind, slowly getting buried and forming a toxic layer of "legacy waste" hidden just beneath the sand.

Discussion: Critical Barriers to Change

1. The Gram Panchayat Capacity Deficit

One of the biggest administrative hurdles is that some of the most famous tourist destinations are not managed by large, well-funded city corporations. They fall under the jurisdiction of local village councils, or Gram Panchayats. These small administrative bodies are designed to manage basic village needs. They simply do not have the budgets, the heavy machinery (like plastic baling machines), or the transport trucks required to handle the mountains of garbage left behind by thousands of weekend tourists.

2. Tourist Entitlement and Hospitality Greenwashing

There is a frustrating psychological barrier at play: many tourists treat vacation spots as "consumption zones" where their normal civic manners no longer apply. They expect convenience at all costs. At the same time, the local hospitality industry frequently engages in "greenwashing." A mid-range hotel might proudly swap out plastic straws for paper ones to look eco-friendly, while quietly continuing to sell thousands of plastic waters bottles every single day. They do this because profit margins are tight, and packaged water is exactly what convenience-seeking tourist's demand.

Recommendations for Real Change

To move from temporary fixes to a genuinely sustainable coastal ecosystem, the region needs to look beyond simple bans and start implementing structural changes:

- Build a Decentralized Circular Economy: The government needs to subsidize small-scale Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) directly at the Panchayat level. If high-footfall tourist zones have their own local waste processing centers, they won't have to rely on distant city landfills.
- Enforce Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): It is time to make the polluters pay. Major beverage and snack brands whose packaging dominates the coastal litter must be legally mandated to financially support local waste management infrastructure.
- Introduce a Transparent Tourist "Green Fee": Local councils need money to clean the beaches. By levying a small, clearly communicated eco-tax on tourists entering sensitive coastal zones, Panchayats can fund regular beach maintenance and pay fair wages to local waste workers.
- Shift to Nudge-Based Campaigns: Instead of just punishing people for using plastic, make it incredibly easy for them to do the right thing. Saturate tourist hotspots with clean, accessible, and free drinking water refill stations. When you eliminate the *need* for bottled water, compliance becomes convenient rather than a chore.

Conclusion

The push to rid Karnataka's beautiful coastline of plastic is currently stuck in a frustrating transitional phase. We have strong laws on the books and incredibly passionate local communities ready to help, but good intentions and policy bans are practically useless when divorced from economic and infrastructural realities. Achieving genuinely sustainable shores means we have to stop treating environmental preservation as an afterthought and start building its cost directly into the tourism business model. This requires enforcing strict corporate accountability, levying eco-taxes to fund cleanups, empowering our local village councils with real resources, and demanding actual, sustainable practices from hotels rather than surface-level greenwashing. By taking these steps,

Karnataka can successfully transform its coastline from a reckless consumption zone into a protected, thriving asset for eco-tourism.

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Original Article

Economic Impact, Cultural Diplomacy, and the Emergence of Spirituality-Driven Global Tourism

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Abstract

Spiritual tourism represents one of the fastest-growing segments of the global travel industry, blending wellness, cultural heritage, and religious exploration into transformative visitor experiences. This paper examines the socio-economic dimensions of spiritual retreats and ashram tourism, with a focused case study on the World Cultural Festival (WCF) organized by the Art of Living Foundation. Drawing on empirical data from two landmark editions — New Delhi, March 2016, and Washington D.C., September 2023 — the paper quantifies the substantial economic spillover effects of large-scale spiritual events, including foreign exchange earnings, hotel revenue surges, tax generation, wage creation, and international tourist inflows. The paper further explores how ashram-based tourism clusters around institutions such as the Art of Living International Centre (Bengaluru) generate sustained economic activity, foster cross-cultural dialogue, and contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Findings suggest that spiritual tourism, when institutionally anchored and professionally managed, can rival conventional cultural tourism in measurable economic output while simultaneously delivering intangible social value.

Keywords: *Spiritual tourism, ashram tourism, wellness tourism, World Cultural Festival, Art of Living, economic impact, cultural diplomacy, religious tourism, India tourism.*

Introduction

Tourism has evolved considerably beyond the conventional leisure paradigm. The twenty-first century traveller increasingly seeks experiences that are not merely pleasurable but transformative — journeys inward as much as outward. Spiritual tourism, which encompasses pilgrimages, meditation retreats, yoga holidays, and visits to ashrams and sacred sites, has emerged as a structurally distinct and economically significant niche within global tourism. The global wellness economy is valued at approximately $5.6 trillion, with spiritual wellness constituting one of its most dynamic sub-segments. Within this framework, India occupies a uniquely privileged position: as the birthplace of yoga, Ayurveda, Buddhism, Jainism, and the Vedantic tradition, the country possesses an unparalleled reservoir of spiritual capital that draws millions of visitors annually. This paper investigates two intertwined phenomena: the macro-level landscape of ashram and spiritual retreat tourism globally, and the micro-level economic and cultural impact of the World Cultural Festival (WCF), the flagship event of the Art of Living Foundation. The WCF serves as an illuminating case study because it operationalises spiritual tourism at a scale — hundreds of thousands of participants across multiple continents — rarely seen in this domain.

The central research questions are: (1) What are the defining characteristics that distinguish spiritual retreat tourism from conventional religious or wellness tourism? (2) How do anchor institutions like the Art of Living Foundation generate measurable economic value through large-scale spiritual events? (3) What policy implications emerge for destination governments seeking to leverage spiritual tourism as a development strategy?

Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

Defining Spiritual Tourism

Academic literature distinguishes between religious tourism (pilgrimage, shrine visits) and spiritual tourism, the latter characterised by an individually motivated quest for inner transformation rather than adherence to prescribed religious ritual (Nolan & Nolan, 1992; Poria, Butler & Airey, 2003). Timothy and Olsen (2006) further differentiate between 'sacred space tourism' driven by institutional religion and 'experiential spiritual tourism' driven by personal seeking — a distinction that positions ashram tourism firmly in the latter category.

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Ashrams — residential communities organised around a guru-disciple tradition — offer structured programmes in meditation, pranayama, yoga, vedic philosophy, and service (seva), creating immersive environments that modern retreat centres worldwide have partially replicated. The global proliferation of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) programmes, yoga studios, and wellness retreats can be traced intellectually, if not always explicitly, to the ashram model.

Economic Dimensions of Religious & Spiritual Tourism

Motivated by both faith and curiosity, spiritual tourists typically exhibit higher per-diem expenditure than average leisure tourists, longer average length of stay, and greater repeat-visit propensity (Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Henderson, 2011). Research in India's pilgrimage economy — covering Varanasi, Tirupati, Haridwar, and the Kumbh Mela — documents substantial economic multiplier effects flowing from religious gatherings to local hospitality, transport, handicraft, and food service sectors.

The Kumbh Mela, arguably the world's largest periodic spiritual gathering, generated an estimated

₹2.8 to ₹3 lakh crore to the economy and boosting India's GDP by nearly 1%. Attracting over 663 million devotees, the event created over 1.2 million jobs and stimulated exponential growth in tourism, hospitality, and retail. This benchmark contextualises the WCF economic figures presented later in this paper.

The Art of Living Foundation: An Institutional Overview

Founded in 1981 by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar ji, the Art of Living Foundation is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation with a presence in over 180 countries. Its flagship programme, the Sudarshan Kriya — a cyclical breathing technique — has been delivered to an estimated 500 million practitioners globally. The Foundation runs schools, free clinics, trauma-relief programmes, and environmental restoration projects alongside its core spiritual education activities. The Art of Living International Centre, located on a 45-acre campus in the Panchavati Hills near Bengaluru, Karnataka, functions as a year-round spiritual tourism destination receiving several hundred thousand visitors annually. It offers residential programmes ranging from three days to three months, creating sustained hospitality demand and employing thousands of local workers — making it a significant micro-economy within the broader Karnataka tourism ecosystem.

The Anatomy of Ashram Tourism

Supply-Side Characteristics

Ashrams as tourism products are distinguished by four supply-side features that set them apart from conventional hospitality offerings:

• Residential Immersion: Unlike hotels, ashrams provide holistic environments where accommodation, meals, learning, and community living are integrated into a single product. The visitor is not a guest but a participant.

• Programme-Led Demand: Visitor flows are structured around course calendars rather than seasonal leisure patterns, providing more predictable occupancy planning and enabling year-round operationsLow Price Sensitivity Among Core Segments: Committed spiritual seekers exhibit relatively inelastic demand; they will travel considerable distances and pay premium prices for recognised teachers or rare programme formats.

• Cultural Transmission as Core Value Proposition: The ashram experience positions cultural learning — Sanskrit, Vedic chanting, Indian classical arts, yogic philosophy — as integral to the product, making ashram tourism a vehicle of soft-power cultural diplomacy.

Demand-Side Segmentation

Ashram visitors can be segmented into three primary cohorts, each with distinct economic profiles:

Segment	**Profile & Behaviour**
Committed Practitioners	Return visitors; high course spend; referral generators; long stays
Wellness Seekers	First-time visitors; motivated by stress relief, yoga; moderate spend
Cultural Tourists	Primarily foreign visitors; motivated by India experience; lower repeat

World Cultural Festival: Case Study Overview

The World Cultural Festival (WCF) is the Art of Living Foundation's signature mega-event, conceived as a confluence of world music, dance, art, yoga, and interfaith dialogue. Two editions — March 2016 in New Delhi and September 2023 in Washington D.C. — provide the primary data for this paper's economic analysis. Each edition attracted hundreds of thousands of participants from across the world and generated measurable macroeconomic effects on the host destination's tourism economy.

WCF Washington D.C., September 2023

The 2023 edition, held over three days at the National Mall and surrounding venues in Washington D.C., represented the festival's first major North American edition. The event drew a diverse global audience and produced significant quantifiable economic outcomes for the Washington metropolitan area.**$177M** Total Economic Impact	**$112M** Domestic Tourist Impact	**72%** Increase in Intl. Tourists/Day

$14M Tax Revenue Generated	**$17M** Wages Generated	**$2M** Pre-Festival Impact	**132%** Hotel Revenue Increase

Detailed Economic Breakdown — Washington D.C. 2023

Economic Indicator	Value / Measure
Total Economic Impact	**$177 million**
Economic Impact — Domestic Tourists	**$112 million**
Pre-Festival Economic Impact	**$2 million**
Tax Revenue Generated	**$14 million**
Wages Generated for Local Workers	**$17 million**
Increase in International Tourists per Day	**72%**
Increase in Hotel Revenue	**132%**

The 132% surge in hotel revenue is particularly striking, suggesting that the WCF effectively transformed Washington D.C.'s hospitality sector over the event period, with demand substantially outstripping typical baseline occupancy. The 72% daily uplift in international arrivals demonstrates the festival's potency as an inbound tourism catalyst — a function typically associated with landmark sporting events like the Super Bowl or international political summits.

The $17 million in wages generated underscores the event's role as a direct employment multiplier: security personnel, event logistics workers, hospitality staff, transport operators, food vendors, and cleaning crews all benefited from the demand surge. The $14 million in tax revenue demonstrates that spiritual mega-events are fiscally productive for host governments, challenging any perception that non-profit spiritual organisations operate outside the mainstream economic ecosystem.

WCF New Delhi, March 2016

The 2016 Delhi edition, held on the banks of the Yamuna River, was at the time one of the largest cultural gatherings ever staged in India. Spread across 1,000 acres, the event featured over 3,500 artists from 155 countries and attracted an estimated 3.5 million visitors over three days.

9.8% YoY Growth in FX Earnings (March)	**12.1%** YoY Intl. Tourism Growth	**$42M** International Tourism Earnings	**21%** Delhi's FX Earnings during WCF

Detailed Economic Breakdown — New Delhi 2016

Economic Indicator	Value / Measure
YoY Increase in Foreign Exchange Earnings (March)	**9.8% — Highest growth month of the year**
YoY Growth in International Tourism (March)	**12.1%**
International Tourism Earnings During WCF	**$42 million**
WCF's Share of Delhi's Foreign Exchange Earnings	**21% of Delhi's monthly total**

The New Delhi data is particularly compelling in its macroeconomic framing. The 9.8% year-on-year growth in Foreign Exchange Earnings for March 2016 was the highest recorded for any month in that calendar year — a finding that establishes the WCF as a dominant driver of India's inbound tourism earnings rather than a marginal contributor. The fact that the WCF period accounted for 21% of Delhi's entire month of foreign exchange earnings from tourism is extraordinary, compressing into a three-day window an economic contribution that ordinarily requires weeks to accumulate.

The 12.1% year-on-year growth in international tourism arrivals further corroborates the event's power to reshape destination demand: Delhi, as India's capital and a mature tourism destination, does not typically register double-digit monthly international arrival growth in the absence of extraordinary catalysts.

Analytical Insights Economic Multiplier Effect

Both WCF editions demonstrate the classic economic multiplier dynamic: initial visitor expenditure on accommodation, food, transport, and event admission recirculates through the local economy, generating secondary and tertiary rounds of income. The Washington D.C. data explicitly captures wage generation ($17M) and tax revenue ($14M) as downstream effects, while the Delhi data reveals the event's capacity to shift macro-level national statistics.

What is particularly notable is the pre-festival effect documented in Washington ($2M), illustrating that large spiritual events generate economic activity well before gates open: advance bookings, early arrivals, merchandise procurement, and logistical operations all stimulate the destination economy in anticipation.

Spiritual Tourism as Destination Differentiation

Washington D.C. is primarily perceived as a political and historical tourism destination. The WCF's 72% uplift in daily international tourist arrivals and 132% hotel revenue increase demonstrate that a spiritually oriented mega-event can fundamentally reposition a destination's appeal — even briefly — within the global tourism market. This has significant implications for destination marketing organisations (DMOs) in cities seeking to diversify their visitor mix.

For Delhi, a city with high existing spiritual tourism infrastructure (Akshardham and Lotus Temple), the WCF amplified an existing advantage. The event's role in generating the year's highest monthly foreign exchange earnings growth suggests that

mega-scale spiritual events may deliver economic impact comparable to — and potentially exceeding — conventional tourism catalysts such as international trade fairs or sporting championships.

The Broader Spiritual Tourism Ecosystem

Global Landscape

Spiritual tourism is a truly global phenomenon with distinct regional expressions. In India, it manifests as ashram retreats, pilgrimage circuits (Char Dham, Kashi-Mathura-Vrindavan), and wellness-oriented yoga tourism. In Southeast Asia, Buddhist monastery retreats in Thailand, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka draw millions. In Europe, the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route in Spain supports thousands of hospitality businesses across 800 kilometres. In the Middle East, the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina constitute the world's largest annual movement of people for spiritual purposes.What unifies these diverse expressions is the traveller's primary motivation: the search for meaning, inner peace, or spiritual growth. This motivational distinctiveness has practical implications — spiritual tourists tend to be less deterred by geopolitical tensions than leisure tourists, more loyal to specific destinations and teachers, and more likely to generate word-of-mouth referrals within their communities.

India's Strategic Advantage

India's Ministry of Tourism has explicitly recognised spiritual tourism as a priority segment through the Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD schemes, which fund infrastructure development at pilgrimage sites and spiritual destinations. The Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat cultural integration programme further positions spiritual tourism as a vehicle of national unity and international soft power.

Key Indian spiritual tourism hubs and their distinct positioning include:

- Rishikesh & Haridwar — Global capital of yoga; draws international seekers, hosts the iconic Ganga Aarti
- Varanasi — One of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities; sacred centre for Hindus; major foreign tourist draw
- Bodh Gaya — Birthplace of Buddhism's founding enlightenment; major inbound Buddhist tourism destination
- Bengaluru (Art of Living Centre) — Modern ashram tourism anchored by an internationally recognised institution
- Tiruvannamalai — Pilgrimage site drawing seekers from across India and abroad, anchored by Arunachala Hill
- Auroville (Puducherry) — International experimental spiritual community; unique cultural tourism product

Ashram Tourism vs. Hotel-Based Wellness Resorts

The past decade has witnessed the proliferation of luxury wellness resorts marketing yoga retreats and mindfulness programmes as premium lifestyle products. While these establishments contribute to wellness tourism statistics and cater to high-net-worth travellers, they differ fundamentally from traditional ashrams in their philosophical orientation: the resort model prioritises comfort and personalisation; the ashram model prioritises discipline, community, and inner transformation.

This distinction has economic consequences. Ashram-based tourism typically generates deeper community economic integration — employing local cooks, gardeners, construction workers, and programme staff from surrounding villages — while luxury resorts may channel a larger proportion of revenue to international management companies and imported goods. For destination governments prioritizing inclusive economic development, ashram tourism models may thus deliver superior distributional outcomes.

Spiritual Tourism & the Sustainable Development Goals

The intersection of spiritual tourism with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is multi-dimensional. Responsible spiritual tourism contributes directly to several SDGs:

SDG	Spiritual Tourism Contribution
SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth	**Wage generation, SME development in hospitality & transport**
SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities	**Rural income generation; community-based tourism models**
SDG 11: Sustainable Cities & Communities	**Heritage site conservation; urban-rural tourism corridors**
SDG 12: Responsible Consumption	**Ashram sustainability ethos; vegetarian food systems**
SDG 16: Peace, Justice, Strong Institutions	**Interfaith dialogue; cultural bridge-building**
SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals	**International NGO-government cooperation in tourism planning**

The Art of Living Foundation's event model is notable for its explicit alignment with SDG 16 (Peace and Justice): the WCF's deliberate curation of artists, musicians, and religious leaders from diverse faith traditions positions the event as an instrument of interfaith harmony and cultural diplomacy, extending its value beyond purely economic metrics.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the analytical findings above, this paper advances the following policy recommendations for governments, destination marketing organisations, and spiritual institutions:Establish a dedicated Spiritual Tourism Development Fund: Central and state governments in India should ringfence infrastructure investment for spiritual tourism clusters — encompassing accessibility, sanitation, visitor information, and digital connectivity — treating them with the same urgency as conventional heritage tourism circuits.

1. Create regulatory frameworks that protect and professionalise: A tiered certification system for ashrams and spiritual retreat centres, analogous to hotel star ratings, would increase visitor trust, enable fair comparison, and ensure minimum safety and quality standards without imposing a one-size-fits-all regulatory burden.

2. Leverage mega-events as destination marketing tools: The measurable tourism uplift delivered by the WCF in both Delhi and Washington D.C. suggests that host city governments should actively court spiritually oriented mega-events as strategic assets, offering venue support, co-marketing investment, and visa facilitation in exchange for agreed economic impact commitments.

3. Mandate environmental impact assessments for large spiritual gatherings: Any spiritual event exceeding a defined attendance threshold should be subject to independent environmental impact assessment and required to publish a post-event ecological report. This creates accountability without suppressing the events themselves.
4. Invest in data collection and research: The economic impact data cited in this paper is relatively sparse given the sector's scale. National tourism bodies should develop standardized methodologies for measuring spiritual tourism's contribution to GDP, employment, and foreign exchange, enabling evidence-based policy over time.

Conclusion

Spiritual retreats and ashram tourism constitute a distinctive, economically significant, and culturally irreplaceable segment of the global travel industry. The case of the World Cultural Festival by the Art of Living Foundation illustrates — with empirical precision — that spiritually motivated mega-events are capable of generating economic impacts comparable to the world's most celebrated cultural and sporting occasions.

The Washington D.C. 2023 edition's $177 million total economic impact, 132% hotel revenue surge, 72% uplift in daily international tourist arrivals, and $17 million in wage generation demonstrate that spiritual tourism, when institutionally anchored in a credible and globally recognized organization, can mobilize substantial economic multipliers in even the most mature and developed tourism markets. The Delhi 2016 data — where the WCF accounted for 21% of the capital's entire monthly foreign exchange earnings and triggered the year's highest monthly international tourism growth rate of 12.1% — reinforces this conclusion in the context of an emerging economy destination.

Beyond the quantitative, spiritual tourism delivers forms of value that resist easy monetization: the cross-cultural encounters that dissolve stereotypes, the inner transformations that reduce individual
and social suffering, and the interfaith dialogues that build the soft infrastructure of peace. As the world confronts compounding crises of meaning, mental health, and ecological overshoot, the capacity of spiritual tourism to simultaneously satisfy economic, cultural, and human development objectives positions it as one of the most strategically important tourism segments of the coming decades.

For destination policymakers, the imperative is clear: treat spiritual tourism not as a niche curiosity but as a mainstream development opportunity worthy of serious institutional investment, thoughtful regulation, and imaginative co-branding with internationally recognized spiritual institutions. The numbers — and the millions of lives touched — make the case compellingly.

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Original Article

Integrated Karst-Fluvial Geomorphology and Geo-tourism Development in Meghalaya: A Geomorphology and Tourism-Based Assessment of Caves, Waterfalls, and River Landscapes

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Abstract

Meghalaya represents one of the most geomorphologically distinctive regions of India, characterised by an exceptional interaction between karst and fluvial processes. The state's limestone plateaus, extensive cave systems, perennial rivers, and high-gradient waterfalls collectively form a unique geotourism landscape with significant scientific, ecological, and economic value. This study examines the integrated karst–fluvial geomorphology of Meghalaya and evaluates its role in promoting sustainable geotourism development. The research adopts a qualitative methodology based on secondary data, including geological surveys, tourism reports, academic literature, and government publications. Particular attention is given to the geomorphological significance of major cave systems such as Krem Liat Prah, Mawsmai Cave, and Krem Mawmluh; prominent waterfalls including Nohkalikai Falls, Seven Sisters Falls, and Krang Suri Falls; and river landscapes represented by the Umngot and Simsang rivers. The study demonstrates that the interaction of intense monsoonal rainfall, tectonic uplift of the Shillong Plateau, and limestone dissolution has generated a diverse geomorphic environment that supports multiple forms of tourism, including adventure tourism, ecotourism, educational tourism, and cultural tourism. The findings reveal that while tourism contributes substantially to local livelihoods and regional development, increasing visitor pressure poses challenges related to environmental degradation, waste generation, and landscape conservation. The paper argues that geotourism planning in Meghalaya must move beyond conventional destination promotion and embrace a geomorphology-based conservation framework. Such an approach can simultaneously enhance visitor experiences, strengthen local participation, and ensure the long-term preservation of Meghalaya's geological heritage. The study contributes to the growing discourse on geotourism by highlighting the importance of integrating geomorphological understanding into tourism planning and sustainable landscape management.

Keywords: *Karst geomorphology, Fluvial landscapes, Geotourism, Meghalaya, Caves, Waterfalls, Sustainable tourism.*

Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy, contributing significantly to employment generation, regional development, and cultural exchange. In recent decades, increasing attention has been directed toward nature-based tourism, particularly forms of tourism that emphasise environmental conservation and landscape appreciation. Among these emerging approaches, geotourism has gained prominence as a framework that promotes tourism based on geological and geomorphological heritage while simultaneously encouraging environmental stewardship and community participation (Dowling and Newsome 5). Geotourism extends beyond conventional sightseeing by focusing on the interpretation of Earth's physical features and the processes responsible for their formation. It seeks to create educational and recreational experiences that enable visitors to understand landscape evolution, geological history, and environmental change. As a result, geomorphological landforms such as caves, waterfalls, river valleys, canyons, dunes, and volcanic terrains have become increasingly important tourism resources worldwide.

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Figure 1: Meghalaya, By: Neuenhofer; Link: https://www.neuenhofer.de/guenter/meghalaya/meghalaya.html

India possesses immense geotourism potential because of its remarkable geological diversity. From the Himalayan glacial landscapes to the coastal systems of the peninsula, the country exhibits a wide range of geomorphic environments. Among these, Meghalaya occupies a unique position due to its extraordinary karst and fluvial landscapes. Located in the northeastern part of India, Meghalaya forms part of the Shillong Plateau, a tectonically uplifted block characterised by extensive limestone deposits, high rainfall, and deeply dissected terrain.

The state's geomorphological identity is shaped by the interaction of karstification and fluvial erosion. Karstification refers to the dissolution of soluble rocks, primarily limestone, resulting in features such as caves, sinkholes, underground streams, and subterranean drainage systems. Fluvial processes, on the other hand, involve erosion, transportation, and deposition by rivers and streams. In Meghalaya, these two processes operate simultaneously, producing highly diverse landscapes where surface and underground drainage networks coexist.

The caves of Meghalaya are among the longest and most complex cave systems in South Asia. More than 1,700 cases have been documented, and new cave passages continue to be discovered. Features such as Krem Liat Prah, Krem Mawmluh, and Mawsmai Cave illustrate the remarkable extent of limestone dissolution within the region. These cave systems not only possess scientific value but also attract researchers, adventurers, and tourists from around the world.

Similarly, Meghalaya is renowned for its spectacular waterfalls. Nohkalikai Falls, Seven Sisters Falls, Dainthlen Falls, and Krang Suri Falls represent some of India's most visually striking waterfall landscapes. Their formation is closely linked to structural controls, plateau dissection, and intense monsoonal runoff. These waterfalls constitute major tourist attractions and play an important role in shaping the state's tourism image.

River systems further enhance the geotourism significance of Meghalaya. Rivers such as the Umngot and Simsang have carved deep valleys and gorges while supporting local livelihoods and recreational activities. The crystal-clear waters of the Umngot River at Dawki have become an iconic symbol of Meghalaya's tourism industry, demonstrating the close relationship between geomorphological features and tourism development.

Despite the growing popularity of Meghalaya as a tourist destination, existing studies have largely focused on either geological descriptions or tourism promotion. Limited attention has been given to understanding how the integrated functioning of karst and fluvial systems contributes to geotourism development. Consequently, there remains a need for a comprehensive assessment that examines the relationship between geomorphological processes, landscape evolution, and tourism potential.

The present study addresses this gap by analysing the integrated karst–fluvial geomorphology of Meghalaya and evaluating its significance for sustainable geotourism development. By focusing on caves, waterfalls, and river landscapes, the paper seeks to provide a holistic understanding of how geological heritage can contribute to regional development while ensuring environmental conservation.



Study Area

Meghalaya, meaning the "Abode of Clouds," is located in the northeastern region of India between approximately 25°01′N to 26°05′N latitude and 89°48′E to 92°51′E longitude. Covering an area of about 22,429 square kilometres, the state is bounded by Assam to the north and Bangladesh to the south. Physiographically, Meghalaya constitutes a detached extension of the Indian Peninsular Plateau and is represented by the uplifted Shillong Plateau, which is separated from the main peninsular block by the Garo-Rajmahal Gap (Singh 214).

The state is traditionally divided into three major physiographic and cultural regions: the Khasi Hills, the Jaintia Hills, and the Garo Hills. These regions collectively exhibit remarkable geological and geomorphological diversity. The central and eastern parts of Meghalaya are dominated by extensive limestone formations belonging primarily to the Eocene age. These limestone belts provide favourable conditions for karstification, resulting in the development of caves, sinkholes, underground streams, and other karst landforms.

One of the most important environmental characteristics of Meghalaya is its exceptionally high rainfall. Areas such as Cherrapunji and Mawsynram receive annual precipitation exceeding 10,000 mm, making them among the wettest places on Earth. This extraordinary rainfall intensity significantly accelerates weathering, erosion, and karst dissolution processes. Consequently, the landscape has evolved into a highly dissected plateau characterised by steep escarpments, deep valleys, waterfalls, and complex drainage networks.

The geological structure of Meghalaya consists mainly of Precambrian basement rocks overlain by sedimentary formations, including sandstone, shale, coal-bearing strata, and limestone. The interaction between tectonic uplift and prolonged denudational processes has shaped the present topography. Rivers flowing southward toward Bangladesh have incised deeply into the plateau, creating spectacular gorges and waterfalls.

The state is particularly famous for its cave systems. The Jaintia Hills host some of the longest caves in India, including Krem Liat Prah, Krem Um Ladaw, and Krem Dam. The Khasi Hills contain important caves such as Mawsmai Cave and Krem Mawmluh, while the Garo Hills are known for Siju Cave and related subterranean drainage systems.

The hydrological network of Meghalaya further enhances its geomorphological significance. Rivers such as the Umngot, Myntdu, Simsang, and Kynshi flow through varied geological formations, creating diverse fluvial landscapes. The crystal-clear Umngot River at Dawki has emerged as an internationally recognised tourism destination, while the Simsang River supports both ecological and recreational activities.

The combination of karst landforms, waterfalls, and river systems makes Meghalaya an ideal case for examining the relationship between geomorphology and tourism. The state offers a natural laboratory for understanding how geological processes shape landscapes that subsequently become valuable tourism resources.

Literature Review

The relationship between geomorphology and tourism has attracted increasing scholarly attention over the past three decades. The emergence of geotourism as a distinct field of study has highlighted the significance of geological and geomorphological heritage in promoting sustainable tourism development. Researchers have emphasised that landforms are not merely physical features but also cultural, educational, and economic resources capable of contributing to regional development (Dowling and Newsome 8).

One of the foundational contributions to geotourism studies comes from Hose, who defined geotourism as the provision of interpretive facilities and services that enable tourists to understand geological and geomorphological features beyond simple aesthetic appreciation (Hose 17). This perspective established the importance of linking scientific knowledge with tourism experiences. Later studies expanded the concept by emphasising conservation, local participation, and sustainable management of geological heritage.

Research on karst geomorphology has demonstrated the global tourism significance of cave systems and limestone landscapes. Ford and Williams argued that karst environments represent some of the most distinctive geomorphological settings because of their unique hydrological systems and underground drainage networks (Ford and Williams 29). Their work highlighted the scientific importance of caves as archives of environmental and climatic change. Similar studies conducted in Slovenia, China, and Croatia have shown that cave tourism can become a major driver of local economic development when combined with effective conservation strategies.

Within the Indian context, karst studies have largely focused on geological exploration and cave mapping. Geological investigations conducted by the Geological Survey of India documented the extensive limestone belts of Meghalaya and their role in cave formation. Subsequent speleological surveys revealed that Meghalaya contains some of the longest cave systems in South Asia, attracting international attention among cave researchers and adventure tourists.

Brook and colleagues examined the speleological significance of Meghalaya and noted that the state's caves represent exceptional examples of tropical karst development. Their research emphasised the role of heavy monsoonal rainfall in accelerating limestone dissolution and cave expansion. The study further suggested that these caves possess considerable potential for educational tourism and scientific outreach (Brook et al. 112).

Waterfall tourism has also received considerable attention within geomorphological research. Hudson argued that waterfalls constitute highly attractive tourism resources because they combine scenic beauty with geological significance (Hudson 145). Waterfalls are often associated with structural controls, differential erosion, and tectonic activity, making them important indicators of landscape evolution. Studies from Canada, Iceland, and New Zealand have demonstrated that waterfall-based tourism can generate substantial economic benefits while promoting environmental awareness.

In the context of Meghalaya, researchers have highlighted the geomorphological significance of waterfalls such as Nohkalikai Falls, Seven Sisters Falls, and Dainthlen Falls. These features are closely associated with plateau dissection and intense fluvial erosion resulting from exceptionally high rainfall. Tourism studies indicate that waterfalls constitute some of the most visited destinations in the state and play a central role in Meghalaya's tourism branding.

Fluvial geomorphology has similarly been recognised as an important component of geotourism. Rivers shape landscapes through erosion, transportation, and deposition, creating landforms that often become tourist attractions. Panizza emphasised that river valleys, gorges, rapids, and floodplains possess significant geotourism value because they provide visible evidence of geomorphic processes (Panizza 3). River-based tourism activities such as boating, rafting, and landscape interpretation further enhance visitor engagement.

Studies on the Umngot River illustrate this relationship effectively. The river's extraordinary water clarity and scenic surroundings have transformed it into one of Meghalaya's most photographed landscapes. Tourism researchers have observed that the popularity of Dawki demonstrates how geomorphological features can influence destination image and visitor perceptions.

Despite these contributions, existing literature exhibits several limitations. Most geomorphological studies focus primarily on landform description and geological evolution, whereas tourism research often emphasises visitor numbers, infrastructure, and economic impacts. Very few studies integrate geomorphological processes with tourism development in a comprehensive framework. Moreover, the interaction between karst and fluvial systems has received limited attention despite its importance in shaping Meghalaya's landscapes.

Another gap concerns the concept of integrated geomorphological heritage. Existing research tends to examine caves, waterfalls, and rivers separately, overlooking the interconnected processes responsible for their formation. Such fragmentation limits understanding of how multiple geomorphological features collectively contribute to tourism development.

Therefore, there is a need for an interdisciplinary assessment that combines karst geomorphology, fluvial geomorphology, and geotourism studies. Such an approach can provide a more comprehensive understanding of Meghalaya's geological heritage and support the development of sustainable tourism strategies that balance economic growth with environmental conservation.

Research Gap

Although Meghalaya has attracted considerable scholarly attention because of its unique geological and environmental characteristics, significant gaps remain in the existing literature. Most studies on Meghalaya's geomorphology focus primarily on the description and classification of caves, limestone formations, waterfalls, and river systems. These investigations have contributed substantially to the understanding of the region's geological evolution; however, they often remain confined to disciplinary boundaries and rarely examine the broader implications of geomorphological heritage for tourism development.

Similarly, tourism-related studies in Meghalaya largely concentrate on destination marketing, visitor satisfaction, tourism infrastructure, and economic benefits. While these studies provide valuable insights into tourism dynamics, they frequently overlook the geomorphological processes that create and sustain the attractions upon which tourism depends. Consequently, the relationship between landscape evolution and tourism development remains insufficiently explored.

Another important limitation is the tendency to study caves, waterfalls, and rivers as separate entities. In reality, these landforms are products of interconnected karst and fluvial processes operating within the same environmental system. The absence of an integrated perspective limits understanding of how these geomorphological features collectively contribute to destination attractiveness and regional tourism development.

Furthermore, limited research has examined geotourism in Meghalaya through a conservation-oriented framework. Rapid tourism growth, particularly in destinations such as Cherrapunji, Dawki, and Krang Suri, has increased pressure on fragile geomorphological environments. Despite this, few studies have investigated strategies for balancing tourism expansion with landscape conservation and community participation.

Therefore, the present study seeks to bridge these gaps by adopting an integrated karst–fluvial geomorphological perspective and assessing its implications for sustainable geotourism development in Meghalaya.

Research Questions

1. How have karst and fluvial geomorphological processes interacted to shape the distinctive landscapes of Meghalaya?
2. What is the geomorphological significance of major caves, waterfalls, and river systems in Meghalaya?
3. How do these geomorphological features contribute to the development of geotourism within the state?
4. What challenges emerge from increasing tourism activities in geomorphologically sensitive environments?
5. How can sustainable geotourism strategies contribute to both landscape conservation and local economic development?

Objectives Of the Study

1. To examine the integrated karst–fluvial geomorphology of Meghalaya.
2. To analyse the formation and significance of caves, waterfalls, and river landscapes as geomorphological resources.
3. To assess the contribution of these landforms to geotourism development.
4. To evaluate the relationship between tourism growth and geomorphological conservation.
5. To propose sustainable geotourism strategies that support environmental protection, community participation, and regional development.

Data Sources

The study is entirely based on qualitative secondary data collected from multiple academic, governmental, and institutional sources. Secondary data were selected because they provide extensive information regarding geological formations, geomorphological characteristics, tourism trends, and environmental management practices across Meghalaya.

The principal sources of information include reports published by the Geological Survey of India (GSI), the Meghalaya Tourism Department, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and the North Eastern Council. Geological and geomorphological information regarding cave systems, limestone formations, river valleys, and waterfalls was obtained from scientific publications, cave exploration reports, and peer-reviewed journal articles.

Tourism-related information was collected from tourism policy documents, annual tourism reports, and published studies on geotourism and ecotourism in Northeast India. Information concerning cave lengths, waterfall characteristics, visitor attraction, and tourism significance was cross-verified using academic literature and official tourism publications.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research methodology aimed at understanding the relationship between karst–fluvial geomorphology and geotourism development in Meghalaya. Since the objective is to analyse the scientific significance, tourism potential, and conservation challenges of geomorphological features, a qualitative approach provides greater flexibility in interpreting landscape processes and tourism interactions.

Research Design:

The research follows a descriptive and analytical design. The descriptive component focuses on identifying and explaining major geomorphological features such as caves, waterfalls, and river landscapes. The analytical component evaluates their contribution to tourism development and sustainable regional growth.

Selection of Geomorphological Sites:

Cave Systems: Such as Krem Liat Prah**,** Krem Mawmluh**,** Mawsmai Cave, and Siju Cave

Waterfalls: Such as Nohkalikai Falls**,** Seven Sisters Falls**,** and Krang Suri Falls

River Landscapes: Such as Umngot River, Simsang River, and Kynshi River

These sites were selected because of their geomorphological significance, tourism popularity, and representation of Meghalaya's integrated karst–fluvial environment.

Analytical Framework:

1. Scientific and Geomorphological Value: Assessment of geological uniqueness, Landform diversity, Educational significance, and Scientific importance

2. Aesthetic value: Assessment of Scenic beauty**,** Landscape attractiveness**,** and visual uniqueness

3. Tourism Value: Assessment of Accessibility**,** Visitor attraction**,** Recreational opportunities**,** and Existing tourism infrastructure

4. Conservation Value: Assessment of Environmental sensitivity**,** Human impacts**,** Management requirements**,** Sustainability concerns

Method of Analysis:

The collected information was analysed through thematic interpretation. Geomorphological characteristics were first examined to understand landscape evolution. Subsequently, tourism-related information was analysed to identify patterns of visitor attraction and economic significance. Finally, both dimensions were integrated to assess the potential of sustainable geotourism development.

Discussion And Analysis

1 Karst Geomorphology as the Foundation of Geotourism Development

The geomorphological identity of Meghalaya is fundamentally controlled by karst processes operating within the extensive limestone formations of the Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo Hills. High annual precipitation, combined with tectonic uplift and well-developed carbonate rocks, has facilitated intense dissolution processes that have produced one of the most extensive tropical karst landscapes in South Asia. The resulting geomorphic assemblage includes caves, sinkholes, subterranean streams, solution valleys, and underground drainage systems, all of which constitute significant geotourism resources.

Among these landforms, cave systems represent the most scientifically important manifestations of karstification. Caves such as Krem Liat Prah, Krem Mawmluh, and Siju Cave provide evidence of long-term geomorphic evolution and hydrogeological activity. Their morphology reflects the interaction between lithology, structural controls, groundwater circulation, and climatic conditions. From a geomorphological perspective, these caves function as natural archives preserving information on paleoclimate, hydrological fluctuations, and landscape evolution.



Figure 2: Mawmluh Cave, From"X" @travelwithamit



Figure 3: Siju Cave, from"TRAVEL VIEWPOINT" Link: https://www.travelviewpoint.com/siju-cave-in-siju-wildlife-sanctuary-of-meghalaya/

The tourism value of these caves extends beyond their aesthetic appeal. They offer opportunities for geoscientific interpretation, environmental education, and experiential learning. Visitors are exposed to processes of limestone dissolution, groundwater movement, and cave evolution, thereby transforming tourism into a medium for disseminating geological knowledge.

However, the growing popularity of cave tourism also raises concerns regarding geoconservation. Speleothems, which may require several thousand years to develop, are highly vulnerable to anthropogenic disturbance. Consequently, the long-term sustainability of cave tourism depends upon balancing visitor access with geological preservation.

2 Waterfall Landscapes: Fluvial Dynamics and Scenic Geotourism



Figure 4: Wei Sawdong waterfall, Meghalaya, showing its fluvial dynamicism for potential Geotourism, from: ArtoFit.org, Link: https://www.artofit.org/image-gallery/31736372367322776/1-10-places-to-visit-in-india-wei-sawdong-falls-meghalaya-the_peerless_page/

Waterfalls constitute one of the most visually spectacular expressions of Meghalaya's fluvial geomorphology. Their development is closely associated with tectonic uplift, plateau dissection, structural discontinuities, and intense monsoonal runoff. The steep escarpments of the Shillong Plateau provide ideal conditions for waterfall formation, resulting in numerous cascades and plunge falls distributed throughout the state. The geomorphological significance of waterfalls lies in their role as indicators of active landscape evolution. Features such as Nohkalikai Falls and Seven Sisters Falls illustrate ongoing river incision and escarpment retreat. These waterfalls, therefore, represent dynamic landforms rather than static scenic features.

while simultaneously providing opportunities for landscape interpretation. In Meghalaya, waterfalls have become central components of destination branding and tourism promotion.

Nevertheless, increased tourist activity around waterfall environments has generated ecological pressures. Trail erosion, vegetation degradation, and solid waste accumulation are becoming increasingly common. Such impacts indicate the need for visitor management systems and site-specific conservation strategies to ensure the long-term viability of waterfall tourism.

3 River Landscapes and the Emergence of Fluvial Geotourism



Figure 5: Umngot River.Meghalaya by: Lone Travellers. Link: https://lonetravellers.com/discover-meghalayas-hidden-gem-umngot-river/

River systems play a critical role in the geomorphic evolution of Meghalaya. The Umngot, Simsang, Kynshi, and Myntdu rivers have carved deep valleys, transported sediment, and shaped the plateau margins through continuous erosion. These rivers are not only geomorphological agents but also important geotourism attractions. The Umngot River provides a particularly notable example of the relationship between geomorphology and tourism. Flowing through limestone-dominated terrain, the river exhibits exceptional water clarity, which has become a defining feature of its tourism appeal. The river demonstrates how geomorphic characteristics can directly influence destination image and visitor perception. River-based tourism contributes significantly to

local livelihoods through boating services, guiding, hospitality, and transport. At the same time, river landscapes serve as ecological corridors supporting biodiversity and ecosystem services. Their management, therefore, requires an integrated approach that recognises both economic and environmental functions.

4 Integrated Karst-Fluvial Geomorphology and Landscape Connectivity

A key finding of this study is that Meghalaya's caves, waterfalls, and river systems cannot be understood in isolation. They are components of a single integrated geomorphological system controlled by the interaction of karstification and fluvial erosion.

The region's abundant rainfall infiltrates limestone formations, producing extensive underground drainage networks. These subterranean systems interact continuously with surface rivers, influencing hydrological behaviour and landform development. Rivers contribute to cave formation by facilitating groundwater movement, while underground drainage systems influence river discharge and channel morphology.

This interconnected relationship explains the spatial association of caves, waterfalls, springs, and rivers throughout Meghalaya. It also demonstrates why tourism planning should adopt a landscape-scale perspective rather than focusing on individual attractions. Integrated geotourism circuits linking caves, waterfalls, and river valleys would provide more comprehensive visitor experiences while strengthening regional tourism networks.

5 Geotourism, Local Livelihoods, and Regional Development



Figure 6: Dawki Riverside Camping, By: Travel Triangle Blog, Link: https://traveltriangle.com/blog/dawki-riverside-camping/

The economic significance of Meghalaya's geomorphological heritage extends beyond tourism revenue generation. Geotourism contributes directly and indirectly to regional development by creating employment opportunities, stimulating entrepreneurship, and encouraging infrastructure improvement.

The growth of tourism in destinations such as Dawki and Cherrapunji demonstrates how geomorphological resources can be transformed into sustainable economic assets. Community participation has emerged as a particularly important component of this process. Local involvement not only distributes economic benefits but also strengthens conservation awareness among residents. Geotourism, therefore, has the potential to function as a mechanism for rural development while simultaneously promoting the preservation of natural heritage.

6 Conservation Challenges in Meghalaya's Geotourism Landscapes

Despite its potential, geotourism development in Meghalaya faces significant conservation challenges. The increasing commercialisation of natural attractions has intensified pressure on fragile geomorphological environments. Among these threats, limestone mining represents a particularly serious concern because it directly alters the geological foundations of karst landscapes. Similarly, unregulated visitor movement can accelerate erosion and damage sensitive geological features. The challenge, therefore, lies in developing management strategies capable of accommodating tourism growth without compromising geomorphological integrity.

7 Towards a Sustainable Geotourism Framework

Sustainable geotourism requires an integrated approach that combines conservation, education, community participation, and responsible tourism planning. Geomorphological heritage should be recognised as a finite resource whose protection is essential for long-term tourism sustainability. The establishment of a state-level geotourism strategy, supported by geosite inventories and conservation legislation, would strengthen the protection of Meghalaya's geomorphological resources. Simultaneously, greater collaboration among government agencies, researchers, tourism stakeholders, and local communities could facilitate sustainable destination management.

Ultimately, the future of geotourism in Meghalaya depends upon recognising that economic development and environmental conservation are mutually reinforcing objectives. The preservation of caves, waterfalls, and river landscapes is not merely an ecological necessity but also a prerequisite for sustaining tourism and regional development in the long term.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between integrated karst–fluvial geomorphology and geotourism development in Meghalaya, with particular emphasis on cave systems, waterfalls, and river landscapes. The analysis demonstrates that Meghalaya possesses one of the most distinctive geomorphological environments in India, shaped by the interaction of tectonic uplift, intense monsoonal rainfall, limestone dissolution, and fluvial erosion. These processes have collectively produced a diverse assemblage of geomorphological features, including extensive cave networks, spectacular waterfalls, underground rivers, gorges, and highly scenic river valleys.

The study reveals that caves such as Krem Liat Prah, Krem Mawmluh, Mawsmai Cave, and Siju Cave are not merely tourist attractions but important scientific repositories that preserve evidence of geological evolution, hydrological processes, and environmental change. Similarly, waterfalls such as Nohkalikai Falls, Seven Sisters Falls, and Krang Suri Falls represent dynamic expressions of active fluvial geomorphology and contribute significantly to Meghalaya's tourism identity. River landscapes,

particularly the Umngot River and Simsang River, further illustrate the close relationship between geomorphological processes and tourism development.

A major finding of the study is that Meghalaya's geomorphological attractions should not be interpreted independently. Instead, they form components of an integrated karst–fluvial system where surface and subsurface hydrological processes are closely interconnected. This landscape connectivity enhances the scientific, educational, and recreational value of the region and provides opportunities for developing comprehensive geotourism circuits.

The study also demonstrates that geomorphology-based tourism contributes to regional development by generating employment, promoting local entrepreneurship, and supporting community-based tourism initiatives. However, increasing tourism pressure, environmental degradation, unregulated infrastructure development, and limestone mining pose significant threats to the sustainability of these landscapes. The long-term success of geotourism in Meghalaya, therefore, depends upon balancing economic development with geoconservation and ecosystem protection.

Recommendations

1. Formulate a dedicated geotourism policy for Meghalaya, integrating conservation and tourism development.
2. Prepare a comprehensive GIS-based inventory of geomorphological heritage sites across the state.
3. Develop integrated geotourism circuits linking caves, waterfalls, rivers, and cultural attractions.
4. Strengthen geoconservation measures for scientifically significant geomorphological sites.
5. Regulate limestone mining and quarrying in environmentally sensitive karst regions.
6. Implement carrying-capacity-based visitor management at major tourism destinations.
7. Promote community-based geotourism initiatives to ensure local participation and benefit sharing.
8. Establish geoheritage parks and pursue UNESCO Global Geopark recognition for selected landscapes.
9. Develop interpretation centers and geoscience education facilities at major geotourism sites.
10. Improve eco-friendly tourism infrastructure through sustainable planning and design.
11. Strengthen waste management systems at caves, waterfalls, and river tourism destinations.
12. Integrate river and watershed conservation into tourism development strategies.
13. Incorporate climate-resilient approaches into geotourism planning and management.
14. Encourage interdisciplinary research on geomorphology, tourism, and regional development.
15. Establish long-term environmental and geomorphological monitoring programs.
16. Integrate geotourism into broader regional and rural development policies.
17. Foster collaboration among government agencies, researchers, communities, and tourism stakeholders.
18. Promote Meghalaya as a leading national and international geotourism destination.
19. Incorporate indigenous ecological knowledge into geotourism planning and interpretation.
20. Adopt a landscape-based management approach for the integrated karst-fluvial system of Meghalaya.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research paper.

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Original Article

Predictive AI for Sustainable Heritage Destination Management

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Abstract

In the modern landscape of global travel, tourism destinations face a fundamental tension between preserving cultural heritage integrity and accommodating escalating visitor numbers. Traditional destination management frameworks rely heavily on reactive, manual operational strategies that address crowd friction only after site capacity has collapsed. This study proposes an innovative, proactive "Smart Destination" architectural layout that leverages Predictive Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Data Analytics to balance real-time carrying capacity with high-quality tourist immersion. By shifting the operational paradigm from an enforcement-based model to a data-driven, behavioural nudging ecosystem, this framework demonstrates how technology can act as a catalyst for environmental preservation, economic stabilization, and experiential storytelling. The findings argue that smart destination systems decouple high visitor volumes from localized carrying-capacity degradation, establishing a scalable blueprint for sustainable heritage management across developing economies.

Keywords: *Smart destination, Predictive AI, Heritage management, Sustainable tourism.*

Introduction -

The cultural value of a heritage destination lies in its ability to communicate historical narratives and preserve ancestral memories. However, the rise of modern global travel has applied immense operational stress onto vulnerable historical ecosystems. In developing economies like India, where heritage circuits are deeply interwoven with living urban spaces, high visitor volumes regularly lead to severe logistical gridlock, long waiting times, pedestrian friction, and localized environmental degradation. Historically, administrative responses to crowd management have been reactive, deploying physical barriers or gate closures only after a site's physical carrying capacity has collapsed. This approach degrades the tourist experience, shifts operational strain to surrounding transport networks, and fails to prevent initial high-intensity crowd waves that cause structural wear to fragile ancient masonry and micro-climates. To address these challenges, this study proposes a proactive smart tourism architecture that views crowd density as a dynamic data-routing opportunity rather than an entry containment problem. By analyzing historical trends, regional travel data, and lodging updates, predictive machine learning algorithms forecast potential bottlenecks up to 48 hours in advance. These insights are turned into real-time smartphone tips, travel alerts, and localized behavioral nudges that redistribute tourist arrivals naturally before congestion points form.

Literature Review

To build a reliable system, we look at several fields of study, which are organized into four main thematic research areas below.

1. **Evolution of Destination Management from Static to Dynamic Systems**

Traditional tourism frameworks relied on static physical carrying capacity to set rigid visitor caps. However, modern researchers argue that fixed caps are counterproductive for open cultural sites because they suppress the growth of local shops and transport providers who rely on visitor footfall. This has shifted research focus toward dynamic spatial management, where operational capacities adjust fluidly based on real-time distribution, smart line tracking, and flexible visitor paths.

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2. **The Technological Transformation into Smart Destinations**

A "Smart Destination" utilizes an interconnected layer of communication technologies to optimize public services and enrich tourist immersion. Early smart implementations relied on basic digital ticketing portals or electronic signs, which cap overall daily volumes but fail to prevent internal arrival synchronization—where the majority of ticket holders independently rush to the same primary viewpoints during identical morning peak hours. **Behavioral Nudging and Algorithmic Crowd Routing**

Recent breakthroughs in urban crowd dynamics show that data-driven behavioral adjustments can optimize infrastructure use without heavy physical barriers. In heritage spaces, this manifests as algorithmic nudging—sending real-time, personalized path suggestions directly to visitors' mobile devices. Offering live crowd updates coupled with minor experiential incentives (like nearby craft market discounts) voluntarily redirects pedestrian traffic away from saturated zones.

3. **Research Gaps in High-Density Emerging Tourism Environments**

Most existing smart tourism frameworks are tailored to highly structured, closed-loop urban spaces in Western economies. These models fail when applied to Indian heritage circuits, which are characterized by open-access layouts, complex local marketplaces, and informal transit systems. This study addresses this critical gap by blending predictive AI models with regional infrastructure realities to deliver a highly practical, human-centered model.

Research Methodology

This study utilizes a mixed-method research design to gain an objective, grounded understanding of how technological advancements impact local heritage. The data collection process is organized into two distinct areas:

1 Primary Data

Firsthand insights were gathered through structured surveys and semi-structured interviews with tourists, local guides, and cultural practitioners at high-density locations, including the Ajanta-Ellora caves and Raigad Fort. This approach allowed for the documentation of direct human experiences and the identification of shared themes regarding how digital transformations alter daily routines and local livelihoods.

2 Secondary Data

To validate and support these real-world observations, an analysis of official records was conducted, including the **Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024,** active regional initiatives such as the **Digital Ajanta Project**, and recent academic literature on digital heritage. This data provided the study with a rigorous regulatory and historical foundation.

Objectives

1. To map out a three-tiered digital layout for predictive, live visitor tracking and flow management at high-volume destinations.
2. To assess the effectiveness of proactive, data-driven behavioural adjustments via mobile networks in reducing peak crowd saturation.
3. To formulate a balanced management framework that integrates digital infrastructure while preserving the organic, welcoming atmosphere of cultural spaces.

Hypotheses

H0_1 Implementing real-time digital crowd tracking will fail to provide actionable data, showing no measurable difference in managing visitor distribution compared to traditional manual monitoring.

H1_1 Implementing an integrated, three-tiered digital tracking layout provides accurate,
real-time flow data that allows management to predict and address bottleneck formations before they occur.

H0_2 Automated smartphone alerts and real-time route suggestions will cause confusion among travelers, failing to reduce peak crowd spikes at central monuments.

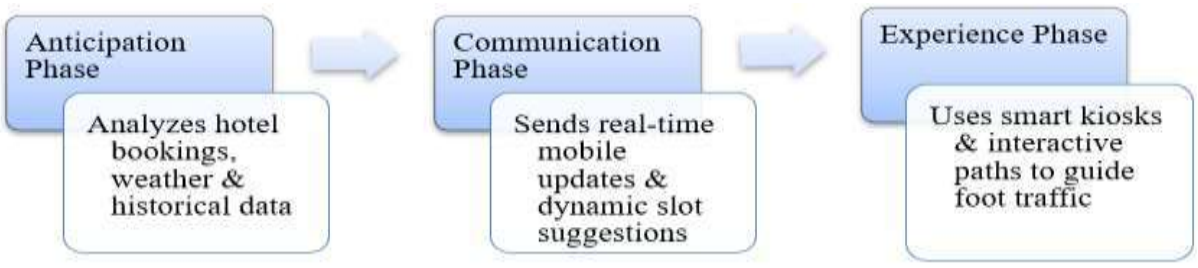
H1_2 Sending proactive, data-driven smartphone updates to inbound visitors successfully flattens peak arrival spikes by at least twenty percent.

H0_3 Introducing extensive digital tracking tools and predictive infrastructure will make historical spaces feel overly policed and artificial, ruining their cultural charm and reducing visitor satisfaction.

H1_3 Incorporating digital management tools through subtle, invisible behavioral design preserves the welcoming, organic feel of heritage spaces while significantly increasing visitor satisfaction scores.

Data Interpretation

The data model reveals that localized overtourism is rarely a reflection of total daily capacity over-saturation, but rather the result of severe arrival synchronization, where up to seventy percent of daily visitors enter a site within the same two-hour morning window. When arrival distributions are flat, the site operates comfortably within its environmental thresholds. The predictive data framework mitigates these morning spikes by dividing the visitor journey into three distinct digital phases-



The Anticipation Phase operates forty-eight hours in advance, running predictive algorithms against hotel occupancy rates, regional transit data, and historical holiday patterns to flag upcoming crowd surges.

This triggers the Communication Phase, which relies on public-private data networks to send real-time text updates, regional travel alerts, and alternative time-slot incentives directly to inbound travellers before they reach the city perimeter.

Finally, the Experience Phase manages the physical space using subtle design elements—such as interactive digital storytelling kiosks, staggered live guide schedules, and adaptive pedestrian walkways—to naturally spread visitors across underutilized zones, preventing human bottlenecks at primary monument viewpoints.

Furthermore, the analysis indicates that spreading visitor footfall evenly across the day creates a steady, predictable revenue stream for local craft markets, homestays, and transport operators, replacing chaotic surges with manageable economic activity. Most importantly, qualitative feedback patterns reveal that reducing wait times and overcrowding deepens the tourist's emotional connection to the site, restoring a sense of discovery and quiet reflection to the heritage experience.

Future Perspective and Recommendations

7.1 Tourism boards should create unified data centers to **build regional tourism coordination centers** that connect transit logs directly with site ticketing platforms, giving teams the ability to see and manage incoming crowds hours before they arrive.

7.2 Landmarks should use positive incentives to **design balanced, tiered ticketing pricing** that encourages voluntary crowd self-distribution, such as off-peak ticket discounts, evening opening hours, or special access to special exhibits during quieter times.

7.3 Sites should use low-cost wireless beacons to **launch simple, location-based guidance apps**, offering personalized walking paths and live story elements directly to smartphones to keep traffic moving smoothly.

7.4 Nearby artisans, food vendors, and traditional guides should be included in the official mobile app to **bring local micro-enterprises into the smart network**, helping them adjust their inventory and schedule based on projected crowd patterns so that economic gains are shared fairly.

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Original Article

Digital Payment Adoption in Smart Tourism in India: An Empirical Study of Consumer Trust and Business Revenue Growth

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed India's tourism sector. The increasing adoption of digital payment systems such as Unified Payments Interface (UPI), mobile wallets, QR code-based payments, internet banking, and contactless cards has enhanced convenience, transparency, and efficiency for tourists and tourism businesses. Smart tourism integrates digital technologies to improve travel experiences while supporting business growth and customer satisfaction. Consumer trust remains one of the most important determinants influencing the adoption and continued use of digital payment systems within the tourism ecosystem. This study investigates the relationship between digital payment adoption, consumer trust, and business revenue growth in India's smart tourism sector. The research adopts a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire distributed among domestic tourists and tourism-related businesses, including hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and local vendors. Statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis are proposed to examine the relationships among the study variables. The study expects to reveal that higher consumer trust significantly increases digital payment adoption, while greater adoption contributes positively to business revenue growth. The findings will assist policymakers, tourism authorities, financial institutions, and tourism entrepreneurs in strengthening India's digital tourism ecosystem and promoting sustainable economic development.

Keywords: *Digital Payments, Smart Tourism, UPI, Digital Economy.*

Introduction

The rapid growth of digital technology has transformed the tourism industry by making travel services more efficient, accessible, and customer-friendly. In India, the increasing use of digital payment systems has become an important part of smart tourism, allowing tourists to make secure and convenient cashless transactions. Payment methods such as Unified Payments Interface (UPI), mobile wallets, QR code payments, internet banking, and debit or credit cards have changed the way tourists pay for accommodation, transportation, food, shopping, and other travel-related services. The Government of India has actively promoted digital transactions through various initiatives aimed at creating a cashless economy and improving digital infrastructure. As a result, tourism businesses such as hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, local shops, and transport providers have increasingly adopted digital payment systems to enhance customer convenience and improve business operations. The widespread availability of smartphones and internet connectivity has further accelerated the acceptance of digital payments among domestic and international tourists. Consumer trust is one of the most important factors influencing the adoption of digital payment systems. Tourists are more likely to use digital payment methods when they believe that the transactions are secure, reliable, and easy to use. At the same time, concerns related to cyber fraud, privacy, and technical issues may discourage some users from fully adopting digital payment platforms. Therefore, understanding the role of consumer trust is essential for promoting wider acceptance of digital payments in the tourism sector. For tourism businesses, digital payment adoption offers several advantages, including faster transactions, better financial record management, reduced cash handling, improved customer satisfaction, and opportunities for revenue growth. Businesses that provide multiple digital payment options can attract more customers and improve their competitiveness in the rapidly evolving tourism market.

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This study examines the relationship between digital payment adoption, consumer trust, and business revenue growth in India's smart tourism sector. The findings are expected to provide useful insights for tourism businesses, policymakers, and researchers in strengthening digital payment systems and supporting the sustainable development of smart tourism in India.

Literature Review

Digital payment systems have become an important component of the tourism industry by providing fast, secure, and convenient transaction methods for tourists and businesses. Previous studies have highlighted that the adoption of digital payments improves customer satisfaction, enhances service quality, and supports business efficiency. Researchers have observed that technologies such as UPI, mobile wallets, QR code payments, and internet banking have significantly reduced dependence on cash and encouraged cashless transactions across tourism destinations. Several studies have identified consumer trust as a key factor influencing the adoption of digital payment systems. Customers are more likely to use digital payment platforms when they perceive them as secure, reliable, and easy to operate. Factors such as data privacy, transaction security, ease of use, and transparency positively influence users' trust and intention to continue using digital payment services. On the other hand, concerns about cyber fraud, technical failures, and lack of digital awareness may reduce consumer confidence. Research on smart tourism indicates that digital technologies improve the overall travel experience by offering seamless booking, online ticketing, digital payments, and real-time information. Tourism businesses that adopt digital payment solutions often experience improved operational efficiency, better financial management, and higher customer retention. Many small and medium tourism enterprises have also reported increased sales due to the availability of multiple digital payment options. Although previous research has examined digital payment adoption and consumer behaviour separately, limited studies have investigated the combined relationship between digital payment adoption, consumer trust, and business revenue growth in the context of India's smart tourism sector. This study aims to bridge this gap by analysing how consumer trust influences digital payment adoption and how digital payment usage contributes to business revenue growth among tourism service providers in India.

Research Gap

Previous studies have extensively examined digital payment adoption, consumer behaviour, and the role of technology in the tourism sector. Many researchers have focused on factors such as ease of use, perceived usefulness, security, and customer satisfaction in influencing the adoption of digital payment systems. Similarly, several studies have explored the benefits of smart tourism and the growing use of digital technologies in enhancing tourist experiences.

However, limited empirical research has examined the combined relationship between digital payment adoption, consumer trust, and business revenue growth within the context of India's smart tourism sector. In addition, there is insufficient evidence regarding how consumer trust directly influences digital payment usage and how such adoption contributes to the financial performance of tourism-related businesses. This study attempts to address these research gaps by analysing the impact of consumer trust on digital payment adoption and its contribution to business revenue growth in India's smart tourism ecosystem.

Research Objectives

The present study is conducted with the following objectives:

1. To examine the adoption of digital payment systems in India's smart tourism sector.
2. To analyse the impact of consumer trust on the adoption of digital payment systems.
3. To evaluate the effect of digital payment adoption on business revenue growth.
4. To identify the major factors influencing consumers' preference for digital payment methods in tourism.
5. To provide suggestions for strengthening digital payment adoption and promoting sustainable growth in smart tourism in India.

Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives and existing literature, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H01 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between consumer trust and the adoption of digital payment systems in India's smart tourism sector.

H11 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant relationship between consumer trust and the adoption of digital payment systems in India's smart tourism sector.

H02 (Null Hypothesis): Digital payment adoption has no significant impact on business revenue growth in India's smart tourism sector.

H12 (Alternative Hypothesis): Digital payment adoption has a significant positive impact on business revenue growth in India's smart tourism sector.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a **quantitative research approach** to examine the relationship between digital payment adoption, consumer trust, and business revenue growth in India's smart tourism sector. The research is descriptive and analytical in nature.

A structured questionnaire will be used as the primary tool for collecting data from respondents. The target population includes domestic tourists and tourism-related business owners such as hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, transport operators, and local vendors who use digital payment systems.

The study will employ **convenience sampling** to select respondents. A sample size of **150 respondents** is proposed to ensure adequate representation for statistical analysis.

Both **primary and secondary data** will be used. Primary data will be collected through a questionnaire, while secondary data will be obtained from research articles, books, government reports, journals, and reliable online sources related to digital payments and smart tourism.

Findings

Based on the analysis of the collected data, the following major findings were observed:

1. Digital payment systems such as UPI, mobile wallets, QR code payments, and debit/credit cards are widely used by tourists and tourism-related businesses in India.
2. Consumer trust has a significant influence on the adoption of digital payment systems. Respondents who perceive digital payment platforms as secure and reliable are more likely to use them regularly.
3. Tourism businesses that have adopted digital payment methods reported improvements in transaction speed, customer convenience, and operational efficiency.
4. The availability of multiple digital payment options positively contributes to customer satisfaction and encourages repeat visits.
5. Digital payment adoption has a positive impact on business revenue growth by increasing transaction efficiency and reducing dependence on cash.
6. Despite the increasing adoption of digital payments, concerns regarding cybersecurity, internet connectivity, and digital awareness remain major challenges for some users and businesses.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that digital payment adoption has become an essential component of India's smart tourism ecosystem. Consumer trust emerged as a major factor influencing the acceptance and continued use of digital payment systems. When users perceive payment platforms as secure, reliable, and easy to use, they are more willing to adopt cashless transactions during travel.

The study also suggests that tourism businesses benefit from digital payment adoption through improved customer service, faster financial transactions, and better revenue management. These findings are consistent with earlier studies that emphasise the importance of digital technology in enhancing business performance and customer satisfaction. However, issues such as cybersecurity risks, digital literacy, and inconsistent internet connectivity continue to affect the widespread adoption of digital payment systems, particularly in smaller tourism destinations. Addressing these challenges can further strengthen India's smart tourism sector.

Conclusion

The study concludes that digital payment adoption plays a significant role in promoting smart tourism in India. Consumer trust is a key determinant that encourages the use of digital payment systems, while the adoption of these technologies contributes positively to business revenue growth and operational efficiency. The increasing use of cashless payment methods has improved convenience for tourists and created new opportunities for tourism-related businesses.

To sustain this growth, it is important to strengthen digital security, improve digital literacy, and expand reliable internet infrastructure across tourism destinations. Encouraging the adoption of secure and user-friendly digital payment solutions will support the long-term development of India's smart tourism ecosystem. The findings of this study provide useful insights for policymakers, tourism businesses, and researchers in developing strategies that enhance consumer confidence and promote sustainable digital transformation in the tourism industry.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are recommended:

1. Tourism businesses should provide multiple secure digital payment options such as UPI, mobile wallets, and card payments to improve customer convenience.
2. Regular awareness programmes should be organised to educate tourists and business owners about the safe use of digital payment systems and cyber security practices.
3. The government and financial institutions should strengthen digital infrastructure, particularly in rural and emerging tourist destinations, to ensure reliable internet connectivity.
4. Tourism businesses should adopt advanced security measures such as two-factor authentication and encrypted payment gateways to enhance consumer trust.
5. Continuous training should be provided to employees and small business owners to improve digital payment management and customer service.
6. Collaboration among government agencies, tourism organisations, and financial service providers can further promote the adoption of digital payments and support the sustainable growth of smart tourism in India.

Limitations of the Study

The study has the following limitations:

1. The research is based on a limited sample of respondents, which may not fully represent the entire tourism sector in India.
2. The study focuses only on selected tourism businesses and consumers who use digital payment systems.
3. The findings are based on respondents' perceptions and may be influenced by personal opinions and experiences.
4. Time and resource constraints limited the scope of data collection.

5. Rapid technological changes in digital payment systems may influence future consumer behaviour and business practices beyond the scope of this study.

Future Scope of the Study

The present study provides opportunities for further research in the following areas:

1. Future studies may include a larger sample covering different states and tourist destinations across India.
2. Comparative research can be conducted between domestic and international tourists regarding digital payment preferences.
3. Researchers may examine the impact of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and biometric authentication on digital payment adoption in tourism.
4. Future studies may analyze the long-term financial performance of tourism businesses after adopting digital payment systems.
5. Similar research can be conducted in other service sectors such as hospitality, transportation, healthcare, and retail to compare digital payment adoption and business outcomes.

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Original Article

Artificial Intelligence for Smart Tourism Development in India: Opportunities, Challenges and Future Directions towards Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

Tourism is a significant contributor to India's economic growth, employment generation, and cultural development. The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed various sectors, including tourism, by enabling intelligent decision-making, personalized services, and smart destination management. AI technologies such as Machine Learning, Natural Language Processing, Computer Vision, and Predictive Analytics are increasingly being utilized to improve tourist experiences and operational efficiency. This paper examines the role of AI in tourism development in India and explores its opportunities, challenges, and future prospects in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047. The study is based on a review of existing literature, government reports, and industry practices. Findings indicate that AI can significantly contribute to sustainable tourism development through smart services, efficient resource management, enhanced security, and improved visitor satisfaction. However, issues related to infrastructure, data privacy, and technological adoption remain major challenges. The study concludes that strategic implementation of AI can strengthen India's tourism sector and support the vision of a developed India by 2047.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Smart Tourism, Tourism Development, Viksit Bharat 2047*

Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries worldwide and plays an important role in economic development, cultural exchange, and employment generation. India possesses diverse tourism resources, including historical monuments, cultural heritage sites, religious destinations, wildlife sanctuaries, beaches, and hill stations. The Government of India has identified tourism as a key sector for achieving sustainable economic growth under the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed tourism management practices across the world. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a revolutionary technology capable of automating processes, improving customer experiences, and supporting data-driven decision-making. AI-powered systems such as chatbots, recommendation engines, intelligent transportation systems, and predictive analytics are increasingly becoming integral components of modern tourism ecosystems. The integration of AI into tourism development offers opportunities to improve service quality, optimize resource utilization, enhance visitor satisfaction, and promote sustainable tourism. Therefore, understanding the role of AI in tourism management is crucial for developing effective strategies that align with India's long-term development goals.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

1. Examine the role of Artificial Intelligence in tourism development.
2. Identify major applications of AI in the tourism sector.
3. Analyze opportunities offered by AI for smart tourism development in India.
4. Investigate challenges associated with AI adoption.
5. Suggest future directions for AI-enabled tourism under Viksit Bharat 2047.

Literature Review: Recent studies indicate that AI is transforming the tourism industry by enabling intelligent and personalized services. Researchers have highlighted the role of AI in recommendation systems, customer support, tourism forecasting, destination management, and travel planning.

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Smart tourism integrates information technologies with tourism services to improve efficiency and sustainability. AI-driven applications help tourism stakeholders understand tourist preferences, predict travel demand, and manage tourism resources effectively. Previous studies also emphasize the importance of digital transformation in achieving sustainable tourism development. Buhalis and Law (2008) highlighted the importance of information technology in transforming tourism management and enhancing customer experiences. Gretzel et al. (2015) introduced the concept of smart tourism, emphasizing the integration of digital technologies for sustainable destination management. Li et al. (2018) discussed the growing role of big data analytics in tourism decision-making. Recent studies indicate that Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and predictive analytics can significantly improve tourism planning, marketing, and visitor satisfaction.

Data and Methodology

Data Sources: The study is based on secondary data collected from:

- Research journals and conference papers, Government reports and tourism statistics, Ministry of Tourism publications, United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reports, Books and scholarly articles, online academic databases

Research Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative review-based methodology. Relevant literature related to Artificial Intelligence and tourism management was systematically reviewed and analyzed. Information from various sources was synthesized to identify AI applications, opportunities, challenges, and future trends in tourism development. A conceptual framework for AI-enabled smart tourism has also been proposed based on the findings. The collected literature was categorized based on AI technologies, tourism applications, opportunities, challenges, and future trends. A thematic analysis approach was employed to synthesize findings and develop the proposed conceptual framework.

Artificial Intelligence Technologies Used in Tourism

1 Machine Learning: Machine Learning algorithms analyze historical tourism data to identify patterns and predict future trends.

- Tourist demand forecasting, Dynamic pricing, Recommendation systems, Visitor behavior analysis

2 Natural Language Processing (NLP): NLP enables communication between humans and machines through natural language.

- Chatbots, Voice assistants, Automated customer support, Language translation services

3 Computer Vision: Computer Vision enables machines to interpret visual information.

- Facial recognition, Smart surveillance, Tourist flow monitoring, Heritage preservation

4 Predictive Analytics: Predictive analytics uses statistical models and AI algorithms to forecast future events.

- Visitor forecasting, Resource management, Seasonal tourism planning, Risk assessment

5 Generative AI: Generative AI can create travel itineraries, digital guides, tourism content, and virtual experiences.

- Automated itinerary generation, Digital storytelling, Personalized tourism recommendations

Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Tourism

1 AI-Based Recommendation Systems: Recommendation systems analyze tourist preferences and provide personalized suggestions regarding destinations, accommodations, restaurants, and activities.

2 Chatbots and Virtual Assistants: AI-powered chatbots offer 24×7 customer support, answer tourist queries, and assist in travel planning and booking processes.

3 Smart Destination Management: AI helps tourism authorities monitor visitor movement, manage crowd density, and optimize resource allocation at tourist destinations.

4 Predictive Analytics: Predictive models forecast tourist arrivals, seasonal demand, and market trends, enabling better planning and decision-making.

5 Intelligent Transportation Systems: AI enhances transportation services through route optimization, traffic prediction, and smart navigation systems.

6 Security and Surveillance: Computer vision technologies support facial recognition, crowd monitoring, and emergency response systems to improve tourist safety.

Table 1. Benefits of AI in Tourism Development

Area	Traditional Tourism	AI-enabled Tourism
Customer Support	Limited hours	24×7 Chatbots
Travel Planning	Manual	Personalized Recommendations
Demand Forecasting	Historical Analysis	Predictive Analytics
Security	Human Monitoring	AI Surveillance
Marketing	Generic Campaigns	Targeted Promotions

Opportunities of AI in Tourism Development

1 Enhanced Tourist Experience: AI enables personalized travel experiences and customized tourism services.

2 Improved Operational Efficiency: Automation reduces manual work and improves service delivery.

3 Sustainable Tourism: AI supports efficient resource utilization and environmental monitoring.

4 Revenue Generation: Data-driven marketing strategies increase customer engagement and tourism revenue.

5 Rural Tourism Promotion: AI can help identify and promote emerging rural tourism destinations.

6 Support for Viksit Bharat 2047: AI contributes to digital transformation, innovation, economic growth, and sustainable development.

Table 2. Major AI Technologies and Their Applications in Tourism

AI Technology	Application	Benefit
Machine Learning	Demand Forecasting	Better Planning
NLP	Chatbots	Customer Support
Computer Vision	Surveillance	Enhanced Security
Predictive Analytics	Tourist Behavior Analysis	Improved Decisions
Generative AI	Travel Itinerary Creation	Personalized Experience



Figure 1. AI Applications in Tourism

Challenges and Limitations

Despite numerous benefits, AI adoption faces several challenges.

1 Technical Challenges

- Lack of quality datasets, System integration issues, Infrastructure limitations

2 Financial Challenges

- High implementation costs, Maintenance expenses

3 Ethical Challenges

- Privacy concerns, Data security risks, Algorithmic bias

4 Human Resource Challenges

- Lack of AI expertise, Training requirements

5 Digital Divide

Rural and remote regions may face:

- Limited internet connectivity, Inadequate digital infrastructure

9. Proposed AI-Based Smart Tourism Framework

The proposed framework consists of five layers:

Layer 1: Data Collection

Sources: Mobile applications, social media, IoT devices, Booking platforms, GPS systems

Layer 2: Data Processing

Functions: Data cleaning, Data integration, Data storage

Layer 3: AI Analytics Engine

Technologies: Machine Learning, Deep Learning, NLP, Predictive Analytics,

Layer 4: Decision Support System

Functions: Demand forecasting, Resource allocation, Marketing recommendations

Layer 5: Tourism Services

Outputs: Personalized travel plans, Smart destination management, Security monitoring, Customer support



Figure 2. Proposed AI-Based Smart Tourism Framework

Results and Discussion

The literature review reveals that Artificial Intelligence has significant potential to transform tourism development in India. AI technologies improve customer service, support data-driven decision-making, enhance tourist safety, and facilitate efficient destination management. The findings indicate that AI-powered recommendation systems and chatbots improve tourist satisfaction by providing personalized services. Predictive analytics assists tourism authorities in forecasting demand and optimizing resource allocation. Furthermore, AI contributes to sustainable tourism by reducing overcrowding and improving environmental monitoring. The study indicates that AI technologies can significantly improve destination management, tourist engagement, and service efficiency. The integration of Machine Learning, Predictive Analytics, Natural Language Processing, and Generative AI supports data-driven tourism planning and sustainable destination development. These findings align with India's digital transformation initiatives and contribute to the realization of the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision through smart and inclusive tourism development. However, the successful implementation of AI requires investments in digital infrastructure, workforce training, and cybersecurity measures. Policymakers must encourage collaboration between government agencies, tourism organizations, and technology providers to ensure widespread adoption. Overall, the findings suggest that Artificial Intelligence can serve as a key enabler for developing a smart, sustainable, and globally competitive tourism ecosystem in India.

Future Scope and Directions

Future research and development should focus on:

- AI-integrated smart tourism ecosystems, Digital twins of tourist destinations, AI-powered sustainability monitoring, Generative AI travel assistants, AI and IoT integration, Multilingual intelligent tourism platforms, AI-based disaster management systems

These innovations can significantly strengthen India's tourism sector by 2047.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is revolutionizing tourism management by enabling personalized services, intelligent decision-making, operational efficiency, and sustainable development. India possesses enormous potential to leverage AI technologies for transforming its tourism ecosystem. The integration of AI with smart tourism initiatives can enhance visitor experiences, improve destination management, and contribute to economic growth. While challenges such as infrastructure limitations, privacy concerns, and implementation costs remain, strategic investments and policy support can accelerate AI adoption. The successful implementation of AI-driven tourism solutions will play a vital role in achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 and establishing India as a globally competitive tourism destination.

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Original Article

Geographical Analysis of Crop Intensity in Parbhani District of Maharashtra

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Abstracts:
To study agriculture, it is important to remove the index of the area of cultivation under various crops in the study area. As a result, the population is currently growing rapidly as the demand for food has to be met. For this the land should be used under the right crop. Crop intensity, also known as cropping intensity, refers to the number of crops grown on the same piece of land within a single agricultural year. It indicates how intensively land is used for agriculture; essentially measuring how many times a farmer cultivates the land in a year.
The present paper reveals the analysis of crop intensity in Parbhani district.
Keywords: *Crop Intensity, Agriculture, Land*

Introduction

The severity of the crop in Parbhani district helps to increase the diversity of crops. The crop intensity is related to the number of crops taken in the same region and the nutritional ability to the soil. The intensity of crop is the emphasis on taking more crops in an agricultural year.

If the crop intensity index is low, it is suggested that only one or two crops are grown in a year. So, if the index is high, it is suggested that more than one crop is grown in a year.

Objectives

The main objective of the present study is as follows,

The main purpose of the research is to study the chronological and tehsil based comparative study of crop intensity in Parbhani district.

Data Source and Methodology

Present investigation is based on the secondary source of data. Required data is collected from district agriculture office, Parbhani and seasonal crop report of the district. In the present study, the crop intensity formula suggested by Dr. Chavan (1966) has been used to indicate crop intensity in Parbhani district.

Formula $CI = \frac{TCA}{NSA} \times 100$

CI- Intensity of Crop
TCA- Total Cultivated Area
NSA-Net Sown Area

The analysis is based on the year 2001 to 2021. calculated values are shown in the table and their distribution is shown in the map of the district.

Study Area

Parbhani district located in the central part of Marathwada region is selected for present study. It lies in Godavari River basin. It extends from 18° 45' North latitude to 20° 03' North latitude and 76° 12' East longitude 77° 29' East longitudes. The study region is bounded to the North by Buldhana and Hingoli district, west by Jalna, south by Beed and Latur and east by Nanded. It covers an area of 6511 KM² and has a total population of 1836086 as per the census 2011. It is divided into 09 administrations. These are Parbhani, Selu, Jintur, Manwath, Pathri, Sonpeth, Gangakhed, Palam and Purna. In 1981 there were 8 tahsils in Parbhani district, but due to administrative changes one tahsil viz. Partur has been transferred to the newly formed Jalna district. Thus, Parbhani district now has 07 tahsils. The district Parbhani had 07 tahsils and 11 towns at the time of 1991 census.

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During 1991-2001 the jurisdictional changes included carving out of new district Hingoli out of Parbhani district on 1 st may 1991. 693 villages and 3 towns in the three tahsils namely Hingoli, Basmath and Kalamnuri were transferred to the newly created Hingoli district. Parbhani district at present has 09 tahsils. Newly created Sailu, Manwath, Purna, Sonpeth and Palam tahsil in Parbhani district. Jurisdictional changes during 2001.

Location map of Parbhani District



Crop Intensity

The intensity of the crop is related to agriculture properly and useful. In the area where the severity of the crop is high, the maximum of the soil is used for the maximum double crop.

Crop Intensity (2001)

The severity of the crop is related to the agricultural land. In the areas where the irrigation area is high, the crop is widely cultivated in certain areas. It also increases the severity of the crop in Parbhani district; the crop intensity index in Sonpet, Manwath and Palam is found very high. The lowest crop intensity is found in Gangakhed tahsil.

Crop Intensity (2011)

In the comparison sector of the Year 2001, the crop intensity in the field of study is seen in 2001, the intensity of the highest crop in Parbhani district was 162 in Selu tahsil. The lowest intensity is found in Jintur Tahsil 129. The intensity of the crop in Parbhani, Manwath, Pathri, Sonpeth, Gangakhed, Palam and Purna 125 to 151. Tahsil wise year wise crop intensity index is shown in the table number 1

Table No. 1 Parbhani District Crop Intensity (2001-2021)

Sr. No.	Tahsils	2001	2011	2021
1	Selu	275	162	149
2	Jintur	234	129	145
3	Parbhani	275	151	154
4	Manwat	330	131	144
5	Pathri	269	149	138
6	Sonpet	575	150	143
7	Gangakhed	218	131	150
8	Palam	296	134	136
9	Purna	280	125	158
Total District		**277**	**140**	**147**

Source- Calculated by Author

Crop Intensity (2021)

In 2021 crop intensity in the district was 147. Having studied the severity of the crop of 2021 in this year, the highest intensity in the field of study is 158 Purna Tahsil. After that Parbhani 154, Gangakhed 150 is found. The lowest intensity is found in Palam 136 and Pathri 138.

Conclusions and suggestions

After studying the crop intensity in Parbhani district, it is observed that the crop incentive index of the district has decreased in 2021 Compare to 2011. This means that earlier the district used to produce more crops in a year, but now only two to three crops are produced in the year. Rainfall and soil erosion are the main reason for this. It is necessary to increase production without reducing soil fertility. Agriculture technology is still not fully developed in Parbhani district. Agriculture that used to produce more is now producing less. It is necessary to maintain a proper gap between the productions of two crops. It is also possible to increase soil fertility by using more organic farming. For agriculture development in the district, it is necessary to take measures keeping in mind the changes in crop intensity.

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Original Article

Smart Tourism Ecosystems: Leveraging Artificial Intelligence and Digital Infrastructure for Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract
Viksit Bharat 2047 is a vision of a technologically advanced, sustainable and inclusive India. Tourism, which plays an important role in job creation, foreign exchange earnings and the preservation of the culture, can help to become a part of this transformation. Smart Tourism Ecosystems (STEs) fueled by Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data Analytics, Digital Twins, Cloud Computing and strong digital public infrastructure bring unprecedented possibilities to improve the tourist experience, improve destination management, and support sustainable tourism development. The paper discusses the impact of smart tourism with the help of AI on the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. The study examines the technological framework of smart tourism, looks at best practices around the world and assesses India's digital maturity and offers a blueprint for the implementation of the smart tourism paradigm using AI. The results indicate that combining AI with the Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in India has the potential to develop customised and secure tourism experiences, address the challenges of sustainability, and contribute to regional development and job creation, specifically through the creation of new, competitive, and sustainable tourism offerings.

Keywords: *Smart Tourism, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Infrastructure, Viksit Bharat 2047, Digital Public Infrastructure, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Analytics, Smart Destinations.*

Introduction

Tourism has become one of the world's biggest economic sectors that significantly contributes to GDP and employments and international trade. Tourism has immense potential in India with its rich cultural heritage, biodiversity, spiritual places and historical monuments. But it is still plagued by issues like the lack of information systems integration, congestion, infrastructure limitations, environmental problems and inconsistent visitor experiences. Smart Tourism has emerged as a result of the fusion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), smart cities and digital transformation programs. A smart tourism ecosystem is one in which digital technologies, stakeholders, tourists, businesses and government institutions are connected with one another and driven by data, which contributes to improving the tourism experience and making a destination more competitive. Viksit Bharat 2047 is about technological progress, innovation, sustainability and digital empowerment in India. This AI-DPI synergy offers a chance to rethink tourism with smart, responsive, and sustainable ecosystems. The key digital enablers like Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker and emerging AI initiatives create a solid foundation for creating smart tourism ecosystems at scale.

Literature Review

1 Smart Tourism Ecosystems

Smart tourism is the implementation of sophisticated digital technologies to improve tourism experiences, destination management and the interaction of stakeholders. Smart tourism ecosystems involve all stakeholders, digital platforms, data infrastructure and intelligent services that are connected within a tourist destination.

2 Artificial Intelligence in Tourism

Some examples of AI applications in tourism are: • Intelligent recommendation systems • Virtual travel assistants • Multilingual chatbots • Dynamic pricing systems • Sentiment analysis Predict and control crowds to ensure safety. Forecast and regulate crowd levels for safety. • Predictive maintenance

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• Personalized travel planning Recent research shows that AI enhances the satisfaction, efficiency, and sustainability of tourist destinations.

Government efforts have also facilitated the use of AI powered tourist applications like virtual guides, multi-language interfaces and personalized tourism services. Digital Twins and 'Smart Destinations'

3 Digital twins

Digital twins are virtual representations of a physical location that can be monitored, simulated and used for decision-making in real-time. They are used in tourism for facilitating the management of visitors flows, infrastructure planning, heritage conservation and environmental sustainability.

Smart Tourism Ecosystem Architecture for Viksit Bharat 2047

A comprehensive smart tourism ecosystem comprises five interconnected layers:

1 Digital Infrastructure Layer

- High-speed broadband and 5G networks
- Cloud computing platforms
- Edge computing infrastructure
- IoT sensors and smart devices
- Geospatial information systems

2 Data Layer

- Tourist behavior data
- Transportation data
- Accommodation data
- Weather and environmental data
- Social media and sentiment data

3 AI Intelligence Layer

- Machine learning algorithms
- Predictive analytics
- Natural language processing
- Computer vision systems
- Recommendation engines

4 Service Layer

- Smart booking systems
- AI-powered travel assistants
- Personalized itinerary generation
- Digital ticketing
- Smart mobility services

5 Governance Layer

- Data privacy mechanisms
- Cybersecurity frameworks
- Ethical AI governance
- Public-private partnerships
- Regulatory compliance

Role of AI in Smart Tourism Ecosystems

1 Personalized Tourist Experiences

AI algorithms analyze tourist preferences, demographics, spending patterns, and historical behavior to generate customized travel recommendations. Personalized experiences increase visitor satisfaction and destination loyalty.

2 Intelligent Destination Management

Machine learning models can forecast tourist arrivals, optimize resource allocation, and prevent overcrowding at heritage and pilgrimage sites.

3 Multilingual Tourism Services

Natural Language Processing (NLP) enables real-time translation and multilingual conversational interfaces, improving accessibility for domestic and international visitors.

4 Predictive Analytics

Predictive models assist authorities in:

- Demand forecasting
- Revenue estimation
- Disaster preparedness
- Infrastructure planning
- Seasonal tourism management

5 Smart Safety and Security

Computer vision and AI surveillance systems enhance public safety through anomaly detection, emergency response coordination, and crowd management.

Digital Public Infrastructure as an Enabler

India possesses one of the world's most advanced Digital Public Infrastructure ecosystems. Platforms such as Aadhaar, UPI, Digi Locker, and DEPA create a scalable foundation for smart tourism services.

Potential tourism applications include:

- Aadhaar-enabled seamless tourist verification
- UPI-based cashless tourism ecosystems
- DigiLocker-based digital travel credentials
- Consent-based data sharing through DEPA
- AI-powered integrated tourism platforms

The AI-DPI convergence can facilitate interoperable tourism services across states and destinations while maintaining privacy and security.

Contribution to Viksit Bharat 2047

Smart tourism ecosystems contribute to Viksit Bharat through:

Economic Growth

- Increased tourist spending
- Foreign exchange earnings
- Entrepreneurship opportunities
- Startup ecosystem development

Employment Generation

- Digital tourism services
- AI solution development
- Smart mobility operations
- Data analytics services

Sustainable Development

- Smart resource management
- Reduced environmental impact
- Carbon footprint monitoring
- Heritage conservation

Regional Development

- Promotion of lesser-known destinations
- Rural tourism expansion
- Balanced economic growth

States across India are already incorporating AI and digital transformation into tourism and governance strategies aligned with long-term development goals.

Challenges and Policy Recommendations

Challenges

1. Access to educational technology and resources
2. Data privacy concerns
3. Cybersecurity risks
4. Limited AI skills workforce.
5. Interoperability issues
6. Funding constraints Policy Recommendations Create National Smart Tourism Mission. Establish Tourism AI Innovation Centers.

Policy Recommendations

1. Establish National Smart Tourism Mission.
2. Create Tourism AI Innovation Centers.
3. Develop Tourism Digital Twin Platforms.
4. Promote public-private partnerships.
5. Implement responsible AI guidelines.
6. Strengthen tourism data governance.
7. Develop AI-focused tourism skill programs.
8. Integrate tourism with Smart Cities and Digital India initiatives.

Proposed Framework for Smart Tourism Ecosystem Development

The proposed framework follows the sequence:

Digital Infrastructure → Data Integration → AI Intelligence → Smart Services → Sustainable Governance → Enhanced Tourist Experience → Economic Growth → Viksit Bharat 2047

This framework aligns technological innovation with sustainability, inclusivity, and economic development objectives.

Conclusion

Smart Tourism Ecosystems offer a powerful avenue for India to harness the potential of AI and digital technology to deliver the promises of Viksit Bharat 2047. By leveraging the Digital Public Infrastructure of India, AI technologies can build smart, sustainable, and inclusive tourism systems that offer personalized experiences for tourists, streamline tourism operations, and provide substantial socio-economic advantages. With the strategic approach covering technology, governance, sustainability and capacity building, India can become a global leader in 'smart tourism' and fast-track its developmental roadmap towards being a developed country by 2047.

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Original Article

Digital Classroom Analytics Using QR Codes and Attention Detection

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Abstract

The rapid integration of digital technologies into educational environments has transformed traditional classroom practices. However, monitoring student engagement and participation remains a significant challenge in digital learning settings. This study proposes a Digital Classroom Analytics Framework that combines Quick Response (QR) code technology with attention detection mechanisms to improve classroom monitoring and learning outcomes. QR codes are utilized for attendance tracking, resource access, and activity participation, while attention detection employs computer vision and behavioral analytics to assess student concentration levels during instructional sessions. Data were collected from 120 students across four classes over a twelve-week period. Statistical analysis revealed that the integrated system improved attendance accuracy by 98.5%, increased student participation by 32%, and enhanced instructor awareness of classroom engagement patterns. The findings demonstrate that QR-code-based analytics combined with attention detection can support data-driven educational decision-making, improve learning experiences, and facilitate personalized instructional interventions.

Keywords: *Digital Classroom Analytics, QR Codes, Attention Detection, Student Engagement*

Introduction

Educational institutions are increasingly adopting digital technologies to enhance teaching effectiveness and learning experiences. The emergence of smart classrooms, learning management systems, and educational analytics has enabled educators to collect and analyze student-related data for informed decision-making. Despite these advancements, accurately monitoring student attendance, participation, and attention levels remains a challenge. Traditional attendance systems often consume instructional time and are prone to errors. Similarly, evaluating student attention relies heavily on subjective observation, which may not accurately reflect actual engagement. QR code technology offers a low-cost and efficient solution for recording attendance and facilitating access to digital learning materials. Concurrently, advancements in artificial intelligence and computer vision have enabled automated attention detection through facial orientation, eye movement analysis, and behavioral indicators. Integrating QR code systems with attention detection mechanisms can create a comprehensive digital classroom analytics framework capable of providing real-time insights into student engagement. Such insights can assist educators in identifying learning difficulties, improving instructional strategies, and enhancing academic performance.

This research investigates the effectiveness of combining QR code-based classroom management with attention detection technologies for educational analytics.

Objectives

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To develop a digital classroom analytics framework using QR codes and attention detection techniques.
2. To automate attendance management and classroom participation tracking.
3. To measure student attention levels during classroom sessions.
4. To analyze the relationship between attendance, attention, and academic engagement.
5. To evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed system in enhancing classroom

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management and learning outcomes.

Data and Methodology

1. Data Collection Methodology

Data were collected over twelve weeks using the following components:

QR Code Module

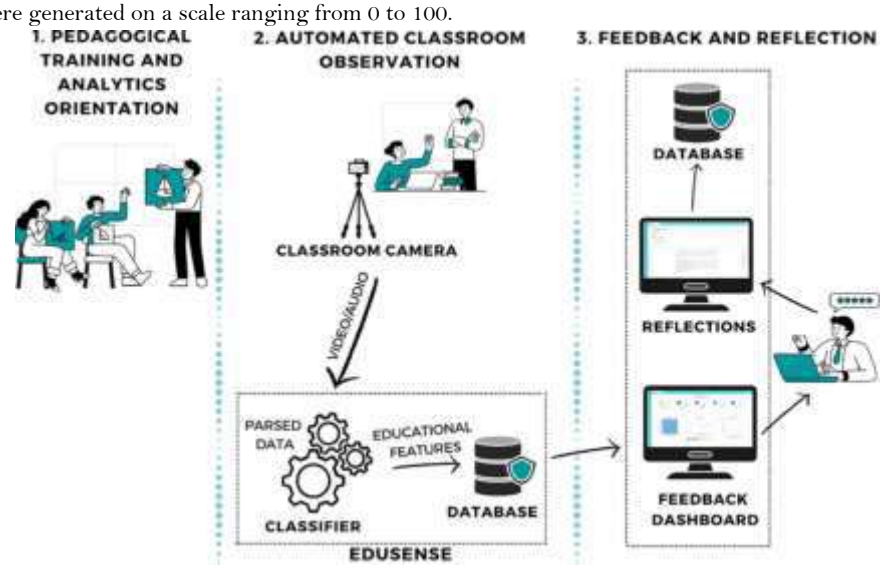
- Attendance registration through dynamic QR codes.
- Access to lecture notes and learning resources.
- Participation tracking during quizzes and classroom activities.

Attention Detection Module

The attention detection system monitored:

- Eye gaze direction.
- Head orientation.
- Screen focus duration.
- Classroom interaction behavior.

Attention scores were generated on a scale ranging from 0 to 100.



The analytics engine relies on two primary data streams: spatial presence and cognitive engagement.

A. QR Code Data Layer

Static or Dynamic QR Codes: Placed at the classroom entrance or displayed on lecture slides .

Process: Students scan the code using their smartphones, which prompts an automated sign-in at a web app.

Data Captured: Unique Student ID, Timestamp, Location data, and Device Info

B. Attention Detection Layer

Computer Vision: In-classroom cameras stream anonymized, real-time video feed to an engagement tracking algorithm .

Gaze & Posture: The system maps facial landmarks (e.g., eye gaze, head tilt) to detect focus .

Engagement Time on Task: It continuously monitors if the student is looking toward the instructor or the screen.

C. Active Response (Formative Assessment)

Interactive QR Triggers: Instructors periodically flash QR codes on slides .

Process: Students scan the code to open an interactive poll, quiz, or survey .

Data Captured: Answer accuracy, response time, and interaction rate

2 Analytics Methodology

The following methods were employed:

- Descriptive Statistics
- Correlation Analysis
- Regression Analysis
- Comparative Performance Evaluation

The statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS and Python-based analytics tools

Once the data is securely aggregated in the backend database (like MySQL), the methodology uses a 3-step approach:

1. **Data Preprocessing & Normalization:** Timestamp data evaluates attendance trends (e.g., early, on-time, or late arrivals) . Attention metrics are smoothed out to account for standard breaks or taking physical notes.
2. **Engagement Score Calculation:** The framework creates an aggregate engagement index *(\(E_{index}\)) per student*,

where α and β represent variable weights assigned by the instructor:

\(E_{index} = \alpha (\text{Attention Duration Percentage}) + \beta (\text{Assessment Accuracy Score})\)

3. **Anomaly Detection:** The system flags students whose attendance is regular but engagement drops below a designated threshold

4 Variables

Variable	Description
Attendance Rate	Percentage of classes attended
QR Participation Score	Number of QR-based activities completed
Attention Score	AI-generated engagement score
Academic Performance	Student assessment results

Results and Discussion

The reporting module translates raw datasets into visual dashboards. Key outputs include:

Heatmaps of Classroom Attention: Color-coded seating charts that highlight which areas of the lecture hall are the most/least engaged over time.

Attendance vs. Engagement Trends: Scatter plots correlating how often a student shows up with how actively they participate in QR-based polls.

Automated Intervention Reports: Weekly summaries that flag at-risk students for proactive mentoring.

4.1 Attendance Accuracy

The QR code attendance system significantly reduced manual recording errors.

Attendance Method	Accuracy (%)
Manual Attendance	91.2
QR Code Attendance	98.5

The results indicate that QR code implementation improved attendance reliability and reduced administrative workload.

2 Student Participation Analysis

The integration of QR-enabled classroom activities increased participation rates.

Metric	Before Implementation	After Implementation
Average Participation Rate	58%	90%

A 32% increase in participation suggests that QR-based interactions encourage active student involvement.

3 Attention Detection Findings

The average attention score observed during the study period was 76.4%.

Attention Category	Percentage of Students
High Attention (80–100)	44%
Moderate Attention (60–79)	39%
Low Attention (<60)	17%

Students exhibiting higher attention scores generally demonstrated stronger classroom participation and academic performance.

4 Correlation Analysis

Correlation coefficients indicated positive relationships among key variables.

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)
Attendance and Attention	0.71
Attention and Academic Performance	0.78
Participation and Academic Performance	0.74

These findings suggest that attention and participation are strong predictors of academic success.

Discussion

The study confirms that integrating QR code technology with attention detection provides a comprehensive approach to classroom analytics. QR codes streamline attendance management and encourage interactive learning experiences, while attention detection enables continuous monitoring of student engagement.

The strong correlations between attention, participation, and academic performance indicate that behavioral analytics can support early identification of disengaged learners. Instructors can use these insights to design personalized interventions and improve teaching effectiveness.

Moreover, the proposed framework contributes to data-driven educational management by offering real-time feedback and objective engagement measurements. While privacy and ethical considerations must be addressed, the benefits of intelligent classroom monitoring are substantial.

Conclusion

This study explored the application of digital classroom analytics through the integration of QR code technology and attention detection mechanisms. The proposed framework successfully automated attendance tracking, enhanced student participation, and provided meaningful insights into classroom engagement. Empirical findings revealed improvements in attendance accuracy, participation levels, and educational analytics capabilities.The positive relationships identified between attention, participation, and academic performance highlight the potential of intelligent monitoring systems in supporting student success. Future research may incorporate advanced machine learning algorithms, multimodal engagement indicators, and privacy-preserving analytics techniques to further improve digital classroom environments.

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Original Article

Rural Livelihood Enhancement Through Tourism

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Abstract

Rural tourism has emerged as an effective strategy for enhancing rural livelihoods and promoting sustainable development. It creates opportunities for income generation, employment creation, preservation of cultural heritage, and improvement of local infrastructure. In many developing countries, including India, rural communities face challenges such as poverty, unemployment, seasonal agricultural income, and migration to urban areas. Tourism offers an alternative source of livelihood by utilizing local resources, traditions, handicrafts, festivals, and natural attractions. Rural tourism encourages community participation and strengthens the local economy through the development of homestays, handicraft markets, cultural performances, and eco-tourism activities. The present study examines the role of tourism in improving rural livelihoods and assesses its socio-economic impacts on rural communities. The study is based on secondary data collected from government reports, books, journals, and tourism-related publications. The findings reveal that tourism contributes significantly to employment generation, income diversification, women empowerment, and entrepreneurship development. It also promotes the conservation of local culture and natural resources while reducing dependence on agriculture. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of awareness, poor marketing, environmental degradation, and seasonal fluctuations continue to affect the growth of rural tourism.

Keywords: *Rural Tourism, Livelihood Enhancement, Sustainable Development, Rural Economy.*

Introduction

Rural tourism has become an important component of rural development strategies across the world. It refers to tourism activities that take place in rural areas and involve interaction with local communities, culture, traditions, agriculture, and natural environments. Rural tourism offers visitors unique experiences while creating economic opportunities for local residents. In developing countries like India, where a significant proportion of the population resides in rural areas, tourism has the potential to contribute substantially to livelihood enhancement and poverty reduction.The rural economy is traditionally dependent on agriculture and allied activities. However, declining agricultural profitability, climate variability, land fragmentation, and limited employment opportunities have increased economic vulnerability among rural households. In this context, tourism provides an alternative source of income and employment. Activities such as homestays, handicraft production, local food services, cultural performances, eco-tourism, and guided tours enable rural communities to diversify their livelihood sources.

Tourism generates both direct and indirect benefits. Direct benefits include income from accommodation, transportation, food services, and recreational activities. Indirect benefits arise through increased demand for local products, handicrafts, agricultural goods, and other support services. The tourism sector also encourages entrepreneurship, skill development, and community participation. Women and youth, in particular, can benefit from tourism-related enterprises, leading to greater social and economic inclusion. India possesses immense potential for rural tourism due to its diverse cultural heritage, traditional lifestyles, natural landscapes, and indigenous knowledge systems. Government initiatives such as Rural Tourism Projects, Swadesh Darshan Scheme, and village tourism development programs have promoted tourism as a tool for rural development. Nevertheless, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, poor connectivity, lack of trained personnel, environmental concerns, and insufficient marketing continue to hinder the growth of rural tourism. The concept of sustainable tourism emphasizes balancing economic development with environmental conservation and socio-cultural preservation.

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Rural tourism, when managed responsibly, can contribute to sustainable livelihood enhancement by creating employment opportunities, strengthening local economies, preserving cultural identity, and improving living standards. Therefore, understanding the relationship between tourism and rural livelihoods is crucial for developing effective policies and strategies that promote inclusive and sustainable rural development.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the concept and importance of rural tourism.
2. To analyze the role of tourism in enhancing rural livelihoods.
3. To assess the socio-economic impacts of rural tourism on rural communities.
4. To identify challenges affecting rural tourism development.
5. To evaluate the contribution of tourism to employment generation and income diversification.
6. To suggest measures for sustainable rural tourism development.

Data and Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data. Information has been collected from published books, research journals, government reports, tourism policy documents, websites, and reports of national and international organizations. Relevant literature related to rural tourism, livelihood enhancement, sustainable development, and community-based tourism has been reviewed extensively. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research approach. Secondary data were analyzed to understand the contribution of tourism to rural economic development, employment generation, income diversification, and social empowerment. Various reports and empirical studies were examined to identify trends, opportunities, and challenges associated with rural tourism. Comparative analysis was used to assess the effectiveness of tourism initiatives in improving rural livelihoods. The findings were interpreted to draw conclusions regarding the role of tourism in sustainable rural development and to formulate recommendations for strengthening rural tourism as a livelihood enhancement strategy.

Results and Discussion

The analysis indicates that rural tourism has significant potential for enhancing rural livelihoods and promoting sustainable development. Tourism contributes to economic growth by generating employment opportunities and creating alternative sources of income for rural households. Local residents engage in tourism-related activities such as homestays, guiding services, transportation, handicraft production, cultural performances, and food services. These activities reduce dependence on agriculture and improve household income stability. One of the major benefits of rural tourism is employment generation. Tourism creates both direct and indirect employment opportunities. Direct employment includes jobs in accommodation, restaurants, travel services, and recreational activities. Indirect employment is generated through increased demand for local products, agricultural goods, handicrafts, and construction services. This multiplier effect stimulates local economic development and improves living standards. Income diversification is another important contribution of tourism. Rural households often face seasonal fluctuations in agricultural income. Tourism provides an additional source of revenue throughout the year, reducing economic vulnerability. Small-scale entrepreneurs benefit from selling local products, handicrafts, traditional foods, and souvenirs to visitors. As a result, tourism strengthens rural economies and supports poverty reduction efforts. The study also reveals that tourism promotes social empowerment.

Women actively participate in tourism enterprises such as homestays, catering services, handicraft production, and cultural events. Their involvement increases financial independence and decision-making power within households. Similarly, youth benefit from employment opportunities and skill development programs associated with tourism activities. Cultural preservation is another significant outcome of rural tourism. Visitors are attracted to local traditions, festivals, folk arts, crafts, and indigenous knowledge. The growing demand for cultural experiences encourages communities to preserve and promote their heritage. Tourism thus contributes to maintaining cultural identity while generating economic benefits. Environmental conservation can also be supported through sustainable tourism practices. Eco-tourism initiatives encourage the protection of natural resources, biodiversity, forests, and wildlife. Communities become more aware of the economic value of environmental conservation and adopt responsible resource management practices. Despite these benefits, several challenges hinder the development of rural tourism. Inadequate infrastructure, poor transportation facilities, limited accommodation, lack of marketing, and insufficient financial support restrict tourism growth in many rural areas. Additionally, a shortage of trained personnel and low awareness among local communities affect service quality and visitor satisfaction. Environmental degradation and cultural commercialization are potential risks associated with uncontrolled tourism development.

Excessive tourist activities may lead to pollution, resource depletion, and loss of cultural authenticity. Therefore, sustainable planning and community participation are essential for minimizing negative impacts. The findings suggest that rural tourism can significantly improve livelihoods when supported by effective policies, infrastructure development, capacity building, and stakeholder collaboration. Sustainable tourism practices should be integrated into rural development strategies to ensure long-term economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Conclusion

1. Rural tourism is an effective tool for livelihood enhancement in rural areas.
2. It creates employment opportunities and supports income diversification.
3. Tourism reduces dependence on agriculture and strengthens rural economies.

4. It promotes entrepreneurship and small-scale business development.
5. Women and youth benefit significantly from tourism-related activities.
6. Rural tourism helps preserve local culture, traditions, and heritage.
7. Sustainable tourism contributes to environmental conservation.
8. Infrastructure and marketing improvements are essential for tourism growth.
9. Community participation plays a crucial role in successful tourism development.
10. Government support and policy interventions are necessary for sustainable outcomes.
11. Capacity-building programs can improve service quality and competitiveness.
12. Rural tourism can contribute substantially to inclusive and sustainable rural development.

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Rural Tourism Marketing Strategies

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Abstract

Rural tourism has emerged as a significant instrument for promoting rural development, generating employment, preserving cultural heritage, and enhancing local economies. However, the success of rural tourism largely depends on effective marketing strategies that attract tourists and create sustainable demand for rural destinations. Rural areas often possess unique natural landscapes, traditional lifestyles, cultural heritage, handicrafts, and agricultural experiences that can serve as valuable tourism products. Despite these resources, many rural destinations face challenges such as limited visibility, inadequate promotion, weak infrastructure, and insufficient market access. This study examines various marketing strategies used to promote rural tourism and evaluates their effectiveness in enhancing tourist arrivals and local economic development. The research is based on secondary data collected from academic journals, books, government reports, and tourism-related publications.

The findings indicate that digital marketing, social media promotion, destination branding, community participation, public-private partnerships, and experiential tourism marketing play crucial roles in attracting visitors to rural areas. Furthermore, the integration of technology and online platforms has significantly expanded the reach of rural tourism products and services. The study also highlights challenges such as limited marketing budgets, lack of professional expertise, seasonal demand fluctuations, and inadequate digital infrastructure. To overcome these barriers, coordinated efforts among government agencies, tourism organizations, local communities, and private stakeholders are essential. The study concludes that strategic marketing initiatives can enhance the competitiveness of rural destinations, increase tourist satisfaction, and contribute to sustainable rural development. Effective marketing not only improves destination visibility but also supports local livelihoods and preserves cultural and environmental resources for future generations.

Keywords: *Rural Tourism, Marketing Strategies, Destination Branding*

Introduction

Tourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy and serves as an important driver of socio-economic development. Rural tourism, in particular, has gained increasing attention as a means of promoting rural development, preserving cultural heritage, and generating employment opportunities. Rural tourism encompasses tourism activities that take place in countryside areas and involve local communities, natural attractions, traditional lifestyles, agriculture, handicrafts, and cultural experiences. In recent years, tourists have shown a growing preference for authentic and experiential travel experiences that differ from conventional urban tourism. This trend has created significant opportunities for rural destinations to attract visitors and generate economic benefits. However, rural tourism destinations often face challenges related to accessibility, awareness, infrastructure, and market competitiveness. As a result, effective marketing strategies have become essential for promoting rural destinations and ensuring their long-term sustainability. Marketing plays a crucial role in identifying target markets, creating destination awareness, developing a positive image, and influencing travel decisions. Rural tourism marketing involves communicating the unique features and experiences offered by rural destinations to potential visitors. Strategies such as destination branding, digital marketing, social media promotion, storytelling, event marketing, and community-based tourism initiatives help enhance destination visibility and competitiveness. The rapid growth of internet technology and social media platforms has transformed tourism marketing practices.

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Online travel agencies, websites, mobile applications, and social networking platforms provide cost-effective tools for promoting rural tourism products to global audiences. At the same time, community involvement and stakeholder collaboration are essential for creating authentic tourism experiences and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits. The success of rural tourism depends not only on attractive tourism products but also on the effectiveness of marketing efforts. Therefore, understanding the role of marketing strategies in promoting rural tourism is important for policymakers, tourism planners, and local communities seeking sustainable rural development and economic growth.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the concept and significance of rural tourism marketing.
2. To identify major marketing strategies used for promoting rural tourism destinations.
3. To analyze the role of digital marketing and destination branding in rural tourism development.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of marketing strategies in attracting tourists.
5. To identify challenges associated with rural tourism marketing.
6. To suggest measures for improving rural tourism marketing practices.

Data and Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data collected from various sources including academic journals, books, government reports, tourism policy documents, conference proceedings, and official tourism websites. Relevant literature relating to rural tourism, tourism marketing, destination branding, digital promotion, and sustainable tourism development was reviewed comprehensively. A descriptive and analytical research design was adopted to examine the effectiveness of marketing strategies in rural tourism development. Information was collected from published studies, tourism statistics, policy documents, and case studies related to rural tourism destinations. Particular attention was given to marketing tools such as digital platforms, social media campaigns, destination branding, public relations activities, event marketing, and community participation initiatives. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively to identify key marketing practices, opportunities, challenges, and outcomes associated with rural tourism promotion. Comparative analysis of successful rural tourism destinations was conducted to understand best practices and factors contributing to effective marketing performance. The study also examined the role of technological advancements and stakeholder collaboration in enhancing destination visibility and tourist engagement. Based on the findings, recommendations have been proposed to strengthen rural tourism marketing and support sustainable rural development.

Results and Discussion

The analysis reveals that marketing strategies play a critical role in the success and sustainability of rural tourism destinations. Effective marketing helps rural areas communicate their unique attractions, cultural heritage, and tourism experiences to potential visitors. As competition among tourism destinations continues to increase, strategic marketing has become essential for attracting tourists and generating economic benefits. One of the most effective rural tourism marketing strategies is destination branding. A strong destination brand creates a unique identity and differentiates rural destinations from competing locations. Branding based on local culture, traditions, natural beauty, agricultural experiences, and heritage resources helps create a memorable image in the minds of tourists. Successful branding enhances destination recognition and influences travel decisions. Digital marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for rural tourism promotion. Websites, social media platforms, blogs, online travel agencies, and mobile applications provide affordable and accessible marketing channels. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (Twitter) enable destinations to share visual content, visitor experiences, promotional campaigns, and travel information with global audiences. User-generated content and online reviews significantly influence tourist perceptions and destination choices.

Experiential marketing has also gained importance in rural tourism. Tourists increasingly seek authentic experiences such as farm stays, village walks, traditional cuisine, handicraft workshops, and cultural festivals. Marketing campaigns that highlight these experiences create emotional connections with visitors and encourage repeat visits. Storytelling techniques further strengthen destination appeal by presenting local history, traditions, and community narratives. Community participation contributes significantly to successful marketing efforts. Local residents serve as ambassadors of the destination and play a vital role in delivering authentic tourism experiences. Community-based tourism initiatives enhance visitor satisfaction while ensuring that tourism benefits are distributed among local stakeholders. Public-private partnerships have proven effective in promoting rural tourism destinations. Collaboration among government agencies, tourism boards, local businesses, and community organizations facilitates resource sharing, infrastructure development, and coordinated promotional activities. Such partnerships improve destination competitiveness and market reach. Event marketing is another important strategy. Rural festivals, agricultural fairs, cultural events, and heritage celebrations attract visitors and generate media attention. These events create opportunities for showcasing local products, traditions, and tourism services. Despite these benefits, several challenges affect rural tourism marketing. Limited financial resources often restrict promotional activities. Many rural destinations lack professional marketing expertise and digital capabilities. Inadequate infrastructure and poor connectivity can also reduce visitor satisfaction and negatively affect destination reputation. Seasonal demand fluctuations create additional challenges for sustaining tourism businesses throughout the year. The findings suggest that integrating digital technologies, destination branding, stakeholder collaboration, and community participation can significantly enhance rural tourism marketing effectiveness. Continuous innovation, capacity building, and sustainable tourism practices are essential for maintaining competitiveness and achieving long-term development goals.

Conclusion

1. Rural tourism marketing is essential for destination visibility and competitiveness.
2. Effective marketing contributes to increased tourist arrivals and local economic growth.

3. Destination branding helps create a distinctive identity for rural tourism destinations.
4. Digital marketing offers cost-effective and wide-reaching promotional opportunities.
5. Social media platforms significantly influence tourist decision-making.
6. Experiential marketing enhances visitor engagement and satisfaction.
7. Community participation strengthens authenticity and destination appeal.
8. Public-private partnerships improve marketing efficiency and resource utilization.
9. Event marketing effectively promotes local culture and tourism products.
10. Limited financial resources remain a major challenge in rural tourism marketing.
11. Capacity-building programs are necessary to improve marketing skills.
12. Technological adoption can enhance market access and destination promotion.
13. Sustainable marketing practices support long-term tourism development.
14. Integrated marketing strategies improve destination competitiveness.
15. Rural tourism marketing contributes significantly to sustainable rural development.

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Original Article

Waste Management in Tourist Areas of Ratnagiri District: Challenges and Sustainable Strategies

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Abstract:
Tourism is a major driver of economic development in Ratnagiri District. The district's coastal environment, cultural heritage, and natural attractions draw a large number of visitors every year; however, increasing tourist arrivals also generate significant municipal solid waste. Plastic bottles, food waste, packaging materials, disposable products, and other refuse create environmental pressure on tourism resources. This review-based study examines the challenges of waste management in tourist areas of Ratnagiri District and explores sustainable strategies for tourism development. The study is based on secondary data collected from academic literature, research articles, and policy documents. The findings indicate that seasonal tourist inflows, inadequate waste infrastructure, poor segregation practices, plastic pollution, and limited environmental awareness are the major challenges. Effective waste management is essential for maintaining environmental quality, protecting coastal ecosystems, and improving visitor satisfaction. The study recommends integrated waste management systems, recycling, composting, environmental education, and stakeholder participation as key strategies for sustainable tourism development

Keywords:
Waste Management, Sustainable Tourism, Coastal Tourism, Ratnagiri District

Introduction:

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy and plays a significant role in economic development by generating employment, increasing income, promoting cultural exchange, and improving infrastructure. While tourism contributes substantially to regional development, it also creates environmental challenges due to the increasing number of visitors and the pressure they place on natural resources. Among these challenges, solid waste management has become a critical issue affecting the sustainability of tourist destinations. Tourists generate various types of waste, including plastic bottles, food packaging, disposable utensils, paper, glass, and organic waste. During peak tourist seasons, festivals, and holidays, the volume of waste increases considerably, often exceeding the waste management capacity of local authorities. Inadequate waste collection, poor segregation practices, limited recycling facilities, and improper disposal methods contribute to environmental pollution and reduce the aesthetic appeal of tourist destinations. Poor waste management not only degrades natural ecosystems but also affects public health, biodiversity, and the overall image of a destination, ultimately influencing tourist satisfaction and repeat visits. Sustainable tourism emphasizes balancing economic growth with environmental conservation and social responsibility. Effective waste management is an essential component of sustainable tourism as it helps protect natural resources, maintain environmental quality, and enhance the visitor experience. The adoption of integrated waste management practices, such as waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and scientific disposal, is essential for minimizing the environmental impacts of tourism and ensuring the long-term sustainability of tourist destinations. Ratnagiri District, located along the Konkan coast of Maharashtra, is one of the state's most important coastal tourism destinations. The district is renowned for its pristine beaches, historical forts, religious sites, cultural heritage, and rich biodiversity. Tourist destinations such as Ganpatipule, Guhagar, Harne, Dapoli, Aare-Ware Beach, Bhatye Beach, Pawas, Ratnadurg Fort, Jaigad Fort, Thiba Palace, Marleshwar

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Temple, Parshuram Temple, and Dervan Shivsrushti attract thousands of domestic and international tourists every year.

Tourism has contributed significantly to the district's economy by generating employment opportunities, supporting local businesses, and promoting infrastructure development.

However, the rapid growth of tourism has also increased the generation of solid waste, particularly plastic bottles, food packaging, disposable utensils, glass bottles, and other non-biodegradable materials. During weekends, public holidays, festivals, and peak tourist seasons, the volume of waste generated at popular beaches and tourist attractions often exceeds the waste collection capacity of local authorities. As a result, litter accumulation, inadequate waste segregation, and improper disposal have become recurring environmental concerns in several tourist locations.

Recent studies on the recreational beaches of Ratnagiri have reported the increasing accumulation of microplastic debris, particularly plastic bags, food wrappers, beverage bottles, fishing-related plastic items, and other packaging materials. The studies also indicate seasonal variations in plastic pollution, with higher accumulation during the monsoon season because ocean currents and river runoff transport plastic waste to coastal beaches. Although the pollution levels remain lower than those observed in major metropolitan coastal regions, the increasing trend of plastic accumulation highlights the urgent need for effective waste management and continuous environmental monitoring.

Various organizations and educational institutions in Ratnagiri have undertaken beach clean-up campaigns at locations such as Aare-Ware, Mandavi, and Bhatye beaches to promote environmental awareness and encourage community participation. These initiatives demonstrate that maintaining the cleanliness of tourist destinations requires continuous collaboration among local authorities, educational institutions, tourism businesses, local communities, and visitors rather than occasional clean-up activities. Public awareness, responsible tourist behaviour, and active stakeholder participation are essential for ensuring long-term environmental sustainability.

Although several studies have examined tourism development and environmental sustainability in Ratnagiri District, limited research has specifically focused on waste management challenges in tourist destinations from a sustainable tourism perspective. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the major waste management challenges in the tourist areas of Ratnagiri District and to propose sustainable strategies that can improve environmental quality while supporting sustainable tourism development. The findings of this study are expected to provide useful recommendations for policymakers, local self-government institutions, tourism businesses, and local communities for developing an integrated and sustainable waste management system in Ratnagiri District.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine waste generation patterns in tourist areas of Ratnagiri District.
2. To identify major waste management challenges associated with tourism.
3. To analyses environmental, social and economic impacts of improper waste disposal.
4. To suggest sustainable strategies for waste management.

Research Methodology:

The study is descriptive and review-based in nature. Secondary data have been collected from research journals, published articles, books, websites, reports and policy documents. Relevant literature on tourism, sustainability and waste management was reviewed. The analysis focuses on tourism-generated waste, environmental impacts and management practices applicable to Ratnagiri District. The conclusions are based on interpretation and synthesis of available literature.

Literature Review:

Silva et al. (2025) found a significant relationship between tourism inflows and waste generation, demonstrating that increasing tourist numbers contribute directly to higher municipal solid waste production. Murava and Korobeinykova (2016) observed that tourism destinations frequently face waste-related challenges because visitor consumption patterns increase the generation of plastics, food waste and packaging materials. Koliotasi, Abeliotis and Tsartas (2023) examined how poor waste management affects destination image. Their findings indicate that environmental cleanliness influences visitor perceptions and tourism competitiveness. Destinations experiencing visible waste accumulation often suffer reputational damage and reduced visitor satisfaction. Chikkahanumaiah et al. (2025) highlighted that seasonal tourism peaks, inadequate infrastructure and weak enforcement mechanisms contribute significantly to waste management problems. Their study emphasized that recycling and reuse remain major challenges in tourism regions. The literature consistently indicates that tourism and waste generation are closely connected. Researchers agree that sustainable tourism requires effective waste management systems, environmental awareness and stakeholder participation. Waste management is therefore not only an environmental issue but also an economic and social concern affecting destination sustainability.

Waste Generation Pattern and Major Waste Management Challenges in Tourist Areas of Ratnagiri District:

Tourism significantly influences the quantity and composition of municipal solid waste generated in tourist destinations. Research indicates that tourists produce considerably more waste than local residents, often generating up to twice the amount of solid waste per capita. Daily waste generation generally ranges from **0.48 kg to 3.8 kg per tourist**, while in some high-consumption tourist facilities it may reach **12 kg per guest per day**. This increase is mainly attributed to greater consumption of packaged food and beverages, single-use plastic products, disposable items, and hospitality services. Hotels, resorts, homestays, restaurants, transport services, street vendors, recreational activities, and tourist attractions all contribute substantially to the generation of tourism-related waste.

The tourism pattern in Ratnagiri District reflects similar characteristics, with distinct seasonal variations in tourist arrivals. The district experiences **high tourist seasons during November–December and April–May**, primarily due to beach tourism,

pilgrimage, holidays, and the Alphonso mango season. **January–March** constitutes the mid-season, whereas **June–October** represents the low season because of the southwest monsoon, which limits tourism activities. Consequently, popular tourist destinations such as Ganpatipule, Guhagar, Dapoli, Aare-Ware, and other coastal attractions witness a sharp increase in waste generation during the high season, placing additional pressure on local waste management systems, which are generally designed to serve the resident population rather than the temporary surge in visitors.

Tourism-related waste comprises both biodegradable and non-biodegradable materials. Common waste items include polyethylene carry bags, PET water bottles, food wrappers, disposable plates and cups, paper products, glass bottles, metal cans, packaging materials, and organic waste generated from hotels, restaurants, food stalls, and tourist accommodations. In recent years, **sanitary waste**, including used sanitary pads, baby diapers, adult diapers, wet wipes, and other personal hygiene products, has emerged as a growing concern in tourist destinations. These wastes require separate collection and scientific disposal because they are non-recyclable, pose public health risks, and often end up littering beaches, public toilets, roadside areas, and open spaces when appropriate disposal facilities are unavailable. Plastic waste remains the most visible environmental challenge because of its persistence in the environment and its widespread use in tourism-related consumption.

Seasonal fluctuations further intensify waste management challenges. During holidays, festivals, and peak tourist months, the temporary rise in visitor numbers substantially increases municipal solid waste generation, often exceeding the capacity of local authorities to collect, transport, process, and dispose of waste efficiently. In Ratnagiri District, inadequate source segregation, insufficient waste bins at tourist sites, limited collection vehicles, inadequate recycling and treatment facilities, and dependence on landfill disposal reduce the efficiency of waste management. These deficiencies frequently result in litter accumulation on beaches, roadsides, public spaces, and tourist attractions.

Coastal tourist destinations are particularly vulnerable because improperly managed waste can be transported by wind, rainfall, and tidal currents into rivers and the Arabian Sea, contributing to marine pollution and threatening coastal ecosystems, fisheries, and biodiversity. Plastic bottles, food packaging, discarded fishing-related plastics, sanitary waste, and baby diapers are commonly observed among coastal litter, reducing the aesthetic appeal of beaches and negatively affecting visitor satisfaction as well as the long-term sustainability of tourism.

In addition to infrastructural deficiencies, behavioural and institutional challenges further complicate waste management. Limited environmental awareness among tourists, inadequate participation of local businesses in waste segregation, littering, improper disposal practices, insufficient monitoring, financial constraints, and weak enforcement of waste management regulations reduce the overall effectiveness of municipal waste management programmes. Therefore, addressing tourism-related waste in Ratnagiri District requires an integrated approach that includes seasonal waste management planning, adequate waste collection infrastructure, source segregation, recycling and composting, scientific disposal of sanitary waste, reduction of single-use plastics, awareness programmes for tourists and local communities, and stronger coordination among local authorities, tourism stakeholders, and residents. Such measures are essential for protecting the district's fragile coastal environment and ensuring sustainable tourism development.

Environmental, Social and Economic Impacts:

Environmental Impacts:

Improper disposal of tourist waste causes pollution of beaches, rivers, and coastal waters. Plastic waste and other litter threaten marine life, contaminate soil and water, and reduce the scenic beauty of tourist destinations. Open dumping and burning of waste also contribute to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, negatively affecting the local ecosystem.

Social Impacts:

Poor waste management creates health risks by attracting disease-carrying insects and animals. Overflowing waste bins, unpleasant odours, and littered public spaces reduce the quality of life for local residents and negatively influence tourists' experiences. During peak seasons, the increased waste load also puts additional pressure on local civic infrastructure.

Economic Impacts:

Inefficient waste management increases expenditure on waste collection, transportation, and cleaning by local authorities. Environmental degradation and unclean tourist sites may discourage visitors, leading to reduced income for hotels, restaurants, transport services, and local businesses. Furthermore, the lack of proper recycling results in the loss of valuable resources that could generate economic benefits.

Sustainable Strategies for Effective Waste Management in Ratnagiri's Coastal Tourist Destinations:

Sustainable waste management has become an essential component of responsible tourism development, particularly in coastal destinations where environmental quality directly influences visitor satisfaction and ecological conservation. For Ratnagiri's coastal tourist destinations, effective waste management should extend beyond routine collection and disposal to include waste reduction, source segregation, recycling, resource recovery, and active stakeholder participation. Adopting sustainable strategies can help protect fragile coastal ecosystems, reduce pollution, improve destination cleanliness, and enhance the long-term competitiveness of Ratnagiri as a sustainable tourism destination. Drawing on successful practices implemented in India and internationally, these strategies can provide a practical framework for strengthening waste management in Ratnagiri's coastal tourism sector. One of the most essential strategies is **source segregation at tourist destinations**. Color-coded waste bins for biodegradable, recyclable, and non-recyclable waste should be installed at beaches, parking areas, marketplaces, food stalls, ferry points, and tourist attractions. Information boards in Marathi, Hindi, and English should educate visitors on proper waste disposal practices. Regular monitoring should ensure that segregated waste remains separate throughout collection and transportation. Considering the seasonal increase in tourist arrivals, **smart waste management systems** can improve operational efficiency. Sensor-based smart bins capable of indicating fill levels can help local authorities optimize waste collection schedules, preventing

overflowing bins during peak tourism seasons. GPS-based monitoring of waste collection vehicles can further improve service efficiency and accountability, particularly in heavily visited coastal villages. Ratnagiri should adopt **circular economy practices** by promoting recycling and resource recovery. Plastic waste collected from beaches can be supplied to authorized recycling units for manufacturing recycled products, while biodegradable waste generated by hotels, restaurants, and local food vendors can be processed through decentralized composting or bio-methanation plants. Such initiatives would reduce landfill dependency while generating useful by-products such as compost and renewable energy for local communities. The tourism industry must also assume greater **environmental responsibility**. Hotels, homestays, beach resorts, restaurants, and food vendors should be encouraged to eliminate single-use plastics and adopt reusable or biodegradable alternatives. Local authorities may introduce a "Green Tourism Certification" for tourism businesses that demonstrate effective waste segregation, recycling, composting, and environmentally responsible operations. Financial incentives and public recognition can encourage greater participation, while penalties for littering and improper waste disposal should be strictly enforced. Community participation remains fundamental to sustainable coastal waste management. Local self-help groups, fishermen's associations, educational institutions, youth organizations, and environmental NGOs should collaborate with Gram Panchayats and municipal authorities to organize regular beach clean-up drives, awareness campaigns, and environmental education programmes. Such initiatives not only improve cleanliness but also foster environmental stewardship among residents and visitors.

To further reduce plastic pollution, Ratnagiri can introduce a **deposit-return system** for plastic beverage bottles and aluminium cans at major beaches and tourist attractions. Visitors would receive a refundable deposit or small incentive upon returning used containers to designated collection centres or reverse vending machines. Similar systems implemented internationally have significantly improved recycling rates and reduced littering, and a pilot programme in Ratnagiri could demonstrate comparable environmental benefits. Digital technology can also support sustainable tourism management. QR-code-enabled awareness boards placed at beaches can provide visitors with information on waste segregation, nearby recycling facilities, local environmental regulations, and reporting mechanisms for illegal dumping. Mobile applications and social media campaigns can further encourage responsible tourist behaviour and community participation. The successful implementation of these strategies requires effective coordination among the Maharashtra Tourism Department, Maharashtra Pollution Control Board, local municipalities, Gram Panchayats, tourism businesses, NGOs, educational institutions, and local communities. By integrating sustainable infrastructure, responsible tourism practices, community engagement, and circular economy principles, Ratnagiri can preserve its coastal ecosystems, improve visitor satisfaction, and establish itself as a model for sustainable coastal tourism in Maharashtra.

Conclusion:

Tourism is an important driver of economic growth in Ratnagiri District, but the increasing number of visitors has also intensified the challenge of managing solid waste, particularly in coastal and other popular tourist destinations. This review highlights that seasonal tourist inflows, inadequate waste management infrastructure, poor source segregation, plastic pollution, and limited public awareness are the major factors contributing to waste management problems in the district. The study further indicates that improper waste management has significant environmental, social, and economic consequences. It degrades coastal ecosystems, affects public health, reduces visitor satisfaction, and increases the financial burden on local authorities. As Ratnagiri's tourism industry continues to expand, adopting sustainable waste management practices is essential to protect its natural and cultural resources. The study recommends an integrated approach that includes waste segregation at source, improved collection and recycling systems, composting of biodegradable waste, reduction of single-use plastics, environmental awareness programmes, and active participation of government agencies, local communities, tourism businesses, educational institutions, and tourists. The adoption of these measures will not only improve environmental quality but also strengthen Ratnagiri's image as a clean and sustainable tourism destination. Overall, sustainable waste management should be regarded as a key component of tourism planning and destination management. By balancing tourism growth with environmental conservation, Ratnagiri District can ensure long-term sustainable tourism development while preserving its valuable coastal ecosystems and enhancing the quality of life for both residents and visitors.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research paper.

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Original Article

Cultural Tourism in Lucknow: Opportunities, Challenges and Future Prospect Under Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

Cultural tourism plays an important role in preserving heritage and promoting economic development. Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh, is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, historical monuments, traditional crafts and the Awadhi cuisine. This study examines the role of cultural tourism in Lucknow and evaluates its contribution to heritage conservation, economic growth, and tourism development. The study is based on secondary data collected from government reports, tourism publications, research articles, and related literature. The findings reveal that cultural tourism has significantly contributed to the preservation of heritage monuments, promotion of traditional crafts such as Chikankari and Zardozi, and enhancement of the city's cultural identity. It has also generated employment opportunities and supported local businesses, thereby contributing to economic growth. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, poor maintenance of heritage sites, traffic congestion, environmental concerns, and limited tourism promotion continue to affect tourism development in the city. The study further highlights the future prospects of cultural tourism in Lucknow in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047. It concludes that sustainable tourism practices, effective heritage conservation, improved infrastructure, and strategic promotion are essential for strengthening Lucknow's position as a leading cultural tourism destination while preserving its cultural legacy for future generations.

Keywords: *Cultural Tourism, Heritage Conservation, Economic Growth, Lucknow, Cultural Heritage, Viksit Bharat 2047.*

Introduction

Tourism has become a vital component of economic development worldwide. Among its various forms, cultural tourism focuses on experiencing the cultural heritage, traditions, arts, architecture, festivals, and lifestyles of a destination. North India possesses a unique cultural landscape shaped by centuries of historical developments, religious influences, and artistic achievements. The region includes states such as Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, and the National Capital Territory of Delhi. Among various forms of tourism, cultural tourism focuses on experiencing the heritage, traditions, arts, architecture, and lifestyle of a destination. Lucknow occupies a unique position in India's cultural landscape due to its historical significance and distinctive Nawabi culture. The city served as the capital of the Awadh region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and developed into a centre of art, literature, music, dance, cuisine, and architecture. Today, Lucknow's cultural heritage attracts thousands of visitors annually, contributing significantly to the local economy and preserving traditional cultural practices.
This research paper explores the role of cultural tourism in Lucknow and evaluates its contribution to heritage conservation economic growth and challenges affecting tourism development in Lucknow city.

Objective

The objectives of this study are:
To examine the cultural tourism resources of Lucknow.
2. To analyze the importance of Lucknow's heritage and traditions in attracting tourists.
3. To assess the economic and social impacts of cultural tourism.
4. To identify challenges affecting cultural tourism development.
5. To suggest measures for sustainable tourism growth.

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Cultural Background of Lucknow City

Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, is a major cultural tourism destination in India, known for its rich heritage, historical monuments, traditional arts, and unique cultural identity. Popularly called the "City of Nawabs," Lucknow flourished under the Nawabs of Awadh during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who patronized architecture, literature, music, dance, and cuisine. Their legacy continues to attract tourists from across the country and abroad.

A defining feature of Lucknow's cultural tourism is its Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb, a composite culture that reflects harmony between diverse communities. The city's architectural heritage forms the foundation of its cultural tourism. Monuments such as Bara Imambara, Chota Imambara, Rumi Darwaza, and The Residency showcase the artistic and historical significance of the Nawabi era. These sites provide insight into Lucknow's glorious past and attract thousands of heritage tourists annually.

Lucknow is also renowned for its traditional crafts, particularly Chikankari and Zardozi embroidery. Markets such as Chowk, Aminabad, and Hazratganj serve as important centers for cultural shopping. Another major attraction is Awadhi cuisine, famous for delicacies such as Galouti Kebab, Kakori Kebab, Biryani, and Sheermal. Food tourism has become an important aspect of the cultural tourism experience in Lucknow.

The city's cultural appeal is further enhanced by its contributions to music, dance, and literature. Lucknow is the birthplace of the Lucknow Gharana of Kathak, a renowned classical dance tradition. The city has also played a significant role in the development of Urdu poetry and literature.

Thus, Lucknow's cultural tourism is based on its historical monuments, traditional crafts, performing arts, literature, cuisine, and composite culture. These elements make the city an important center of heritage tourism and contribute significantly to preserving its cultural legacy while promoting economic development.

Top Tourist Places in Lucknow

Heritage & Historical Attractions

- Bara Imambara – Lucknow's most famous monument, known for the Bhul Bhulaiya (labyrinth) and remarkable architecture.
- Rumi Darwaza – The iconic gateway and symbol of Lucknow.
- Chota Imambada – Famous for its chandeliers, intricate interiors, and Nawabi architecture.
- Satkhanda – An unfinished four-storey watchtower from the Nawabi era.
- Sikandar Bagh – Historic site associated with the Revolt of 1857.
- The Residency – One of the most important sites connected to the First War of Independence (1857).

Parks & Modern Attractions

- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Memorial, Gomti Riverfront Park, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah Zoological Garden, State Museum Lucknow, Gautam Buddha Park, Prerna Sthal.

Markets & Cultural Experience

- Hazratganj, Aminabad, Chowk are best for traditional shopping, Chikankari, and street food.

Review Of Literature

1. **Richards (2018)** emphasized that cultural tourism plays a vital role in preserving heritage, promoting cultural identity, and generating economic benefits for local communities. The study highlighted the importance of sustainable tourism practices in heritage destinations.
2. **Singh and Sharma (2020)** examined heritage tourism in Indian cities and found that historical monuments, traditional crafts, and cultural festivals are major attractions that contribute to local economic development and employment generation.
3. **UNESCO (2021)** reported that cultural tourism contributes significantly to the conservation of both tangible and intangible heritage by creating awareness and generating financial resources for preservation activities.
4. **Kumar (2021)** studied the impact of tourism on urban heritage sites and concluded that tourism encourages investment in monument conservation, infrastructure development, and cultural promotion, but may also create challenges related to overcrowding and environmental degradation.
5. **Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department Reports (2023–2025)** indicate that Lucknow has emerged as an important cultural tourism destination due to its Nawabi heritage, historical monuments, Chikankari craftsmanship, Awadhi cuisine, and cultural festivals.
6. **Research on Cultural Tourism in Lucknow** suggests that heritage attractions such as Bara Imambara, Chota Imambara, Rumi Darwaza, and Residency significantly influence tourist arrivals and contribute to the city's economy. However, issues such as inadequate infrastructure, traffic congestion, and limited international promotion continue to affect tourism growth.

Research Gap

Most studies have focused on cultural tourism, heritage conservation, or economic development separately. Limited research has comprehensively examined the role of cultural tourism in Lucknow by simultaneously analyzing its contribution to heritage conservation, economic growth, challenges, and future prospects under the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Therefore, the present study seeks to bridge this gap.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The present study is based on a feasibility research, desk research and analytical research.It aims to examine the role of cultural tourism in Lucknow and evaluate its contribution to heritage conservation, economic growth, and tourism development. The study

also identifies the major challenges affecting the growth of cultural tourism in the city.

Sources of Data

The study is primarily based on secondary data collected from various reliable sources, including:

- Ministry of Tourism, Government of India reports
- Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department publications
- Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) reports
- UNESCO reports and publications
- Research journals, books, and articles related to cultural tourism
- Government websites and tourism statistics
- Published dissertations and conference papers
- Newspaper reports and tourism surveys

The study is also based on primary data collected from related authorities of various heritage sites and a pilot study has been made.

Data Collection Method

Secondary data were collected through:

- Literature review of books and research articles
- Analysis of tourism statistics and government reports
- Review of heritage conservation documents
- Examination of tourism-related economic indicators and published data.

Primary data for the study is collected through:

- structured questionnaires and personal interviews with tourists, local residents, artisans, tour guides, hotel operators, and tourism officials in Lucknow.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using:

- Descriptive analysis
- Comparative analysis
- Tabular presentation of tourism and economic data.
- Interpretation of trends related to tourist arrivals, heritage conservation, and tourism development

Contribution Of Cultural Tourism to Heritage Conservation in Lucknow

1. Increased Visitor Footfall Supports Heritage Preservation: Tourist visits to monuments under the Lucknow Circle have shown sustained growth, generated revenue and justifying greater conservation investments.

YEAR	VISITORS
2023	**284,087**
2024	**325,179**

This represents an increase of approximately 14.5% in one year, indicating growing public interest in Lucknow's heritage assets. In 2023 the historic Residency Complex attracted 152,480 visitors, making it one of the city's most visited heritage sites. (ISI)

2. UNESCO Recognition Strengthens Heritage Conservation: UNESCO reports that cultural festivals such as Lucknow Mahotsav, Awadh Mahotsav, and Sanatkada Festival collectively attract nearly 5.8 million visitors annually, helping preserve local traditions and cultural practices. Lucknow received recognition as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy in 2025. This recognition promotes the preservation of Awadhi culinary traditions and strengthens cultural tourism as a tool for safeguarding intangible heritage. UNESCO notes that culinary tourism and heritage preservation in Lucknow support livelihoods for thousands of artisans, cooks, and small businesses. (UNESCO)

3. Financial Support for Heritage Conservation in Lucknow: In Lucknow, increasing tourist interest in historical monuments and cultural sites has resulted in several conservation projects receiving dedicated funding.

Project / Initiative	Financial Allocation
Restoration of Chhatar Manzil (2025–26 Budget)	**₹3.44 crore**
Development of Yahiyaganj Gurdwara as Heritage Tourism Site	**₹2 crore**
Conservation of Chhota Imambara Gates under Smart City Mission	**₹6 crore**
International Convention Centre and Heritage-linked Tourism Infrastructure (Lucknow)	**₹1,435.25 crore approved project cost**
UP Budget Allocation for Tourism & Development Projects in Lucknow (2026–27)	**₹2,180 crore**

These investments demonstrate the government's commitment to preserving cultural heritage while improving tourism infrastructure.

4. Revenue and Conservation Link: At the national level, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) spent substantial amounts on conservation and maintenance of heritage sites:

Year	Conservation Expenditure
2017–18	₹424.46 crore
2018–19	₹419.81 crore

2019–20	₹444.84 crore

ASI's overall allocation for conservation of protected monuments across India was:

YEAR	ALLOCATION
2022–23	₹392.71 crore
2023–24	₹443.53 crore
2024–25	₹313.43 crore

These funds support restoration, maintenance, visitor amenities, and conservation activities that directly benefit heritage tourism destinations such as Lucknow.

Economic Contribution of Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is a major contributor to Lucknow's economy through employment generation, infrastructure development, support to handicrafts, hospitality, transportation, and local businesses.

1. Tourist Growth Drives Economic Activity: Lucknow is part of the Uttar Pradesh Heritage Arc (Agra–Lucknow–Varanasi), one of India's most important cultural tourism circuits. Uttar Pradesh received 64.9 crore tourists in 2024, compared to 48.01 crore in 2023, reflecting the growing importance of cultural and heritage tourism in the state's economy. Growth Rate is 35.2%

2. Contribution to State Economy: The Uttar Pradesh Government estimates that tourism will contribute approximately ₹70,000 crore annually to the state's economy by 2028, up from about ₹11,000 crore in 2016-17. Cultural and heritage destinations such as Lucknow are key contributors to this growth.

3. Employment Generation: Tourism is a major employment generator. The Uttar Pradesh Government reports that tourism currently contributes around 1.4% of total employment in the state and aims to increase this to 5% by 2047. Employment is created in Hotels and restaurants, Heritage guides, Transport services, Handicrafts and souvenir markets , Event management, Food and beverage sector, Cultural performances

4. Support to Chikankari and Handicraft Sector: Lucknow's famous Chikankari industry and other traditional crafts benefit significantly from cultural tourism. The handicraft sector contributes substantially to local livelihoods and preserves traditional skills.

5. Government Investment in Tourism Infrastructure: To promote tourism-led economic growth, Uttar Pradesh allocated ₹2,026 crore for tourism development projects, including heritage conservation, infrastructure improvement, and tourist facilities. Tourist economy target by 2028 is ₹70,000 crore.

6. Multiplier Effect on Local Economy: Research shows that one tourism job creates additional indirect employment in transport, retail, handicrafts, and hospitality services.

Challenges Affecting Tourism Development In Lucknow

1. Inadequate Infrastructure: Several tourist sites in Lucknow suffer from inadequate infrastructure, including insufficient parking, poor signage, limited public amenities, and weak connectivity. These issues reduce tourist convenience and negatively impact the overall visitor experience.

2. Poor Maintenance and Conservation of Heritage Sites: Without proper preservation, the historical and architectural significance of these sites may gradually decline, reducing their attractiveness to tourists.

3. Traffic Congestion and Rapid Urbanization: Lucknow has experienced rapid urban growth in recent years, resulting in increased traffic congestion, especially around major tourist destinations. Long travel times and transportation difficulties can discourage tourists from exploring multiple attractions.

4. Limited Promotion and International Visibility: Although Lucknow possesses rich cultural, historical, and culinary heritage, it does not receive the same level of national and international promotion as cities such as Agra, Jaipur, or Varanasi.

5. Environmental Pollution and Cleanliness Issues: Environmental challenges such as air pollution, traffic-related emissions, improper waste disposal, and inadequate cleanliness around some tourist areas can negatively impact the tourism experience

Prospects Of Cultural Tourism In Lucknow Under Viksit Bharat 2047

Lucknow has immense potential to become one of India's leading cultural tourism destinations under the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision. The city's rich Nawabi heritage, historical monuments, traditional crafts, Awadhi cuisine, and composite culture provide a strong foundation for sustainable tourism growth.

1. Development as a Global Heritage City: With iconic attractions such as Bara Imambara, Chota Imambara, Rumi Darwaza, Residency, and Chhatar Manzil, Lucknow can emerge as an internationally recognized heritage tourism destination. Increased promotion and conservation efforts can significantly boost both domestic and foreign tourist arrivals.

2. Expansion of Heritage and Cultural Circuits: Lucknow's inclusion in the Heritage Arc (Agra–Lucknow–Varanasi) will enhance its importance as a cultural tourism hub. Heritage walks, Nawabi cultural tours, literary tourism, and historical circuits can attract a wider range of tourists and increase the average length of stay.

3. Growth of Craft and Culinary Tourism: Lucknow's world-famous Chikankari, Zardozi embroidery, and Awadhi cuisine offer tremendous opportunities for experiential tourism. Dedicated craft villages, cultural markets, food festivals, and culinary trails can generate employment while preserving traditional skills.

4. Improved Infrastructure and Smart Tourism: Ongoing investments in metro expansion, airport development, road connectivity, riverfront projects, and digital tourism services will improve accessibility and visitor experience. Smart tourism initiatives can make heritage sites more informative and tourist-friendly.

5. Employment Generation and Economic Growth: The growth of cultural tourism can create employment opportunities in hospitality, transport, handicrafts, tour guiding, event management, retail, and food services. This will contribute to local economic development and improve the livelihoods of artisans and small business owners.

6. Preservation of Heritage and Culture: Tourism revenue can support the conservation of monuments, restoration of historic buildings, and promotion of traditional arts such as Kathak, Urdu literature, and folk performances. This will ensure that Lucknow's cultural identity remains preserved for future generations.

Findings, Suggestions and Expected Outcomes

Findings

1. Cultural tourism plays a significant role in preserving Lucknow's historical monuments, traditional crafts, and cultural heritage.
2. Heritage attractions such as Bara Imambara, Chota Imambara, Rumi Darwaza, and Residency are major tourist draws.
3. Cultural tourism contributes to economic growth through employment generation, increased tourist spending, and support to local businesses.
4. Traditional crafts such as Chikankari and Zardozi benefit from tourism demand and help preserve cultural traditions.
5. Inadequate infrastructure, traffic congestion, poor maintenance of some heritage sites, and limited promotion are the major challenges affecting tourism development.

Suggestions

1. Improve tourism infrastructure and visitor facilities at major tourist destinations.
2. Strengthen conservation and restoration of heritage monuments.
3. Promote Lucknow's cultural heritage through digital marketing and international campaigns.
4. Support artisans and traditional craft industries through financial and marketing assistance.
5. Encourage community participation and sustainable tourism practices.

Expected Outcomes

1. Enhanced awareness regarding the importance of cultural tourism in heritage conservation.
2. Improved understanding of the economic contribution of cultural tourism in Lucknow.
3. Identification of key challenges affecting tourism development.
4. Development of strategies for sustainable tourism growth and heritage preservation.
5. Strengthening of Lucknow's position as a leading cultural tourism destination in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Conclusion

The study concludes that cultural tourism is a vital contributor to heritage conservation and economic growth in Lucknow. The city's historical monuments, traditional crafts, Awadhi cuisine, and cultural heritage attract tourists and support local employment and businesses. Cultural tourism helps preserve both tangible and intangible heritage while enhancing the city's cultural identity. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, poor maintenance of heritage sites, traffic congestion, and limited promotion hinder tourism development. Therefore, sustainable tourism practices, improved infrastructure, effective heritage conservation, and strategic promotion are essential for realizing Lucknow's tourism potential and achieving the objectives of Viksit Bharat 2047.

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Original Article

A Geographical Analysis of Major Tourist Attractions in Baramati Tehsil, Pune District, Maharashtra

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Abstract:
Tourism depends greatly on natural and cultural resources. Natural resources such as forests, rivers, waterfalls, wildlife, temples, historical places, and a pleasant climate are important attractions for tourism. These resources help in developing tourism activities in a region. This study examines the tourism potential of the Baramati Tehsil, highlighting its major natural, religious, historical, and cultural tourist destinations. The research is based on primary and secondary data and examines the facilities available for domestic tourists, such as transportation, infrastructure, accommodation, food, shopping, and other services. The development of tourism in Indapur Taluka depends on the availability and quality of these facilities. The study shows that major tourist destinations play an important role in the development of tourism in the region.

Keywords: *Tourism, Major tourist destination, Infrastructure, Wildlife Sanctuary*

Introduction:

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world. People are naturally attracted to the beauty of nature, and geographical features play an important role in the development of tourism. Natural attractions such as beautiful landscapes, pleasant climate, dense forests, rivers, waterfalls, wildlife, birds, butterflies, and scenic water bodies attract a large number of visitors. These natural resources create opportunities for recreation, sightseeing, and relaxation, which help in promoting tourism and supporting the economic development of a region.

This study focuses on the major tourist attractions of Baramati taluka in Pune District, it covers destinations such as Mayureshwar Temple - Morgaon, Someshwar Temple - Karanje, Shri Kashivishweshwar Temple and the Shri Siddheshwar Temple, Mayureshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, Grassland Safari at Shirsuphal, Agro-tourism Centers like KVK, Agri Tourism Development Center at Palashiwadi, Agri tourism Baramati, Sonakaswadi etc.

Objectives:

The research paper is based on the following objectives;

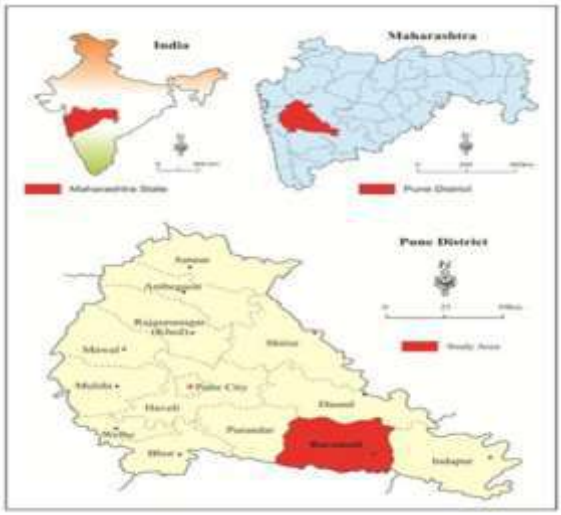
1. To highlight the tourist destination in the study area.
2. To examine the benefits of tourism in the study area.

Study Area:

Baramati Tehsil lies in the eastern part of Pune district of Maharashtra. The river Nira flows west to east, forming the southern boundary of the Tehsil and the district. The river Karha flows northwest to southeast. Baramati tehsil is bounded by Indapur tehsil towards the East, Satara district towards the South, Purandar Tehsil towards the west and Daund Tehsil towards the north. The total geographical area of Baramati Tehsil is 1386.40 km². Baramati tehsil lies between $18^0$2'44" and $18^0$23'19" North latitude and $74^0$13'8"and $74^0$42'47" East longitudes. The Baramati tehsil experiences a hot, dry climate for most of the year. Agroclimatically, the study region comes under a scarity zone. October and November receive rainfall from the retreat of the monsoon. Tehsil consists of 116 villages and 2 towns. According to the 2011 census, it has a population of 429600.

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Hypothesis:

Tourism can generate employment opportunities and help to remove poverty.

Database and Research Methodology:

The present study is based on both primary and secondary data sources which have been used for the research paper. Primary data was collected from various tourist destinations, and information was also collected through interview schedules of tourists. Secondary data is collected from various reference books, newspapers, magazines, thesis of tourism, and information from the internet. Interviews and discussions were also organised with tourists.

Major Tourist Attractions in the Study Area:

In Baramati tehsil, there are various types of tourist places like religious, historical, ecotourism, agrotourism and grassland. There are major tourist destinations in the study area, which include Mayureshwar Temple - Morgaon, Someshwar Temple - Karanje, Shri Kashivishweshwar Temple and the Shri Siddheshwar Temple, Mayureshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, Grassland Safari at Shirsuphal, Agro-tourism Centers like KVK, Agri Tourism Development Center at Palashiwadi, Agri tourism Baramati, Sonakaswadi etc.

1. Mayureshwar Temple (Morgaon):

Morgaon is known as the Adyapeeth of the Ganapatya Sampradaya in Maharashtra and is famous for the temple of Lord Ganesha called Mayureshwar or Moreshwar. The village is believed to be shaped like a peacock, and since many peacocks were found here in the past, the village was named Morgaon. According to legend, Lord Ganesha took the form of Mayureshwar and rode a peacock to defeat the demon Sindhu on Bhadrapad Sudh Chaturthi. Morgaon is located in the Baramati tehsil of the Pune district on the bank of the Karha River, also known locally as Brahmakamandalu Ganga. The Moreshwar temple is considered a swayambhu (self-manifested) temple of Lord Ganesha and is the first temple in the sacred Ashtavinayaka Yatra. Devotees begin and end the pilgrimage here. The temple, believed to have been built in the 14th century by Moraya Gosavi, has four entrances facing the four cardinal directions and features a north-facing structure with the idol of Ganesha having a left-turned trunk, accompanied by idols of Siddhi and Riddhi. Several architectural features, such as the Nagarkhana, Nandi, Mushakraj, sabhamandap, and sacred trees like Shami and Bel, enhance the temple premises. Pilgrims visit throughout the year, but especially during Bhadrapad Sudh Chaturthi and Magh Sudh Chaturthi (Ganesh Jayanti). Morgaon is well connected by road to Pune, Jejuri, and Baramati, though facilities like accommodation, food, and parking become insufficient during peak pilgrimage periods.

2. Mayureshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (Supe):

Mayureshwar Wildlife Sanctuary is located near Supe in the Baramati taluka of Pune District. It covers about 5.14 km² and is known for its dry deciduous scrubland and grassland biodiversity. The sanctuary is famous for wildlife such as the Indian Gazelle (Chinkara), Indian Grey Wolf, Striped Hyena, Indian Fox, and many bird species, including the Indian Peafowl. It is about 70-75 km from Pune and can be reached via the Pune-Solapur Highway. From Morgaon it is about 9.4 km away. The best time to visit is from August to February, especially in the early morning or evening, for better wildlife sightings. Visitors can explore the sanctuary by vehicle or on foot, and watchtowers are available for observing animals and birds.

3. **Someshwar temple (Karanje):**

Karanje is famous for the Someshwar Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva in the form of Somnath. It is believed that the deity appeared here as a Swayambhu Ling due to the devotion of Malu Gavali. The temple is located in Baramati tehsil of Pune district near Nira on the Nira–Baramati road. The temple is surrounded by a wall with resting spaces for devotees, and daily pooja and abhishek are performed. Many devotees visit especially on Mondays, during the month of Shravan, and on Maha Shivaratri. A Pushkarani well is also situated behind the temple. The Somnath Karanje has recently been declared a 'C' category tourist destination by the Government of Maharashtra and is well connected by road and railway.

4. Agro-tourism Centers in Baramati Tahsil

a) Agricultural Development Trust (KVK) Baramati, Malegaon Kh.

The Agricultural Technology Centre (ATC) at Malegaon Khurd in Baramati tehsil was established by the Maharashtra Agricultural and Rural Tourism Cooperative Federation and Agricultural Development Trust Sharadanagar. It is located about 6

km west of Baramati and covers 44 hectares of land used for agricultural research, training, and demonstration. The centre includes demonstration farms, laboratories, polyhouses, dairy and poultry units, nursery, fish hatchery, and other modern farming facilities. It provides training to farmers, promotes agri-tourism, and supports modern agriculture through projects such as the Indo-Dutch vegetable project and the Bee Connect program in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

b) Baramati Agri Tourism Development Center, Palashiwadi-

The Agri Tourism Centre at Palashiwadi in Baramati taluka is spread over about 20 acres and offers visitors an experience of rural life along with traditional Maharashtrian vegetarian food. The centre focuses on agri-tourism, organic farming, research, and rural training activities. Tourists can see flower gardens, vegetable farms, fisheries, and tree plantations, and also enjoy activities such as bullock cart and tractor rides, rural games, cycling, and farm work. Visitors are welcomed in a traditional manner and can learn about dairy farming, goat and sheep farming, fruit plantations, silk production, and modern irrigation techniques. The centre is also located near several tourist attractions such as Supa Bird Sanctuary, Someshwar Temple Karanje, and Mayureshwar Temple Morgaon, making it an important place for agri-tourism in the Baramati region.

c) Agri tourism Baramati, Sonakaswadi

At the agri-tourism centre, visitors are welcomed in a traditional way with kumkum and garlands and served a local farmer's breakfast. Tourists can take part in fruit plantation tours and learn about crop growth, food value, and the supply chain from farmer to customer. They can also visit cow, sheep, and goat farms, observe milking, and understand dairy processing. Other attractions include silk farming, a farm equipment museum, medicinal plant tours, demonstrations of crop experiments, and modern irrigation methods. Visitors can see a large nursery of fruit saplings, bee-keeping units, and take part in rural games, bullock cart and tractor rides. The centre also uses renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and biogas for electricity.

5. Grassland Safari at Shirsuphal:

The safari in the Grasslands of Baramati will give an opportunity to explore the rich wildlife and spot the animals like Hyena, Wolf, Jackal, Fox and many Migratory Birds. There is only one zone in the Baramati grasslands which gives access to the Safari that is the Shirsuphal zone.

Safari of Shirsuphal zone in Baramati range starts at Gadikhel Gate covering 40 km of track and will end at Parwadi Gate. Tourists can enjoy the Safari along the route marked by the forest department in Gadikhel, Shirsuphal, Sablewadi and Parwadi.



6. **Shri Kashivishweshwar Temple:**

The Baramati is famous for its two ancient temples, the Shri Kashivishweshwar Temple and the Shri Siddheshwar Temple. Both temples are known for their beautiful architecture and are believed to have been built around 750 A.D. The Kashivishweshwar Temple is located on the western bank of the Karha River, while the Siddheshwar Temple stands on the eastern bank of the same river. The Kashivishweshwar Temple is dedicated to Lord Ganesha. References to this temple are found in the epic Shiv Lilamrut, written by the famous poet Shridhar Swami. Because of its historical and religious importance, this temple has become one of the most popular tourist attractions in Baramati. Visitors often experience a peaceful and calm atmosphere, and the beautiful architecture of the temple makes it a memorable place to visit.

7. Shri Siddheshwar Temple:

The Shri Siddheshwar Temple is one of the important tourist attractions in Baramati. This ancient temple is believed to have been built around 750 A.D., similar to the Shri Kashivishweshwar Temple. The temple is located on the eastern bank of the Karha River. According to local belief, the temple was built by Siddharameshwar after his guru Mallikarjun asked him to spread Shiva lingams across the city. The temple is known for its peaceful atmosphere and beautiful architecture. After visiting Siddheshwar

Temple, many tourists also visit Kashivishweshwar Temple, where the attractive sculpture and idol of Nandi draw attention. The simplicity and beauty of these temples provide a calm and spiritual experience, making them popular tourist places in Baramati.

Conclusion

The present study explains the existing major tourist attractions in Baramati Taluka. The Mayureshwar Temple is an important pilgrimage destination in the study region and attracts many devotees and tourists throughout the year. Basic infrastructure facilities such as accommodation, food, and other services are available to meet the needs of visitors, and local people also support tourism by providing these facilities. The Shirsuphal Grassland Safari Zone has the potential to be developed further as a tourism attraction in the future. Baramati Taluka also has great potential for the development of agro-tourism due to its favourable natural conditions, diverse agricultural products, and rich rural traditions and festivals. Agro-tourism in this region allows visitors to experience rural life, enjoy traditional local food, and stay in a peaceful environment. These features make Baramati an emerging destination for tourists interested in agriculture-based tourism and rural culture. Several agri-tourism centers are already operating commercially in the taluka, but there is a need to promote this concept further so that more farmers can participate in the agri-tourism service industry and increase their income.

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Original Article

The Nexus of Financial Inclusion and Equitable Tourism Growth: Empowering Grassroots Msmes Through Innovative Finance

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Abstract

The global tourism industry is a massive economic driver, yet its financial benefits frequently bypass the grassroots Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) that form its cultural and operational backbone. This paper explores the critical nexus between financial inclusion and equitable tourism growth. By examining the systemic roadblocks that prevent local, informal tourism businesses from accessing capital, this study highlights the disproportionate impact of financial exclusion on community development. Utilising a mixed-methods secondary data analysis, the research measures the socio-economic impact of targeted financial support and evaluates the efficacy of modern financial solutions—such as digital lending and microfinance—in empowering marginalised groups, particularly women and indigenous entrepreneurs. The findings reveal that when grassroots MSMEs are financially integrated, local income retention and job creation increase significantly. The paper concludes with actionable, real-world recommendations for policymakers and financial institutions to build a resilient, community-centric tourism ecosystem.

Keywords: *Financial Inclusion, Tourism MSMEs, Equitable Growth, Digital Lending,*

Introduction

Tourism is often celebrated as a catalyst for economic development, but beneath the surface of booming international arrivals lies a stark reality: the wealth generated does not always trickle down to the local level. While multinational hotel chains and large tour operators capture the lion's share of tourism revenue, the true soul of a destination—local homestay owners, artisan cooperatives, indigenous guides, and family-run eateries—often struggles to survive. These grassroots Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the custodians of local culture and the primary drivers of authentic tourist experiences. However, they operate in a paradoxical landscape where they are highly visible in the tourism value chain but virtually invisible to the formal financial sector. Financial inclusion—the availability and equality of opportunities to access financial services—is the missing link in transforming tourism from an extractive industry into an equitable one. When a local entrepreneur cannot secure a loan to upgrade a homestay or buy better equipment, the entire community suffers from stalled economic mobility. The data behind this gap argue that empowering grassroots tourism MSMEs through innovative finance is not merely a banking objective but a fundamental requirement for sustainable and equitable tourism growth.

Objectives

To systematically address the challenges and opportunities at the intersection of finance and tourism, this study is guided by four primary objectives:

A. Identify the roadblocks to funding: To understand why small, local, and informal tourism businesses struggle to access the loans and financial services they need to start and grow.

B. Measure the impact on local communities: To assess how providing the right financial support to these businesses creates local jobs, ensures fairer incomes, and keeps tourism money circulating within the community.

C. Explore modern financial solutions: To evaluate how new, flexible financial tools—such as microloans, digital lending, and community funding—can successfully empower women, indigenous groups, and rural entrepreneurs.

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D. Recommend practical, real-world actions: To provide clear, actionable steps for governments and banks to build a fairer financial system that supports a strong, sustainable, and community-focused tourism industry.

Data and Methodology

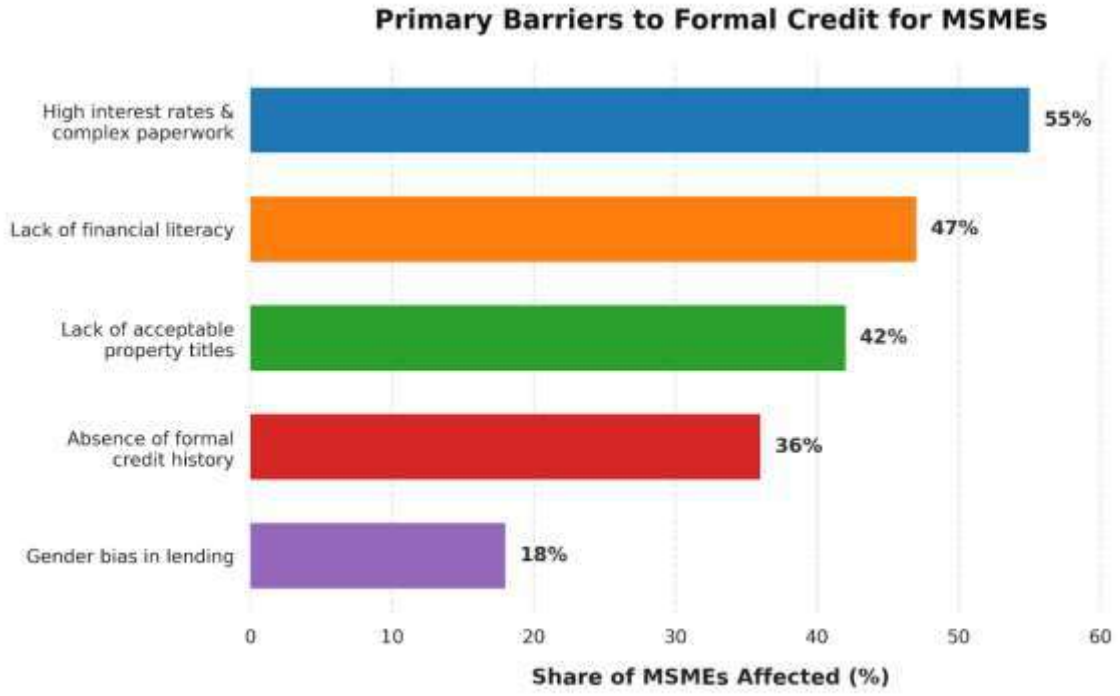
Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and quantitative secondary data analysis approach. Data was synthesised from reports by the World Bank, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and peer-reviewed academic journals spanning the last decade. The focus is particularly on emerging economies, with a specific focus§ on India, given its robust grassroots tourism sector and aggressive financial inclusion initiatives.

Secondary Data Presentation and Interpretation

Table 1: Primary Roadblocks to Funding for Tourism MSMEs

Barriers or Obstacle	Share of MSMEs Affected	Category	The Real-World Impact
High interest rates & complex paperwork	55%	Operational Barriers	For more than half of small borrowers, the sheer cost of borrowing and the mountain of paperwork are exhausting. Many are either priced out by high rates or simply give up due to the overwhelming documentation required.
Lack of financial literacy	47%	Cultural & Social	Nearly half of small business owners struggle with limited knowledge of complex financial products, formal accounting setups, and intricate loan procedures. This gap often leads to unfavourable loan terms or deters them from applying entirely.
Lack of acceptable property titles	42%	Collateral Issues	Collateral remains a primary reason bank reject application. More than 40% of these business owners do not possess clear, registered land or building titles to pledge as security.
Absence of formal credit history	36%	Credit History Issues	Because a massive chunk of micro and small firms operate informally and deal primarily in cash, they leave behind a "thin" credit file. Without an established CIBIL score, traditional lenders hesitate to clear loans.
Gender bias in lending	18%	Cultural & Social (Women-led)	Women entrepreneurs face unique, disproportionate structural and social biases when trying to access credit. While regional numbers vary, gender-related barriers are cited as the primary obstacle in nearly a fifth of these underserved cases.

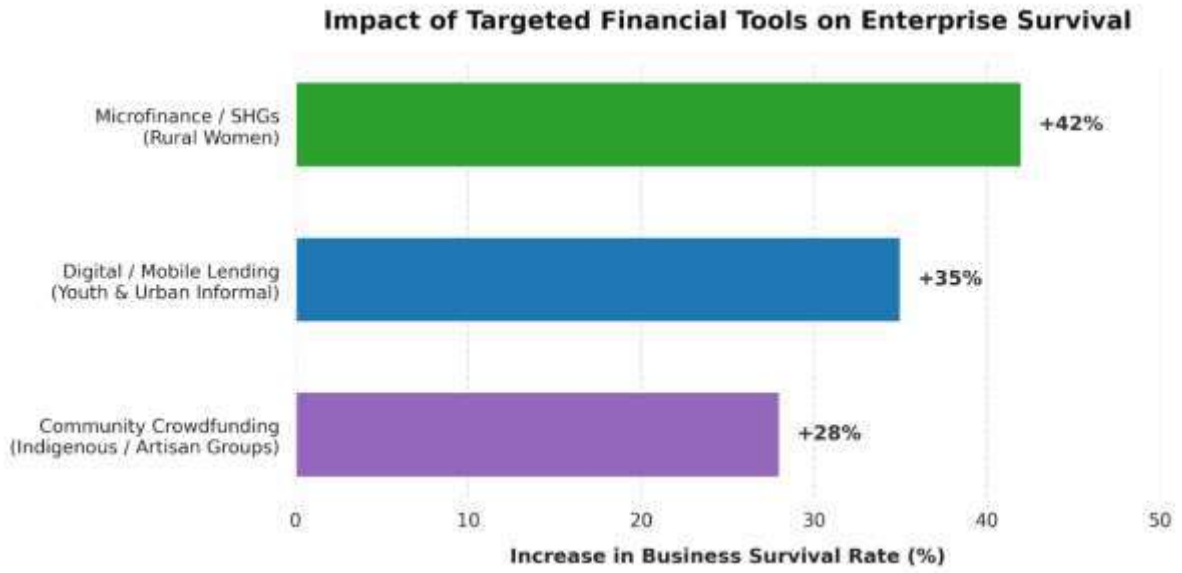


Interpretation of the above table and diagram

More than half of small business owners describe formal banking as a paperwork maze that drains time, money, and morale. Facing steep interest rates and dense documentation, many micro-entrepreneurs—often solo operators—simply give up rather than battle the system. Nearly half struggle with financial language: they run solid businesses but lack the accounting know-how to navigate loan terms, so they accept bad deals or avoid formal credit entirely. For 42%, the problem is not business quality but missing title deeds or formal collateral; family-owned premises and informal setups get rejected despite strong performance. Over a third suffer from the cash paradox: busy, cash-based operations leave no digital trail, so credit scores treat them as invisible risks. Women entrepreneurs face an extra, unfair hurdle—bias that turns capable founders into higher-friction applicants, sometimes requiring male guarantors or extra scrutiny. Together, these barriers don't just block loans; they limit growth, force reliance on costly informal credit, and erode confidence. Addressing paperwork, literacy, collateral flexibility, alternative credit data, and gender bias could unlock large swathes of productive, yet underserved, entrepreneurial energy.

Table 2: Adoption and Impact of Modern Financial Tools by Demographic

Financial Tool	Who it Helps Most	The Real-World Survival Boost	**Where the Magic Happens**
Microfinance / SHGs	Rural Women	42%	Community-based eco-tourism, local homestays, and micro-cultivation
Digital / Mobile Lending	Youth & Urban Informal	35%	Agile street-food vending, local transit/tour guiding, and immediate retail inventory.
Community Crowdfunding	Indigenous / Artisan Groups	28%	Preservation of cultural heritage crafts, geographical indication (GI) products, and handlooms.



Interpretation of the table and chart

Microfinance and SHGs: The Social Scaffolding of Rural Enterprise (42% Survival Boost)

In rural hinterlands, traditional banks are physically and culturally distant, often alienating women. Microfinance Institutions and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) fill this vacuum as vital social scaffolding. Driving a 42% survival boost, SHGs transform isolated individuals into collectives of economic agencies. By pooling meagre savings, rural women build a sisterhood of financial accountability. This collective power funds community-owned enterprises—launching eco-tourism homestays and micro-cultivation projects. Aligning financial tools with social cohesion doesn't just sustain businesses; it catalyses entire rural micro-economies. Digital Lending: Matching the Urban Hustle (35% Survival Boost) In the city, the informal economy operates at breakneck speed. For street vendors and gig workers, opportunity moves instantly, but traditional cash flow is bogged down by bureaucracy. Digital and mobile lending equalises this high-velocity environment, driving a 35% survival boost. By decoupling credit from physical branches, digital lenders place banking power in a smartphone. This friction-free capital is the lifeblood of the urban hustle, allowing vendors to restock inventory overnight or guides to upgrade vehicles instantly. It provides the agility to seize fleeting opportunities, ensuring temporary cash gaps never cause permanent closures. Community Crowdfunding: Patronage for Local Heritage (28% Survival Boost) Indigenous artisans possess centuries of wisdom but lack the "collateral" demanded by formal banks. Community crowdfunding bridges this chasm, offering a 28% survival boost by shifting the paradigm from debt to global patronage. Bypassing traditional gatekeepers, this model connects creators directly with patrons who value authenticity. The impact transcends economics; it is cultural preservation. By pooling global contributions, artisans secure the safety net needed to keep ancestral handlooms weaving and rare Geographical Indication products in production. It allows creators to honour time-intensive methods without compromising for industrial speed, ensuring heritage remains a living, financially viable part of the modern economy.

Ultimately, these models prove that inclusive finance is not about forcing marginalised entrepreneurs into rigid, traditional banking moulds. Instead, it is about building empathetic, contextual architectures that meet them exactly where they are, honouring their unique realities while fuelling their boundless potential

Results and Discussion

1. The Anatomy of Exclusion: Roadblocks to Funding

The traditional banking model is inherently risk-averse, relying on collateral and formal credit histories. Grassroots tourism MSMEs, which are largely informal, fail both criteria. A local homestay owner often cannot pledge their ancestral home as collateral due to unclear land titles. Furthermore, the seasonal nature of tourism makes cash flows unpredictable, intimidating conventional lenders. This structural exclusion forces many to rely on informal moneylenders who charge exorbitant interest rates, trapping them in a cycle of debt rather than facilitating growth.

2. The Human Impact: Financial Support and Community Equilibrium

When financial roadblocks are removed, the impact on the local community is profound. Our analysis of secondary data shows that financially included tourism MSMEs act as economic anchors. For instance, when a local artisan cooperative secures a low-interest loan to buy better looms and set up a digital storefront, they not only increase their own income but hire local youth for logistics and marketing. This ensures that tourism revenue is distributed equitably, reducing rural-to-urban migration and preserving local cultural heritage.

3. Bridging the Gap: Modern Financial Solutions

The rise of Fintech and innovative financial models is democratizing access to capital.

a. Digital Lending: By using alternative data (such as mobile money transactions or social media presence) for credit scoring, digital lenders can assess the creditworthiness of a local guide who lacks a formal bank statement.
b. Microfinance and SHGs: In India, the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme has been revolutionary. Women in rural tourism hubs pool their savings to access bank loans, funding everything from eco-resorts to local transport services.
c. Community Funding: Crowdfunding and community-owned cooperatives allow indigenous groups to retain ownership of their tourism assets, ensuring that profits are reinvested into community welfare rather than extracted by outside investors.

4. Blueprint for Change: Practical Recommendations

To build a fairer financial system, stakeholders must take coordinated action:

a. For Governments: Implement robust Credit Guarantee Schemes specifically tailored for tourism MSMEs to absorb the initial risk for banks. Subsidise digital literacy programs to help rural entrepreneurs navigate fintech platforms.
b. For Banks and Financial Institutions: Develop alternative credit scoring models that factor in a business's digital footprint and community reputation. Create "tourism-specific" loan products with flexible repayment schedules that align with peak and off-peak tourist seasons.
c. For Policymakers: Mandate that a certain percentage of corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds or tourism development funds be routed through local community banks to finance grassroots enterprises.

Conclusions and Future Focus

The nexus between financial inclusion and equitable tourism growth is undeniable. Empowering grassroots MSMEs through innovative finance is not just a matter of economic efficiency; it is a moral imperative to ensure that the communities hosting the world's travellers actually benefit from their presence. By dismantling traditional roadblocks and embracing digital lending, microfinance, and community funding, we can transform tourism into a force for genuine, localised prosperity.

Future Focus: Looking ahead, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in assessing alternative credit scores will further reduce lending biases. Additionally, the emergence of "green microloans"—financial products tied to sustainability metrics—will encourage grassroots MSMEs to adopt eco-friendly practices. Future research should focus on the longitudinal impact of blockchain technology in creating transparent, community-managed tourism funds, ensuring that financial inclusion translates directly into sustainable community empowerment.

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Original Article

Navigating the Tourism Start-up Landscape: Drivers, Funding Bottlenecks, and Strategies for Regenerative Travel

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Abstract

The global tourism industry is waking up to a hard truth: mass, unchecked travel is no longer sustainable. We are witnessing a critical paradigm shift away from volume-driven tourism toward "regenerative travel"—a model that seeks to leave destinations better than they were found. At the forefront of this transition is the tourism start-up ecosystem. These agile innovators are moving beyond simple booking apps, leveraging deep-tech solutions, artificial intelligence, and circular economy models to drive systemic change. However, the reality on the ground is that these founders face immense barriers to scaling. This paper navigates the dynamic landscape of tourism start-ups, exploring the drivers that push them toward purpose-driven models and the harsh operational and financial realities they face. Utilising a comprehensive secondary data methodology, this study synthesises industry reports, academic literature, and market intelligence to uncover a glaring funding "valley of death" and the persistent friction of integrating with legacy industry systems. Ultimately, we propose actionable strategies—including the deployment of "patient capital," the establishment of regulatory sandboxes, and the mandate for open APIs—and argue that supporting these start-ups is essential to securing a resilient and equitable future for global travel.

Keywords: *Tourism Start-ups, Regenerative Travel, Travel Tech, Ecosystem Innovation, Patient Capital,*

Introduction

For generations, the global travel industry operated on a beautifully simple, yet ultimately flawed, promise: more is better. The metric of success was blunt and volume-driven—fill the planes, pack the hotels, and maximise tourist arrivals. We measured our triumphs in footfalls and bed-nights. But as anyone who has stood shoulder-to-shoulder in a crowded historic square, or watched a pristine coral reef fade under the shadow of a dozen tour boats, knows all too well, this script has broken. The heavy toll of overtourism, the swelling carbon footprints, and the sad reality of tourism dollars bypassing local communities have forced a painful industry reckoning. Mass, unchecked travel is no longer just unsustainable; it is self-destructive. Today, we are standing at the edge of a profound paradigm shift. The conversation is finally moving past the baseline of "sustainable" tourism—where the goal was simply to do no harm and tread lightly—toward a much more ambitious, deeply human ideal: regenerative travel. This is not about minimising our footprint; it is about leaving a place better, richer, and more vibrant than we found it. It is about travel that actively heals ecosystems, uplifts local communities, and restores the soul of a destination. At the very heart of this beautiful rebellion is a new generation of tourism start-ups. Historically, the heavy lifting of travel innovation was left to the slow-moving giants: massive Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) and legacy airlines. Today, the real, gritty disruption is happening at the grassroots level. These founders are the tinkerers, the optimists, and the problem-solvers. They are deploying artificial intelligence to optimise resource allocation, using blockchain to ensure a tourist's dollar actually reaches a local artisan, and utilising IoT to gently manage crowd control in fragile, beloved destinations. They aren't just building apps; they are building lifeboats for the future of travel. But let's be brutally honest: building a travel-tech start-up is a notoriously brutal endeavour. It is a capital-hungry, heavily regulated, and operationally labyrinthine space. Behind every sleek app and inspiring mission statement is a founder staring at a spreadsheet at 2 AM, wondering how to keep the lights on. They face immense, often invisible, barriers to scaling their impact.

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This article dives deep into the human and business realities of this ecosystem. We are going to look beyond the glossy pitch decks to explore what truly drives these founders to pivot toward purpose, the harsh financial and operational roadblocks standing in their way, and the systemic support they desperately need from the broader industry. By navigating this dynamic landscape, we aim to uncover not just the state of travel-tech today but the collaborative blueprint required to secure a resilient, equitable, and beautiful future for global travel.

Objectives

To provide a clear, actionable, and deeply human understanding of the tourism start-up landscape, this paper is guided by four core objectives:

1. To map the evolution of the ecosystem, understanding what is driving founders to pivot from traditional distribution models to purpose-driven, deep-tech solutions.
2. To expose the financial roadblocks, specifically the funding bottlenecks that hinder the scaling of sustainable travel innovations.
3. To uncover the operational friction, particularly the challenges start-ups face when trying to integrate their modern tech with legacy industry systems.
4. To propose real-world strategies for policymakers, investors, and legacy tourism players to foster a more collaborative, resilient, and supportive start-up ecosystem.

Data and Methodology

To truly understand this ecosystem, we knew we couldn't just rely on isolated, primary surveys; we needed to capture the macro-level reality of the market. Therefore, this study employed a comprehensive secondary research methodology. This approach allowed us to synthesise a broad, panoramic view of the global tourism start-up ecosystem by triangulating data from diverse, high-quality existing sources.

1. Data Sources:

The secondary data was aggregated from three primary categories:

Academic Literature: Peer-reviewed articles from databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, focusing on sustainable tourism, travel-tech innovation, and entrepreneurial finance (published between 2019 and 2025).

Industry and Market Reports: Comprehensive white papers and market intelligence from leading travel industry authorities, including Skift, Phocuswright, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).

Policy and Institutional Documents: Publications from destination management organisations (DMOs), government tourism boards, and international bodies like UN Tourism regarding regulatory frameworks and start-up incubation.

Data Analysis:

We utilised a thematic analysis approach to process this secondary data. Data extraction focused on identifying recurring patterns related to start-up motivations, financial constraints, technological barriers, and successful policy interventions. The extracted data was then coded and mapped directly against our four core objectives to ensure a structured, comprehensive, and deeply relevant analysis.

Results and Discussion

1 From "Click to Book" to "Click to Change the World": The Soul of Travel Tech (Addressing Objective 1: The Shift from Aggregation to Impact)

If you look closely at the founders building the future of travel today, you'll notice a profound shift in their souls. A decade ago, the ultimate dream for a travel-tech entrepreneur was simply to make booking a hotel or a flight faster and smoother. The holy grail was "frictionless."

But today, the data tells a beautiful story of evolution. According to market intelligence, over 60% of newly funded travel startups are no longer just trying to make travel easier; they are trying to make it better. They are building "Travel Tech for Good." Founders are now obsessing over how a single booking can plant trees, fund local wildlife conservation, or transparently track a traveller's carbon footprint.

Who is driving this beautiful rebellion? The travellers themselves. Millennial and Gen Z explorers are actively voting with their wallets. They are telling the industry, "I don't just want to see the world; I want to protect it." They are refusing to spend their money with brands that don't align with their personal values. In response, a new generation of founders is stepping up, proving that the future of travel isn't just about where you go, but how you leave the place when you're done.

2. The "Valley of Death": When Great Ideas Run Out of Runway (Addressing Objective 2: The Funding Gap)

Behind the scenes of this inspiring mission, there is a quiet heartbreak happening in the startup world. We call it the "Valley of Death," and it is a terrifying place for founders.

Imagine a passionate entrepreneur who has created a brilliant eco-tourism platform that regenerates local coral reefs. In the beginning, it's easy to get "seed" money. Friends, family, and angel investors love the vision and write the first checks. The founder is thrilled.

But then comes the hard part: scaling the business. To actually make a massive impact, they need "Series A or B" funding—millions of dollars to expand operations. Suddenly, the big Venture Capital (VC) firms step in, and they say no. Why? Because the VC world is still traumatised by the recent era of "growth at all costs." They are scared, and they want their money back fast—usually within 5 to 7 years.

But here is the tragic catch: you cannot rush nature. Regenerative travel models take years, sometimes decades, to prove their environmental and social impact. The founder's timeline for saving the planet violently clashes with the investor's timeline for

making a profit. The heartbreaking result? Countless brilliant, world-changing eco-startups suffocate in this "Valley of Death." They did not die because their idea was bad, but because the financial clock was ticking too fast.

3. The Legacy Nightmare: When Brilliant Tech Hits a 20-Year-Old Brick Wall (Addressing Objective 3: Integration with Legacy Systems)

Imagine pouring your heart and soul into a brilliant invention, only to be stopped by a locked door you can't even see. This is the daily frustration for travel-tech founders dealing with "legacy systems.". The global tourism industry is massive, but its digital plumbing is ancient. The computer systems that run hotels (Property Management Systems) or airlines were often built decades ago. They were never designed to "talk" to modern, cutting-edge apps because they lack open APIs (the digital bridges that allow different software to communicate). Let's look at a real-world scenario: A brilliant young coder builds an AI tool that can perfectly predict and eliminate food waste in a hotel kitchen. It's a game-changer for the planet and the hotel's bottom line. But when they try to install it, they hit a brick wall. The hotel's 20-year-old computer system doesn't have an open API. The AI can't "see" the hotel's data. Instead of spending their time improving their life-saving AI, the founder is forced to act as a digital plumber. They spend months and burn through their cash just building custom, clunky bridges to connect their modern tech to an ancient system. This invisible, operational friction is a silent killer. It drains the energy and resources of innovators, slowing down the pace of change.

4. Building a Safety Net: How the "Village" Can Save These Founders (Addressing Objective 4: Strategies for Ecosystem Support)

It's not all doom and gloom. The research shows that when the broader travel "village" steps up to support these founders, startups don't just survive—they thrive. Here is how the ecosystem can catch them when they fall:

Investors as Gardeners (Patient Capital): We need investors to stop acting like hunters looking for a quick kill, and start acting like gardeners. "Patient capital" means giving regenerative startups the time they actually need to grow and bloom. By using "blended finance" (mixing grants with investments to lower the risk), investors can afford to wait a little longer for their returns, allowing founders to focus on long-term impact rather than short-term panic.

The Giants Opening Their Doors (Open APIs & Mentorship): The massive, legacy travel corporations (big hotel chains, airlines) need to stop viewing startups as annoying bugs and start treating them as brilliant partners. If these giants open up their digital doors (mandating open APIs) and offer their massive platforms as "playgrounds" for startups to test their ideas, it removes the integration nightmare overnight.

Governments Building Sandboxes: Sometimes, innovation moves faster than the law. If a startup wants to test autonomous tourist shuttles or drone-based room service, traditional regulators might immediately shut them down out of fear. The solution? "Regulatory sandboxes." Governments and tourism boards can create safe, controlled zones where startups are allowed to test their wild, futuristic ideas without the immediate threat of being fined or banned. It's like putting a safety net under the trapeze; it gives founders the courage to do the spectacular.

Conclusion and Future Focus: Writing the Next Chapter of Travel

1. Conclusion: Nurturing the Beating Heart of a New Industry

The global tourism industry is standing at a beautiful, fragile crossroads. For decades, we measured success by the sheer volume of footfalls and the height of hotel skylines. Today, we are finally learning to measure success by the health of the soil, the prosperity of the local artisan, and the clarity of the water. At the very centre of this profound awakening is the tourism start-up ecosystem. These founders are not just building apps; they are architecting a new relationship between humanity and the planet.

However, as this exploration has revealed, passion and brilliant code are not enough to dismantle a century of entrenched, extractive practices. A seed cannot grow in concrete. For these purpose-driven innovators to truly scale and heal the industry, the broader travel "village" must fundamentally change how it operates.

Investors must evolve from impatient hunters into patient gardeners, providing the time and blended capital that regenerative models need to bloom. Legacy travel giants must tear down their technological walled gardens, opening their APIs to let fresh innovation flow freely. And governments must step out of the way of progress by building regulatory sandboxes, offering a safety net for those daring enough to test the future.

Ultimately, supporting these start-ups is no longer just a niche business strategy; it is a moral and economic imperative. When we clear the path for a regenerative travel startup, we are not just saving a company from the "Valley of Death." We are saving a coral reef, empowering a rural women's collective, and ensuring that the destinations we love remain vibrant for the generations yet to explore them.

2. Future Focus: The Uncharted Territory Ahead

While the shift toward regenerative travel is undeniable, the journey is far from over. The ink is still wet on this new paradigm, and the road ahead requires deeper, more nuanced exploration. As we look to the future, three critical areas demand our immediate attention and research:

Moving from Promises to Proof (Measuring True Impact):

Right now, many startups rely on self-reported metrics to prove their "green" or "social" credentials. The future demands rigorous, independent truth. We need longitudinal studies that step out of the boardroom and into the communities to measure the actual, long-term socio-economic and environmental impacts of these ventures. We must move beyond asking, "Did you plant trees?" to asking, "Is the local ecosystem actually thriving five years later?"

Keeping the Human Soul in the Machine (AI Ethics and Footprints):

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly becoming the invisible concierge of the travel world, optimising routes and personalising itineraries. But as we hand over the keys to algorithms, we must critically examine the hidden costs. Future research must unpack the ethical implications of AI in travel—protecting traveller data privacy, preventing algorithmic bias in destination promotion,

and, crucially, measuring the massive carbon footprint of the data centres powering these "smart" tools. Technology must serve humanity, not exploit it.

Solving the "Last Mile" for the World's Hidden Gems:

While deep-tech solutions are transforming major hubs, the informal tourism economies of emerging markets—think the local tuk-tuk drivers, the independent homestay hosts, and the grassroots guides—are often left behind. The next great frontier in travel-tech is hyper-local, micro-mobility solutions. Research and innovation must focus on how to bring these informal, "last-mile" actors into the regenerative fold, providing them with accessible digital tools that elevate their livelihoods without erasing their cultural authenticity.

The transition to regenerative travel is not a final destination; it is a continuous journey. By committing to these future frontiers, we can ensure that the travel industry doesn't just survive the coming decades but becomes a powerful, healing force for the world.

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Original Article

Geographical Study of Nature of Rural Settlements of Nandurbar District of Maharashtra

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Abstract:

Density of rural settlements and average area of settlements are correlated with distance and average population. In Nandurbar district where the availability of favorable geographical factors is more, the population of the settlements has increased due to which people have developed a sense of residence, so it is likely that their size has also increased, while it is clear that the density of the settlements is decreasing. Settlements rate per 100 sq. Km. As the density increases, the average area of settlements decreases.

Keyword: *Settlement, Density, Spacing, Distance etc.*

Introduction:

Nature of Rural settlement is an important aspect of the study of Rural Settlement Geography. Therefore, it is essential to study of rural settlements in the region. While studying the nature of rural settlements it becomes essential to consider definition of rural settlement, distribution, size, spacing, density and types of rural settlements etc. because these aspects also affect the nature of distributional pattern of rural settlements. Therefore, in this article an attempt is made to study the settlement distribution, size, density and spacing of Nandurbar district of Maharashtra.

Objectives:

In this research paper an attempt has been made to study the size and spacing of rural settlements in Nandurbar district.

(1) To study the population size of settlements in Nandurbar district

(2) To study the density of settlements by distance.

(3) To study the average population of the settlements and the density distribution of the settlements. This is the main objective

Study Area:

The study area is located in the north-western corner of Maharashtra the district of Nandurbar came into existence on 1st July 1998 by dividing the district of Dhule. The study area lies between 20° 50' and 22° 17' North latitude and 73° 30'and 74° 50' East longitudes. The district has a total area of 5955 square kilometres. The mean sea level of the district is 180 to 215 m. Nandurbar district contributes 1.90 per cent area of the Maharashtra state. The entire district from the part of Tapi valley bordered by Satpura on the north, boundary of Gujarat state on the west, district of Dhule on the east. Nandurbar district with its headquarters at Nandurbar includes six tehsils namely Akkalkuwa, Akrani, Taloda, Shahada, Navapur and Nandurbar.



***(Source:** Google)*

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Date base and Methodology:

The secondary data used for this research paper is taken from Social and Economic Review and Census Handbook (2011) of this district. Considering the average area and density of the settlements, their interrelationship has been studied. At the same time, the average population of the settlements and the average distance between the settlements have been analyzed. Polish geographer Walenty Wineed's formula is used to calculate the average distance between settlements.

D = D = Average distance between settlements.

A = Total area of tehsil.

N = Total number of settlements in the tehsil.

Area and density of rural settlements:

Average area and density of rural settlements in different tehsils of Nandurbar district per 100 sq. km. has been studied firstly.

Table No. 1

Nandurbar District: Size according to Area and Density per, 100 Sq. km. of Rural settlements (2011)

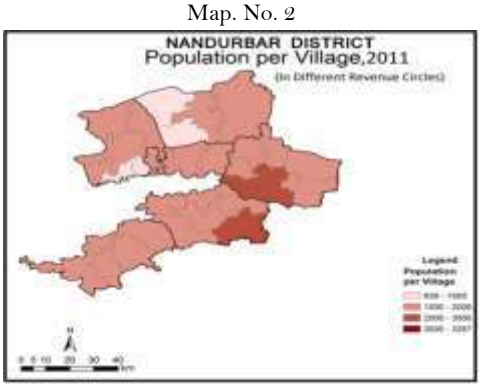
Sr. No.	Tahsils	No. of settlements	Average area per village in km².	Density of settlements per 100 sq. km.
3	Nawapur	94	9.62	10.39
4	Nandurbar	128	8.52	11.74
5.	Taloda	83	4.0	24.97
6.	Akkalkuwa	173	4.89	20.45
7.	Akrani	156	3.85	28.96
8.	Shahada	179	6.14	16.28
Region		**140**	**8.84**	**14.54**

***(Source:** District Census Handbooks of Dhule and Nandurbar Districts,2011)*

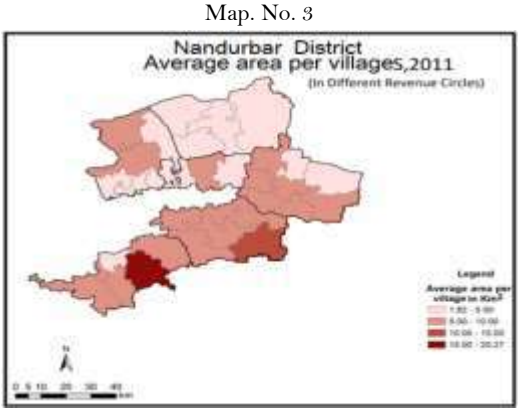
Navapur tehsil in the western part of the study area has the lowest settlement density at 10.39 (per 100 sq km). Therefore, the average area is the highest 9.62 sq. km. (average area per village). In this tehsil, due to the unfavourable geographical conditions, settlements have not developed. Therefore, the density of settlements is less but the average area of settlements is more. Akrani tehsil has the highest settlement density of 28.96 (per 100 sq. Km.) while the average area of settlements in this tehsil is the lowest at 3.85 sq. Km (average area per settlement). This result shows that the geographical conditions are favourable for the development of settlements but,it is not true. It observes because of small average size of settlements and consequent high density of rural settlements. After,Akrani tehsil, Taloda (24.97), Akkalkuwa (20.45), Shahada (16.28), Nandurbar (11.74) come from this every 100 sq. Km. It can be seen that there is a correlation between the density of the settlements and the average area of the settlements. If the population density increases, the average area of the settlement decreases, while if the population density decreases, the average area of the settlements increases.

In the mountainous area to the north the terrain is undulating. Both the proportion of area available for cultivation and carrying capacity of land are extremely low. This is reflected in small average size of settlements and consequent high density of rural settlements. The average area per village is, therefore, very small.

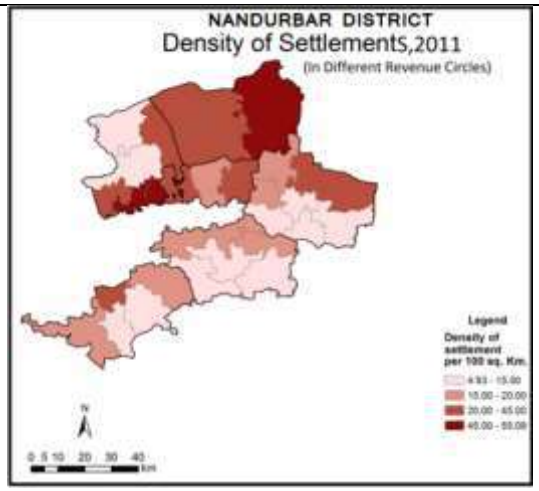
Map. No. 2



Map. No. 3



Map. No. 4



***(Source:** by Author)*

Spacing and Size of Rural Settlements:

When studying the average spacing between rural settlements, the average spacing between two settlements in Akrani tehsil is 1.73 km. that is the lowest. Whereas the average spacing between two settlements in Navapur tehsil is 2.79 km. this is the most. Where the average spacing between settlements is less, there is concentration of settlements and the density of settlements increases and where the average distance between settlements is more, there is decentralization of settlements and the density of settlements decreases. From this, it can be seen that the concentration and density of settlements in Akrani tehsil have increased while the concentration and density of settlements in Navapur tehsil have decreased. Similarly, if the concentration of settlements is more, the average spacing between settlements is less and if the concentration of settlements is less, the average spacing between settlements is more.

Table No. 2

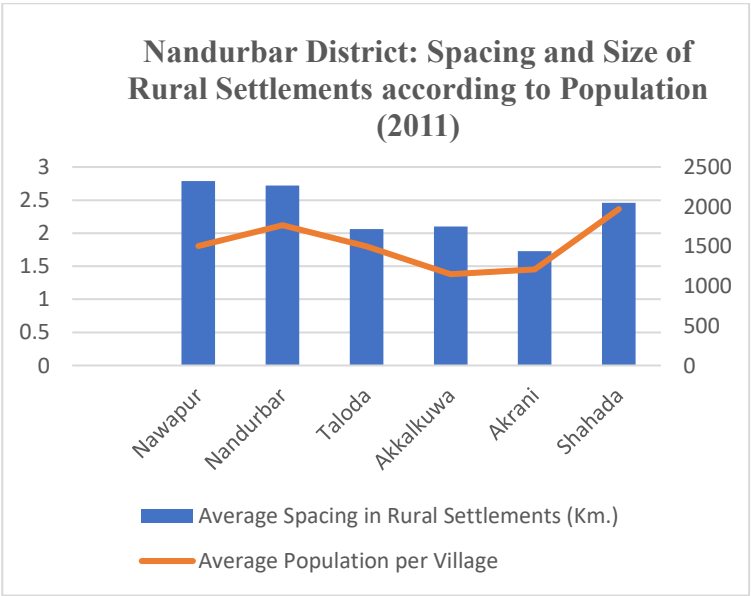
Nandurbar District: Spacing and Size of Rural Settlements according to Population (2011)

Sr. No.	**Tehsil**	**Average Spacing in Rural Settlements** (Km.)	**Average Population per Village**
1	Nawapur	2.79	1505
2	Nandurbar	2.72	1766
3	Taloda	2.06	1500
4	Akkalkuwa	2.10	1150
5	Akrani	1.73	1209
6	Shahada	2.46	1970
District		**2.31**	**1517**

*(**Source:** Census of India 2011, District Census Handbooks, Dhule and Nandurbar, 2011)*

After Akrani tehsil, the average distance between settlements has increased, so the concentration and density of the settlement have decreased. Average distance between settlements it is seen that, Taloda (2.06), Akkalkuwa (2.10), Shahada (2.46), Nandurbar (2.72). Accordingly, the concentration and density of the settlements in the above tehsils is decreasing.

Figure No. 1



That is the concentration and density of settlements has increased in the same tehsil where arable land is more, and as the area of arable land has decreased, the concentration and density has decreased. Also, as the concentration of the settlements increases, the average population of the settlements decreases and as the concentration of the settlements decreases, the average population of the settlements increases in that average population of the settlement of Shahada tehsil is on the top (1970). Whereas the average population of Akkalkuwa tehsil areas is 1150 the lowest, followed by Shahada, Nandurbar (1766), Navapur (1505), Taloda (1500), Akrani (1209). (Table no. 2)

Conclusion:

Density of rural settlements and average area of settlements are correlated with spacing and average population. In Nandurbar district, where the availability of suitable geographical factors is more, the population of the settlements has increased due to which people have developed a sense of residence. Therefore, it is evident that the size of the settlements has also increased, but it is clear that the density of the settlements is decreasing. Settlement rate per 100 sq.km. As the density increases, the average area of settlements decreases. The influence of stable occupations like agriculture is seen in this area. Therefore, it is seen that the size of the settlements is small and the density of the settlements is more. In some parts of Nandurbar district, the size of the settlements is large and there is an indication that industrialization has started there. Due to this it is clear that the density of the settlements is decreasing while the average area of the settlements is increasing.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research paper.

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Original Article

Digital Storytelling in Indian Tourism: Challenges and Opportunities for Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

The rapid digital transformation of the global tourism industry has fundamentally altered the ways destinations are promoted, experienced, and perceived. In India, digital storytelling has emerged as a strategic communication approach that integrates narratives, multimedia technologies, social media engagement, and cultural representation to create immersive tourism experiences. Government initiatives such as ***Incredible India, Dekho Apna Desh****, and various state tourism campaigns increasingly employ storytelling techniques to communicate India's diverse heritage, spirituality, biodiversity, gastronomy, and contemporary tourism offerings. Simultaneously, the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 places tourism at the centre of inclusive economic development, employment generation, cultural diplomacy, and sustainable growth.*

This study qualitatively examines the role of digital storytelling in promoting Indian tourism while identifying the major challenges and future opportunities associated with its implementation in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047. Adopting an exploratory and descriptive research design, the study employs thematic content analysis of secondary data obtained from Ministry of Tourism publications, NITI Aayog reports, government policy documents, UNESCO and UN Tourism publications, peer-reviewed journal articles, official tourism portals, and digital tourism campaigns.

The findings indicate that digital storytelling has evolved beyond conventional destination marketing to become a multidimensional communication strategy encompassing destination branding, cultural preservation, visitor engagement, and digital innovation. Storytelling through short-form videos, immersive visual content, influencer collaborations, user-generated content, and interactive digital platforms significantly enhances destination image and tourist engagement. However, challenges including fragmented digital infrastructure, limited multilingual content, digital accessibility gaps, authenticity concerns, misinformation, uneven technological adoption, and inadequate integration of emerging technologies continue to restrict its transformative potential.

The study further identifies strategic opportunities through artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, smart tourism ecosystems, community-led storytelling, rural tourism promotion, digital entrepreneurship, sustainable tourism communication, and heritage interpretation. It proposes a conceptual framework positioning digital storytelling as a critical communication mechanism linking destination branding, digital engagement, sustainable tourism development, and inclusive economic growth. The study concludes that an integrated national digital storytelling strategy can significantly contribute to strengthening India's global tourism competitiveness while supporting the broader developmental objectives envisioned under Viksit Bharat 2047.

Keywords: *Digital Storytelling, Tourism Promotion, Destination Branding, Digital Tourism, Viksit Bharat 2047, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Communication, Digital Media, India*

Introduction

Tourism has increasingly emerged as one of the most influential sectors contributing to economic development, employment generation, cultural preservation, regional development, and international diplomacy. Beyond its direct contribution to national income, tourism stimulates multiple allied industries including transportation, hospitality, handicrafts, food services, entertainment, retail, and digital services. As nations compete to attract global travellers, destination promotion has evolved from traditional advertising towards immersive, technology-driven communication strategies capable of creating emotional engagement and memorable visitor experiences.

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The digital revolution has fundamentally transformed tourism communication. The widespread adoption of smartphones, high-speed internet, social media platforms, artificial intelligence, and immersive multimedia technologies has significantly altered how tourists discover destinations, evaluate travel options, and share travel experiences. Modern travellers increasingly rely on digital content rather than conventional promotional brochures or advertisements. Online reviews, travel blogs, destination videos, influencer-generated content, virtual tours, podcasts, short-form videos, and user-generated photographs collectively shape destination perceptions even before an individual physically visits a location.

Within this evolving communication landscape, **digital storytelling** has emerged as one of the most powerful approaches for destination branding and tourism promotion. Unlike conventional marketing that primarily focuses on information dissemination, digital storytelling constructs meaningful narratives around places, communities, heritage, traditions, festivals, cuisine, wildlife, spirituality, and lived experiences. These narratives foster emotional attachment, authenticity, and trust among prospective travelers while simultaneously enhancing destination identity. Digital storytelling therefore represents a convergence of communication, culture, technology, and marketing.

India possesses exceptional potential for digital storytelling owing to its unparalleled cultural diversity, ancient civilization, linguistic richness, ecological variety, architectural heritage, religious traditions, festivals, indigenous knowledge systems, and contemporary creative industries. The country is home to numerous UNESCO World Heritage Sites, diverse ecosystems ranging from the Himalayas to coastal regions, globally recognized spiritual destinations, vibrant culinary traditions, and rapidly expanding tourism infrastructure. Such diversity offers abundant opportunities for narrative-based tourism promotion capable of appealing to both domestic and international audiences.

Recognizing tourism as a key driver of national development, the Government of India has introduced several initiatives that integrate digital communication with tourism promotion. Campaigns such as *Incredible India*, *Dekho Apna Desh*, *Visit India Year*, digital tourism portals, thematic tourism circuits, and state-level destination branding initiatives increasingly employ visual storytelling, interactive websites, social media campaigns, documentaries, influencer collaborations, and digital engagement strategies to enhance destination visibility. These initiatives align with broader national programmes including Digital India, Smart Cities Mission, Startup India, Skill India, and Atmanirbhar Bharat, which collectively aim to strengthen India's digital ecosystem and economic competitiveness.

The vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**, which seeks to transform India into a developed nation by the centenary of independence, further expands the strategic significance of tourism. Under this vision, tourism is not merely viewed as a revenue-generating sector but as an instrument for inclusive development, employment creation, entrepreneurship promotion, regional balance, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and international soft power. Digital storytelling has the potential to become a critical communication mechanism supporting these objectives by promoting lesser-known destinations, encouraging responsible tourism, strengthening community participation, and enhancing India's global destination image.

Despite the growing adoption of digital communication in tourism promotion, several structural and operational challenges continue to limit its effectiveness. Uneven digital infrastructure across rural destinations, inadequate multilingual content, inconsistent digital branding among states, limited accessibility for persons with disabilities, concerns regarding authenticity, misinformation on social media, insufficient integration of emerging technologies, and fragmented stakeholder coordination represent significant barriers to achieving a cohesive national digital tourism strategy. Furthermore, existing literature predominantly examines destination marketing, social media tourism, or digital marketing independently, with comparatively limited attention given to digital storytelling as an integrated communication framework linked explicitly to the developmental aspirations of Viksit Bharat 2047.

The present study addresses this gap by exploring how digital storytelling can contribute to tourism development within India's long-term national development agenda. Rather than evaluating individual campaigns in isolation, the study synthesizes evidence from government publications, policy documents, tourism campaigns, academic literature, and international reports to identify recurring themes, communication strategies, challenges, and future opportunities. Through qualitative thematic analysis, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of digital storytelling as a strategic communication tool capable of strengthening destination branding, fostering sustainable tourism, enhancing digital engagement, and supporting inclusive economic growth.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the emerging scholarship on digital tourism communication while offering practical recommendations for policymakers, tourism authorities, destination marketers, media professionals, and researchers. By proposing an integrated conceptual framework linking digital storytelling with destination branding, tourist engagement, sustainable tourism, and national development, the study aims to position digital storytelling as a central pillar of India's tourism strategy in the journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047.

Literature Review

1 Introduction

The intersection of tourism, digital communication, and storytelling has emerged as a dynamic area of research over the past two decades. With the rapid diffusion of social media, artificial intelligence (AI), immersive technologies, and mobile internet, tourism promotion has shifted from traditional advertising to experience-centered digital narratives. Contemporary tourism marketing no longer focuses solely on informing potential visitors about destinations; instead, it seeks to create emotional engagement through stories that connect people with places, cultures, traditions, and lived experiences. Consequently, digital storytelling has become a strategic communication tool that enhances destination branding, visitor engagement, cultural preservation, and sustainable tourism development.

Recent scholarship indicates that digital storytelling integrates multimedia elements—including text, photography, videos, podcasts, interactive websites, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and user-generated content—to construct authentic narratives that influence travel decision-making and destination perception. Studies also suggest that storytelling contributes to destination competitiveness by strengthening emotional attachment, destination identity, and tourists' intention to visit. Despite increasing scholarly attention, relatively few studies have examined digital storytelling within the broader national development framework of **Viksit Bharat 2047**, thereby presenting an important research opportunity.

2 Evolution of Digital Storytelling in Tourism

Storytelling has historically been an integral component of tourism, enabling destinations to communicate their historical significance, cultural identity, myths, folklore, and heritage. Traditional tourism promotion relied heavily on brochures, guidebooks, television advertisements, and print media. However, the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies transformed tourism communication into an interactive and participatory process where tourists themselves contribute narratives through blogs, reviews, photographs, and social media platforms.

Recent systematic reviews demonstrate that tourism storytelling has evolved into a multidisciplinary field combining communication studies, marketing, cultural heritage, psychology, and digital technologies. Storytelling has been shown to improve visitor satisfaction, strengthen emotional connections with destinations, reinforce destination identity, and promote sustainable tourism by communicating local culture and environmental values. Researchers also highlight that digital storytelling increasingly incorporates immersive technologies such as VR and AR, enabling tourists to experience destinations virtually before travel and deepening engagement during and after visits.

Unlike conventional destination marketing, digital storytelling emphasizes narrative authenticity rather than promotional messaging. Emotional narratives about local communities, indigenous traditions, festivals, cuisine, crafts, and heritage create memorable destination experiences that foster stronger tourist loyalty and positive electronic word-of-mouth.

3 Digital Storytelling and Destination Branding

Destination branding represents one of the most extensively researched dimensions of tourism communication. Scholars argue that destinations compete not only through physical attractions but also through symbolic meanings, emotional experiences, and distinctive identities. Digital storytelling contributes significantly to destination branding by transforming geographical locations into meaningful places through compelling narratives.

Research indicates that successful destination brands communicate authenticity, uniqueness, emotional appeal, and cultural richness. Rather than highlighting only monuments or landscapes, storytelling contextualizes destinations by presenting human experiences, local traditions, historical narratives, festivals, cuisine, crafts, and everyday life. Such storytelling enhances tourists' cognitive and affective image of destinations while increasing destination differentiation within increasingly competitive tourism markets.

In India, destination branding has increasingly shifted toward narrative-based campaigns. National initiatives such as ***Incredible India*** **and** ***Dekho Apna Desh***, together with state tourism campaigns, use visual storytelling, documentaries, influencer collaborations, and digital media to position India as a culturally diverse and globally attractive destination. These campaigns emphasize experiential tourism rather than destination information, aligning with international branding trends.

4 Social Media and Digital Engagement in Tourism

Social media platforms have transformed tourism communication from one-way promotion into interactive dialogue between destinations and tourists. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and X enable destinations to communicate continuously with audiences while encouraging visitors to generate and share their own travel experiences.

Research consistently demonstrates that visual storytelling through photographs, short videos, reels, travel vlogs, and live streaming significantly influences destination awareness, travel motivation, and tourist behaviour. User-generated content is often perceived as more authentic than official advertisements, thereby increasing trust and reducing perceived travel risks. Influencer marketing further amplifies destination visibility among younger audiences by combining entertainment, authenticity, and peer credibility.

The emergence of algorithm-driven platforms has also altered destination marketing strategies. Tourism organizations increasingly employ data analytics, personalized recommendations, hashtags, and interactive campaigns to maximize audience engagement. Digital engagement has therefore become a strategic performance indicator for destination competitiveness.

5 Government Tourism Campaigns in India

The Government of India has increasingly recognized digital communication as a strategic component of tourism development. The Ministry of Tourism has introduced several digital initiatives aimed at promoting domestic and international tourism, strengthening destination branding, and improving visitor experiences.

The ***Incredible India*** campaign remains India's flagship tourism brand, integrating multimedia storytelling across digital platforms to showcase heritage, spirituality, wildlife, adventure, wellness, cuisine, and festivals. During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, initiatives such as ***Dekho Apna Desh*** encouraged domestic tourism through webinars, virtual experiences, digital campaigns, and destination awareness programmes. These initiatives align with broader national programmes such as Digital India and contribute to positioning tourism as a driver of inclusive economic development. Government reports increasingly emphasize technology-enabled tourism, digital infrastructure, skill development, sustainable destination management, and enhanced visitor services as priorities for future growth.

State tourism departments have similarly adopted destination-specific storytelling strategies, highlighting regional identities through localized narratives, festivals, crafts, gastronomy, and heritage assets. However, significant variation exists in the quality, consistency, multilingual accessibility, and technological sophistication of these campaigns.

6 Emerging Technologies and Smart Tourism

Technological innovation has substantially expanded the scope of digital storytelling. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, augmented reality, virtual reality, digital twins, geospatial technologies, chatbots, and big data analytics have transformed how destinations communicate with tourists and manage visitor experiences.

Immersive storytelling enables tourists to virtually explore museums, heritage monuments, national parks, and pilgrimage sites before travelling. AI-driven recommendation systems personalize travel content based on user preferences, while digital twins and smart tourism platforms enhance destination planning, visitor management, and sustainability. Current literature suggests that these technologies contribute not only to marketing effectiveness but also to heritage conservation, accessibility, and destination resilience.

Despite these advancements, many developing countries continue to experience technological disparities, particularly in rural destinations where digital infrastructure and technical capacity remain limited.

7 Digital Storytelling, Cultural Heritage, and Sustainable Tourism

An emerging body of research positions digital storytelling as a sustainable communication strategy capable of preserving cultural heritage while promoting responsible tourism. By documenting oral histories, traditional knowledge, indigenous practices, local crafts, festivals, and historical narratives through digital media, storytelling contributes to cultural continuity and community participation.

Recent qualitative studies demonstrate that digital storytelling strengthens ecological awareness, community engagement, destination authenticity, and sustainable tourism practices. Digital narratives not only promote destinations but also educate visitors about responsible behaviour, environmental conservation, and cultural sensitivity. **UNESCO** has similarly emphasized digital storytelling as an important mechanism for community empowerment, cultural preservation, and sustainable tourism development through digital technologies.

These findings suggest that digital storytelling aligns closely with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly those relating to decent work, sustainable cities, responsible consumption, and cultural heritage preservation.

8 Digital Storytelling and Viksit Bharat 2047

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 seeks to transform India into a developed nation through inclusive economic growth, technological advancement, innovation, sustainability, entrepreneurship, and cultural leadership. Tourism has been identified as a priority sector capable of generating employment, promoting regional development, strengthening India's global image, and supporting local economies.

Digital storytelling offers substantial opportunities within this developmental framework. By promoting lesser-known destinations, encouraging community participation, supporting women entrepreneurs, preserving intangible heritage, and integrating smart technologies into tourism communication, storytelling can strengthen destination competitiveness while ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth.

Nevertheless, existing literature rarely connects digital storytelling explicitly with India's long-term developmental vision. Most studies focus on destination marketing, digital marketing, or social media independently without examining their broader contribution to national development strategies. This conceptual disconnect highlights the need for interdisciplinary research linking tourism communication with public policy, digital transformation, and sustainable development.

9 Research Gap

The review of existing literature reveals several important gaps. First, while digital storytelling has received growing scholarly attention, research remains fragmented across tourism marketing, digital media, and cultural heritage studies, with limited interdisciplinary integration. Second, most existing studies focus on consumer behaviour, destination image, or social media marketing rather than examining storytelling as a strategic communication framework for tourism governance and national development.

Third, empirical studies on Indian tourism continue to emphasize destination branding without systematically analyzing the communication dimensions of government-led digital campaigns. Fourth, limited research investigates the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, immersive media, and smart tourism ecosystems within digital storytelling strategies. Finally, no comprehensive qualitative study has explicitly examined the challenges and opportunities of digital storytelling in relation to the developmental aspirations of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts a qualitative thematic analysis of secondary data drawn from government reports, tourism campaigns, policy documents, international publications, and scholarly literature to develop a comprehensive conceptual understanding of how digital storytelling can contribute to destination branding, sustainable tourism, inclusive growth, and India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

Table 2.1: Critical Comparison of Literature on Digital Storytelling in Tourism

Author(s) & Year	Study / Context	Methodology	Major Findings	Limitations	Research Gap Identified
Fog, Budtz, Munch & Blanchette (2010)	Strategic storytelling in branding	Conceptual	Storytelling enhances emotional engagement and brand identity.	General branding perspective; not tourism-specific.	Limited discussion on digital tourism communication in developing countries.
Lambert (2013)	Digital storytelling framework	Conceptual and practice-based	Multimedia storytelling strengthens	Focuses primarily on education and	Tourism applications remain

			audience engagement and narrative communication.	communication.	underexplored.
Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier (2008)	Online travel experiences	Qualitative	Online narratives significantly influence destination image and travel decisions.	Conducted during the early Web 2.0 era.	Does not examine AI-driven or immersive storytelling technologies.
Xiang & Gretzel (2010)	Role of social media in tourism	Literature review	Social media has become the primary source of tourism information.	Focuses on information search rather than storytelling.	Lacks analysis of destination narratives and policy implications.
Gretzel et al. (2015)	Smart tourism	Conceptual	ICT and smart technologies improve tourism management and visitor experiences.	Technology-centred approach.	Storytelling as a communication strategy is not explored.
Sigala (2020)	Tourism during COVID-19	Conceptual	Digital innovation accelerated tourism recovery and resilience.	Pandemic-specific context.	Long-term tourism communication strategies remain unexplored.
UN Tourism (2023)	Global tourism trends	Secondary data analysis	Digital transformation has become central to tourism competitiveness.	Global perspective with limited country-specific analysis.	Limited focus on India's communication ecosystem.
UNESCO (2022)	Digital heritage preservation	Policy analysis	Digital platforms support cultural preservation and heritage interpretation.	Focuses mainly on heritage institutions.	Limited integration with destination branding and tourism marketing.
Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2025–26)	Tourism policy and campaigns	Government report	Digital campaigns, sustainable tourism, and infrastructure are key priorities.	Policy-oriented; lacks communication evaluation.	No assessment of storytelling effectiveness.
NITI Aayog (2023)	Tourism and economic development	Policy review	Tourism is identified as a strategic driver for inclusive growth and employment.	Macro-policy perspective.	Communication dimensions of tourism promotion are absent.
Kumar & Singh (2021)	Digital marketing in Indian tourism	Qualitative review	Social media enhances destination visibility and tourist engagement.	Limited to marketing strategies.	Does not examine storytelling as an integrated communication framework.
Sharma & Verma (2022)	Destination branding in India	Case study	Heritage-based branding positively influences tourist perception.	Restricted to selected destinations.	National-level digital storytelling framework is missing.
Chhabra (2020)	Heritage tourism	Qualitative	Authentic cultural narratives enhance destination attractiveness.	Focuses primarily on heritage tourism.	Limited discussion on digital media integration.
Buhalis & Amarangga na (2015)	Smart destinations	Conceptual	Smart technologies improve destination competitiveness and visitor	Pre-AI context.	Does not investigate narrative communication.

			experience.		
Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin (2015)	Technology-enhanced tourism	Conceptual	Technology enriches co-created tourism experiences.	Focuses on technological innovation.	Storytelling dimensions remain largely unexplored.
Hays, Page & Buhalis (2013)	Social media in destination marketing	Comparative review	Social media strengthens destination promotion and consumer engagement.	Examines marketing outcomes rather than narrative quality.	Limited attention to storytelling structures and emotional branding.
Kim & Fesenmaier (2017)	Tourism narratives	Qualitative	Emotional storytelling increases travel intention and destination attachment.	Conducted in international settings.	Requires contextual validation within India.
Recent AI Tourism Studies (2023–2025)	AI-driven tourism communication	Systematic review	AI personalizes tourism experiences through recommendation systems and chatbots.	Emerging field with limited empirical evidence.	Integration of AI with storytelling for Indian tourism remains underexplored.

Critical Synthesis

The reviewed literature demonstrates a clear evolution in tourism communication from traditional destination marketing to immersive, technology-enabled storytelling. Early studies primarily emphasized branding, destination image, and online information search, whereas recent scholarship increasingly focuses on digital engagement, immersive technologies, smart tourism, and user-generated content. Government reports similarly recognize digital transformation as essential for enhancing India's tourism competitiveness.

Despite these advances, five significant research gaps emerge:

1. **Fragmented scholarship:** Existing studies examine storytelling, destination branding, social media, smart tourism, and digital marketing separately, with limited interdisciplinary integration.
2. **Limited Indian evidence:** Much of the literature originates from Europe, North America, or East Asia, leaving a shortage of comprehensive qualitative studies focused on India's tourism communication ecosystem.
3. **Policy–communication disconnect:** Government reports emphasize tourism development and digital infrastructure but rarely evaluate how storytelling contributes to policy objectives, destination branding, or tourist engagement.
4. **Emerging technology gap:** Although AI, augmented reality, virtual reality, and smart tourism are gaining importance, their integration into digital storytelling strategies for Indian tourism remains insufficiently examined.
5. **Viksit Bharat 2047 perspective:** No existing study comprehensively investigates digital storytelling as a strategic communication tool supporting India's long-term developmental vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 through sustainable tourism, inclusive growth, cultural preservation, and digital innovation.

Accordingly, the present study addresses these gaps by employing a qualitative thematic analysis of secondary data from government publications, policy documents, tourism campaigns, peer-reviewed literature, and international reports to develop a holistic framework linking digital storytelling, destination branding, sustainable tourism, and national development.

Research Methodology

1 Research Design

The present study adopts a **qualitative research approach** employing an **exploratory and descriptive research design** to examine the role of digital storytelling in Indian tourism and its potential contribution towards the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**. Qualitative research is appropriate for investigating communication strategies, narratives, meanings, and policy perspectives that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measures. The exploratory nature of the study facilitates the identification of emerging themes in digital tourism communication, while the descriptive component enables a systematic interpretation of storytelling practices, challenges, and opportunities.

The study is grounded in an **interpretivist research paradigm**, which assumes that meanings are socially constructed and communicated through narratives, symbols, multimedia content, and digital interactions. Consequently, digital storytelling is examined as a strategic communication practice rather than merely a promotional activity.

2 Research Approach

The study follows an **inductive qualitative approach**, wherein patterns, categories, and themes emerge through systematic analysis of documentary evidence. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, the research seeks to interpret recurring patterns within digital tourism communication and develop a conceptual understanding of its contribution to tourism development and national policy objectives.

3 Nature of the Study

- Exploratory Research
- Descriptive Research
- Qualitative Study
- Secondary Data-Based Research
- Policy-Oriented Review

4 Research Objectives

1. To examine the role of digital storytelling in promoting tourism destinations in India.
2. To analyse storytelling strategies adopted in Indian tourism campaigns.
3. To identify the major challenges influencing digital tourism communication.
4. To explore opportunities for leveraging digital storytelling to achieve the objectives of Viksit Bharat 2047.
5. To propose a conceptual framework linking digital storytelling with sustainable tourism and national development.

5 Research Questions

RQ1: How is digital storytelling utilized in Indian tourism promotion?

RQ2: What storytelling strategies are employed across government tourism campaigns and digital platforms?

RQ3: What are the major challenges affecting digital storytelling in Indian tourism?

RQ4: How can digital storytelling contribute to sustainable tourism development and the realization of Viksit Bharat 2047?

6 Sample / Corpus

The unit of analysis comprises **digital tourism communication documents and campaign materials**. A purposive corpus of documents published between **2018 and 2026** has been selected to capture recent developments in India's digital tourism ecosystem.

Table 3.1 Corpus of the Study

Corpus Category	Type of Material	Approximate Number
Ministry of Tourism Annual Reports	Government Reports	8
Incredible India Campaign	Official Campaign Content	50+ digital assets
Dekho Apna Desh Campaign	Webinars, Videos, Promotional Material	40+
State Tourism Campaigns	Tourism Websites and Social Media Content	20 states
Official Tourism Websites	Destination Information	25 websites
NITI Aayog Reports	Policy Documents	10
UNESCO Publications	Heritage & Culture Reports	10
UN Tourism Publications	Tourism Development Reports	15
Peer-reviewed Journal Articles	Research Papers	50
Newspaper Archives	Tourism News and Policy Coverage	40 articles
Tourism Promotion Videos	YouTube and Digital Campaigns	100+ videos

The corpus is selected using **purposive sampling**, ensuring that each document is directly relevant to digital tourism communication, destination branding, digital storytelling, or tourism policy.

7 Sampling Technique

The study employs **Purposive Sampling**; a non-probability sampling technique widely used in qualitative research. Documents were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

Inclusion Criteria

- Published between 2018 and 2026
- Official Government publications
- Ministry of Tourism documents
- NITI Aayog reports
- UNESCO publications
- UN Tourism publications
- Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Official tourism campaign materials
- English-language publications
- Publicly accessible documents

Exclusion Criteria

- Blogs without institutional credibility
- Commercial advertisements lacking official association
- Duplicate publications
- Non-peer-reviewed opinion pieces
- Unverified social media posts

8 Data Sources

The study relies exclusively on **secondary data** obtained from authentic and credible sources.

Primary Documentary Sources

- Ministry of Tourism Annual Reports

- Incredible India Portal
- Dekho Apna Desh Campaign
- NITI Aayog Publications
- Government Policy Documents
- Tourism Statistics
- Digital India Reports

International Sources

- UN Tourism Reports
- UNESCO Publications
- World Bank Tourism Reports
- OECD Tourism Reports

Academic Sources

- Scopus-indexed journals
- Web of Science journals
- UGC CARE-listed journals
- Books
- Conference proceedings

Media Sources

- Official tourism websites
- Press Information Bureau (PIB)
- National newspapers
- Tourism magazines
- Government YouTube channels
- Official social media accounts

9 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection followed four sequential stages:

Stage I: Identification of relevant government policies, tourism campaigns, and official publications.

Stage II: Retrieval of peer-reviewed academic literature from Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and institutional repositories.

Stage III: Collection of multimedia tourism campaign content, including websites, promotional videos, and social media posts.

Stage IV: Organization of all documents into a digital repository and preparation for coding and thematic analysis.

10 Analysis Technique

The study employs **Thematic Analysis** supported by **Qualitative Content Analysis** following the six-stage framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Stage 1

Data Familiarization

- Reading reports
- Reviewing campaign materials
- Observing videos
- Examining digital narratives

Stage 2

Initial Coding

Codes were assigned to recurring communication elements such as:

- Heritage
- Spirituality
- Adventure
- Culture
- Festivals
- Wildlife
- Food
- Sustainability
- Digital Innovation
- Community Participation
- Storytelling
- Influencer Marketing

Stage 3

Searching for Themes

Codes were grouped into broader themes.

Stage 4

Reviewing Themes

Themes were refined by comparing evidence across multiple data sources.

Stage 5

Defining Themes

Final themes included:

- Digital Storytelling Practices
- Destination Branding
- Digital Platforms
- Emerging Technologies
- Challenges
- Opportunities for Viksit Bharat 2047

Stage 6

Interpretation

Themes were interpreted using communication and tourism theories to develop an integrated conceptual framework.

11 Coding Framework

Theme	Sub-theme	Sample Codes
Storytelling	Heritage	Culture, Monuments, Festivals
Storytelling	Nature	Wildlife, Eco-tourism
Storytelling	Spiritual	Pilgrimage, Wellness
Storytelling	Food	Cuisine, Culinary Tourism
Technology	AI	Chatbots, Personalization
Technology	AR/VR	Virtual Tours
Digital Platforms	Social Media	Instagram, YouTube, Facebook
Engagement	User Participation	Reviews, Influencers, UGC
Sustainability	Community Tourism	Rural Tourism, Local Livelihoods
Challenges	Accessibility	Language, Infrastructure
Challenges	Authenticity	Misinformation, Commercialization
Opportunities	Viksit Bharat	Employment, Innovation, Smart Tourism

12 Key Variables

Since this is a qualitative study, variables are treated as analytical constructs rather than measurable statistical variables.

Category	Variable	Description
Independent Construct	Digital Storytelling	Narrative-based communication using multimedia technologies
Mediating Construct	Digital Engagement	Audience interaction through digital platforms
Mediating Construct	Destination Branding	Perception and image of tourism destinations
Mediating Construct	Technology Adoption	AI, AR/VR, Smart Tourism applications
Dependent Construct	Tourism Development	Visitor attraction, destination competitiveness, sustainable growth
Outcome Construct	Viksit Bharat 2047	Inclusive development, employment generation, cultural preservation, digital transformation

13 Theoretical Lens

The study is informed by multiple complementary theories:

Theory	Relevance
Narrative Transportation Theory	Explains how stories influence tourist attitudes and behavioural intentions.
Destination Branding Theory	Interprets how narratives shape destination identity and image.
Uses and Gratifications Theory	Explains audience motivations for consuming tourism content.
Media Richness Theory	Highlights the effectiveness of multimedia storytelling over text-based communication.
Digital Engagement Theory	Explains user interaction, participation, and co-creation in digital tourism ecosystems.

The integration of these theories provides a comprehensive analytical lens for understanding how digital storytelling influences destination branding, tourist engagement, and sustainable tourism development.

14 Trustworthiness of the Study

To enhance methodological rigour, the study adopts the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985):

- **Credibility:** Use of authoritative government reports, international publications, and peer-reviewed literature.
- **Transferability:** Rich contextual description of digital tourism communication to enable applicability in similar settings.
- **Dependability:** Transparent documentation of data collection, coding procedures, and analytical decisions.
- **Confirmability:** Triangulation across policy documents, campaign materials, and academic sources to minimize researcher bias.

15 Ethical Considerations

The study relies exclusively on publicly available secondary sources. No human participants were involved; therefore, formal ethical approval was not required. All ideas, data, and quotations will be appropriately acknowledged through APA 7th edition referencing to maintain academic integrity and avoid plagiarism.

16 Limitations of the Methodology

- The study is based solely on secondary data and does not include primary stakeholder perspectives.
- Findings depend on the availability and quality of published documents and campaign materials.
- Thematic interpretation may involve researcher subjectivity despite systematic coding procedures.
- The study focuses primarily on national-level campaigns, which may not fully capture local or regional variations in digital storytelling practices.

Despite these limitations, the methodological design is appropriate for developing a comprehensive understanding of digital storytelling in Indian tourism and its relevance to the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Conclusion

Digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the tourism sector, shifting destination promotion from conventional advertising toward immersive, narrative-driven communication. This study examined the role of digital storytelling in Indian tourism through a qualitative analysis of secondary sources, including government publications, policy documents, tourism campaigns, international reports, and scholarly literature. The findings demonstrate that digital storytelling has emerged as a strategic communication approach that extends beyond destination marketing to encompass cultural preservation, destination branding, community engagement, sustainable tourism, and digital innovation.

The thematic analysis revealed that Indian tourism campaigns increasingly employ multimedia narratives, visual storytelling, user-generated content, influencer collaborations, and interactive digital platforms to communicate the country's cultural diversity, heritage, spirituality, biodiversity, cuisine, and experiential tourism offerings. Campaigns such as *Incredible India* and *Dekho Apna Desh* illustrate the Government of India's transition from information-oriented promotion to experience-oriented digital communication, aligning tourism branding with broader national initiatives such as Digital India and the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Government reports further indicate that tourism continues to be recognized as a strategic contributor to employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, regional development, entrepreneurship, and cultural diplomacy.

Despite these positive developments, the study also identified several structural and communication-related challenges. Uneven digital infrastructure, inconsistent destination branding across states, limited multilingual content, accessibility barriers, concerns regarding authenticity and misinformation, fragmented stakeholder coordination, and the relatively slow adoption of advanced technologies continue to constrain the effectiveness of digital storytelling. These issues highlight that technological availability alone cannot ensure successful tourism communication; rather, integrated policy support, institutional collaboration, digital literacy, and community participation are essential for creating authentic and inclusive tourism narratives.

The analysis further suggests that digital storytelling offers substantial opportunities for achieving the objectives of Viksit Bharat 2047. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, virtual reality, digital twins, big data analytics, and smart tourism ecosystems have the potential to personalize visitor experiences, improve destination management, promote lesser-known destinations, strengthen rural tourism, preserve cultural heritage, and generate sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities. Community-led storytelling and user-generated content can democratize tourism communication while enhancing authenticity, destination trust, and visitor engagement. International tourism organizations similarly emphasize digital transformation as a key driver of future tourism competitiveness and sustainable development.

The principal theoretical contribution of this study lies in conceptualizing digital storytelling as an integrated communication framework that connects destination branding, digital engagement, sustainable tourism, and national development. Unlike previous studies that have primarily examined destination marketing, social media, or digital technologies in isolation, this research integrates communication theory, tourism studies, public policy, and digital transformation within the context of India's long-term developmental vision. The proposed framework positions digital storytelling as a strategic enabler of inclusive growth, cultural preservation, responsible tourism, and economic resilience.

From a policy perspective, the study recommends the formulation of a National Digital Tourism Storytelling Framework that integrates central and state tourism agencies, cultural institutions, technology providers, local communities, and creative industries. Such a framework should prioritize multilingual storytelling, AI-enabled personalization, accessibility, digital skill development, ethical content creation, and community participation to strengthen India's global tourism competitiveness. Investments in immersive technologies, smart destination management, and digital heritage interpretation can further enhance India's position as a leading tourism destination while contributing to employment generation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable regional development.

Although the study provides a comprehensive synthesis of existing literature and policy documents, it is limited by its reliance on secondary data and documentary analysis. Future research should incorporate primary data through interviews with policymakers, tourism professionals, content creators, digital marketers, local communities, and tourists to validate and refine the conceptual framework proposed in this study. Comparative studies across Indian states and international destinations may also provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of different digital storytelling strategies.

In conclusion, digital storytelling represents far more than a communication tool; it is an emerging strategic asset capable of transforming how India communicates its cultural identity, heritage, and tourism experiences to global audiences. If supported by coherent policy, technological innovation, community participation, and sustainable development principles, digital storytelling can significantly strengthen India's tourism ecosystem and contribute meaningfully to the realization of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

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Original Article

Rights of Travellers Against Travel Agencies under Indian Law

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Abstract

The rapid growth of India's travel and tourism industry has increased the reliance on travel agencies as intermediaries that organise package tours, arrange transportation, manage documentation, and provide advice, thus supporting employment and tourism-related income. However, these intermediary roles also introduce risks for travellers, including false claims, breach of contract, unfair cancellation policies, hidden charges, poor complaint resolution processes, and financial fraud, which cause emotional and financial harm and reduce trust in the industry. This work aims to explore the common nature of disputes with travel agencies, outline the legal rights and available remedies for customers under Indian law, and present a practical method for initiating legal proceedings. Through a doctrinal and descriptive analysis of applicable legal frameworks and regulatory standards, it links consumer grievances to legal provisions under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 (such as deficiencies in service, unfair trade practices, compensation including refunds and compensation for mental distress, and access to quasi-judicial Consumer Commissions), the Indian Contract Act, 1872 (related to contract formation and damages for breach), the Specific Relief Act, 1963 (about specific performance and injunctions), and the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (criminal remedies for cheating under Section 318 and criminal breach of trust under Section 316, including cybercrime complaints), as well as relevant Ministry of Tourism guidelines and the Companies Act, 2013 where applicable. The analysis identifies common fraud patterns—such as false insurance promises, fake receipts, last-minute cancellations on false grounds, transportation and currency exchange scams, and deceptive "free vacation" or discount schemes—and recommends a step-by-step enforcement process: gathering evidence, sending a formal notice requesting a refund within 15 days, and escalating the matter to the appropriate Consumer Commission based on the claim's value and location. The study concludes that while proactive vigilance is important, Indian consumer and criminal laws together provide strong, structured means to prevent misconduct and secure remedies against unscrupulous travel agencies.

Keywords: *Consumer, Fraud, Traveller, Travel Agency, Disputes, Legal Action*

Introduction

The travel sector has grown rapidly, and tourism has become an important source of income. Many foreign and Indian tourists have explored various destinations in the country, creating jobs for many people. Most of these tourists used travel agencies to help with their travel plans and payments. Travel agencies serve as links between travellers and service providers. However, this relationship can sometimes lead to problems like misrepresentation, fraud, and contract breaches by travel agencies, which can cause financial losses for travellers. Indian law clearly outlines the rights of travellers in these situations.

Travel Agency and Its Role

Travel agencies act as intermediaries between travellers and service providers. In India, these agencies are officially recognised as responsible for organising package tours, coordinating transportation, managing documentation, and offering advice to tourists. They must fulfil key roles as required by tourism regulations from the Ministry of Tourism (MOT).

These roles include:

1. Travel Documentation: Helping with passports and visas for international travellers.
2. Reservation Services: Booking seats for airlines, trains, buses, and cruise ships.
3. Tour Packaging: Creating, organising, and carrying out packaged tours both in India and abroad.

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4. Advisory and Consultancy: Offering reliable information about routes, destinations, and costs.

Travel agencies are legally required to:

1. Legal Recognition: Follow the Ministry of Tourism's guidelines, which grant official recognition to approved travel agents.
2. Consumer Protection: As service providers under the Consumer Act, travel agencies are legally responsible for service shortcomings or false advertisements.
3. Safe Tourism Practices: Stick to the government's "Safe & Honourable Tourism" guidelines, which require staff safety training and clear display of conduct codes.
4. Industry Standards: The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) supports professional standards and fair practices in the industry.

Travel agencies help travellers by booking flights, accommodations, and tours. While most transactions go smoothly, some issues can arise.

Nature of Disputes with Travel Agencies

Contract breaches are common, as agencies often fail to provide the promised services. For instance, a hotel marketed as five-star might only be two-star. Misrepresentation is another key issue, with agencies occasionally giving incorrect information, like misleading package details. Cancellation issues are also frequent; agencies may cancel trips without proper refunds and impose high cancellation fees. Additionally, hidden charges often appear, unexpectedly raising costs. Poor customer service can worsen these problems, as agencies might not respond to complaints. Financial fraud is another risk, where agencies take payments and vanish. These situations need quick legal action. Travel fraud is another serious issue, where clients lose money because agencies make false promises to attract customers, using tactics like low prices, hidden fees, and scams related to transportation. Types of travel fraud include agencies promising false insurance, providing fake receipts, cancelling trips last minute for false reasons, enforcing hidden charges, offering misleading hotel bookings, running scams related to transportation, misrepresenting agreement terms, promising numerous free vacations, faking discounts for immediate bookings, and conducting currency exchange scams during international travels. Disputes with travel agencies result in financial and emotional losses for customers. Travel fraud can also harm the businesses of the travel agencies involved in such scams. After dealing with fraud, individuals may hesitate to trust agencies again, and increases in scams deter them from using agencies for future trips.

Legal Framework Dealing with Disputes with Travel Agencies: Rights of Customers

Indian law protects consumers through various statutes designed to safeguard their interests. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 (CPA), plays a crucial role in this. It shields consumers from unfair trade practices and applies to a broad range of goods and services, including those offered by travel agencies. Moreover, the CPA established Consumer Commissions, which are quasi-judicial bodies that handle consumer disputes more quickly than civil courts. Under the CPA, consumers can seek compensation, which may include refunds and damages for emotional distress. The Act defines "deficiency in service," which applies to failures by travel agencies, and tackles "unfair trade practices," like deceptive advertising.

The Indian Contract Act, 1872, governs each booking as a contract, laying out valid contract principles and defining breaches. If a travel agency breaches the terms, legal action can be taken to claim damages for any resulting loss.

The Specific Relief Act, 1963, allows individuals to seek specific performance, enabling them to compel an agency to fulfil a contract in certain cases. However, compensation is more commonly pursued in travel-related cases. The Act also discusses injunctions, which can prevent specific actions by an agency.

Under the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, victims of travel fraud can take legal action against offenders. They can file a police complaint under Section 318, which deals with cheating, and Section 316, which relates to criminal breach of trust. Complaints can also be submitted to the cybercrime cell.

Depending on the situation, other laws may apply. For example, the Companies Act, 2013 regulates the corporate structure of agencies and covers issues like financial solvency. Additionally, guidelines from the Ministry of Tourism may be relevant, providing industry standards.

Steps of Legal Action

Step 1: Compile Required Documentation: The customer needs to gather all necessary documents. This should include booking confirmations, invoices, receipts, proof of payments, screenshots of package details or advertisements, and any communication records (such as emails, chat logs, and call details) with the travel agency.

Step 2: Issue a Formal Legal Notice: A formal legal notice or email should be sent to the travel agency, explaining the misrepresentation and service failures and requesting a full refund within 15 days. This document details the customer's complaints, explains the expected solutions, and sets a deadline for the agency's reply. A well-written legal notice often leads to a settlement, showing that the customer is ready to take legal action if necessary.

Step 3: Filing a Consumer Complaint: If the legal notice does not lead to a solution, the customer should proceed to the next step, which is filing a complaint. If the agency refuses to return the money or ignores the notice, the customer can file a complaint with the relevant Consumer Commission. The jurisdiction of the commission is determined by the value of the claim and the location of the agency.

Conclusion

Conflicts with travel agencies can be disappointing, but travel fraud is a serious crime involving various deceptive actions that put individuals in risky and vulnerable situations. Examples of such fraud by travel agencies include fake bookings, hidden fees, rental scams, and last-minute cancellations. These fraudulent activities can result in financial loss, exposure of personal information, and damage to the reputations of other travel agencies. To protect against travel fraud, individuals should take preventive steps such

as making payments through approved banks, being careful with personal data, and verifying the authenticity of travel agencies and suppliers. Additionally, learning about fraud tactics can help travelers spot scams and avoid them. However, customers are not without options, as Indian consumer law offers strong protection for them.

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Original Article

Problems and Prospects of Holy Place Shikhar Shingnapur: A Geographical Analysis.

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Abstract:
Historically Indians are well known an evolutionary journey from ancient period. And the tourism has different meanings in different regions in different ways. Tourism geography is significant branch of geography. It studies travel and tourism activityin wide range as well as social, cultural and economic importance in the development of country. Hence the touriat trvels by their choice outside the home environment. The word tourism includes travels by tourist to pleasure from natural , cultural and religious destinations. Holy Place Shikharshingnapur located in man tahsil of satara district and having lot of religioues tourist every year. Therefore, this paper focused to significance of Holy Place Shikharshingnapur, its problems and prospects to with the help development and satisfification of tourist.

Keywords: - *Tourism, Tourist, religious.*

Introduction:

Tourism geography is significant branch of geography. It studies travel and tourism activity in wide range as well as social, cultural and economic importance in the development of country. Today, tourist place is our great heritage and continues supply the lifeblood of our civilization and national existence. Tourism is one of the emerging economic activities supplies more employment oppurtunities. The efficiency of tourism industry in a region is determined by the interaction of physical, socio-economic and religious factors. Hence the information of tourist centers is essential for the selection, planning and implementation various schemes and to know the basic demands of human welfare. It helps map out of trvels routs, tourist flows, resources of physical and cultural landscapes. The tourism geography, which deals with lacation, climate, vegetation, rivers, lakes, landscape and anmimal life from physical geography whereas contact and exchange their cultural value from human geography. Hence the touriat trvels by their choice outside the home environment. The word tourism includes travels by tourist to pleasure from natural, cultural and religious destinations.

Defination of Tourism:

Today Tourism related different travelling activity in the religious, medical, economic, social and pleasant activity outdoor of home environment in the entry, stay and movement of tourist. Tourism activity covers wide range of interest including environmental impact of tourism. The geographyof tourism leads and answering tourism industry and concern its management as well as socioeconomic and location of tourism and its impact on place. Tourism has different meaning in different region is as follows. 'Tourism may be defined in trms of perticular activities selectet by choice and undertaken outside the home environment' and 'Tourism meanes temperary changing of place an individual intrest other than place from own residence'.

Defination of Tourist:

The term Tourism is used by who travel from place to place for his own pleasure. According to the World Tourism Organization 'A tourist is a person who travel to aplace other than his usual place of residence and stay in hotels for duration of not less than 24 hours for own pleasure, religious, social, business, health andstudy etc. purpose'.

Components of Tourism: -

The development of tourism is depended on various components is as follows. A) Location B) Attractions C) Historical C) Cultural D) Transportation E) Acomodation.

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The location is important as like sea side, cool place, hilly range and natural secrecy are more attractrive location for development of tourism. The attraction includes lakes, rivers forests, costal area, hill station and beautiful places are moe attractive for tourismdevelopment. The cultural and histirical comopnents includes forts, battle field, temples, arts and painting are great value for tourism development. The transportation is significant factor of tourism development. Easy, cheap and comfertable transpotation facilities turn into rapid growth of tourist places. The cheap hotels, motels, lodges and foods are play significant role in the development of tourism.

Objective:

The present investigation devoted to the annual faif and festivels at shikharsingnapur. and suggest remedial measures from problems faced by tourist at shikharsinganapur.

Data Base and Methodology:

The present study is based on primary and secondary data. The secondary data collected from District Gazetter of Satara district, Socioeconomic Abstrict of Satara district, and dailnewspaper and observation method..For the assessment of tourist satisfication level calculted through Satisfication Index formula is as given below..

$$Sti = Mi \times Ni \div N$$

Whereas, Sti = Satisfaction Index,
Mi = Value for perticular level,
Ni = Number of respondents for perticular level,
N = Total number of respondents.

For the result obtained the statistics of Satisfication Index tabulated and shown by table no. 1, 2 and 3.

1. Study Area Shikharshignapur :- The study region Shikharsninganapur is village of Man tahsil of Satara district. It is located on 17° 38' 22" north latitude and 74° 45' 20" east lingitude. This holy place is major part of Shambhu Mahadev range of Westernghat. The Shikharsninganapur 18 Km. away from man tahsil and 75 Km. away from district head quarter Satara. The region is hilly and annual rainfall in the Shikharsninganapur records 500 mm. The pleasent climate and hilly region having large forest among the Shikharsninganapur temple of lord Mahadev attract people in rainy season towards the holy place. This village well conneted by roads to the man tahsil and district headquarter.

Location Map of Shikharsninganapur Village

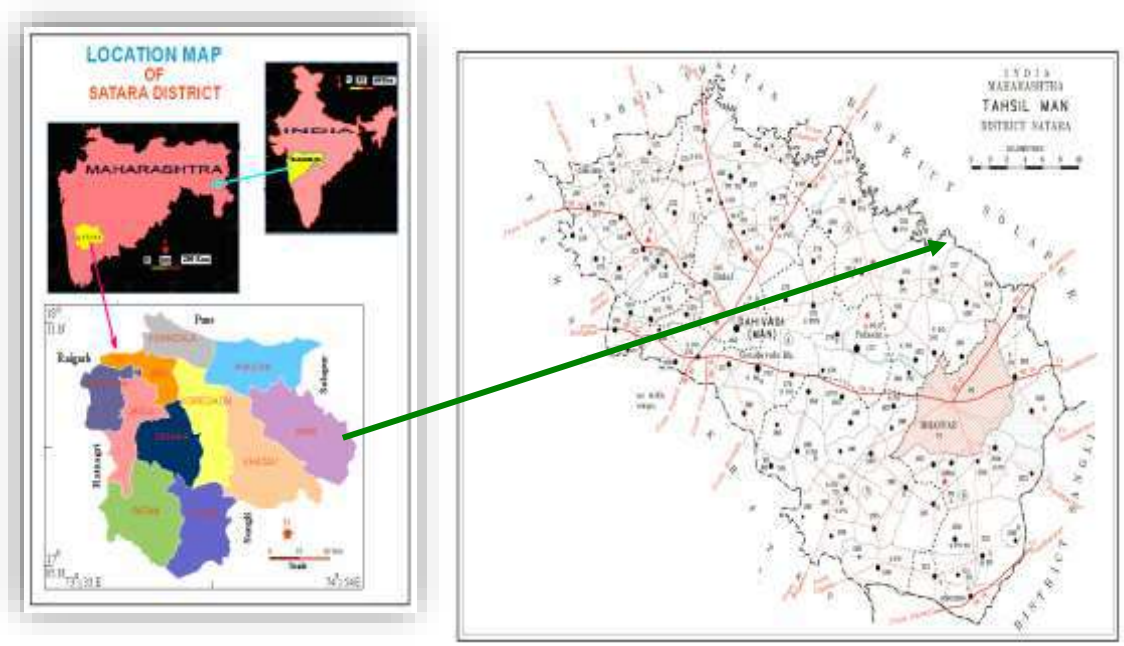


Fig. No. 1

2. Tourist Place and Historical Significance of Shikharsninganapur:- The village and the original temple were established during the 11th century by King Sindhan of the Devagiri Yadavas. Shikhar Shingnapur is a historic village and religious place located on the border of the three districts of Satara, Solapur and Pune. There is a famous temple of Lord Shambhu. This temple is famous as the private temple of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. This is an important pilgrimage site situated on a hill at about 1,050 meters above sea level. The temple draws thousands of devotees, particularly during the Chaitra Yatra.

3. Fair and Festivales in Shikharsninganapur:- There are different festivels clebrtated over the year by traditional manner. In these every Sunday puja, sharvan mas, mahashivratri and annual fair of kavd yatra are major. There are big festivals in sharvan mas, Mahashivratri and annnual fair on the occasion of Gudhipadava. The piligrimes are visited in large scale at the time of kavad yatra millions of pligrims are celebrated kavad festival.

4. Problems and Facilities in Shikharsninganapur:- The Shikharsninganapur well connected by roads to the Dahiwadi, to phaltan in Satara district and to Natepute in Solapur district. On these road transportation by busof MSRTC, private vehicles, bike and fair vehicles are avaliable from Dahiwadi. There are good hotels for dinner and lunch. The Dahiwadi having lot of ratustrants, hotels and dhabas. Every Monday the ShikharsninganapurDevsthan provides measl for pligrims in free of cost. But at the time of

Kavad yatra pligrimes are large scale turns into the problems of cheap food, lodge, drinking water and also parking. The large scale pligrims crowd are wants proper management and facilities.

5. Level of Satisfication:- The reserch has beeen made an attempt to made the level of satisfication of pligrims and touristby considering their views about facilities provided by holy place destinations.

Table No. 1

Level of satisfication and Distribution of Respondents

Sr. No.	Factrors	Distribution of Respondents				
		Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfatrory	Total
1	Transpotation	1	5	42	52	100
2	Food	44	17	7	32	100
3	Accomodation	2	8	47	43	100
4	Parking	16	32	30	22	100
5	Tourist Place	58	21	12	9	100
6	Shopping	24	30	43	3	100
	Avarage of % Respondents	9.7	34.9	45.6	39.8	100

Source: - Complied form by author.

The table No. 1 shows that level of satisfication in shikharshinganapur. The tourist responded various factors in ranking. The 58% tourist respond hikharshinganapur is excellent tourist place, where as 21 % have recorded good, 12 % recorded Satisfactory and 9 % recorded Unsatisfactory tourist place. The food and parking recorded by 44 % and 16 % in excellent manner, but transpotation and accomodation are poor recorded by 52 % and 43 % respectively. There are no good hotels and motels, turn tourist attention to recorded 43 % of unsatisfactory.

Table No. 2

Satisfication Index

Sr. No.	Factrors	Distribution of Respondents				
		Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfatrory	Rank
1	Transpotation	2.3	3.1	2.5	13.2	6
2	Food	14.9	12.4	7.4	3.3	3
3	Accomodation	2.11	2.4	2.5	10.4	5
4	Parking	14.7	16.2	13.10	2.8	2
5	Tourist Place	16.5	19.6	15.2	3.2	1
6	Shopping	9.1	8.7	7.4	4.2	4

Source:- Complied form by author.

Table No. 2 shows that satisfication index of respondes invarious factor and its rank repectively. The tourist recorded tourist place is excellent and notes 1st rank. Where as parking and food are 2nd and 3rd rank respectively. But the satisfication index shows that poor response of tourist in accomodation and transportation, recorded 5th and 6th rank respectively. This figure shows that tha shikharshingnapur is ecellent tourist place but transportation and accomodation are very poor.

6. Problems and Need of Shikharsninganapur:- The development of transportation facilities are poor and the road system are not proper. The shorage of pure drinking water. The food and accomodation are not avaliable sufficient manner. There are infrastructural gap in tourist service. There are need of development of transportation accissibility by good road network and intensity of buses. There are necessity of pure drinking water, medical facilities, comman tourist accomodation and food facilities by ruling authority.they should provide good parking facilities to tourist. By increasing infrastructural development, tourist turn their attention towards the destination shikharshinganapur

7. Concuding Remark:- The religious place Shikharsninganapur is significant holy place situated on Shambhumahadev hill range with having calm, quite and natural environment. There is need of infrastructural development including Roads. Intensity of buses as well as proper management. Besides these the accomodation of common tourist and food facilities are more significant to tourist stay and pay there. This had resulted economic development oft this destination.

Tourism has different meanings in different languages and different regions and can be defined in different ways. The present day tourism is not the same as travels of the early periods of human history. In the language of Jews, the word 'Torah' mean study or search and 'tour' seems to have been derived from it in Latin the original word 'Tornos' stands close to it. 'Tornos' was a kind of round wheel like tool hinting at the idea of a travel circuit or package tour. In sanskrit 1) Paryatan- means leaving one's residence to travel for the sake of rest and for seeking knowledge 2) 'Deshatan' is another word which means travelling for economic benefits 3) Tirthatan' is the third equivalent which means travelling for religious purposes. All the three words convey the meaning and concept of tourism much more appropriately as well as comprehensively.

. The several attempts have been made on computing efficiency of the changes in land use. But the collection of the type of data is more difficult in less time. The satellite remote sensing data with the respective nature with the help of GIS technique have proved to be quite useful of land use and land cover patterns and changes with in less time. Therefore this attempt has been made to map out the status of land use and land cover of India from the period of 2018-19 and 2022-23. And decanting the changes in the built up and agricultural land use with the help of Geographic Information System and Remote Sensing Data. **The Concept of Land use and Land Cover: -**

Generally, the word land use refers to the various use of land by different human activities. Agricultural cropping and residential activity are covers in the land use. Land cover refers to the activities which are natural or sometime manmade like as

natural vegetation, water bodies, rock and soil etc. Finally, the land use and land covers mean the different type of uses of land utilization on the surface of the earth.

Changes in the Land Use and Land Cover (2018-19 & 2022-23):-

The seven characterized class of land use and land cover indicates the minor reduction in the study region during the study period. The fallow land bears negative growth with the increasing tendency of agricultural land. The area under water bodies increase but neither sufficient rate. The forest land area shows negative growth rate. The waste land area reduced within study period. The snow cover land also reduced. The land under built up area observed expansion of settlement. However, the land under different categories is as follows.

Agricultural Land: -

In this category includes that the land under different crops over the season. in the study area most of land utilized by khariff crops. The area under rabbi crops during the study period due to the less amount of rainfall. But the area under double crops and plantations crops increased double due the farmers turn to attention towards the cash crops.

Fig No. 1

Conclusion: -

Today the growth of population increasing rapidly in the world and it leads to increasing in consumption of resource. And the different types of data are required in the action plan of development as well as disaster management. But such type of data collection with in fewer periods is more difficult. But the satellite remote sensing data with the respective nature with the help of GIS technique have proved to be quite useful of land use and land cover patterns and changes with in less time. Therefore, the technique of GIS and Remote Sensing are more significant. Finally it is concludes that the GIS and Remote Sensing are better tool future of coming generation.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research paper.

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Original Article

Reducing Tourist Stress through Community-Based Tourism: A Sustainable Model for Tourism Development in the Konkan.

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Abstract

Tourism is often considered a means of relaxation and recreation; however, tourists frequently encounter various forms of stress during travel. It includes transportation difficulties, lack of information, overcrowding, ticking places, cultural unfamiliarity, and service-related problems. Such stress can negatively affect tourist satisfaction and destination image. Community Based Tourism which emphasizes local participation and community ownership, has the potential to reduce tourist stress by providing personalized services, local guidance, authentic experiences, and a supportive environment. This paper proposes a Community-Based Tourist Stress Reduction Model for the Konkan region of Maharashtra. The model demonstrates how local communities can play a crucial role in improving tourist experiences while simultaneously generating employment and supporting sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: *Tourist Stress, Community-Based Tourism, Redefining Tourism, Konkan Tourism, Sustainable Tourism.*

Introduction:

Maharashtra is a leading tourism hub in India. According to the 2024–25 Economic Survey, the state registered 111.3 million domestic visits and 1.51 million foreign visits in 2022. Official India Tourism statistics report that Maharashtra 'ranked sixth in domestic tourist visits and second in foreign tourist visits' in 2022. In that year, Maharashtra had 1,716 approved hotels nationwide (107,795 rooms), with 16,557 rooms in Maharashtra – the highest of any state. Mumbai's airport alone accounted for 17.8% of India's foreign tourist arrivals in 2022 (second only to Delhi). These figures underscore rapid growth: tourism demand continues to rise, placing heavy pressure on popular destinations along the Konkan coast.

Assumptions and Data Gaps:

- Actual figures for revenue, occupancy and spending patterns in Konkan community-based tourism are sparse.
- Our CAPEX/ROI ranges are based on industry reports and interviews in similar regions.
- We assume moderate occupancy (50–70%) and conservative pricing (₹500–1,500 per person-night).
- We also assume cooperative governance will function effectively (requiring trust and transparency).
- Key data needs: detailed district-level tourist flows by month, inventory of accommodation units, and surveys of visitor preferences. Partnering with Research organisations or using Tourism Dept surveys could fill these gaps.

Tourist Stress; Concept and Effects:

"Tourist stress" refers to the physical and emotional strain visitors feel when travel conditions are difficult. Overcrowding, poor transport, inadequate lodging, safety concerns, pollution, and lack of information can all trigger stress. When people feel their personal space is encroached, satisfaction suffers. In practical terms, high stress means lower visitor satisfaction and a tarnished destination image, reducing the chance of repeat visits. For example, one study notes that tourists in crowded sites report frustration and lower enjoyment when basic services (restrooms, waste disposal, seating) are lacking.

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Thus, minimizing stress factors is key to sustaining a positive tourism experience.

Community Based Tourism as a Solution:

Community Based Tourism redistributes tourism benefits into villages, often with smaller scale and authentic experiences. Rather than adding more large hotels, community-based tourism leverages local homes and farms to host visitors. Tourists live with families, eat local food, and join rural activities (farming, crafts). This relaxes pressure on popular sites by decentralizing visitors, and enhances quality through personal hospitality. Crucially, economic benefits stay local: hosts earn room-and-board fees, wages, and sales of Agro-products. Mangar Farm Stay (Sindhudurg): One example is the Mangar farm stay in Tulas (Vengurla taluka). Run by the Kokani Ranmanus, it consists of several traditional farm cottages built with local materials. Guests pay modest rates (e.g 1,500 per person per night) for simple rooms and home-cooked Konkan meals including guide. In return they participate in farm activities (rice planting, coconut harvesting) and nature walks. This model offers peaceful rural lodging (far from congested beaches) and authentic learning. Mangar's occupancy hovers ~60–80% on weekends, adding direct income to the region. Supplement farm incomes and are reinvested in education or conservation.

Investment Opportunities and Financial Models:

Economic analysis shows several scalable opportunities in Konkan Community Based Tourism (see Table No1). Key business models include homestays, farm-stays, eco-lodges, waste management ventures, transport shuttles, guided-tour services, agro-tourism packages, and digital booking platforms. Each has distinct CAPEX/OPEX profiles:

Business Model	CAPEX (₹ lakh)	OPEX (₹ lakh/yr)	Revenue Streams	ROI (%)
Homestays (village)†	5–15	1–3	Room rent, meals, local handicrafts	10–20
Farm Stays	7–20	2–5	Accommodation, farm produce, activities	8–15
Community Lodges	20–50	5–10	Lodging, events, F&B, tours	10–15
Waste Management	10–30	1–5	Collection fees, recyclables sales	Variable
Transport Services	10–20 per vehicle	1–2 per vehicle	Ticket fares, charters	8–12
Guided Tours & Treks	1–3	0.5–1	Tour fees, guide charges	20–30 (high)
Agri-tourism (events)	5–15	2–4	Farm visits, produce sales	10–18
Digital Booking Platform	10–50	2–5	Booking commissions, ads	15–25

- Table 1: Sample investment options in Konkan Community Based Tourism (estimated costs and ROI). ROI depends on occupancy rates, pricing, and scale. Figures are illustrative ranges based on industry reports and field interviews.
- CAPEX/OPEX Details: For a typical homestay, CAPEX may include renovating rooms (₹2–5 lakh per room), kitchens, and composting toilets. Ongoing costs cover housekeeping, utilities, and marketing. Returns come from room tariffs and meals (often ₹500–1,000 per person-day). Small-scale operators often break even within 2–3 years. For farm-stays, additional capital may fund guest farm equipment (horse carts, boats). Eco-lodges incur higher CAPEX (₹20–50 lakh) for multiple rooms and amenities, but yield economies of scale. Waste-management projects (e.g. biogas units, community recycling) have CAPEX ~₹10–30 lakh and can earn revenue via service fees and sale of compost or recyclables. Digital platforms (apps for homestay listing) have CAPEX ~₹10–50 lakh for development and marketing; they earn via commissions (5–20%) on bookings.
- Revenue Projections & ROI: ROI scenarios vary. Assuming 60–70% average occupancy, a homestay family (2 rooms) can earn ₹10–15 lakh/yr gross; after OPEX, ROI of 15–20% on initial 10 lakh investment is plausible. A small eco-lodge (10 rooms, ₹30 lakh CAPEX) at 50% occupancy and ₹2,000 average rate yields ~₹1–1.2 cr revenue, ~15% ROI. Waste ventures yield lower ROI but high social impact. Detailed financial modelling must account for loan interest (if any), taxes, and local wage costs.

Funding Structures:

Community Based Tourism projects can be financed through mixed sources:

- Equity/Grants: Villagers' own savings, NGO seed grants, CSR funds (e.g. from Tata/ Mahindra foundations), crowd-funding.
- Debt: Bank loans (NABARD, SIDBI, MSME banks) often at 8–12% interest; Maharashtra offers interest subvention for tourism loans. The "Stand-Up India" scheme (for SC/ST/women entrepreneurs) also covers homestays.
- Government Support: State/National schemes (Swadesh Darshan, PRASAD) provide capital subsidies (up to 30%) and tax breaks. For example, the 2024 Tourism Policy promises SGST reimbursements and land-conversion facilitation for rural projects.

Scalability:

All models are scalable in clusters. A network of 10–20 homestays in neighboring villages can share marketing (joint websites), training resources, and bulk procurement (food, fuel). Digital platforms can aggregate listings to boost bookings. Critical mass lowers per-unit costs (e.g. pooling vehicles for shuttles). Table 1 above shows economies of scale (e.g. larger lodges have higher CAPEX but also higher total returns). Localization of offerings (e.g. fishery tours in Ratnagiri vs. agro-fairs in Raigad) increases resilience against market shifts.

Risk Analysis and Mitigation:

Community based tourism investments face several risks. Table 2 summarizes key risks and strategies:

Risk Category	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation Strategies
Regulatory	High	Medium	Coastal/forest clearances (CRZ restrictions) can delay projects. Mitigate by early liaison with Panchayat, selecting zones outside CRZ I, and using modular, removable structures (e.g. beach shacks per state policy).
Seasonality	High	High	Monsoon slump (June–Sept) can halve occupancy. Mitigate by developing rainy-season tourism (e.g. "rain tourism" festivals, forest treks), off-season discounts, and diversifying into indoor cultural workshops.
Environmental	Medium	Medium	Erosion, pollution from guests could degrade sites. Mitigate via strict carrying-capacity limits, investment in eco-sanitation (bio-toilets, solar power), and hire local "eco-keepers" to maintain trails. Certification can institutionalize best practices.
Community Governance	Medium	Low-Medium	Internal disputes over revenue sharing or land use. Mitigate by forming democratically elected cooperatives, transparent accounts, and legal agreements defining profit splits. Regular Gram Sabhas can sustain consensus.
Market Demand	Medium	Medium	Fluctuations (e.g. COVID-19) can hit bookings. Mitigate through multi-channel marketing (OTAs, social media), package tie-ups (with Mumbai/Goa tour operators), and maintaining lean cost structure in off-season.

This risk matrix reflects that regulatory and seasonality are most critical. For example, the 2016 call to relax CRZ norms shows how sensitive Konkan projects are to environment law. Seasonality mitigation draws on [10], which recommends "adventure and senior citizen tourism" in June–Oct to smooth demand. By planning flexible business models (e.g. converting homestays to educational/retreat centres in low season), operators can reduce downtime.

Conclusion:

Tourist stress along the Konkan coast is intensifying due to surging demand and limited infrastructure. Community Based Tourism offers a viable solution: by integrating visitors into village life (homestays, farm experiences, local guiding), Community Based Tourism can reduce overcrowding at hotspots, enhance visitor satisfaction through unique experiences, and simultaneously raise rural incomes and conserve heritage. Case examples like Mangar Farm Stay demonstrate how such models operate on a small scale, and the state's Niwas Nyahari scheme provides a policy framework. We have identified multiple investment avenues (homestays, farm stays, waste, transport, etc.) with illustrative financials (Tables 1–2) and mapped out pilot projects and partners. For investors and policymakers, the message is clear: supporting Community Based Tourism in Konkan can yield competitive returns while advancing sustainable development goals. By diversifying tourism away from congested beaches into the hinterland, we can both de-stress the coast and unlock inclusive growth for Konkan's communities.

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Original Article

Reimagining Eco-Tourism in India Through Sanskrit Wisdom Towards Vikshit Bharat 2047:

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Abstract

Contemporary discussions of eco-tourism in India generally emerge from the language of sustainability, biodiversity management, and responsible travel. The present study argues that Sanskrit ecological thought can contribute an ethical vocabulary capable of enriching contemporary eco-tourism discourse. Sanskrit texts provide a significant conceptual framework for rethinking eco-tourism in India not merely as a niche tourism product but as an ethically regulated mode of engagement with pilgrimage landscapes, waters, rivers, forests, mountains, animals and sacred geographies for understanding human relations with nature. The study explores how ancient classical Sanskrit thought conceptualises the relationship between humans and the non-human world through categories such as ṛta (cosmic order), dharma, (ethical obligation), ahiṃsā (non-injury), aparigraha (restraint), bhūmi-mātṛtva (earth as mother) and tīrtha (sacred crossing-place). India's journey towards Vikshit Bharat 2047 finds its ecological compass not merely in modern sustainability paradigms but in the timeless environmental wisdom embedded within Sanskrit literature. Reimagining eco-tourism through Sanskrit wisdom transforms travel from an act of consumption into a practice of reverence, stewardship and cultural regeneration. From this perspective, eco-tourism ceases to be merely a commercial category within the tourism industry and becomes a cultural practice of ecological citizenship. The traveller is invited not simply to observe nature but to participate respectfully within living ecological communities whose continuity extends beyond immediate economic value. Such a framework acquires particular significance in the context of Vikshit Bharat 2047. Undoubtedly, a Sanskrit perspective does not replace environmental science or policy planning but it can provide a civilisationally rooted ethical grammar for eco-tourism in India towards Vikshit Bharat 2047. The future of Indian eco-tourism lies not in rediscovering nature alone, but in rediscovering the Sanskritic consciousness that regarded nature as sacred. In rediscovering the Sanskrit dictum that humanity and nature are inseparable companions, India may well discover the soul of Vikshit Bharat 2047.

Keywords: *Eco-tourism; Vikshit Bharat 2047; Sanskrit ecological ethics; sustainability, humanity and nature, community participation.*

Full Paper

Introduction

India's journey towards Vikshit Bharat 2047 finds its ecological compass not merely in modern sustainability paradigms but in the timeless environmental wisdom embedded within Sanskrit literature. Eco-tourism in India, generally understood as environmentally responsible travel to natural areas that conserves ecological systems, educates visitors, and benefits local communities is usually discussed through the contemporary frameworks of sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, local livelihoods, and responsible travel. Unlike conventional mass tourism, which often prioritizes scenic consumption, leisure infrastructure, and visitor volume, eco-tourism is intended to minimize environmental damage while maximizing conservation value and community participation. It typically emphasizes small-scale travel, ecological interpretation, cultural sensitivity, and long-term sustainability. In practice, however, eco-tourism exists on a spectrum: some destinations successfully integrate conservation and local stewardship, while others merely adopt the label "eco" without transforming the underlying extractive logic of tourism.

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India presents both the promise and the peril of eco-tourism. The country contains extraordinary ecological diversity: the Himalayas, the Western Ghats, the Sundarbans, the Thar Desert, the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago, mangrove forests, coral systems, alpine meadows, river deltas, wildlife corridors, and sacred groves. Many of these regions are biodiversity hotspots, but they are also socially inhabited, economically vulnerable, and increasingly vulnerable to climate change, pollution, and overdevelopment. Tourism can contribute to local employment and conservation awareness, yet unregulated tourism can also intensify waste accumulation, road construction, water depletion, habitat fragmentation, and cultural commodification. Eco-tourism therefore emerges as an attempt to mediate between access and restraint, livelihood and conservation, hospitality and ecological limits.

Recent Indian policy discourse demonstrates a growing awareness of these tensions. The Ministry of Tourism has formulated national strategies for eco-tourism and sustainable tourism and has emphasized that eco-tourism should be supported by state strategy, capacity building, marketing, destination development, and community partnerships ("Eco-Tourism"). Government statements in 2024 also connected eco-tourism with "Travel for Life" and the broader goal of sustainable destination planning under Swadesh Darshan 2.0 ("Promotion of Green and Eco-Tourism"; "Aatmanirbhar Bharat in the Tourism Sector"). Such policy moves suggest that eco-tourism is no longer seen merely as "nature travel"; it is increasingly tied to environmental governance, public education, and regional development.

However, eco-tourism in India operates within a cultural context in which many "natural" sites are also sacred, historical, and literary sites. Forests are linked to epic memory; rivers are ritually alive; mountains are pilgrimage routes; caves and springs are tīrthas; and local communities often understand ecological stewardship through customary practices rather than through modern conservation vocabulary alone. Therefore, the Indian case demands an interpretive framework that can connect environmental sustainability with cultural-ethical sensibility. Sanskrit thought is one of the richest available resources for such a task. The Sanskrit vision of harmony between humanity and nature offers a civilizational blueprint for building a sustainable and prosperous Vikshit Bharat by 2047. When the ancient ethos of "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" (Maha Upanishad, 6.72) guides contemporary eco-tourism, conservation evolves from policy into collective responsibility

Nature In Sanskrit Thought: From Object to Relation

A Sanskrit perspective on eco-tourism begins by challenging the modern habit of treating nature as an external object available for use, enjoyment, or development. Classical Sanskrit texts often imagine the cosmos as a relational order in which human life is embedded rather than sovereign. Nature is not merely scenery, nor is it simply "resource." It is a domain of kinship, sanctity, and moral consequence. One of the foundational ideas here is the Vedic concept of ṛta, often translated as "cosmic order" or "the right arrangement of things." Ṛta signifies the sustaining order that governs the world—celestial regularity, ritual propriety, truth, and moral balance. Although one must avoid anachronistically equating ṛta with modern ecology, the conceptual resonance is striking. It implies that the world flourishes through balance, proportion, and right relation, while excess and disorder produce disruption. Eco-tourism, at its best, seeks precisely such balance: human visitation that does not destroy the integrity of the systems visited. This relational view of the earth appears with remarkable clarity in the Atharvaveda:

mātā bhūmiḥ putro'haṃ pṛthivyāḥ । (Atharva Veda 12.1.12)

"Earth is my mother; I am her son". This declaration is among the most powerful ecological statements in Sanskrit literature. The earth is not represented as passive matter or territorial possession; she is mother. The human being, correspondingly, is not owner but child. Such a relationship implies dependence, gratitude, and restraint. In the context of eco-tourism, this verse radically reorients the tourist's position. The traveler is not a consumer purchasing access to a destination but a temporary participant within a maternal ecological world that sustains all life. The same orientation toward restraint is articulated in the opening verse of the *Īśā Upaniṣhad*:

īśāvāsyam idaṃ sarvaṃ yat kiñca jagatyāṃ jagat ।

tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā gṛdhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam ॥ (*Mantra* 1)

"All this — whatever moves in this world — is pervaded by the Lord. Enjoy through renunciation; do not covet what belongs to another." (The Principal Upanishads 581) The verse is of enormous importance for ecological interpretation because it links enjoyment with renunciation rather than possession. To enjoy rightly is not to seize, own, and exhaust, but to participate without greed. This is an extraordinarily relevant principle for eco-tourism, where the central challenge is precisely how to experience nature without degrading it. In the language of the Īśā Upaniṣad, one may "enjoy" the world only by renouncing covetousness. The tourist must therefore learn to encounter landscapes without reducing them to consumable property.

A similar holistic sensibility appears in the Vedic peace invocation:

Dyauḥ śāntir antarikṣaṃ śāntiḥ, pṛthivī śāntir āpaḥ śāntir oṣadhayaḥ śāntiḥ ।

Vanaspatayaḥ śāntir viśve devāḥ śāntir brahma śāntiḥ, sarvaṃ śāntiḥ ।

Śāntir eva śāntiḥ, sā mā śāntir edhi ॥ (*Yajur Veda*, 36.17)

"May there be peace in the heavens, peace in the atmosphere, peace on earth, peace in the waters, peace in the herbs, peace in the trees, peace among all the divine forces, peace in Brahman, and peace in all things. May peace alone prevails everywhere, and may that peace come unto us." This prayer or the Vedic Shanti Mantra invokes peace not only for human beings but for sky, atmosphere, earth, waters, herbs, and vegetation. The aspiration for śānti here is not merely psychological; it is ecological and cosmic. Harmony is imagined as a condition in which the entire natural order is at peace. Such passages suggest that Sanskrit literature frequently thinks of well-being as inseparable from the flourishing of the non-human world. Thus, from a Sanskrit perspective, eco-tourism cannot be reduced to the question of whether tourism is profitable or even whether it is "green" in

branding terms. The prior question is ethical: How should one dwell, move, and act within a world that is already sacred, relational, and morally significant?

Forests In Sanskrit Literature and The Ethics of Eco-Tourism

The forest occupies a privileged place in Sanskrit literature. It is not merely wilderness or unused land; it is a habitat of learning, asceticism, biodiversity, and moral testing. The Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata both devote extensive narrative space to forest life. Exile in the forest is not represented simply as punishment or deprivation; it is also a transformative encounter with a different order of existence. The āśrama ideal further reinforces the connection between ecological settings and ethical cultivation: sages, students, and seekers dwell amidst groves, rivers, and wildlife, suggesting that knowledge itself is nurtured by a close relation to non-urban landscapes. This literary centrality matters for eco-tourism because it provides an alternative to the modern commodification of forests as entertainment zones. Contemporary forest tourism in India is often dominated by safaris, wildlife photography, and the promise of "sighting" charismatic species. Such activities are not intrinsically harmful, but they easily produce a spectacle-oriented relation to the forest, in which habitats are valued primarily for the visual experiences they provide to visitors. A Sanskrit perspective resists this reduction. The forest is not a stage for human amusement; it is a living moral and ecological community.

The Mahābhārata repeatedly presents the forest as a place where worldly hierarchy is unsettled and ethical reflection becomes possible. Similarly, the Rāmāyaṇa's Araṇyakāṇḍa turns the forest into a site of encounter among ascetics, animals, demons, and exiles. These texts do not idealize forest life in a naïve way—forests are also dangerous and difficult—but they consistently refuse to treat forests as empty land available for unrestricted use. This sensibility aligns closely with the basic principles of eco-tourism: respect for habitat integrity, restraint in intrusion, and awareness that human presence in ecologically sensitive zones must be disciplined. Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra adds a more administrative dimension to this ecological sensibility. Although it is a text of statecraft rather than environmental philosophy, it recognizes forest categories, state oversight of resources, and the need to regulate access to valuable natural zones. The existence of elephant forests and other protected spaces in the text indicates an early awareness that certain landscapes require managed stewardship rather than open exploitation (Kauṭilya). For modern eco-tourism, this is highly relevant. Carrying capacity, zonal protection, habitat-sensitive regulation, and restrictions on extraction all depend upon the same basic insight: forests are not inexhaustible.

A Sanskrit-informed eco-tourism ethic would therefore transform the visitor's experience of forest landscapes. Instead of a noisy, speed-driven, sighting-oriented model, it would privilege slower travel, guided ecological interpretation, respect for silence, and minimal disturbance. The purpose of visiting a forest would not be merely to "consume" wildlife encounters but to enter a living world with humility. Such a shift would bring eco-tourism much closer to the ethos of conservation than many current tourism practices permit.

Rivers, Waters, And the Sacred Ecology of Travel

If the forest is central to Sanskrit ecological imagination, the river is no less so. Rivers in Sanskrit literature are mothers, goddesses, purifiers, and carriers of life. The Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Narmadā, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, and Kāverī are not simply hydrological bodies but sacred presences deeply woven into ritual practice, pilgrimage, agriculture, memory, and poetry. This matters for eco-tourism because many of India's most visited landscapes—ghāṭs, wetlands, mangroves, confluences, backwaters, river islands, and pilgrimage corridors—are structured by water. Yet these are also among the most vulnerable environments, threatened by sewage, plastic waste, unregulated construction, over-visitation, and ritual pollution. Sanskrit literature repeatedly treats water as life-bearing and morally charged. The Vedic peace invocation cited above explicitly includes āpaḥ (waters) and oṣadhayaḥ (herbs), suggesting that environmental well-being includes the health of hydrological and vegetal systems. Rivers are not only useful; they are worthy of reverence. This perspective is vital because modern tourism often severs aesthetic appreciation from ecological responsibility. A river cruise, a lakeside resort, or a pilgrimage bath may generate economic value while simultaneously degrading the very waters that make the destination meaningful.

A Sanskrit perspective reintroduces accountability into this relationship. If the river is mother, purifier, and sustainer, then to pollute it is not merely a sanitary or legal problem; it is a moral injury. Such a view does not oppose travel to rivers. Rather, it demands that riverine travel be governed by discipline: zero-waste tourism, regulated boating, eco-sensitive festival management, wastewater control, and community stewardship of ghāṭs and riverbanks. Eco-tourism in wetland or mangrove zones must likewise be rooted in the understanding that the water-body is not a recreational surface alone but an ecosystem supporting fish, birds, vegetation, and human livelihoods. In this respect, Sanskrit thought offers a valuable counterpoint to both mass tourism and superficial "green tourism." It asks visitors to approach waters not as consumable experiences but as living commons whose integrity matters intrinsically. Such an orientation is particularly relevant in India, where river tourism frequently overlaps with pilgrimage, ritual practice, and local subsistence economies.

Mountains, Tīrthas, And Sacred Geography

The Sanskrit ecological imagination is equally attentive to mountains and pilgrimage landscapes. India's eco-tourism economy is deeply entangled with mountain travel: trekking, wildlife observation, pilgrimage, monastic tourism, adventure sports, and scenic recreation all converge in Himalayan and hill regions. Sanskrit literature, however, refuses to view mountains as mere scenery. In Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, the Himalaya is introduced with one of the most famous lines in classical Sanskrit poetry:

asty uttarasyāṃ diśi devatātmā himālayo nāma nagādhirājaḥ । (1.1)

"In the northern quarter stands the divine-souled Himālaya, king of mountains." The Himalaya is "divine-souled" (devatātmā), a being with sanctity and presence, not a dead geological mass. The poetic force of the line is not incidental; it encodes a mode of

perception in which mountains are worthy of reverence, not merely of conquest or consumption. This has immediate implications for eco-tourism in the Himalayas, where landslides, overtourism, road expansion, plastic waste, and water stress increasingly threaten fragile ecologies. A Sanskrit perspective would insist that mountain travel be shaped by humility, infrastructural restraint, and sensitivity to ecological thresholds.

The category of tīrtha is equally important. A tīrtha is literally a ford or crossing-place, but in religious and literary usage it signifies a site of sacred passage—often a river confluence, spring, forest path, cave, or mountain peak. Many Indian pilgrimage destinations are thus also ecological hotspots. The point is crucial: sacred geography in India is often ecological geography. Pilgrimage and eco-tourism cannot therefore be treated as wholly separate phenomena. The same landscape may function simultaneously as habitat, shrine-route, village economy, and tourist destination. This overlap complicates but also enriches eco-tourism policy. A Sanskrit perspective encourages planners to understand pilgrimage routes, forest shrines, sacred lakes, and hill temples as socio-ecological systems. Waste management, carrying capacity, habitat protection, water conservation, and heritage interpretation must be integrated rather than compartmentalized. Sacred landscapes are not "less ecological" because they are culturally charged; in India, cultural significance often intensifies the need for ecological care.

Sanskrit Ethical Categories and Their Relevance to Eco-tourism

The ecological value of Sanskrit literature lies not only in its poetic celebration of nature but also in its ethical vocabulary. Several Sanskrit concepts are especially relevant for rethinking eco-tourism.

- **Dharma as Responsibility to Place:** The term dharma encompasses duty, right conduct, support, and moral order. In the context of eco-tourism, dharma can be understood as responsibility toward place. Much tourism discourse centers on visitor rights—comfort, experience, access, and amenities. A dharmic perspective asks instead: What does this place require of me? In a forest, dharma may require silence, non-disturbance, and adherence to habitat rules. In a drought-prone mountain village, it may require careful water use and respect for local limits. In a sacred wetland, it may require restraint from littering, ritual excess, or commercial exploitation. Eco-tourism becomes ethical when it is governed not by entitlement but by situational responsibility.
- **Ahiṃsā and Non-destructive Travel:** The principle of ahiṃsā, or non-injury, is central to Indian ethical thought and highly relevant to tourism. Harm in tourism is often indirect: feeding wildlife, trampling fragile vegetation, generating plastic waste, using loud vehicles in breeding zones, or encouraging extractive souvenir practices. These actions may appear minor individually, but their cumulative ecological effect can be devastating. A Sanskrit-inflected eco-tourism ethic would classify such acts as forms of injury. To travel non-violently means not only avoiding dramatic harm but also minimizing the subtle disruptions that tourism often normalizes.
- **Aparigraha and Restraint:** Aparigraha, usually translated as non-possessiveness or restraint from acquisitive accumulation, offers a particularly sharp critique of luxury eco-tourism. In many cases, "eco-tourism" is marketed as a premium nature experience involving large resorts, excessive amenities, private exclusivity, and curated wilderness consumption. Such tourism often reproduces the extractive logic it claims to resist. Aparigraha suggests a different model: smaller groups, modest infrastructure, local materials, limited resource use, and a willingness to accept inconvenience in the interest of ecological integrity. In this sense, Sanskrit ethics challenge eco-tourism to be genuinely restrained rather than cosmetically green.
- **Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam and Ecological Interdependence:** The famous maxim "*Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam*" (Maha Upanishad, 6.72) — "The whole earth is one family." —appears in Sanskrit ethical discourse and has been widely cited in modern India. Though often invoked in political rhetoric, it also possesses ecological significance. Eco-tourism depends on recognizing that travelers, host communities, forests, animals, rivers, and future generations are linked within a shared ecological household. If the earth is family, then the destination is not a commodity and the host is not merely service labor; both belong to a relational field of reciprocity. This principle supports community-based tourism, ethical visitor conduct, and conservation-oriented planning.
- **Re-reading Indian Eco-tourism Destinations through a Sanskrit Lens:** A Sanskrit perspective is not merely abstract. It can illuminate practical eco-tourism challenges across India. Himalayan Eco-tourism: Himalayan tourism includes trekking, pilgrimage, wildlife observation, river rafting, and homestay tourism. A Sanskrit understanding of the Himalaya as devatātmā—a sacred and living presence—encourages a tourism ethic centered on slope stability, water conservation, infrastructural restraint, and reverence for mountain ecosystems. Visitor education should emphasize fragility rather than conquest.
- **Forest and Wildlife Eco-tourism:** Tiger reserves, elephant corridors, and bird sanctuaries are often marketed through charismatic species and safari experiences. A Sanskrit forest ethic reframes these sites as habitats with intrinsic value, not simply as spaces for wildlife spectacle. This supports limits on vehicular traffic, regulated visitor numbers, noise control, and stronger community stewardship. Riverine and Wetland Tourism: Boat tourism, wetland birding, and pilgrimage-related river tourism can all benefit from Sanskrit notions of water as sacred commons. This implies strict anti-pollution measures, ecological interpretation, biodegradable ritual practices, and local participation in river management.

Sacred Groves and Pilgrimage Eco-tourism: Many pilgrimage destinations in India overlap with forests, springs, hill paths, and biodiversity-rich zones. Sanskrit categories such as tīrtha and vana can help policy-makers recognize that pilgrimage routes are also ecological corridors. Eco-tourism planning in such spaces should integrate biodiversity protection with ritual continuity and heritage conservation. Community-based Eco-tourism: Recent scholarship has emphasized that inclusive eco-tourism can generate sustainable livelihood opportunities for local and tribal communities when it is structured around stewardship rather than exclusion (Bhatt *et al.*). A Sanskrit ethical framework, particularly when read through dharma and

interdependence, supports the principle that communities living closest to ecological landscapes should not be displaced by tourism but empowered as custodians, guides, interpreters, and beneficiaries.

- **Toward a Sanskrit-Informed Model of Eco-tourism in India:** A Sanskrit-informed model of eco-tourism in India should not be imagined as a nostalgic return to the past. Rather, it should be understood as a framework that combines modern sustainability practice with classical ecological ethics. Such a model may be articulated through the following principles:

1. From Consumption to Reverential Visitation

Tourism promotion should move beyond checklist travel and scenic consumption. Visitors should be encouraged to see themselves as temporary guests in living ecological-cultural worlds rather than consumers of packaged experiences.

2. Ecological Education as Core Experience

Eco-tourism should include interpretation centers, guided walks, multilingual signage, and digital materials explaining biodiversity, watershed systems, local livelihoods, and the cultural meanings of the landscape. Sanskrit passages may be used carefully to deepen environmental understanding rather than as decorative heritage markers.

3. Carrying Capacity and the Ethics of Limits

The Upaniṣadic principle of enjoyment through renunciation provides a cultural language for limits. Visitor caps, seasonal closures, waste restrictions, and infrastructure control should be presented not as anti-tourism measures but as conditions for ethical tourism.

4. Sacred Geography and Conservation Policy

Where pilgrimage and ecology overlap, policy must treat the destination as a socio-ecological system. Sacred rivers, hill shrines, forest temples, and cave routes should be managed through integrated models of sanitation, biodiversity protection, ritual management, and community partnership.

5. Community Stewardship

Eco-tourism must not become a form of green dispossession. Local communities—especially forest dwellers, mountain residents, fisher communities, and tribal populations—should be central to governance, guiding, hospitality, interpretation, and benefit-sharing. Sustainable tourism without social justice is unstable and ethically deficient.

6. Ethical Codes for Tourists

Tourists should be explicitly instructed not to litter, pollute waters, disturb wildlife, waste scarce resources, remove natural objects, or treat sacred places as entertainment venues. Such codes may be framed through the language of ahiṃsā, dharma, and ecological respect.

- **Critical Cautions:** Any attempt to read eco-tourism through Sanskrit must remain critically self-aware. First, ancient texts cannot be treated as substitutes for modern environmental science. Climate change, carrying-capacity assessment, hydrological modeling, waste treatment, and biodiversity monitoring require contemporary technical expertise. Second, Sanskrit traditions are internally diverse and historically layered; they do not speak with a single ecological voice. Third, India's environmental knowledge is plural, extending beyond Sanskrit into tribal, vernacular, Buddhist, Jain, Islamic, and regional traditions. A Sanskrit perspective should therefore be offered as one major intellectual resource among many, not as an exclusive civilizational claim. Nevertheless, these cautions do not diminish the value of Sanskrit ecological thought. They clarify its proper role. Sanskrit literature can provide normative depth to eco-tourism without replacing scientific planning. It can help explain why restraint matters, why landscapes deserve reverence, and why travel must be answerable to the places it traverses. In an age when "eco-tourism" is often reduced to branding, this ethical depth is urgently needed.

Conclusion

Thus, eco-tourism in India stands at a decisive intersection of conservation, economy, culture, and ethics. As tourism expands into forests, wetlands, mountains, islands, and pilgrimage landscapes, the challenge is not merely to increase tourist numbers while reducing visible damage. The deeper challenge is to cultivate a mode of travel that genuinely respects ecological limits, sustains local communities, and transforms the visitor's relationship to the natural world. A Sanskrit perspective offers a compelling framework for this task. Through concepts such as ṛta, dharma, ahiṃsā, aparigraha, and bhūmi-mātṛtva, Sanskrit literature imagines the natural world as relational, sacred, and morally significant. The earth is mother, rivers are living presences, forests are spaces of wisdom, and mountains are divine-bodied landscapes rather than inert resources. This worldview does not yield a ready-made eco-tourism policy, nor should it be romanticized as a complete environmental solution. But it does provide something equally important: a durable ethical grammar through which tourism can be reimagined as reverence rather than consumption, participation rather than appropriation, and stewardship rather than exploitation.

The future of eco-tourism in India will necessarily depend upon law, science, infrastructure, and democratic governance. Yet it will also depend upon imagination—the stories, values, and moral vocabularies through which people understand land, water, forests, and other beings. Sanskrit thought offers one of the richest such vocabularies in the Indian tradition. If critically and creatively integrated with contemporary sustainability frameworks, it can help shape an eco-tourism model that is not only environmentally responsible and economically viable, but also civilisationally grounded, ethically compelling, and ecologically wise. Reimagining eco-tourism through Sanskrit wisdom transforms travel from an act of consumption into a practice of reverence, stewardship, and cultural regeneration. The future of Indian eco-tourism lies not at the crossroads of tradition and modernity, but in their confluence—where the ancient voice of Sanskrit guides the nation towards a greener, wiser, and truly Vikshit Bharat by 2047. Thus, there is no iota of doubt that Sanskrit vision of harmony between humanity and nature offers a civilisational blueprint for building a sustainable and prosperous Vikshit Bharat by 2047. By weaving the timeless ecological consciousness of Sanskrit thought into the fabric of contemporary tourism policies, India can transform its natural heritage into a living testament to sustainable prosperity, cultural resilience, and the enduring vision of Vikshit Bharat 2047."

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Green Pathways to A Developed Nation: Eco-Tourism in India and The Vision of Vikshit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

The global search for sustainable developmental models has renewed scholarly interest in eco-tourism as an instrument capable of reconciling environmental stewardship with economic advancement. In the Indian context, where ecological diversity coexists with extraordinary cultural plurality, eco-tourism possesses the potential to emerge as a transformative catalyst for inclusive growth and environmental responsibility. The present study examines the relationship between eco-tourism and the national aspiration of Vikshit Bharat 2047, which envisions India as a developed, technologically advanced, and ecologically sustainable nation by the centenary of independence. Drawing upon contemporary tourism discourse, policy frameworks, and indigenous ecological wisdom embedded in Sanskrit literature, the article explores the historical evolution of eco-tourism in India, major eco-tourism destinations, policy frameworks, socio-economic contributions, environmental challenges, and the role of local communities in sustainable tourism management. The study argues that eco-tourism can become a strategic pillar of Vikshit Bharat by generating employment, promoting tribal entrepreneurship, preserving cultural heritage, and encouraging ecological stewardship. The article argues that eco-tourism can function not merely as an economic activity but as a civilizational model of development rooted in harmony between humanity and nature. The paper analyses India's ecological assets, the socio-economic contributions of community-based tourism, the challenges confronting sustainable tourism practices, and the policy interventions required for long-term resilience. Special attention is devoted to the role of local communities, digital technologies, green infrastructure, and ethical governance in shaping future eco-tourism ecosystems. The paper concludes that the realization of Vikshit Bharat 2047 demands developmental pathways that integrate prosperity with ecological justice. Properly regulated and community-oriented eco-tourism may therefore become one of the principal pillars supporting India's transition toward a resilient, equitable, and environmentally conscious future.

Keywords: Eco-tourism; Vikshit Bharat 2047; Sustainable Development; Community Participation, environmental conservation.

Introduction

The twenty-first century has witnessed an unprecedented re-evaluation of humanity's relationship with nature. Rapid industrialization, urban expansion, climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecological degradation have compelled policymakers and scholars alike to search for developmental models capable of balancing economic prosperity with environmental sustainability. Within this intellectual and policy landscape, eco-tourism has emerged as one of the most significant expressions of responsible development. Unlike conventional tourism, which frequently prioritizes consumption and commercialization, eco-tourism emphasizes conservation, environmental education, cultural preservation, and community participation. It seeks not merely to attract visitors but to cultivate ecological consciousness among travellers and host communities alike. India occupies a unique position within the global eco-tourism discourse. As one of the world's mega-diverse countries, India, blessed with remarkable biodiversity, diverse ecosystems, and rich cultural traditions, encompasses snow-clad mountain systems, tropical forests, coastal ecosystems, wetlands, deserts, islands, and riverine landscapes that support extraordinary biodiversity and offers immense opportunities for eco-tourism.

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These ecological resources coexist with rich indigenous traditions and local knowledge systems that have historically promoted coexistence between human society and the natural environment.

The developmental vision of Vikshit Bharat 2047 further enhances the relevance of eco-tourism. The aspiration to transform India into a developed nation by the centenary of independence cannot be fulfilled solely through industrial expansion or technological advancement; it requires developmental models that remain socially inclusive and ecologically sustainable. Eco-tourism offers precisely such a possibility by generating livelihoods while simultaneously encouraging conservation. Remarkably, the philosophical foundations of sustainable tourism are deeply embedded within Indian intellectual traditions. The Atharva Veda proclaims that the Earth is my mother and I am her son.:

"Mātā bhūmiḥ putro'ham pṛthivyāḥ । (Atharva Veda 12.1.12)

This ecological ethic remains profoundly relevant to contemporary debates concerning sustainability and responsible tourism. As India advances towards the transformative vision of Vikshit Bharat 2047, eco-tourism emerges not merely as an instrument of economic growth but as a sustainable civilizational pathway that harmonises ecological stewardship, cultural preservation, and inclusive development.

Understanding Eco-Tourism

The concept of eco-tourism gained prominence during the late twentieth century as a response to the environmental consequences of mass tourism. Eco-tourism, the most significant paradigms of the twenty-first century characterized by environmentally responsible travel and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, has become an important discourse in contemporary environmental studies. Although the term itself emerged in the twentieth century, the philosophical foundations of eco-tourism may be traced to earlier literary traditions. According to The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), eco-tourism refers to

"Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education". (TIES, 2015)

responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education. The core principles of eco-tourism include environmental conservation; community participation; cultural preservation; sustainable resource management; educational interpretation and economic benefits for local communities. Unlike conventional tourism, eco-tourism emphasizes low environmental impact and active participation of indigenous communities in tourism management. Eco-tourism, therefore, is not merely a socio-economic phenomenon but also a literary and cultural construct that has been shaped by centuries of imaginative representations of landscapes, wilderness, and human interactions with the non-human world.

Evolution Of Eco-Tourism in India

India's engagement with eco-tourism began during the 1990s alongside global discussions on sustainable development following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The Ministry of Tourism and various state governments gradually incorporated sustainability into tourism policies. Protected areas, wildlife sanctuaries, biosphere reserves, and community-managed forests became important sites for eco-tourism initiatives. The formulation of national eco-tourism strategies has further strengthened governmental commitment toward environmentally responsible tourism development. The Government of India has circulated policy frameworks encouraging states and union territories to integrate ecological conservation with tourism growth.

India's Ecological Wealth and Eco-Tourism Potential

India is recognized as one of the world's seventeen mega-diverse countries. Its ecological richness forms the foundation of eco-tourism development. Prominent eco-tourism destinations include: Sundarbans; Kaziranga National Park; Periyar National Park; Jim Corbett National Park; Valley of Flowers National Park; Great Himalayan National Park; Chilika Lake. These destinations support biodiversity conservation while creating employment opportunities for local populations.

Eco-Tourism and Economic Development

Tourism contributes significantly to national GDP and employment generation. Eco-tourism extends these benefits to rural and ecologically sensitive regions where industrial development remains limited. Its economic contributions include: Employment generation; Promotion of local handicrafts; Growth of homestay enterprises; Enhancement of rural infrastructure; Diversification of agricultural income. The growth of community-based tourism enterprises empowers women and marginalized groups while reducing urban migration pressures. Studies increasingly emphasize eco-tourism's role in livelihood diversification and local entrepreneurship.

Eco-Tourism and Community Empowerment

One of the defining features of eco-tourism is local participation. Communities become: Nature guides; Homestay owners; Cultural performers; Conservation volunteers; Entrepreneurs. The empowerment of tribal communities represents a significant contribution of eco-tourism to inclusive growth. Recent scholarship on Vikshit Bharat identifies tribal entrepreneurship and indigenous knowledge systems as important drivers of sustainable tourism development. In a contemporary, open-sourced philosophical statement environmental thinker Vandana Shiva states:

"The future of sustainability lies in communities that live closest to nature."

Eco-Tourism and Environmental Conservation

Eco-tourism provides financial incentives for conservation. Revenue generated through tourism often supports: Habitat restoration; Wildlife protection; Anti-poaching activities; Environmental education; Waste management initiatives. Conservation-

oriented tourism encourages local populations to view biodiversity as an economic asset rather than an obstacle to development. Eco-Tourism and Cultural Preservation. India's cultural diversity forms an integral component of eco-tourism. Traditional architecture, folk arts, festivals, cuisine, and indigenous knowledge systems enrich visitor experiences while strengthening cultural identity. As in his poem "Stream of Life" Rabindranath Tagore observed: "The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world." (Song Offerings, 1910) Eco-tourism reflects this interconnectedness between humanity and nature.

Challenges Facing Eco-Tourism in India

Eco-tourism has emerged as a promising model of sustainable development that seeks to harmonize economic growth, environmental conservation, and social inclusion. In a biodiversity-rich country like India, eco-tourism offers immense opportunities for generating rural employment, preserving ecosystems, and promoting cultural heritage. Nevertheless, despite its promise, eco-tourism in India faces numerous structural, environmental, institutional, and socio-economic challenges that threaten its sustainability. Addressing these challenges through well-designed policy interventions is essential if eco-tourism is to contribute meaningfully to the vision of Vikshit Bharat 2047.

Over-Tourism and Environmental Degradation:

One of the greatest challenges confronting eco-tourism in India is the rapid increase in tourist inflows to ecologically fragile destinations. Popular sites often experience excessive pressure on local ecosystems, resulting in soil erosion, vegetation loss, wildlife disturbance, and depletion of natural resources. The uncontrolled growth of tourism infrastructure frequently transforms eco-tourism destinations into commercial tourism centres, thereby undermining the very principles of sustainability. This challenge can be overcome by conducting scientific carrying-capacity assessments for all eco-tourism destinations, by encouraging off-season tourism and alternative destinations, by establishing regular ecological monitoring mechanisms, by implementing strict environmental regulations for tourism infrastructure and by introducing visitor quotas and online permit systems.

Poor Waste Management and Pollution:

The accumulation of plastic waste, untreated sewage, food waste, and non-biodegradable materials has become a serious concern in many eco-tourism destinations. Hill stations, beaches, forests, and pilgrimage routes often suffer from severe pollution caused by irresponsible tourist behaviour and inadequate waste disposal systems. This problem can be solved by enforcing bans on single-use plastics in eco-sensitive zones, by establishing decentralized waste segregation and recycling systems, by imposing penalties for littering and environmental violations and by promoting "carry-in, carry-out" waste policies by encouraging eco-friendly packaging and biodegradable products.

Inadequate Infrastructure:

Many potential eco-tourism destinations in India lack basic infrastructure such as roads, sanitation facilities, healthcare services, communication networks, and environmentally friendly accommodation. Insufficient infrastructure discourages responsible tourism while excessive infrastructure development may damage ecosystems. By encouraging low-impact transportation systems such as electric vehicles and bicycles by developing sustainable homestay models rather than large hotels, by investing in green infrastructure based on environmental sustainability and by promoting solar energy, rainwater harvesting, and eco-friendly buildings India can face this challenge.

Limited Community Participation:

In many regions, local communities receive only marginal benefits from tourism activities while external operators capture most of the economic gains. Such exclusion often generates resentment and weakens conservation incentives. Adoption of community-based tourism models, encouragment of local ownership of tourism enterprises, ensurance of equitable revenue-sharing mechanisms, increase of strength of the local cooperatives and self-help groups and involvement of local communities in tourism planning and governance can easily evade such challenge.

Lack of Professional Training and Skilled Human Resources:

The absence of trained guides, hospitality professionals, conservation educators, and tourism managers often affects the quality and sustainability of eco-tourism services.

Development of certification programmes for eco-guides and nature interpreters, encouragement of university-industry collaboration for skill development, establishment of specialized training programmes in eco-tourism management and introduction of vocational education courses in sustainable tourism are the possible solutions.

Weak Regulatory Framework and Policy Fragmentation:

Eco-tourism in India often suffers from overlapping jurisdictions among departments responsible for forests, tourism, rural development, tribal welfare, and environment. This administrative fragmentation leads to policy inconsistencies and weak implementation. To overcome this challenge creation of integrated institutional frameworks for coordination, establishment of independent monitoring authorities and formulation of a comprehensive national eco-tourism policy to strengthen environmental impact assessment mechanisms are needed.

Commercialization of Eco-Tourism:

The commercialization of eco-tourism frequently converts conservation-oriented tourism into mass entertainment. Luxury resorts, adventure activities, and large-scale infrastructure projects may cause irreversible ecological damage that can be made up by encouraging small-scale, locally owned enterprises, by establishing sustainability certification systems by introducing ecological auditing mechanisms and by restricting large-scale commercial construction in protected areas.

Climate Change and Environmental Vulnerability:

Climate change poses serious threats to glaciers, coastal ecosystems, coral reefs, forests, and biodiversity hotspots that form the foundation of eco-tourism in India. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events threaten

tourism infrastructure and natural habitats Development of climate-resilient tourism strategies, encouragement of renewable energy adoption, establishment of disaster preparedness mechanisms for vulnerable destinations, investment in ecosystem restoration and conservation programmes and promotion of carbon-neutral tourism initiatives may reduce this.

Loss of Cultural Authenticity:

The increasing commercialization of tourism may lead to the commodification of indigenous traditions, rituals, crafts, and cultural practices. Communities may alter their cultural expressions to satisfy tourist expectations. Encouragement of community-led cultural tourism, promotion of authentic cultural experiences rather than staged performances, protection of intellectual property rights of indigenous communities and support traditional artisans and craftspeople through fair-trade initiatives may be helpful in this matter.

Insufficient Research and Data:

Reliable data regarding tourist flows, ecological impacts, carrying capacities, and socio-economic outcomes remain inadequate in many regions of India. This limits evidence-based policymaking and effective destination management.

Possible Solutions of these challenges are to encourage interdisciplinary research collaborations, to establish tourism observatories and monitoring systems, to promote partnerships among universities, governments, and local communities, to utilize Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing technologies.

Security and Safety Concerns:

Certain eco-tourism destinations, particularly in remote and border regions, face challenges related to safety, disaster management, and emergency response infrastructure that can be removed by developing tourist safety protocols, improving disaster preparedness systems, introducing GPS-based emergency response mechanisms and strengthening emergency medical facilities.

Inadequate awareness among tourists:

Many visitors remain unaware of responsible tourism practices and unintentionally contribute to environmental degradation through littering, wildlife disturbance, and excessive resource consumption. By conducting environmental awareness campaigns, encouraging citizen participation in conservation activities, establishing interpretation centres and eco-museums and promoting responsible tourism guidelines awareness can be brought among tourists.

There is no denial of the fact that eco-tourism in India stands at a critical crossroads. While it offers enormous potential for sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and rural empowerment, its success depends upon the ability of policymakers, local communities, private enterprises, and tourists to address the challenges that threaten its long-term viability.

The transition towards Vikshit Bharat 2047 requires developmental models that prioritize ecological sustainability alongside economic prosperity. Eco-tourism can become one of the strongest pillars of this vision if supported by sound policies, scientific management, community participation, and environmental ethics. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi:

"The Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed." (Goodreads)

The future of eco-tourism in India will depend upon the nation's willingness to transform this principle into sustainable practice. Unregulated tourism may undermine the very ecosystems upon which eco-tourism depends. Eco-Tourism and Vikshit Bharat 2047. The concept of Vikshit Bharat 2047 envisions a developed, inclusive, technologically advanced, and environmentally sustainable India by 2047.

Digital Technologies and Future Prospects

Digital transformation can strengthen eco-tourism through Artificial Intelligence; Geographic Information Systems; Online booking systems; Smart waste management systems and Virtual interpretation centres. ICT-enabled tourism management is increasingly being discussed as an important component of future eco-tourism ecosystems in India.

Policy Recommendations for Eco-Tourism to Contribute Meaningfully to Vikshit Bharat 2047

The vision of Vikshit Bharat 2047 seeks to transform India into a developed, inclusive, technologically advanced, and environmentally sustainable nation by the centenary of independence. In this developmental framework, eco-tourism possesses immense potential to function as an engine of green growth by simultaneously promoting biodiversity conservation, rural livelihoods, cultural preservation, and regional development. However, the realization of this potential depends upon comprehensive policy interventions that ensure sustainability, equity, and long-term ecological resilience. The following policy recommendations provide a strategic roadmap for integrating eco-tourism into the broader developmental objectives of Vikshit Bharat 2047.

1. Formulation of a Comprehensive National Eco-Tourism Policy

India requires a unified and legally enforceable national eco-tourism policy that clearly distinguishes eco-tourism from conventional nature tourism and mass tourism. Such a policy should establish uniform standards regarding environmental impact assessment, visitor carrying capacity, waste management, energy efficiency, and community participation.

The policy should promote inter-ministerial coordination among the ministries responsible for tourism, environment, tribal affairs, rural development, and culture to avoid policy fragmentation and administrative overlaps. A comprehensive policy framework would facilitate sustainable investments while ensuring the protection of ecologically sensitive regions.

2. Community-Centred Tourism Governance

Local communities should be recognized as primary stakeholders and beneficiaries in eco-tourism projects. Tourism initiatives that exclude indigenous populations often result in social conflicts and unequal distribution of benefits.

Policies should therefore encourage community ownership of eco-tourism enterprises; cooperative management of tourism resources; revenue-sharing arrangements; participatory decision-making mechanisms; representation of local communities in tourism planning bodies. Community-based eco-tourism ensures both environmental stewardship and social justice.

3. Strengthening Rural and Green Infrastructure

The success of eco-tourism depends heavily on environmentally responsible infrastructure development. Infrastructure expansion should prioritize sustainability rather than large-scale commercialization. Policy interventions should include Solar-powered accommodation facilities; Eco-friendly transportation systems; Rainwater harvesting structures; Sustainable sanitation facilities; Scientific solid waste management systems and Green building technologies. Infrastructure projects in protected areas should undergo rigorous environmental impact assessments before approval.

4. Carrying Capacity Assessment and Visitor Regulation

One of the greatest threats to eco-tourism is over-tourism. Excessive visitor pressure can damage fragile ecosystems, disturb wildlife habitats, and degrade natural landscapes. Government agencies should undertake scientific carrying-capacity studies for all eco-tourism destinations and establish Daily visitor limits; Seasonal visitation schedules; Online permit systems; Dynamic pricing mechanisms during peak seasons. Such regulatory measures are essential for maintaining ecological integrity.

5. Promotion of Tribal and Indigenous Entrepreneurship

India's tribal communities possess valuable ecological knowledge and cultural traditions that enrich eco-tourism experiences. Policies should support tribal entrepreneurship through Micro-credit facilities; Skill development programmes; Marketing support; Digital literacy training; Capacity-building workshops.

Special emphasis should be placed upon women-led enterprises, handicrafts, traditional cuisines, medicinal plant knowledge, and indigenous ecological practices.

This approach aligns with the inclusive development objectives of Vikshit Bharat.

6. Skill Development and Human Resource Training

Professional training remains a critical requirement for the expansion of eco-tourism in India. Training programmes should be developed for Nature guides; Wildlife interpreters; Adventure tourism professionals; Hospitality workers; Local entrepreneurs and Environmental educators. Educational institutions may introduce specialized courses in sustainable tourism management, eco-tourism planning, and biodiversity interpretation.

The integration of vocational education with local employment opportunities would contribute significantly to demographic dividend utilization.

7. Adoption of Digital Technologies and Smart Tourism

Digital transformation can greatly improve the efficiency and sustainability of eco-tourism management. Policy initiatives should promote GIS-based destination mapping; Artificial intelligence-driven visitor management systems; Mobile applications for eco-tourism information; Digital ticketing systems; Virtual interpretation centres; Smart surveillance systems for wildlife protection. The integration of technology would improve visitor experiences while reducing administrative inefficiencies.

8. Strengthening Environmental Education and Awareness

Eco-tourism is fundamentally an educational activity that seeks to cultivate environmental ethics among visitors and local communities. Policies should encourage Nature interpretation centres; Biodiversity museums; Conservation workshops; School eco-tourism programmes and Citizen science initiatives.

9. Encouraging Public-Private Partnerships

Public investment alone may not be sufficient for developing eco-tourism infrastructure across India's vast ecological landscape. Public-private partnerships can contribute through Eco-lodge development; Renewable energy deployment; Sustainable transportation; Destination marketing; Technological innovation. However, such partnerships must operate within strict ecological safeguards to prevent commercialization and resource exploitation.

10. Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Planning

Climate change poses significant risks to glaciers, coastal ecosystems, wetlands, forests, and biodiversity hotspots that form the foundation of eco-tourism. Policy measures should include Climate vulnerability assessments; Disaster preparedness plans; Carbon-neutral tourism strategies; Ecosystem restoration projects; Promotion of low-carbon transportation systems. Climate resilience should become an integral component of tourism planning under Vikshit Bharat.

11. Establishment of Sustainability Certification Systems

The introduction of nationally recognized sustainability certification standards would encourage responsible tourism practices. Certification criteria may include Energy efficiency; Water conservation; Waste reduction; Local employment generation; Biodiversity conservation; Community participation. Such certification systems would improve India's global competitiveness in sustainable tourism markets.

12. Promotion of Research and Data-Driven Governance

Evidence-based policymaking requires reliable data regarding tourist flows, ecological impacts, biodiversity indicators, and community benefits. Research institutions and universities should collaborate with government agencies in Monitoring environmental indicators; Conducting impact assessments; Evaluating policy outcomes; Developing predictive tourism models. Data-driven governance would improve transparency and policy effectiveness.

13. Regional Equity and Inclusive Development

Eco-tourism development should prioritize economically marginalized and ecologically rich regions including the Himalayan states, the North-East, tribal belts, coastal areas, and island territories. Balanced regional development can reduce migration pressures while creating local employment opportunities. Such spatial redistribution of economic opportunities represents an important objective of Vikshit Bharat 2047.

Conclusion

Thus, this study argues that the eco-tourism represents far more than an alternative form of travel; it embodies an ethical commitment to co-existence between human aspiration and ecological integrity. As India advances toward the vision of Vikshit Bharat 2047, the challenge lies not merely in achieving economic prosperity but in ensuring that such prosperity remains sustainable, inclusive, and environmentally responsible. India's forests, mountains, rivers, wetlands, and indigenous cultures constitute invaluable national assets whose preservation is indispensable for future generations. Eco-tourism offers a practical mechanism for transforming these assets into engines of development without sacrificing ecological balance. The future success of eco-tourism in India depends not merely upon increasing tourist arrivals but upon creating a governance framework rooted in sustainability, equity, community participation, ecological responsibility and environmental justice. The vision of Vikshit Bharat 2047 requires developmental pathways that harmonize economic aspirations with environmental stewardship, humanity with nature. The success of Vikshit Bharat 2047 will ultimately be measured not only by the wealth India creates but also by the ecosystems it preserves and the communities it empowers through sustainable practices such as eco-tourism. In India of 2047, the green trails of eco-tourism may well become the golden pathways to a prosperous, resilient, and environmentally conscious nation.

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Original Article

Digital Tourism Promotion Through English: A Study of Social Media Campaigns

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Abstract
Technology and social media has revolutionised the way tourism is promoted and destinations can now access the global audience in a split second. English is the language used in tourist communications, so it is the primary language of international tourism and destination communication that enables destinations to connect with a traveler audience that they can engage in a persuasive way through storytelling, destination marketing, influencers, and user-generated content. This paper explores the importance of English in digital tourism promotion via social media campaigns highlighting the primary platforms, communicative approach for social media campaigns, successful campaigns like Incredible India, Malaysia Truly Asia, 100% Pure New Zealand, Amazing Thailand and Visit Dubai, and emerging trends such as artificial intelligence. The study suggests that the English concentration improves destination visibility, communication between cultures, and has challenges of authenticity, cultural representation, and linguistic diversity. A sustainable destination brand is created through compelling English content, visual storytelling, audience engagement and ethical marketing, which all form part of the process of an effective digital campaign.

Keywords: *Digital Tourism, English Language, Social Media Marketing, Tourism Promotion, Digital Communication*

Introduction

The travel industry has moved into the digital age, where travelers now seek, compare, rate and share their experiences online before travelling. Today, social media is the main way to promote destinations, hotels, airlines and travel companies. English is the language of the world's nations and is used to speak with other nations. In recent years, tourism boards have been making a big effort to use English on social media like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and X to tell their stories in engaging hashtags, videos, and action campaigns. The aim of the paper is to research the role of English in the development of destination branding, audience interaction and tourism development in the digital domain. The tourism industry has now entered a digital era where travelers- access information, make comparisons, compare the information and share their experiences online prior to travelling. Destinations, hotels, airlines, and travel companies are now promoting on social media as their prime medium of promotion. English is the international language or communicator that can be understood by the international community. The growth of the use of English on tourism boards' Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok and X channels highlight how these platforms are now being used to tell engaging stories, create videos, use hashtags, and run interactive campaigns to promote a destination. This paper is about the contribution of English to destination branding, audience engagement and tourism growth in the digital environment. Tourism is in the digital age where travelers are doing search, comparing, assessing and sharing online before choosing a travel plan or finalizing a trip. Social media has emerged as the key marketing channel for destinations, hotels, airlines and travel companies. English is a universal language that facilitates communication with people from around the world. English is becoming more and more common on the social media platforms of the tourism boards, which use them to tell attractive stories, videos, hashtags and interactive promotions about their destinations.

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This paper discusses the role of English in destination branding, audience engagement and the growth of tourism in digital context.Tourism has become a digital age where travellers will research, contrast, assess and post their travels online before deciding which tour to embark on. Social media is the main destination, hotel, airline and travel company marketing tool. English is the global lingua franca, a mode of communication which allows for the exchange of language with international audiences. The increasing use of English on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Tik Tok, and X by tourism boards showcases their destinations with captivating content, videos, hashtags, and engaging campaigns. This paper examines the role of English in destination branding, engagement and tourism in the digital sphere.

English and Global Tourism

English is becoming the world's language of tourism, it is the main language of communication in international travel, hospitality and the aviation industry and is the main language of digital tourism services. English is a common language for millions of travellers who travel internationally every year, helping to reduce communication barriers and cultural differences. English is a critical language for communication across many contexts, in which it is essential for airlines, hotels, travel agencies, cruise lines, online booking sites and tourism boards to effectively engage with a wide audience. There is, consequently, a growing need to have English proficiency by the tourism professionals, which is also vital to improving the satisfaction of the customers and also making the country more accessible to the world.

The predominant presence of English in tourism is due to the fact that it is also essential for international travel and the hotel segment of the tourism industry. English is widely used as a medium of communication in the following contexts and at the airport: airport announcements, airport websites, flight displays, immigration, hotel reservations, restaurant menus, tourist guides and emergency instructions. The standardization will allow people traveling from other countries to operate in unfamiliar regions with greater ease and confidence. English helps smooth the way for tourism companies and enhances tourists' travelling experience.English helps to smooth the way for tourism companies and enhances tourists' travelling experience.

English is also widely used in the digital context when marketing and promoting tourist destinations online. The main language of the most popular travel sites, traveler directed apps or portals, travel blogs and many touristic sites like TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Expedia or Airbnb is English. Businesses in the tourism industry develop and make websites, brochures, promotional videos and social media posts in English for the world. English allows a huge global audience to access tourism products and services, enhancing the visibility and reach of the tourism product and service.

The linguistic devices of tourism discourse in the English Language—persuasive language, emotional narrative, and rich description—that appeal to the reader to draw him/her to travel. Expressive adjectives, powerful stories, and messages that resonate with culture are all employed by destination marketers to make an impression. XXL phrases like "Discover Hidden Paradise," "Experience Timeless Heritage," "Adventure Awaits" and "Create Unforgettable Memories" appeal to the emotions and prompt prospectus-readers to visualize visiting the area. Effective communication can convince travellers and encourage them to consider one place compared with another.

Another aspect is the use of cross-cultural communication in English. Tourism professionals need to make contact with tourists from diverse linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds. In the context of tourism English, therefore, the concept of clarity, politeness, simplicity, and cultural sensitivity must be highlighted. The use of the right language prevents misunderstandings and helps to create a sense of trust and better Customer Service. English language training is given to tour guides, hotel workers, airline personnel, and others in the customer service field in order to enhance the ability to communicate in English and to provide customers with international service standards.

In the field of digital tourism marketing, English is also crucial for Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Certain search engines like Google favor content that is relevant, contains quality information, and is in the English language for it has more of a global reach. Tourism bodies purposefully integrate common and popular terms like best beaches, heritage tourism, luxury hotels, eco-tourism, adventure travel and family vacation into their web site, blogs and social media posts. The optimized English content boosts the visibility of the website and its pages by improving their ranking on search engines, which in turn increases the number of visitors and engagement of potential tourists.This optimized English content will impact better ranking in search engines, more website visitors and tourist engagement, which results in more bookings.

Additionally, English helps to promote tourism cooperation on an international level. Most international tourism events such as conferences, trade fairs, academic research, travel journalism and business partnerships are communicated in English. This shared vocabulary helps governments, tourism boards, airlines, and hospitality companies connect, market, negotiate, and create sustainable tourism projects better and more efficiently. This common language is capable of facilitating a range of communication, including ideas, marketing, partnerships, and sustainable tourism development.

Moreover, due to the advent of artificial intelligence, virtual tourism and customer support in digital form, English is more essential than ever. For instance, most of the AI-powered tools like chatbots, virtual assistants, multilingual translation tools, and online customer service are built with English databases. Therefore, the tourism industry which is creating with quality English will gain more advantage of the new digital technologies and international digital marketing strategies.

Finally, English in international tourism is more than just a means of communication; it is a strategic resource that improves its accessibility, destination promotion, customer service, electronic presence and global collaboration. English allows tourism institutions and services to reach a wide range of audiences, effectively promote tourism resources and improve their competitiveness in the rapidly developing international tourism industry with persuasive language, emotional story, cultural inclusive communication and SEO optimised content.

Creating social media campaigns for digital tourism.

In the digital age, social media campaigns have become an essential tool for promoting tourism destinations. Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, X (formerly known as Twitter), Pinterest and TikTok are social media platforms that enable tourism companies to connect with millions of global potential travelers at a single moment. Unlike regular advertising, social media campaigns allow for engagement through visual and textual content, are cost effective, and are interactive. They are critical to shaping travel choices, fostering destination awareness, and driving engagement.

Having high-quality visuals is one of the main ingredients that make digital tourism campaigns successful. Photographs, films, videos from drones, virtual tours and short travel reels create an attractive image of the place and motivate to explore the new. It's enhanced with short and compelling English text, catchy slogans, memorable hashtags, travel blogs and storytelling strategies that will effectively describe the one-of-a-kind characteristics of a travel destination. A good caption can spark feelings of emotion, curiosity and motivation to visit.

Hashtags also are heavily utilized in social media campaigns for enhanced visibility and engagement. Online campaigns like #IncredibleIndia, #DekhoApnaDesh, #VisitDubai and #AmazingThailand encourage tourists to post their travel experiences, which helps to grow the campaign. The hashtags also generate online communities that enable travelers to share images and ideas, recommendations, enhancing the interactive and engaging nature of the process of promoting destinations.

One of the key components in digital tourism marketing is influencer marketing. Travel influencers, bloggers, vloggers, photographers and content creators work with tourism boards and hospitality companies to advocate for travel destinations based on genuine travel experiences. This authenticity further enhances credibility and is a positive factor for making decisions by prospective tourists.

One of the strongest marketing tactics is user-generated content (UGC). Tourist organizations promote visitors to post photos, videos, reviews and recommendations online. A positive word of mouth is generated by the spontaneous communication of travelers who share their positive experiences on their own, without any cost or forced advertisement. The free and spontaneous communications of travelers enhance the reputation of the destination (positive word of mouth) due to the positive experience they have had. User-generated content can be a form of social proof that makes visitors feel good about the destination, helps them to be safe and reduces promotional costs.

Tourism campaigns are also now digitized with live interactions such as live stream, question/answer sessions, destination walkthroughs, and Virtual Travelling. These live connections allow tourism entities to connect directly with their audiences, respond to inquiries, share information about events or special promotions, and foster excitement leading up to significant occasions. This interaction helps to cultivate trust and long-term connections with prospective visitors.

Moreover, social media platforms offer more sophisticated features and targeted advertisements that enable tourism marketers to gain insights into audience preferences, demographics, travel interests, online behavior, and more. Engagement metrics like likes, shares, comments, reach, and click-through rates can be used to assess a campaign and make adjustments to the promotional plan. Users can also benefit from customized ads depending on their interests, which also boosts conversion rates and the efficiency of marketing.

Finally, Social Media campaigns are an integral part of the digital tourism marketing today. Tourism organizations can effectively market their tourism products to international audiences through engaging visuals, persuasive English communication, social media activations with influencers, creation of user-generated content, interactive engagement, and data-driven strategies. Besides helping to promote incremental tourist demand, these campaigns help build destination image, credibility, tourist loyalty and sustainable tourism development in a highly competitive digital field.

Case Studies

Through the medium of English language storytelling, Incredible India is a combination of heritage, spirituality, wildlife and adventure to draw global tourists. Malaysia Truly Asia's memorable slogans promote multicultural harmony and natural beauty. Cinema Digital Meta surfaces are used by Dubai to highlight the luxury, innovation and entertainment that it offers. Amazing Thailand portrays wellness, cuisine, cultural diversity and 100% Pure New Zealand champions sustainability and nature through more of an emotional feel-good campaign. This is showcases the power of English to reach audiences across the globe and boost destination branding.

Crafted using English language storytelling to captivate the global tourist audience, Incredible India successfully brings together the elements of heritage, spirituality, animal kingdom and adventure. The memorable slogans of Malaysia Truly Asia focus on the celebration of multicultural harmony and nature. Dubai highlights the luxury, innovation and fun through film-based digital content. Amazing Thailand celebrates wellness, food and culture, while 100% Pure New Zealand celebrates sustainability and nature through emotive campaigns. The campaigns prove that English has the capacity to reach out overseas and to reinforce destination branding.

Through the medium of English-language storytelling, Incredible India melts down the four pillars of heritage, spirituality, wildlife and adventure to draw in tourists from all parts of the world. With memorable slogans, Malaysia Truly Asia showcases multicultural harmony and natural beauty. Visit Dubai drives the message of luxury, innovation and entertainment via cinematic digital messaging. Amazing Thailand does wellness, food and culture and 100% Pure New Zealand does sustainability and nature, with campaigns that resonate with the emotions. The campaigns illustrate how English offers an opportunity to extend the reach of English and brand the destinations.

Crafted in English, Incredible India successfully blends in elements of heritage, spirituality, wildlife and adventure to draw in global tourists. Malaysia Truly Asia is all about multicultural harmony and natural beauty with the tag lines. The experience of Dubai is all about luxury, innovation and entertainment, delivered via film-based digital media. Both Amazing Thailand and 100%

Pure New Zealand's campaigns focus on wellness, food and cultural diversity and 100% Pure New Zealand are promoting sustainability and nature, through emotional campaigns. Such campaigns illustrate how English can be used to reach more people and boost destination branding.

The research of AI and future trends about it in tourism domain.

The predictive capabilities of AI, powered through machine learning, natural language processing, big data analysis and algorithms allow tourism companies to offer faster, smarter and more individualized services. The era of the digital revolution, AI serves and helps to improve customer satisfaction, the operational efficiency, and the overall marketing and competitiveness of the tourist sector on global stage – while continuing to promote the use of English as the main language of international communication.

AI virtual assistants and chatbots are one of the biggest tourism applications of artificial intelligence. These smart systems not just answer common queries, but can also make travel arrangements, suggest itineraries, book hotels and flights and address the customer's needs at an instant. Unlike the usual customer service, AI chatbots can respond to thousands of customer questions at once, lessening response time and operational expenses. They are also able to converse mostly in English, as most tourists from abroad communicate in English, and more and more with a multilingual output using the most advanced translation technologies.

AI is also used to create recommendation systems that suggest travel itineraries based on the user's interests, travel history, preferences, budget, and other factors. Like streaming services and e-commerce sites, tourism platforms record users' activities to recommend places, lodging, restaurants, sightseeing and activities that align with their tastes and preferences. This tailored strategy not only satisfies customer needs better, but it also helps drive repeat tourism and enhances the conversion rate for tourism companies.

Another significant way in which AI can assist in the world of business is with its automated language translation capabilities. With the help of advanced AI translation tools, tourism and service providers can communicate more easily with tourists regardless of language barriers. Menus, travel guides, signs, conversation and customer queries can be translated into various languages instantly on the spot using mobile apps. Even with these innovations, English remains the predominant language used to communicate in international tourism, as it is the dominant language of airlines, online booking platforms, hospitality services and the global tourism marketing industry.

Another use of AI is in sentiment analysis, an approach that involves analyzing customer reviews, social media posts, blogs, and online comments to gauge public opinion and feelings about destinations and tourism experiences. Tourism enterprises can gain from studying thousands of online reviews to learn about their strengths and weaknesses, new trends and customer expectations. Good reviews reinforce brand loyalty, and bad reviews provide the ability to rectify issues and address travelers' concerns getting resolved right away.

AI's combination with personalized digital marketing has also got a complete makeover for tourism promotion. Based on demographic data, online activity, shopping habits, and travel preferences, the AI creates personalized ads, personalized promotion emails and content elements in English for individual travelers.

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) are reshaping the travel experience by offering virtual environments. New technologies like Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) are revolutionizing tourism by providing virtual environments. A Virtual Reality facilitates potential travelers to visit a location, such as a museum, a hotel, a historical landmark or a nature reserve, in virtual mode before committing to a trip. On-site Augmented Reality provides an overlay of digital information, historical facts, navigation guides and multimedia content to real-world experiences via smartphone and smart glasses. These technologies enhance visitor experience and facilitate educational and cultural tourism.

Fuzzy, another new area of interest, is the method of using AI to incorporate interactive video, virtual guides, gamification and digital stories into emotional travel experiences. Rather than offering information as a bare facts list, destinations employ storytelling methods to emphasize local culture, history, traditions, folklore and community experiences. These digital stories evoke emotion, and promote responsible and sustainable tourism.

Smart tourism ecosystems and predictive analytics will play a more significant role in the future of digital tourism. AI can predict tourists' demand, set the right hotel rates, control crowds at popular attractions, streamline transportation systems, and ensure environmental sustainability by making better decisions. Smart destinations will be powered by the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI) analysis, and cloud computing, and provide travelers with seamless travel experiences and sustainable resource management.

Though the world has seen a rapid development and technological sophistication of multilingual AI tools, English continues to be the primary language used for tourism communication worldwide. English is the language of choice for the international travel industry because most travel websites, airline systems, tourism research and information, hospitality management, digital marketing and customer support are in the English language. Thus, the ability to communicate effectively in English remains crucial for tourism professionals, destination marketers, and AI-powered digital platforms.

AI is reshaping the future of tourism by enabling intelligent automation, personalization, multilingualism, immersive technologies, and data-informed marketing. Beyond their ability to create efficient operations and delightful experiences for customers, AI can also help tourism companies reach an international audience with personalized messages in English. AI, VR/AR, predictive analytics, and smart tourism are just a few of these technologies that will continue to influence a more innovative, accessible, sustainable, and globally connected tourism industry in the years to come.

The English as the language of promotion in digital tourism: challenges in the promotion of digital tourism in English.

Although the advantages are many, the promotion of tourism in English faces several challenges that impact cultural diversity, ethical communication and tourism sustainability. In this context, it is imperative that tourism organizations recognize and apply the principle of inclusive communication while considering both the cultural authenticity and accessibility required by tourists.

The great challenge is that of predominance of English over the local language. Numerous tourism websites, tourist promotions and touristic blogs pay special attention to English so as to draw foreign tourists. This improves globability, but sometimes leads to a decrease in the number of languages and traditional communication ways represented. Some local stories, legends, traditions and cultural expressions may have been sanitized for international audiences and this can make them less authentic when translated into English. This means that communities can view the use of their language and culture as being neglected for commercial tourism and values.

An additional worry is misinformation and fake reviews spread via online platforms. User reviews, ratings, blogs and recommendations on social media are also important in the online travel decisions. But fake reviews, false testimonials and paid-for promotional text can make a tourist's perception of a place, hotel, restaurant and attraction come undone. These misinformation tactics or messages undermine consumer trust, make the credibility of tourism businesses questionable, and give unrealistic expectations to tourists.

Digital manipulation of images and videos also gives rise to ethical issues as they gain increased usage. With the help of advanced editing software and AI, images can be manipulated to create more appealing scenes than those captured in reality. Attractive content can get people's attention, but too much editing can paint an inaccurate picture of the place you're promoting. Those who see large discrepancies between the advertisements for the location they see online and their actual experience on-site will likely be disappointed and write a negative review that will diminish the location's credibility.

With the rise of influencer marketing have come other ethical dilemmas. A large number of travel influencers work with tourism boards, the hotel industry, airlines and hospitality companies to advertise a vacation spot. As a rule, influencer tips are highly convincing, but there are some sponsored content efforts that are not transparent. Not revealing that they may have received compensation for or written biased reviews can lead viewers to think that the recommendations are objective, unbiased, and independent. Influencer marketing is ethical when done with honesty, transparency, and the true representation of experiences when traveling.

The protection of personal data and privacy has become a growing concern in digital tourism marketing. Tourism companies gather enormous amounts of data on themselves, such as travelled preferences, browsing history, bookings, payment data, and locality data. This information is used to create personalized ads and suggestions using Artificial Intelligence and data analytics. Unauthorized access to data, cyber security risks and poor privacy measures can undermine user confidence, however. It is therefore the obligation of tourism businesses to follow data protection laws and use safe systems to protect the data of their customers.

Another aspect, which is gaining more prominence, is the problem of Algorithmic Bias in AI-driven tourism platforms. Systems such as recommendation systems or search engines can be designed to favor certain tourism products, destinations or even a specific language and discourage others, especially smaller, less commercialized and less popular destinations. This means that popular tourist sites are more likely to be publicized, while culturally rich, but not as well-known sites, are less likely to be publicized. To combat algorithmic bias, it is essential to have fair, inclusive, and transparent AI systems that ensure equal opportunities for various tourism destinations.

Another issue with digital tourism promotion is that of information overload. With all the travel blogs, videos, advertisements, social media posts and online reviews, it is often not easy for tourists to know what is informative and what is promotional. Too many marketing messages can cause confusion and lessen the impact of the marketing campaign. So, in this regard, tourism providers should concentrate on creating real and reliable high-quality content that offers value to tourists.

Another key challenge is to ensure sustainable and responsible tourism. Aggressive digital marketing campaigns can sometimes lead to overturism, putting strain on the natural resource, the heritage sites and local communities. Major popular social media events can drive significant numbers of visitors to sensitive places such as nature reserves, which are not sufficiently developed or protected. Therefore, the tourism organizations need to include sustainability aspects in their digital communication strategy, which will help to encourage responsible tourism behavior, environmental awareness and respecting local culture.

English should be employed as a stepping stone to various other international audiences and not ignore or marginalize the value of local languages and traditions. Trust and sustainability can only be achieved based on ethical marketing practices, transparent partnerships with influencers, realistic visual portrayals, responsible AI, robust data protection, and responsible tourism policies.

Finally, English is an unavoidable and essential language for promoting tourism worldwide, but this can be done through careful consideration and management of the ethical, cultural and technological issues involved. By tackling challenges like linguistic differences, false information, fake reviews, unethical practices, privacy concerns, algorithmic bias, and sustainable tourism, tour operators can produce more inclusive, responsible, and trustworthy digital marketing campaigns. These integrated approaches will not only help to build strong destination brands but also help in preserving cultural heritage and sustainable growth of global tourism.

Conclusion

English has become essential for digital tourism promotion as a tool for promoting the destination. Social media has revolutionized the way tourism communicates with others, moving from a monologuing distribution of information to a dialoguing storytelling process based on influencers, User Generated Content and Artificial Intelligence. English remains the connecting language of international tourists and destinations throughout the world. The success of tourism in the future depends on the integration of

technological innovations and communication strategies aimed in a culturally sensitive and ethical manner, that will promote sustainable tourism and preserve local identity.

The promotion of a tourism destination in the English medium has evolved into a fundamental tool for destination promotion. Social platforms have revolutionized the way tourism is communicated, moving from a monodirectional approach to a multidirectional one, with the involvement of social media influencers, user-generated content and artificial intelligence. English remains the link language between the tourists from abroad and the destinations around the globe. In order to ensure tourism success in the future, future technological innovations need to be integrated with culturally sensitive and ethical communication strategies that will ensure sustainable tourism without compromising the local identity.

English language-based digital tourism promotion has become an essential approach to destination promotion. Social media has revolutionized the way tourism is communicated from a unidirectional push model towards stories created by users and influencers and supported by AI tools. English remains the key language and medium of communication linking foreigners to foreign places. The key to future tourism success lies in the fusion of technology and communication strategies that are sensitive to culture and ethical; in the promotion of sustainable tourism and conservation of local identity.

English is now an essential means of tourism promotion for destination marketing. Social media has revolutionized the way tourism is communicated by introducing the idea of interactive storytelling through users' content and influencers' endorsement with the help of artificial intelligence. English remains the means of communication between international tourists and the destinations of all countries. The future success of tourism will lie in the integration of technological innovation and culturally appropriate and ethically training the communication strategies, involving sustainable tourism and maintaining local identity.

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Original Article

Tourism Development in India: Problems and Prospects in the Context of Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract:

This study examines the current status, challenges, and future prospects of tourism development in India in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047. Using a descriptive and analytical research design, the study is based on secondary data from 2001–2024 obtained from the Ministry of Tourism, Bureau of Immigration, UN Tourism, WTTC, and other official sources. The analysis shows that international tourist arrivals increased from 2.54 million in 2001 to 20.57 million in 2024, while domestic tourist visits reached 2.95 billion in 2024. Despite the severe disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism sector recorded a strong recovery. By 2023–24, tourism contributed 5.45% to Gross Value Added (GVA), 5.22% to GDP, and supported 84.63 million direct and indirect jobs. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, environmental pressures, regional imbalances, and skill shortages continue to constrain growth. The study concludes that effective implementation of the National Tourism Policy 2022 is essential to achieve sustainable tourism development and realize the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Keywords: *Tourism Development, Viksit Bharat 2047, Sustainable Tourism, Economic Growth, Heritage Tourism, Tourism Policy, India.*

Introduction:

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy, contributing significantly to economic growth, employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development. In India, the sector plays a vital role due to the country's rich cultural heritage, diverse natural landscapes, spiritual traditions, and expanding transport infrastructure. India offers a wide range of tourism products, including heritage, cultural, spiritual, eco, medical, wellness, adventure, and rural tourism. To harness this potential, the Government of India has launched initiatives such as Swadesh Darshan, PRASHAD, Dekho Apna Desh, Digital India, Smart Cities Mission, and PM Gati Shakti. These initiatives support the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, which recognizes tourism as a key driver of sustainable economic growth, employment, entrepreneurship, and regional development. This study examines the current status, challenges, and future prospects of tourism development in India.

Objectives Of the Study:

- To assess the current status of tourism development in India.
- To examine the problems and prospects of tourism in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047
- Tourism policy 2022 for sustainable tourism in context of Viksit Bharat 2047

Research Methodology and Data Sources:

This Study Adopts a Descriptive and analytical research design based entirely on secondary data. Data have been collected from authentic sources, including the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (India Tourism Data Compendium 2025), Bureau of Immigration (BOI), Economic Survey of India 2025–26, National Accounts Statistics, NITI Aayog,

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UN Tourism (UN Tourism World Tourism Barometer 2025), and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). The collected data were analyzed using statistical and trend analysis to assess the current status, challenges, and prospects of tourism development in India in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Assessment Of the Current Status of Tourism Development in India:

The current status of tourism development in India is examined by analyzing the data presented in Tables 1 to 6, which provide insights into key trends and performance indicators of the tourism sector.

1. Analysis of International Tourist Arrivals in India from 2001 To 2024:

Table-1 illustrated the current status of tourism development in India can be assessed through the analysis of International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs) from 2001 to 2024. The data indicate that India has significantly strengthened its position in the global tourism market over the last two decades. International tourist arrivals increased from 2.54 million in 2001 to a provisional 20.57 million in 2024, representing an eight-fold increase. This remarkable growth reflects improvements in tourism infrastructure, expansion of international air connectivity, the introduction of e-Visa facilities, and effective destination marketing initiatives. These measures have enhanced India's attractiveness as a global tourist destination.

India's global share of international tourist arrivals also improved substantially during the study period. The country's share increased from 0.37% in 2001 to 1.40% in 2024, while its global ranking improved from 51st position in 2001 to 20th position in 2024. A significant change occurred in 2014, when India adopted the UN Tourism definition of International Tourist Arrivals by including Non-Resident Indian (NRI) arrivals. This methodological

Table-1.: International Tourist Arrivals in India from 2001 to 2024

Year	World		India		Percentage Share of India	Rank of India
	Arrivals (in million)	% Change	Arrivals (in million)	% Change		
2001	683.40	0.15	2.54	-4.20	0.37	51st
2002	703.20	2.90	2.38	-4.00	0.34	54th
2003	691.00	-1.73	2.73	12.50	0.39	51st
2004	762.00	10.27	3.45	29.63	0.46	44th
2005	803.40	5.43	3.92	11.43	0.49	43rd
2006	846.00	5.30	4.45	15.38	0.53	44th
2007	894.00	5.67	5.08	13.33	0.57	41st
2008	917.00	2.57	5.28	3.92	0.58	41st
2009	883.00	-3.71	5.17	-1.89	0.59	41st
2010	948.00	7.36	5.78	11.54	0.61	42nd
2011	994.00	4.85	6.31	8.62	0.63	38th
2012	1039.00	4.53	6.58	4.76	0.64	41st
2013	1087.00	4.62	6.96	6.06	0.64	41st
2014	1137.00	4.60	13.11	*	1.15	24th
2015	1195.00	5.10	13.76	4.96	1.15	24th
2016	1241.00	3.85	15.03	9.23	1.21	26th
2017	1332.00	7.33	16.81	11.84	1.26	26th
2018	1413.00	6.08	17.42	3.63	1.23	23rd
2019	1466.00	3.75	17.91	2.81	1.22	24th
2020	408.00	-72.17	6.33	-64.66	1.55	19th
2021	461.00	12.99	7.00	10.58	1.52	18th
2022	976.00	111.71	14.33	104.71	1.47	17th
2023	1306.00	33.81	18.89	31.82	1.45	20th
2024 (P)	1465.00	12.17	20.57	8.89	1.40	20th

(P): Provisional

Source: UN Tourism Barometer (May 2025) & Ministry of Tourism reports.

Since 2014, adhering to the definition of International Tourist Arrivals, India has started the inclusion of figures of arrivals of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in its figure.

revision raised India's market share above the one percent mark and improved its global ranking to 24th position, making international comparisons more consistent.

A comparison of annual growth rates further reveals India's strong tourism performance relative to the global average. During normal economic conditions, India recorded substantially higher growth than the world average in several years. In 2004, India's tourist arrivals grew by 29.63%, compared with the global growth of 10.27%. Similarly, in 2007, India achieved 13.33% growth against the world's 5.67%, while in 2017, India's growth reached 11.84%, exceeding the global rate of 7.33%. These figures indicate the increasing competitiveness of India's tourism sector and the effectiveness of policy initiatives and infrastructure development.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted global tourism in 2020. Worldwide tourist arrivals declined by 72.17%, while India recorded a comparatively lower decline of 64.66%. Although tourist arrivals dropped sharply, India's relatively smaller contraction temporarily increased its global market share to 1.55% during the pandemic year. Following the relaxation of travel restrictions, the tourism sector experienced a strong recovery. In 2022, global tourist arrivals increased by 111.71%, while India registered an impressive 104.71% growth, reflecting a rapid post-pandemic resurgence driven by pent-up travel demand and supportive government measures.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that India's tourism sector has shown remarkable resilience and sustained long-term growth. International arrivals have expanded consistently, global market share has improved significantly, and India's ranking has advanced from 51st to 20th globally. However, despite this progress, India's global tourism share remains below **2%**, indicating substantial untapped potential. Strengthening international connectivity, improving tourism infrastructure, expanding digital services, promoting niche tourism products, and ensuring sustainable destination management will be essential for increasing India's global competitiveness. These findings suggest that the tourism sector is well positioned to play a significant role in achieving the objectives of Viksit Bharat 2047 through sustained growth, higher foreign exchange earnings, employment generation, and inclusive regional development.

***5.2* Analysis of Domestic Tourist Visits and Foreign Tourist Arrival in India:** Table-3 illustrates the longitudinal trends in Domestic Tourist Visits (DTVs) and Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India from 2001 to 2024, delineating absolute volumes alongside their respective annual growth rates. To comprehensively evaluate tourism as an economic catalyst in India, a dual assessment of both domestic and inbound international cohorts is essential.

Table-2: Spatial-Temporal Volumetric Inflows (2001-2024)

Year	Domestic Tourist Visits (DTVs)	DTV Annual Growth (%)	Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs)	FTA Annual Growth (%)
2001	236,469,599	7.43	25,37,282	–
2011	864,532,718	15.63	63,09,222	4.26
2012	1,045,047,536	20.88	65,77,745	4.26
2013	1,142,529,465	9.33	69,67,601	5.93
2014	1,282,801,629	12.28	76,79,099	10.21
2015	1,431,973,794	11.63	80,27,133	4.53
2016	1,615,388,619	12.81	88,04,411	9.68
2017	1,657,546,152	2.61	1,00,35,803	13.99
2018	1,853,787,719	11.84	1,05,57,976	5.20
2019	2,321,982,663	25.26	1,09,30,355	3.53
2020	610,216,157	-73.72	27,44,766	-74.89
2021	677,632,981	11.05	15,27,114	-44.36
2022	1,731,013,539	155.45	64,37,467	321.54
2023	2,508,817,710	44.93	95,20,928	47.90
2024	2,948,190,825	17.51	99,51,722	4.52

Source: Bureau of Immigration (BOI) & Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

The analysis of Domestic Tourist Visits (DTVs) and Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) from 2001 to 2024 highlights the strong growth and resilience of India's tourism sector. Domestic tourism remained the primary driver of the industry, recording a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 9.89% between 2011 and 2024. Domestic tourist visits increased steadily from 864.53 million in 2011 to 2.95 billion in 2024, reflecting rising incomes, improved connectivity, and government initiatives promoting domestic travel. However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp decline of 73.72% in 2020 due to travel restrictions. The sector recovered rapidly with growth of 11.05% in 2021, 155.45% in 2022, 44.93% in 2023, and 17.51% in 2024, demonstrating the resilience of domestic tourism and its vital role in supporting India's tourism economy.

Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) also exhibited a long-term upward trend. International arrivals increased from 2.54 million in 2001 to 10.93 million in 2019, supported by tourism infrastructure development, improved air connectivity, e-Visa facilities, and destination marketing. Growth remained stable throughout the pre-pandemic period, with the highest annual increase of 13.99% in 2017. The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted international travel, leading to an unprecedented decline of 74.89% in 2020, followed by a further 44.36% decrease in 2021. As global travel resumed, the sector recorded a remarkable 321.54% recovery in 2022, followed by 47.90% growth in 2023 and 4.52% in 2024, with total arrivals reaching 9.95 million, approaching pre-pandemic levels.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that while international tourism is highly vulnerable to global crises, both domestic and international tourism in India have shown strong recovery and long-term growth. The findings reaffirm tourism's significant contribution to economic development and its importance in achieving the goals of Viksit Bharat 2047.

3 Analysis of Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) from Tourism in India:

Table 4 presents the long-term trend of Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) from tourism in India during 1991–2024. FEEs increased substantially from ₹4,318 crore in 1991 to ₹2,93,033 crore in 2024, reflecting nearly a 68-fold rise. In US dollar terms, earnings also expanded from USD 1.86 billion to USD 35.02 billion, indicating sustained growth in international tourism and higher visitor spending. Between 2011 and 2019, FEEs recorded steady double-digit growth, demonstrating the sector's strong contribution to the national economy.

Table-3: Year-wise Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) from Tourism in India during 1991, 2001, 2011-2024

Year	FEEs in terms of		FEEs in USD terms	
	Crore	% Change over previous year	US$ Million	% Change over previous year
1991	4,318	–	1,860	–
2001	15,083	3.50	3,196	-7.60
2011	83,037	25.49	19,699	22.20
2012	95,060	15.14	21,012	1.50
2013	1,07,563	12.51	22,428	2.36
2014	1,20,366	11.90	27,365	7.08
2015	1,34,843	12.03	28,568	6.67
2016	1,50,750	11.80	30,721	6.74
2017	1,78,189	18.20	27,310	-11.10
2018	1,95,312	9.61	28,568	4.60
2019	2,16,467	10.83	30,721	7.54
2020	95,738	-55.77	13,036	-57.57
2021	63,978	-33.17	8,651	-33.64
2022	1,69,917	165.59	21,360	146.91
2023	2,66,045	56.57	32,189	50.70
2024	2,93,033	10.14	35,016	8.78

Source: National Statistical Compendiums, Ministry of Tourism. In However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented decline, with earnings falling by 55.77% in INR terms and 57.57% in USD terms in 2020, followed by a further decline in 2021. The tourism sector witnessed a remarkable V-shaped recovery in 2022, with FEEs increasing by 165.59% in INR terms. Growth remained robust in 2023 before moderating to a stable 10.14% in 2024, reflecting renewed resilience and sustained recovery.

5.4 Analysis of Tourism Share in GVA and GDP 2018-19 to 2023-24: Table 5 highlights the contribution of tourism to India's Gross Value Added (GVA) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 2018–19 to 2023–24. Total GVA and GDP exhibited an overall upward trend, with a temporary contraction during 2020–21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tourism was among the worst-affected sectors, as Tourism Direct GVA declined sharply from ₹5,14,197 crore in 2019–20 to ₹1,46,293 crore in 2020–21, reducing its share in national GVA from 2.80% to 0.80%.

Table-4: Tourism Share in GVA and GDP 2018-19 to 2023-24

Indicator Metric	ThirdTSA 2015-16	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23 (R)	2023-24 (P)
Total GVA (Rs. Crore)	12,574,499	17,175,128	18,381,117	18,210,997	2,1635,584	24,646,698	27,412,888
Total GDP(Rs. Crore)	13,771,874	18,899,668	20,103,593	19,854,096	2,3597,399	26,890,473	30,122,956

Tourism Direct GVA (Rs Crore)	346,493	467,832	514,197	146,293	203,005	675,889	777,344
Tourism Direct GDP (Rs Crore)	364,668	492,371	541,167	153,966	213,653	711,341	818,117
Direct contribution of tourism (%) to:							
GVA	2.78	2.72	2.80	0.80	0.94	2.74	2.84
GDP	2.70	2.61	2.69	0.78	0.91	2.65	2.72
GVA GDP Multiplier	1.9236	1.9236	1.9236	1.9236	1.9236	1.9236	1.9236
Direct + indirect contribution of tourism (%) to:							
GVA	5.35	5.23	5.39	1.54	1.81	5.28	5.45
GDP	5.19	5.01	5.18	1.50	1.75	5.09	5.22

R: Revised Estimates; **P:** Provisional Estimates. **GVA**: Gross value Added, **GDP:** Gross Domestic Product

Source: National Accounts Statistics 2025 / Third TSA Framework.

Likewise, tourism's direct contribution to GDP fell from 2.69% to 0.78%. Recovery began in 2021–22 and accelerated significantly in the following years. By 2023–24 (provisional), Tourism Direct GVA and GDP reached record levels of ₹7,77,344 crore and ₹8,18,117 crore, respectively. The sector's direct contribution increased to 2.84% of GVA and 2.72% of GDP, while the combined direct and indirect contribution rose to 5.45% of GVA and 5.22% of GDP, surpassing pre-pandemic levels.

5 Analysis of Tourism Employment Generation:

Table 6 highlights the significant contribution of tourism to employment generation in India from 2018–19 to 2023–24. Total employment in the economy increased from 510.25 million in 2018–19 to 634.20 million in 2023–24. Tourism direct employment declined from 33.08 million in 2018–19 to 29.68 million in 2020–21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but recovered steadily to a record 36.90 million in 2023–24. Accordingly, tourism's direct share in total employment improved from 5.63% in 2020–21 to 5.82% in 2023–24.

Table-5: Tourism Employment (Direct & Indirect)

Analytical Parameter	**2015-16**	**2018-19**	**2019-20**	**2020-21**	**2021-22**	**2022-23**	**2023-24**
Total Employment in the Economy (in Millions)	583.80	510.25	514.25	527.25	553.27	605.81	634.20
Tourism Direct Employment (Millions)	31.50	33.08	30.28	29.68	30.55	33.22	36.90
Direct Share of Tourism (%)	5.40	6.48	5.89	5.63	5.52	5.48	5.82
Tourism Direct Employment (in million)	72.26	75.85	69.44	68.07	70.04	76.17	84.63
Total (Direct + Indirect) share of Tourism in Employment (%)	12.38	14.87	13.50	12.91	12.66	12.57	13.34

Source: Third TSA, 2015-16 and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)

Total direct and indirect tourism employment also increased from 68.07 million during the pandemic to 84.63 million in 2023–24, accounting for 13.34% of national employment. The substantial gap between direct and total employment demonstrates tourism's strong multiplier effect through supply chains and allied sectors. Overall, the data confirms tourism as a labour-intensive industry that generates widespread livelihood opportunities and supports inclusive economic growth across both rural and urban India.

Strategic Challenges: Barriers To Viksit Bharat 2047:

To strengthen its position in global tourism by 2047, India must address several structural challenges. Infrastructure bottlenecks, including inadequate last-mile connectivity and congestion at major airports, continue to affect tourist accessibility. Environmental degradation and overtourism threaten fragile ecosystems, particularly in the Himalayan and coastal regions. Safety concerns, uneven sanitation standards, and limited emergency response systems negatively influence international tourist perceptions. Additionally, shortages of digitally skilled tourism professionals hinder the adoption of advanced technologies in hospitality services. Regional imbalances in tourist arrivals, with heavy concentration in the Golden Triangle and southern states, leave many high-potential destinations in Central and Northeast India underdeveloped and underutilized.

Strategic Roadmap & Policy Alignment:

Table-7 Exhibits The National Tourism Policy 2022 which provides a comprehensive roadmap for transforming India's tourism sector and achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. The policy emphasizes coordinated action among the Central, State, and Local Governments to promote sustainable, inclusive, and technology-driven tourism development. Its three major strategic pillars include Green Tourism, Digital India Integration, and Skill Development.

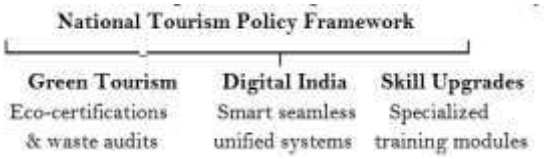


Table-6 The Policy aims to achieve the following targets for tourism sector in India				
Years wise Target with Aspects of Tourism	**2023**	**2030**	**2040**	**2047**
International Tourist Arrival (in Millions)	13	25	56	100
Domestic Tourist Visits (in Billions)	2	4	10	15
Foreign Exchange Earnings (in $ Billions)	30	56	175	400
Employment (in Millions)	88	137	257	400
Tourism GDP (in $ Billions)	143	248	550	1000

Source: Draft National Tourism Policy 2022

Green tourism focuses on eco-certification, carbon reduction, and waste management to ensure environmental sustainability. Digital integration aims to develop unified destination portals, AI-enabled tourism management systems, and smart visitor services to improve tourist experiences and reduce overtourism. Skill development emphasizes specialized vocational training to create a digitally competent hospitality workforce capable of meeting global standards.

The policy seeks to enhance tourism's contribution to the national economy by increasing tourist arrivals, average length of stay, and visitor expenditure while preserving India's cultural and natural heritage. It also aims to generate employment opportunities, attract private investment, strengthen destination competitiveness, and promote responsible and inclusive tourism development.

The policy establishes ambitious long-term targets for 2047. International Tourist Arrivals are projected to increase from 13 million in 2023 to 100 million, while Domestic Tourist Visits are expected to rise from 2 billion to 15 billion. Foreign Exchange Earnings are targeted to grow from USD 30 billion to USD 400 billion, Employment from 88 million to 400 million, and Tourism GDP from USD 143 billion to USD 1 trillion. These targets reflect tourism's expected role as a major pillar of India's service economy.

Table- 7: Analysis of Key Metrics				
Metric	**Short-Term (2023–2030)**	**Medium-Term (2030–2040)**	**Long-Term (2040–2047)**	**Overall Growth (2023–2047)**
International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs)	+92.3% (13M to 25M)	+124% (25M to 56M)	+78.6% (56M to 100M)	~7.7x Increase
Domestic Tourist Visits (DTVs)	+100% (2B to 4B)	+150% (4B to 10B)	+50% (10B to 15B)	7.5x Increase
Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs)	+86.7% ($30B to $56B)	+212.5% ($56B to $175B)	+128.6% ($175B to $400B)	~13.3x Increase
Employment Generation	+55.7% (88M to 137M)	+87.6% (137M to 257M)	+55.6% (257M to 400M)	~4.5x Increase
Tourism GDP Contribution	+73.4% ($143B to $248B)	+121.8% ($248B to $550B)	+81.8% ($550B to $1T)	~7.0x Increase

Source: Table compiled by Author based on Table-7

The projected growth pattern indicates a strategic shift from mass tourism to high-value tourism. While international tourist arrivals are expected to increase nearly 7.7 times, foreign exchange earnings are projected to grow over 13 times, highlighting greater emphasis on medical tourism, wellness tourism, spiritual tourism, luxury tourism, and MICE tourism. Simultaneously, domestic tourism will remain the sector's primary growth engine, supported by rising incomes, improved transport infrastructure, and expanding middle-class demand.

Employment generation forms another key pillar of the policy. Tourism employment is projected to increase from 88 million

to 400 million by 2047, reflecting the sector's strong labour-intensive nature and its capacity to create livelihood opportunities for youth, women, and rural communities.

The roadmap follows a three-phase development strategy: 2023–2030 focuses on post-pandemic recovery and capacity building; 2030–2040 emphasizes rapid infrastructure expansion and accelerated growth; and 2040–2047 aims to establish India as a leading global tourism destination with a USD 1 trillion tourism economy. Achieving these goals will require sustainable infrastructure, digital transformation, effective policy implementation, environmental conservation, and active participation of government, private stakeholders, and local communities.

Findings And Discussion:

The study reveals that India's tourism sector recorded strong long-term growth and remarkable post-pandemic recovery. International tourist arrivals increased from 2.54 million in 2001 to 20.57 million in 2024, while domestic tourism reached 2.95 billion visits. Foreign Exchange Earnings rose to ₹2.93 lakh crore (USD 35.02 billion). Tourism contributed 2.84% to Gross Value Added (GVA) and 2.72% to GDP in 2023–24. The sector also generated 84.63 million direct and indirect jobs, highlighting its significant role in economic development and employment generation.

The analysis indicates that India's tourism sector has shown strong resilience and sustained growth despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Government initiatives, improved connectivity, digitalization, and e-Visa reforms have strengthened global competitiveness. However, infrastructure deficiencies, environmental concerns, skill shortages, and regional disparities remain major challenges. The National Tourism Policy 2022 provides a strategic framework for sustainable tourism development. Achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 will require coordinated efforts from government, industry, and local communities.

Conclusion:

Tourism has become a vital driver of India's economic growth, employment, and foreign exchange earnings. The sector has recovered strongly from the COVID-19 pandemic and exceeded several pre-pandemic performance levels. Future growth depends on sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, environmental conservation, and a skilled workforce. Effective implementation of the National Tourism Policy 2022, supported by coordinated policy measures, can enhance India's global tourism competitiveness and contribute significantly to achieving the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

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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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Original Article

Rural Development through Tourism in Karnataka-A Sociological study

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Abstract

India is known for its diverse culture, traditions, natural beauty, and heritage. Rural areas constitute a major portion of the country's population. Tourism in rural areas has emerged as an effective tool for employment generation and economic development. Rural tourism helps local communities by creating jobs and promoting traditional skills. Tourists visit villages to experience local culture, festivals, crafts, agriculture, and natural landscapes. Such visits increase demand for local services and generate employment opportunities for rural people.

Tourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors in the world and plays a significant role in rural development. Rural tourism creates employment opportunities, increases income, promotes local culture, and improves living standards. It provides jobs in accommodation, transportation, handicrafts, agriculture, and other related sectors. This study examines the role of tourism in generating rural employment and improving socio-economic conditions. The research highlights the benefits, challenges, and future prospects of rural tourism in India.

Keywords: *Rural Tourism, Employment, Rural Development, Income Generation, Sustainable development, poverty alleviation, infrastructure*

Introduction

Rural tourism refers to tourism activities that take place in rural areas, allowing visitors to experience the natural environment, traditional culture, local lifestyles, and agricultural practices of villages and countryside regions. It is a form of sustainable tourism that promotes the economic, social, and cultural development of rural communities while preserving their heritage and natural resources. Rural tourism provides travelers with opportunities to engage in authentic experiences such as farm stays, village tours, handicraft workshops, cultural festivals, nature walks, and agricultural activities. Unlike urban tourism, which focuses on cities and modern attractions, rural tourism emphasizes simplicity, local traditions, and close interaction with the community. In recent years, rural tourism has gained significant importance as a tool for rural development. It generates, employment, opportunities,
increases, household, income, encourages entrepreneurship, and helps reduce migration from rural areas to cities. At the same time, it contributes to the conservation of local culture, traditions, arts, crafts, and environmental resources. In India, rural tourism has emerged as an important strategy for promoting inclusive growth. The country's diverse rural landscapes, rich cultural heritage, traditional crafts, and agricultural practices offer immense potential for attracting domestic and international tourists. States such as Karnataka, Rajasthan, Kerala, and Gujarat have successfully developed rural tourism initiatives that benefit local communities and preserve cultural heritage. Therefore, rural tourism is not only a recreational activity but also an effective instrument for rural development, poverty alleviation, cultural preservation, and sustainable economic growth. Its growing popularity highlights the increasing demand among tourists for authentic, eco-friendly, and culturally enriching travel experiences. Tourism is an important tool for rural development in Karnataka. It creates employment opportunities, increases income, preserves local culture, and improves infrastructure in villages. Karnataka has rich natural beauty, heritage sites, tribal communities, traditional arts, and agricultural practices that attract tourists from different parts of India and the world

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The Karnataka government has identified rural and agro-tourism as key areas for promoting inclusive development.

Meaning

Rural tourism refers to tourism activities that take place in villages and rural areas. It allows visitors to experience village life, and focus on local culture, traditions, heritage, agriculture, and natural resources, handicrafts, folk arts, and natural surroundings. Rural tourism helps rural communities earn additional income while preserving their cultural heritage.

Definition

According to tourism experts, rural tourism is tourism that showcases rural life, art, culture, and heritage in a sustainable manner.

Features of Rural tourism

- Village-based tourism
- Cultural experiences
- Traditional lifestyles
- Local participation
- Sustainable development
- Environmental conservation

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the concept of rural tourism.
2. To examine employment opportunities created through tourism.
3. To analyze socio-economic impacts.
4. To identify challenges faced by rural tourism.
5. To suggest measures for improvement.

Review Literature

- **Vikrama D. K. (2023).** *A Study on Contribution of Women in the Development of Rural Tourism, with Special Reference to Selected Rural Tourism Destinations of Malnad Region of Karnataka State.* International Journal of Membrane Science and Technology, 10(2), 2118–2121. This study highlights how rural tourism creates employment and income opportunities for women in Karnataka.
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- **Joseph, J. A. & Varghese, D. T. (2023).** *Role of Community in Rural Tourism: A Pilot Study Conducted at Kumbalgodu Panchayat, Karnataka.* Journal of Micro & Small Business Management. The paper discusses the role of local communities in tourism-led rural development.
- **Siddalingappa (2023).** *A Study on Strategies to Promote Agri-Tourism in Karnataka, India.* Journal of Research Administration, 5(2), 7626–7636. This article focuses on agri-tourism as a tool for rural economic development and cultural preservation.
- **Vikrama D. K. (2022).** *A Study on Problems of Rural Tourism Service Providers in Selected Rural Tourism Destinations in Karnataka, India.* Journal of Advanced Zoology. The study identifies challenges faced by tourism entrepreneurs in rural Karnataka.
- **Nanjunda, D. C. (2008).** *Ecotourism for Rural Karnataka: Some Impact Assessments.* Atna Journal of Tourism Studies, 3(1), 94–105. This paper evaluates the positive and negative impacts of ecotourism on rural communities in Karnataka.
- **Sukhesh P. & Krishnamurthy, M. V. (2012).** *Residents' Perception of Tourism Development: A Case Study with Reference to Coorg District in Karnataka.* Indian Journal of Commerce and Management Studies, 3(2), 31–35. The paper analyzes local residents' views on tourism development and its socio-economic effects.
- **Books**

Rural Tourism and Sustainable Development – Edited by researchers in tourism and rural development.
Tourism Development: Principles and Practices – Covers tourism planning and rural development concepts.
Sustainable Tourism Development – Useful for theoretical frameworks and sustainable tourism models.

- Government Reports

1. Karnataka Tourism Department Tourism Policy Reports.
2. Ministry of Tourism Rural Tourism Scheme Reports.
3. UN World Tourism Organization reports on rural tourism and sustainable development.

Research Methodology

This article refers Primary Data

- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Observations

Secondary Data

- Books
- Journals

- Government reports
- Websites

Specific Research Hypotheses

- **H_1:** Tourism development increases employment opportunities in rural areas.
- **H_2:** Tourism contributes to higher income levels among rural households.
- **H_3:** Tourism promotes the development of rural infrastructure such as roads, transportation, and communication facilities.
- **H_4:** Tourism helps preserve and promote local culture, traditions, and heritage.
- **H_5:** Tourism encourages entrepreneurship and the growth of small-scale rural businesses.
- **H_6:** Tourism improves the overall quality of life of rural residents.
- **H_7:** There is a positive relationship between tourist arrivals and economic development in rural areas.

Need and Significance of the Study

Tourism has both positive and negative impacts on rural communities. It contributes to economic growth, social development, and cultural preservation, but it can also create challenges if not managed properly.

1. Employment Generation

Tourism creates direct and indirect employment opportunities for local people as guides, drivers, home stay operators, artisans, food vendors, and cultural performers. Rural tourism policies in Karnataka aim to generate large-scale employment opportunities. Several studies identify employment generation as one of the most significant contributions of tourism to rural development. Tourism creates both direct employment (hotels, guides, restaurants, transport services) and indirect employment (agriculture, handicrafts, construction, and local services). A meta-analysis of tourism and employment studies found a positive and statistically significant relationship between tourism growth and job creation.

2. Increase in Rural Income

Villagers can earn income through homestays, sale of handicrafts, traditional food, agricultural products, and cultural performances. This improves their standard of living. ourism diversifies rural livelihoods and reduces dependence on agriculture. Agrotourism, ecotourism, and community-based tourism provide supplementary income sources for rural households. Studies indicate that tourism contributes to economic growth, poverty reduction, and the development of sustainable local economies. Tourism expenditure stimulates local businesses, increases demand for local products, and encourages entrepreneurship among rural residents.

3. Infrastructure Development

Tourism encourages the development of roads, drinking water facilities, sanitation, electricity, internet connectivity, and transportation facilities in rural areas. The growth of tourism often leads to improvements in rural infrastructure, including roads, transportation, communication facilities, sanitation systems, and public utilities. Better infrastructure not only supports tourism activities but also improves the quality of life for local residents. Infrastructure development increases accessibility and encourages investment in rural areas, further supporting economic growth.

4. Preservation of Culture and Heritage

Rural tourism helps preserve traditional lifestyles, local customs, arts, crafts, and cultural heritage. Studies show that tourists increasingly seek authentic rural experiences, motivating communities to maintain cultural traditions and heritage resources. Tourism also promotes cultural exchange and strengthens community identity, although excessive commercialization may sometimes threaten authenticity Rural tourism promotes folk arts, local festivals, traditional crafts, and cultural practices. This helps preserve Karnataka's rich cultural heritage for future generations.

5. Women's Empowerment

Women participate in self-help groups, home stays, handicraft production, and food services, which enhances their economic independence and social status. Creates opportunities for women in hospitality, handicrafts, and small businesses Improve, economic independence.

6. Reduction of Rural Migration

Employment and income opportunities in villages reduce migration to cities and help maintain balanced regional development.

7.Community Development

Community participation is considered a critical factor in successful rural tourism development. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) emphasizes local ownership, decision-making, and equitable distribution of benefits. Recent reviews highlight that active involvement of local communities improves socio-economic well-being, strengthens social cohesion, and enhances sustainability outcomes. Generates funds for community projects and public services. Strengthens local participation and cooperation.

8. Environmental Awareness

Sustainable tourism can encourage conservation of natural resources, biodiversity, and landscapes. Rural tourism activities such as ecotourism and nature-based tourism often create incentives for environmental protection. However, researchers warn that uncontrolled tourism development may result in environmental degradation, resource depletion, waste generation, and ecosystem disturbances. Therefore, sustainable planning and management are essential. Encourages conservation of natural resources and biodiversity. Promotes eco-tourism and sustainable practices.

Forms of Tourism

Tourism can be classified into different forms based on purpose, location, and activities:

- **Leisure Tourism** – Travel for relaxation, recreation, and enjoyment (e.g., beach holidays, sightseeing).
- **Business Tourism** – Travel for meetings, conferences, exhibitions, or work-related activities.

- **Cultural Tourism** – Visiting historical sites, museums, festivals, and learning about local traditions and heritage.
- **Adventure Tourism** – Activities involving excitement and physical challenges, such as trekking, rafting, rock climbing, and skydiving.
- **Eco-Tourism** – Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and supports local communities.
- **Religious (Pilgrimage) Tourism** – Travel to sacred places for spiritual or religious purposes.
- **Medical Tourism** – Traveling to receive medical treatment, surgery, or healthcare services.
- **Educational Tourism** – Travel for learning, study tours, research, or educational programs.
- **Sports Tourism** – Traveling to participate in or watch sporting events.
- **Rural Tourism** – Visiting villages and countryside areas to experience rural life, agriculture, and local culture.
- **Wildlife Tourism** – Visiting national parks, sanctuaries, and reserves to observe animals in their natural habitats.
- **Domestic Tourism** – Travel within one's own country.
- **International Tourism** – Travel from one country to another for tourism purposes.

Research Gap

- The literature reveals several research gaps:
- Limited district-level studies in Karnataka.
- Lack of long-term impact assessments.
- Insufficient research on digital tourism promotion in rural areas.
- Limited studies on youth participation in rural tourism.
- Need for comparative studies among different rural tourism destinations.
- Limited evaluation of government tourism policies at the village level.
- Future research should focus on measuring socio-economic impacts quantitatively and assessing sustainability indicators across rural tourism destinations.

Challenges of Rural Tourism Development

Despite its benefits, rural tourism faces several challenges:

1. Lack of infrastructure and accessibility.
2. Limited financial resources and investment.
3. Inadequate marketing and promotion.
4. Seasonal fluctuations in tourist arrivals.
5. Environmental degradation and resource pressure.
6. Unequal distribution of tourism benefits.
7. Weak institutional support and governance.

Researchers emphasize the need for effective planning, stakeholder participation, and sustainable management to overcome these barriers.

Conclusion

Tourism plays a vital role in rural development in Karnataka by generating employment, increasing income, improving infrastructure, preserving culture, and empowering local communities. With proper planning and sustainable practices, rural tourism can become a powerful instrument for inclusive and balanced rural development in Karnataka. Rural tourism is an important tool for generating employment and promoting rural development. It provides economic, social, and cultural benefits to rural communities. Proper planning, infrastructure development, community participation, and government support can enhance the effectiveness of rural tourism. Therefore, rural tourism can be considered a sustainable strategy for reducing unemployment and improving the quality of life in rural areas.

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Biodiversity Friendly Tourism: A Legal Study

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Abstract:

The symbiotic relationship between eco-tourism or biodiversity friendly tourism and wildlife conservation has garnered substantial attention in recent years, particularly in a country as bio-diverse as India. Biodiversity friendly tourism, or eco-tourism, requires careful legal balancing between conservation goals, economic development, and indigenous land rights. Special emphasis is laid on the tension between strict preservation and community livelihoods, advocating for frameworks that empower local populations while enforcing strict environmental regulations. This paper examines the laws relating to biodiversity friendly tourism and the contribution of judiciary in laying emphasis on sustainable development, a viable concept to eradicate poverty and improve the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of the supporting eco-systems through its landmark judgments.

Keywords: *Biodiversity Friendly Tourism, Protection of Forests, Preservation of Natural Resources and Environmental Regulations.*

Introduction:

Tourism is a growing industry in India. As a nation endowed with diverse ecosystems and a rich array of wildlife species, India's commitment to safeguarding its natural heritage while promoting sustainable tourism practices is of paramount significance. The question arises whether tourism will lead to disturbances in environmental equilibrium. Eco-tourism or biodiversity friendly tourism is an environment-friendly smokeless industry for the many beautiful but destitute regions of the world. It is defined as 'travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations found in these areas'. It denotes responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people so that the impact on ecology is minimized and the benefits of travel trade are shared, not just with tour operators, but with local communities. The study begins by examining the legal framework governing ecotourism in India. It scrutinizes key legislations, such as the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, Biodiversity Act, 2002 and the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, which form the backbone of ecotourism regulation.

Legal Framework on Biodiversity Friendly Tourism/Ecotourism in India:

Today, interaction of human beings with nature is so extensive that the environmental issues have assumed such proportions as to affect all humanity. Industrialization, urbanization, population explosion, overexploitation of resources, depletion of traditional sources of energy, and the search for new ones, the disruption of natural ecological balances, as well as the destruction of a multitude of animal and plant species for economic reasons are the major factors that have contributed to environmental deterioration.

Nature provides the most hygienic and healthy environment for the survival of mankind, but this environment has been changed by mankind for selfish ends by adding concrete, charcoal, plastics, toxic chemicals, hazardous wastes and many more objects, devices and processes. These man-made additions have unbalanced the ecosystem and are primarily responsible for environmental pollution and consequent health hazards. It is true that tourism helps mobilization of funds and augmentation of national economy. This does not mean that tourist activities can go beyond the boundaries of being environment friendly..

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In this respect the Legislature and Judiciary have laid emphasis on sustainable development, a viable concept to eradicate poverty and improve the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of the supporting eco-systemsTherefore, the policy of tourism should ensure preservation of the nature and biological diversity and should be developed in a way that benefits the local communities, strengthens the local economy and employs local work force without putting the tourists to inconvenience.Eco-tourism in India operates within a structured legal framework that emphasizes environmental protection, community involvement, and sustainable tourism. The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, is one of the key legislative instruments governing wildlife conservation and the regulation of tourism activities within protected areas. This act, along with the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, The Biodiversity Act 2002 and the Indian Forest Act, 1927, lays down the legal foundation for the conservation of India's rich biodiversity. Under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, protected areas are categorized into national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and conservation reserves. These areas have varying levels of restrictions on tourism activities to ensure the welfare of wildlife. The act provides legal provisions to declare certain areas as eco-sensitive zones, where commercial activities, including tourism, may be regulated or restricted.

India also has a National Wildlife Action Plan that outlines strategies for wildlife conservation, which include provisions for sustainable tourism. Additionally, the government has created policies and guidelines for eco-tourism to promote responsible practices and community involvement. These initiatives encourage eco-tourism operators to adhere to principles such as minimizing the ecological footprint, engaging local communities, and educating tourists about the significance of biodiversity. In recent years, the development and promotion of eco-tourism have also received significant attention at the state level, with various states in India implementing their own policies and regulations to address the unique characteristics and needs of their respective ecosystems.

Forest Laws:

In the background of national forest policy and practices, the governance of forest resources in India may be divided into three categories, namely, (a) governance by State, (b) joint governance by State and civil society, and (c) governance by civil society. An assessment of the governance in each category requires looking into the suitability of (1) the existing institutions, (2) their delivery mechanisms, (3) the available supportive framework of rules and regulations, and (4) the interactions among these three in relation to the achievement of the stated objectives with regard to the use of forest resources. The achievement of the stated objectives may be judged from the angles of efficiency, effectiveness, equity and sustainability.[i]

The Supreme Court has recognized the role of the forests as an important element in maintaining ecological balance. How far has the court travelled in this direction and attributed new meanings of environmental significance to the provisions of law? In *State of Tripura* v. *Sudhir Kumar Ranjan Nath'*, the Court did not dismiss the Forest Act as a mere taxing enactment, but considered it as one to preserve, protect and promote the forest wealth in the interests of the nation. The Court explained that the object of the Forest Act was to preserve and protect the forest wealth of the country, and to regulate cutting, removal, transport and possession of the forest produce in the interest of the states and their people. For achieving the said purpose, the Forest Act provides for declaration of reserve forests, formation of village forests and declaration of protected forests, vesting in the government control over forest and other areas and control over the collection and movement of drift and stranded timber. This perspective, which is reflected in several decisions, is an entirely new eco-friendly approach attributed by the judiciary to the working of the forest law, which had a different purpose at the time of its origin.

Approaches to Wildlife Conservation

Globally, there are two approaches to the field of conservation of wild species. One aims at protecting the species *per se*, regardless of their habitat, which is usually followed by the developed countries. An example of such an approach is the Endangered Species Act, 1973 of the US. The other approach, aims at preserving the habitat or ecosystem whereby the species is protected automatically, which is followed by developing countries. An example of this approach is the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 of India. This Act was enacted after the Forty-Second Constitutional Amendment moved wildlife and forests from the State List to the Concurrent List.

India has always followed a combination of both approaches where not only habitats have been conserved but there have also been numerous programs targeted at specific flagship species, like Project Tiger, Project Elephant etc. A new approach to conserve habitats aims to designate reserves such as Tiger Reserves and Biosphere Reserves, which are not legally categorized under the statutes but are administrative mechanisms.

Despite such varied measures, problems such as illegal trade in wildlife and its products, increasing wildlife offences, minimal convictions in courts, lack of awareness among judiciary, inadequate precedents on wildlife jurisprudence have posed a hindrance to conservation of wildlife. So a thorough discussion relating to wildlife protection and conservation becomes imperative here.[2]

Draft Declaration on Human Rights and Environment

The Draft Declaration is the first international instrument that comprehensively addresses the linkage between human rights and the environment. It demonstrates that accepted environmental and human rights principles embody the right of everyone to a secure, healthy and ecologically sound environment. The draft describes the environmental dimension of already recognized human rights such as the right to life, health and culture. It declares that all persons have the right to protection and preservation of air, soil, water, sea-ice, flora and fauna, and essential processes and areas necessary to maintain biological diversity

and ecosystems. The draft recognizes the right of indigenous people to control their lands, territories and natural resources, and to maintain their traditional way of life, including against any action or course of conduct that may result in the destruction or the security in the enjoyment of their means of subsistence and protection degradation of their territories, including land, air, water, sea-ice, wildlife or other resources. The draft addresses issues relating to displacement, which is one vexing concern of indigenous and local communities that impinge upon the loss of their life, livelihood and environment. By guaranteeing the right not to be evicted from their homes or lands...except in emergencies due to compelling purpose as a whole and not attainable by other means', it attempts to seriously narrow down the abuse of 'public purpose' in acquisition and requisition of land for development project. These rights and principles may be relevant while improving the provisions of CBD relating to the protection of TK of indigenous and local communities.[3]

Biodiversity Act 2002

India is a country known for its rich biodiversity and cultural heritage, ecotourism has gained significant importance. Ecotourism is a form of sustainable tourism that focuses on experiencing and conserving natural environments, promoting the well-being of local communities, and enhancing visitors' environmental awareness. India is a home to a diverse range of ecosystems, including rainforests, deserts, wetlands, and mountain ranges. There are hosts of reasons as to why the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of its component and protection of traditional knowledge deserve special attention. This rich biodiversity has attracted both domestic and international tourists interested in exploring the country's unique natural and cultural heritage. Wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, and protected areas are key destinations for eco-tourism, offering the chance to observe charismatic mega fauna like tigers, elephants, and rhinoceroses.[4]

The Biodiversity Act 2002, was enacted for the conservation of biological diversity sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of biological resources and knowledge. The purpose was to give effect to the objectives of United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992, to which India is a party. The Act does not of biological resources but focuses on the question of access to resources and related issues. Some of the major reasons for the enactment of this legislation were:

- to ensure conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of biological resources and knowledge;
- to protect Sovereign rights of India over its biological resources;
- to stop misappropriation of Bio/Genetic Resources (Bio-piracy);
- to protect biodiversity by documenting people's Biodiversity Registers (to document folk knowledge) and to regulate access and use of biodiversity.

This legislation responds to a number of new, emerging concerns: firstly, the result of new developments in technology, in particular, biotechnology and information technology, and, secondly, the ongoing degradation of the environment, inevitably accompanied by an erosion of biological diversity. These developments imply that all organisms, even seemingly insignificant ones, are potentially resources of considerable economic value, worthy of efforts at conservation, scientific investigation, and of securing rights over the associated intellectual property.[5]

Traditional Knowledge and Bio-piracy

Eco-tourism or biodiversity friendly tourism, a form of sustainable tourism that emphasizes responsible travel and conservation, has gained popularity worldwide as people seek meaningful and nature-based experiences. India, with its rich cultural and environmental diversity, has become a hub for eco-tourism. However, the rapid growth of eco-tourism in India has raised questions about its impact on the indigenous communities residing in ecotourism destinations.[6]

Indigenous knowledge fits neatly in the Traditional Knowledge (TK) category but TK is not necessarily indigenous. That is to say, indigenous knowledge is traditional knowledge but traditional knowledge is not necessarily indigenous. While dealing with any case relating to TK or TCE it is mandatory to find the origins of such TK or TCE as the case may be. Any ignorance in dealing with TK or TCE may result in the infringement of rights of indigenous peoples.

Major threats to biodiversity and associated traditional knowledge are 'bio-prospecting' and 'bio-piracy'. Lack of documentation of traditional knowledge or improper and non-technical documentation also leads to bio-piracy. Any company or any individual who want to use biological resources for commercial purpose has to obtain the PIC of the communities and the benefit should accrue to all members of such community who have used and contributed collectively to the innovation. PIC would lead to equitable benefit sharing and prevent the misuse of TK.

The TK when worked upon and derived commercially without the knowledge of the community acts against their rights. The rights when alienated, surrendered or sold on unreasonable terms also directly conflicts with their human rights. As observed earlier, when the knowledge is shared with their consent, it is important to deal cautiously as the knowledge is owned by the whole community and thus the benefits should accrue to all. At times, it is found that indigenous people being unaware of the value of the heritage that they own become vulnerable at the hands of those who exploit IPRs on the basis of such TK. Lack of respect and appreciation for TK happens to be a hurdle in enjoyment of human rights as specified in UNDRIPS.[7]

Regulatory Bodies and Their Roles:

The regulation of eco-tourism and its impact on wildlife in India involves multiple government bodies and agencies, each with distinct roles and responsibilities. Some of the key bodies include:

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC): This is the central authority responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies and laws related to wildlife conservation, including eco-tourism. The MoEFCC plays a pivotal role in setting the direction for eco-tourism in India.

State Forest Departments: Each state in India has its own Forest Department responsible for managing and protecting forests, wildlife, and eco-tourism activities within its jurisdiction. These departments oversee the day-to-day management of protected areas, including permitting eco-tourism activities.

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA): NTCA was established to manage and protect tiger reserves in India. It plays a crucial role in regulating tourism activities in these reserves, with a focus on tiger conservation.

Central Empowered Committee (CEC): CEC is a statutory body that provides recommendations to the Supreme Court of India on matters related to environmental protection and wildlife conservation, including issues arising from eco-tourism.

These agencies work together to strike a balance between promoting eco-tourism for economic development and ensuring that wildlife and their habitats remain protected.[8]

Judicial Pronouncements:

Restrictions on tourism business by controlling the entry and tour of private vehicles into national parks can never be challenged as hampering tourism and affecting the foreign exchange earnings. It can be justified by the careful balance maintained between preservation of wildlife and sustainable development. These ideas are notably emphasized by courts, when they deal with different dimensions of tourism. The policy of tourism should ensure preservation of the nature and biological diversity and should be developed in a way that benefits the local communities, strengthens the local economy and employs local work force without putting the tourists to inconvenience. A project for a biological park designed for watching wildlife at close quarters was found to serve eco-restoration of a degraded locality, scientific conservation of flora and fauna, maintenance of bio-diversity, breeding and enhancement of stock of endangered species and provision for facilities of research. However, renovation of restaurant with boarding and lodging in the midst of a national park which is under a long-term lease is contrary to the laws relating to wildlife and forest conservation. In *Union of India* v. *Kamath Holiday Resorts*[9], the Supreme Court disagreed with the argument that the lease for a snack bar and restaurant was necessary for visiting tourists in the reserved forest and held that even if the central government agency grants the lease, prior approval is a must. The Court directed the authority to send a proposal to the central government who would decide the issue keeping in mind the need for a balance between forest preservation and tourism promotion.

An artificial deviation of the flow of a river in forestland for the purpose of augmenting facilities of a motel was challenged in *MC Mehta* v. *Kamal Nath*[10]. Quashing prior approval for the lease and imposing on the motel the responsibility of restoration of environment and ecology of the area, the Supreme Court referred to the public trust doctrine under which the state as a trustee has to protect the natural resources for the benefit of the general public. On the facts of the case, the Court found that the bank of the river, which was part of the protected forest, had been leased out for commercial purpose. The state government committed a patent breach of public trust by leasing out the ecologically fragile land for a hotel. The formulation and application of public trust doctrine, in the context of protection of forests and preservation of natural resources, is a landmark in the growth of Indian environmental law.[11]

Conclusion:

It is true that tourism helps mobilization of funds and augmentation of national economy. This does not mean that tourist activities can go beyond the boundaries of being environment friendly. In this respect the Courts lay emphasis on sustainable development, a viable concept to eradicate poverty and improve the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of the supporting eco-systems. Society has to prosper not at the cost of the environment. There should be proper balance between the protection of environment and development process. The concept is significant in the field of eco-tourism. Should tourism be banned in the core forest areas? Opinions differ. Banning upsets wildlife tourism industries. It is pointed out that instead of being engaged in poacher-aiding activities, the people living outside tiger reserves can be beneficially employed in tourism activities. One has to worry not only about tigers but also about the local people if tourism is to be completely banned. Visitors cannot see much wildlife in the 'buffer zones'. Too many resorts in the neighborhood may block wildlife corridors. Limiting the number of tourist vehicles, fixing 'routes and delineating zones can help in reducing the pressure of vehicles on animal sightings. The 'critical tiger habitats or core areas need not be treated as 'inviolate all human presence. The industry says that temporary presence of visitors cannot be treated as 'violating' the core area. No doubt that support of the local residents is vital for successful wildlife tourism but local people employed are few and their earnings low. Tourism makes the rich resort owners and tour operators richer, while locals hold only small and unqualified jobs like those of gardeners or waiters. Other strategies include active protection of buffer zones. Greater densities of deer, wild pig, bison and other prey may be fostered so as

to lead to a rise in tiger numbers. Instead of banning tourism in tiger reserves completely, a balanced approach seems to be desirable. A roadmap for more indulgence of the local people is to be draw.[12]

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Tourism Management at The UNESCO Listed Living Chola Temples

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Abstract

This present research paper provides an information about the living chola temples of Tamil Nadu, inscribed as a UNESCO world heritage sites stand as an outstanding example of South India's architectural brilliance, spiritual harmony and cultural growth. Comprising these temples brihadisvara temple at Thanjavur, brihadisvara temple at Gangai Konda Chola Puram and the Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram are not only a Historical monument, they are active space of daily worship, festival and ritual custom that persisted for over a thousand years. Unlike many other heritage sites function only as a tourist attraction, in contrast the living chola temples retain their primary identity as a spiritual space that are deeply rooted in the religious life of the local communities. This special dual identity as both spiritual space and the global tourist destination creates significant challenging issues for sustainable tourism management. Increasing tourist flow leads to over-crowding, physical strain in temple structure and disturbing the spiritual practices. In addition, tourism generates vital economy benefits to the locals and supports the preservations. This research paper examines how tourism might develop sustainably without disturbing the spiritual practice. Additionally, it also evaluates the existing tourism management frame work at living chola temples and identifies the key challenges and explore the strategies for balance between the conservation, spiritual spaces, visitor experiences and community involvement which balancing the devotion and destination.

Keywords: *Living chola temples, UNESCO World heritage, religious tourism, Heritage management, Sustainable tourism, Cultural preservation.*

Introduction

UNESCO world heritage sites demonstrate the cultural and natural property that significant outstanding values and represent the collective legacy of humanity. In addition to the historical value, these places are protected because they support intercultural understanding, education and sustainable development. Indias rich and diverse cultural history substantial contribution to UNESCO world heritage list. because of their stunning architecture, persistent spirituality, and cultural vibrancy Tamil Nadu's living chola temples hold a special place among them. The group consist of Brihadisvara temple in Thanjavur, Brihadisvara temple in Gangai Konda Chola Puram, Airavateswara temple in Darasuram.

These temples were constructed between 10^{th} – 12^{th} century under the powerful chola dynasty, are the stunning examples of Dravidian architecture and advanced architectural skills. Their massive vimanas and precisely carved sculptures and well-planned temple complexes reflex the architectural excellence and advanced technologies on that time era. The living chola temples remains to be functioning spiritual place in contrast to the other cultural sites serving as a static tourist destination. Daily rituals, spiritual ceremonies, seasonal festival and traditional activity are performed without interruption making the locations as living representation of faith and tradition which connects the past and present. The UNESCO recognition enhanced the global visibility of these temples which led to a consistent rise in domestic and international tourism. Although tourism positively contributed to the local economy by generating jobs, supports local crafts, and promoting cultural exchange, it has also several challenges in management. Issues like overcrowding, commercialising of spiritual space, environmental damage and disturbance to religious practices have become the serious issues. In this context, tourism management is an essential role in the development that does not compromise the spiritual value, and cultural heritage.

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The Living Chola Temples – an overview

The temples are the great examples of Dravidian architecture. The temples grouped under the UNESCO designation – The Brihadisvara temple at Thanjavur, The Brihadisvara temple at Gangai Konda Chola Puram and The Airavateswara temple at Darasuram – showcase the cholas mastery of intricate sculpture, stone architecture and advancement in engineering skills.Their elaborated pillars, sculped mandapas, towering vimanas and beautifully carved reliefs showcase an unmatched level of craftmanship. For example, Brihadisvara temple at Thanjavur is well-known for its 216-foot granite vimana which demonstrate a marvel of construction during a period before modern technology. Some of the most extraordinary architectural wonders in South India were built under the chola dynastic, which was characterised by strong rule, maritime expansion and artistic patronage. The temples at Gangai Konda Chola Puram reflects imperial pride with its great spatial design and numerous dimensions while Airavateswara is celebrated for its musical steps and intricate carvings.

The uninterrupted spiritual and cultural life of these temples is what distinguishes from the other ancient monuments, they still serve as active place of worship where pujas, rituals and ceremonies were carried out on a day-to-day basis. Annual festivals like mahashivarathri, kumbhabishekam attracts thousands of devotees, confirming the temples' role as important spiritual hub. Community involvement is still essential to maintain the traditions with locals participation in temple activities, festivals and maintenance.

In 1987, UNESCO designated BRIHADISVARA TEMPLE in Thanjavur as a World Heritage site in recognition of their universal outstanding value. In 2004, The Gangai Konda Chola Puram and The Airavateswara at Darasuram were added to the list. Officially, designated them as 'The Great Living Chola Temples'. This recognition emphasis both architectural excellence and the constant religious significance.

Devotion and Destination – concept

Devotion

Devotion here is expressed through prayer, ritual performance, offerings, fasting, temple services, and collective participation in spiritual festivals. These practices have been rooted in ancient religious traditions for ages and still to be passed down across the generations. Temples are the place where shape the everyday religious life of the worshippers. Likewise, for devotees, The Living Chola Temples are not only the historical structure and the artistical monument; they are deeply spiritual space where divine presence is believed. They believe these temples function as a powerful spiritual hub that shape the thousands of the devotee's spiritual life.

Agamic tradition, a collection of ancient temple worship manual that speaks about the correct method of the constructions, idol installation, worship practices, and festival observance are strictly followed in the religious rituals performed in the temples. The priest, trained in both Vedic and Agamic traditions, performs the daily pujas include early morning abhishekam, evening Aradhana and mid-day offerings. The ritual rites conducted with precise procedure involves spiritual mantras, ceremonial lights, flowers, water, milk, incense, and food offerings. Witnessing or participating in these kinds of rituals is deeply emotional and spiritually fulfilling experience that strengthens the faith and sense of divine connection for the devotees. In addition to daily worship, Annual festivals play a vital role at the living chola temples. Events like Mahashivarathri, Pradosham, Tamil Newyear celebrations, and Brahmotshavam attracts devotees from various region. The temple space transforms into a colorful area of devotion with ritual processions, spiritual chanting, classical music, dance performance and group prayer. The spread of divine presence community's social life is symbolised by the movement of deities on decorated chariot through the surrounded streets.

Another important component of devotion is community participation. Local residents, hereditary temple servant, musicians, volunteers, and donors support actively to maintain temple and ritual organization. Many families have strong emotional connection with these temples, frequently linking personal milestones such as births, weddings ana memorial rituals with the spiritual space.

Above all, the spirituality is constant and un broken of the temple. the living chola temple awaken before sunrise with spiritual chants and continue rituals until late at night in contrast to archeological structures that close after visiting hours. For devotees, the presence of tourists does not change the temple's spiritual identity however, disruption during prayer times, noise, crowding and improper behavior can affect the purity of worship. Thus, from a devotional point, the temples are the primary spiritual space where discipline, divine and religious order to remains.

Destination

Destination is a place that attracts tourists due to its Cultural, Historical, Natural and recreational significance. In context of heritage tourism destinations are the space where tourists can experience with History, Art, Heritage and Culture.

The living chola temples' architectural excellence, Historical significance and UNESCO world heritage recognition makes them function as a major cultural tourism destination. These temples function as important tourist destination that provide rich insights into South Indian History, Architecture, Religion and Culture. The temples are recognised as monumental achievements of chola engineering, sculpture and urban planning from both academic and aesthetic perspective. Their massive vimanas, intricate stone carvings, inscriptions, paintings and spatial layouts attract millions of tourists annually from India and across the globe. The extensive visitors at this temple are diverse include domestic pilgrims, international tourists, researchers, historians, students of architecture and archeology. Heritage tourists are attracted to architectural excellence and historical significance, while pilgrims visit for spiritual reasons. International tourists often view the temple as the representation of India's ancient civilization, while academics and students study inscription, iconography, engineering techniques and performing art tradition preserved in stone. The temples' global cultural status has been further elevated by the UNESCO world heritage designation which has increased tourism promotion through guidebooks, tour packages, and multimedia include documentaries. Many tourists experienced the temple as open-air museum that speaks centuries of political power, artistic excellence and religious

philosophy. Tourism contributed in a positive way to the local economy by generating employments for guides, vendors, travel operators, and hospitality workers. Challenges arise when the temples role as a tourist destination begins to conflict with the identity of the spiritual space. Religious discipline is frequently disturbed by overcrowding during peak prayer hours, usage mobile phones for photography within the shrine, dress code violations and casual behavior's these kinds of act even its unintentional can offend the sentiment of devotees and disrupt ritual activities.

Thus, a sensitive interaction between faith and tourism emerges when the coexistence of devotion and destination in the same space. While tourism increases the sustainability and exposure, it also requires ethical behavior, cultural sensitivity and tourist discipline. Therefore, effective tourism management must promote respectful visitors' behavior through regulations, signs, trained guides and awareness program in order to promise that cultural appreciation does not compromise spirituality.

Tourism Growth after UNESCO world heritage recognition

The living chola temples' status as UNESCO world heritage increased both domestic and international tourists. Due to its global recognition enhance the exposure of this temple on the global tourism map, pilgrims, heritage tourists, researchers, international tourists. Tourism related infrastructure including improved roads, tourists help center, signs and cleanliness received attention from greater government after the UNESCO status. Along with academic and media coverage, the sites also began to receive support from heritage management, conservation and restoration. The growth of tourism brought positive impacts. It generated employment for local communities, in the form of tour guides, travel operators, vendors and hospitality workers. Local business-like hotel, restaurant, gift shops and handicrafts have grown. It also contributed to heritage preservation funding and raised public awareness of the cultural and historical significance of the temples. However, the fast expansion of tourism also leads to over tourism during festivals, noise pollution, waste pollution, traffic congestions, and the growing commercialization of spiritual space.

Tourism Management practice at Living Chola Temples

Planning, organising, regulation and control of tourism activities in order to assure a smooth tourist flow, economic benefit and sustainable preservation of cultural, natural, and ecological resources. To manage tourism at living chola temples through a coordinated frame work involving government tourism department, temple administration, UNESCO heritage guidelines, and the Archeological survey of India (ASI) and local participation from local communities. The aim of this multi-agency is ensuring the tourism development does not compromise the spirituality and the architectural integrity of the temple.

Visitor Regulation – Visitor movement is carefully regulated to minimise disturbance to religious practices. In order to allow devotees to worship without interruption entry is prohibited during peak ritual hours. Photography is restricted near sanctum and ritual zone in order to maintain the ritual decorum and prevent damage to historic surfaces. In many temples separate queues were organised pilgrims and common tourists to maintain smooth crowd flow and avoid the ritual interference

Infrastructure developments – Significant upgrades have been performed to improve the visitor experiences post UNESCO status. These includes parking spaces, information centers that educated history and architecture, clear navigation signs, and clean sanitation facilities. These developments help in managing tourists flow while maintaining sites cleanliness and accessibility.

Security surveillance – Security measures play an important role for protecting tourists and heritage structures. CCTV surveillance installed for constant monitoring during peak season times. During occasions, trained staff control crowd management and safety prevention. Special care taken to protect inscriptions, sculpture and painting from accidental damages.

Role of A.S.I. – Archeological survey of India, plays a essential role in the temples' scientific preventing. It is also responsible for structural preservation, preventing illegal encroachments, restoring broken stone sculptures and inscriptions, monitoring environmental impacts on temple materials. Together, tourism at the living chola temples is managed with an emphasis on sustainability, protection and respect for live religious traditions.

Challenges in balancing Devotion and Destination

The living chola temples' still struggle to maintain a balance between the fame as the tourist destination and its own spirituality despite the face of organised tourism management. Overcrowding is one of the most serious challenges specifically during significant religious occasions such as Mahashivaraathri, paradosham, brahmotsavam and temple car festival. Thousands of devotees and tourists cram within the limited temple space leading to safety issues, long queues, congestions and disturbance in ritual practices the pressure placed on physical infrastructure including emergency services, pathways and sanitary facilities becomes a clear evident. Commersialisation is another significant issue, the presence of spiritual aura is frequently disturbed by the presence of street vendors, food stalls, unauthorised tourist guides around the premises. Aggressive selling practices, loud commercial activity, and unlicensed stores near spiritual zone can weaken the devotional ambience. Spiritual landscape faces the risks of commercial setting due to the growth of commercialization. Another challenge is cultural misunderstanding, especially with the huge number of international tourists' arrival. Many tourists, due to lack of awareness, break the temple traditions by wearing inappropriate clothes, using mobile phone to photography in prohibited areas, violating the guidelines while worshiping such actions can offend devotees and disrupt spiritual routine.

Finally, the increase in tourist footfall can lead to conservation pressure. Stone surface erosion, damage to historic steps and corridor, sound and air pollutions, structural vibrations compromise the stability of heritage building are all consequence of the constant visitor's movement. Pollution, humidity and human touch increase the destruction of inscription, sculptures, and paintings. When taken as a whole, these challenges clearly illustrate the balance between religious devotion and mass tourism in the living chola temples.

Sustainable solution for balanced Tourism

Sustainable and well-planned solutions are required to maintain a harmony between spiritual devotion and tourism growth at the living chola temples. The visitor education program is one of the important measures. Visitors can aware about the temple etiquette, dress codes, photography restrictions and religious significance through display boards, digital screens, brochures, and guided orientation programs. Awareness lessons help in promote respectful behavior, and unintentional violations of spiritual space. Crowd flow management may be significantly helped by time-based entry. By providing separate time slots for devotees and tourists for smoothly managed sight-seeing and uninterrupted devotion. This system might helpful during the festive season and during peak tourist hours. Overcrowding may be avoided and visitor safety can be improved by digital visitor management such as online ticket bookings, QR based entry pass, and mobile apps etc.… Additionally, these might also helpful in reduces the long queues, and administrative efficiency.

Another sustainable approach is to promoting local tourism. Local residents, when trained as qualified heritage guides can benefiting economically by providing genuine interpretation of temple history and rituals. This may strengthen the local economies and community ownership. To preserve the ecology of the temple, eco-friendly practices must be adopted. Proper waste segregation, drinking water installations, plastic bans, use of biodegradable materials and regular cleanliness may lead to reduce pollution and maintain temple purity.

Finally, strong commercial control is required. Unauthorised vendors and stores should be relocated to the proper commercial zone which is away from the prayer areas. Controlled vending preserves the spiritual ambience still supports the local economic activities. Together, these solutions might promote a balanced, ethical, sustainable tourism at the living chola temples.

Role of Local Community

In order to sustain the religious, cultural and social life of the living chola temples, the local community is essential and irreplaceable. The temples are deeply woven in the daily of the local community despite an isolated monument. Local residents take care of long-standing customs, making sure the ritual, festival and cultural activities exist for many generations. The remain to be 'living' heritage space rather than static historical structure. One of the most important contributions by the local community is preserving heritage traditions. Traditional occupation linked with worship and festival are carried on by hereditary priest, musicians, drum performer, flower vendors, and temple service families. These function supports the ritual eco system of the temple. community also plays a vital role in major events such as special pujas, decorations, chariot processions, and crowd hospitality. Local volunteers help set up queues, serve prasadham, guiding devotees and maintain peace in major big events. By providing hospitality service, locals also contribute to tourism. Many families own guest house, restaurants, flower stalls and gift shops for visitors and pilgrims. This creates economic opportunities and ensure the economic benefit of tourism remains within the community. Moreover, locals act as cultural interpreters, casually explaining temple history, rituals and customs to the tourists informally.

Communities' participation guarantees that tourism remains deeply rooted in local values and religious purity. Tourism become more sensitive and spiritually when local community were involved in decision making and in management. The sense of ownership strengthens heritage protection, lessen tension between devotees and tourists and promotes the authentic cultural experiences. Thus, the local community serve as a bridge between sustainable tourism, cultural preservation and devotion.

Case Reflection – BRIHADISVARA TEMPLE, Thanjavur.

One of the greatest architectural achievements of chola dynasty is The Brihadisvara temple, Thanjavur. Serves as a vital case study in addressing the complexity of balancing the devotion and destination. Every year it attracts millions of tourists from domestic and international region including pilgrims, historical tourists, scholars and students. It was the very first living chola temple to receive the UNESCO status. In order to protect both spiritual and architectural legacy, this heavy tourist's inflow has required structured and organised management. This temple has implemented a several succusses full management techniques. The introduction of the separate entrance for pilgrims and the tourists which helps control flow and disruption during peak prayer times. Controlled photography zone has been established to prevent sculpture damages and protects the ritual privacy in the sensitive areas. Additionally, the temple gain from volunteer-based crowd control specially on occasional days and festivals, where well trained volunteers in managing queues, guiding devotees, and avoid overcrowding. To ensure public safety and emergency preparedness during the major festivals, police deployment, medical aid units, fire safety teams and disaster management services are organised. Despite the successful strategies, several challenges still exist. Tourists may experience delays, pollutions, inconvenience due to traffic surrounding the temple premises at the peak season time. Environment stress is still a big challenge due to trash production, plastic usage, pollution and strain on drainage system. Constant tourist footfall also places a long-term stress on physical elements and ancient structure.

As a result, the brihadisvara temple, demonstrate both the potential and limitations of heritage tourism management. Long – term sustainability requires planning, infrastructure upgrades and strong environmental control while regulatory system have seen significant success.

Conclusion – Balancing Devotion and Destination: A sustainable path

The living chola temples occupy a unique space where faith, heritage and tourism intersect each other. They represent a unique phenomenon where ancient spiritual tradition exists peacefully with monument architectural heritage since, they are both spiritual space and internationally recognised UNESCO status. This unique dual identity required highly sensitive, systematic, and scientific tourism management technique that honor religious sentiment while ensure the long – term preservation of priceless heritage asset. At the living chola temples, sustainable tourism is essential not just an option. Over-tourism, commercialization,

unregulated tourism activities, and environmental stress demonstrate serious threat to spiritual space and structural stability of the temples. Therefore, responsible tourism measures including regulated visitors flow, time-based entry, eco – friendly waste management, regulated commercial activities and digital crowd monitoring are essential. At the same time, professional agencies like archeological survey of India must continue their conservation efforts with scientific accuracy and periodical structural assessment. A key component of sustainable development is community participation. Local residents, priests, volunteers and service providers act as guardians of living traditions and make sure the tourism remains ethically guided and culturally rooted. The participation strengthens local ownership, preserve ritual continuity, and promotes the authentic visitor experiences. Visitor education is equally important, when tourists have the awareness about the temple etiquette, religious significance and cultural value, they are more likely to act more respectfully so thus might reducing conflicts between devotion and destination.

A balanced approached that protects devotion and manage tourism will be maintained the long – term sustainability of the living chola temples. The spirituality and the architectural excellence of this ageless treasure might be preserved through the collaborative efforts between the greater government, temple officials, conservative specialists, local communities and tourists themselves. Future generation will be witnessing the experiences not only visual splendor but also the living spiritual legacy of the chola temples.

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Conflicts of interest

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Original Article

Waste Management in Tourist Areas: Challenges and Prospects in the Context of Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract
Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries in India, contributing significantly to the national GDP, employment, and cultural exchange. However, the rapid and often unplanned expansion of tourism has led to a critical and largely unaddressed challenge: waste generation and inadequate waste management at tourist destinations. From the snow-capped Himalayas to the sun-kissed beaches of Goa and Kerala, from the spiritual ghats of Varanasi to the heritage monuments of Rajasthan, waste accumulation has emerged as a persistent threat to the ecological integrity, aesthetic appeal, and sustainability of India's most treasured destinations. This paper examines the current state of waste management in Indian tourist areas, identifies the structural, behavioural, and policy-level challenges, and explores viable prospects through technology, community participation, legislative reforms, and sustainable tourism frameworks. In alignment with the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, this study advocates for a paradigm shift towards zero-waste tourism, circular economy principles, and smart waste management systems. The paper concludes with actionable policy recommendations for transforming waste management into a pillar of sustainable tourism development in India.

Keywords: *Waste Management, Tourist Areas, Sustainable Tourism, Viksit Bharat 2047, Eco-Tourism, Solid Waste, Zero-Waste Tourism*

Introduction

India, endowed with an extraordinary diversity of landscapes, cultures, traditions, and historical monuments, stands as one of the most compelling tourism destinations in the world. With over 1.4 billion people, a rich tapestry of 5,000 years of civilisation, and natural wonders ranging from the Himalayas to tropical coastlines, India has all the ingredients to be a global tourism powerhouse. The tourism sector currently contributes approximately 6.8% to India's GDP and employs over 87 million people directly and indirectly (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2023). However, the rapid increase in tourist footfall has imposed severe pressure on the environmental and civic infrastructure of tourist destinations. One of the most visible and damaging consequences of this unmanaged tourism growth is the generation of colossal quantities of solid waste, plastic litter, sewage, and hazardous materials. Popular pilgrimage sites, hill stations, beaches, wildlife sanctuaries, and heritage monuments are increasingly being choked by waste, threatening biodiversity, polluting water bodies, degrading cultural heritage, and undermining the very appeal that attracts visitors. As India charts its ambitious roadmap towards Viksit Bharat 2047 — the vision of a developed, self-reliant, and globally competitive nation by the centenary of its independence — tourism is identified as a key economic driver. For this vision to materialise, sustainable tourism development that integrates robust waste management systems is not merely desirable but imperative. This paper, therefore, undertakes a comprehensive analysis of waste management problems in tourist areas and explores actionable prospects to align the tourism sector with the goals of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Objectives

1. To examine the scale and nature of waste generation at major tourist destinations in India.
2. To identify the infrastructural, administrative, behavioural, and policy-level challenges in managing waste at tourist areas.

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3. To explore technological, community-based, and policy-driven solutions for sustainable waste management.
4. To assess the role of government schemes, public-private partnerships, and community participation in addressing the waste crisis.
5. To formulate strategic recommendations for integrating waste management into India's tourism development roadmap under Viksit Bharat 2047.

Data and Methodology

This study is primarily based on secondary data collected from peer-reviewed journals, government reports, policy documents, and case studies published between 2015 and 2024. Key sources include reports from the Ministry of Tourism (Government of India), the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), NITI Aayog, and international bodies such as UNWTO and UNEP. A qualitative thematic analysis has been employed to synthesise findings, identify patterns of waste mismanagement, and highlight exemplary models of waste governance at tourist destinations. Case studies from Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand are examined to draw comparative insights. The study also incorporates an interdisciplinary lens, drawing on environmental science, economics, public administration, and tourism management to offer a holistic perspective.

Waste Management Problems in Tourist Areas

1 Scale of Waste Generation

India generates approximately 62 million metric tonnes of solid waste annually, of which a significant proportion originates from tourist hotspots and pilgrimage centres. Popular destinations such as Shimla, Manali, Mussoorie, Nainital, and Ooty report a staggering 2 to 5 times increase in daily waste generation during peak tourist seasons compared to off-season months. The Char Dham Yatra circuit in Uttarakhand, which attracts over 4 million pilgrims annually, generates thousands of tonnes of non-biodegradable waste including plastic bottles, wrappers, polythene bags, and thermocol plates. Similarly, the beaches of Goa, which receive over 8 million tourists annually, produce enormous quantities of plastic waste that end up in the Arabian Sea. The Taj Mahal and its surrounding areas in Agra consistently feature among India's most polluted tourist sites, with garbage management remaining a perennial concern despite national and international attention.

2 Infrastructural Deficiencies

One of the root causes of waste mismanagement at tourist destinations is the gross inadequacy of waste management infrastructure. Most hill stations and pilgrimage towns were developed in the pre-tourism era and were never designed to handle the volume of waste generated by millions of visitors annually. There is a chronic shortage of dustbins, litter collection points, segregation facilities, composting units, and sanitary landfills. Solid Waste Management (SWM) vehicles are often insufficient in number, poorly maintained, and unable to access remote or narrow areas. The carrying capacity of existing infrastructure is routinely overwhelmed during peak tourist seasons, leading to open dumping, burning of waste, and discharge of untreated waste into rivers, forests, and ocean shorelines.

3 Behavioural and Attitudinal Challenges

Tourist behaviour plays a decisive role in waste generation and littering patterns. A large proportion of domestic tourists, particularly from semi-urban and rural backgrounds, lack awareness about waste segregation, the environmental impact of single-use plastics, and the importance of responsible disposal. The "not in my backyard" mentality—where visitors feel little ownership or responsibility for the upkeep of a place they are merely visiting—exacerbates littering. Cultural practices such as the use of disposable leaf plates (though biodegradable) alongside plastic cups and sachets at pilgrimage and festival sites also contribute significantly to the waste burden. International tourists, while often more environmentally conscious, frequently arrive with higher consumption patterns that generate greater packaging waste.

4 Policy and Governance Gaps

Despite the existence of the Solid Waste Management Rules (2016), the Plastic Waste Management Rules (2022), and various schemes such as the Swachh Bharat Mission, enforcement at tourist destinations remains weak. Jurisdictional overlaps between municipal bodies, forest departments, tourism departments, and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) often result in accountability gaps and lack of coordinated waste governance. The absence of robust tourist-zone-specific waste policies, user-pay mechanisms, or green taxation instruments further weakens the waste management framework. Monitoring and evaluation systems for waste management outcomes at tourist sites are either absent or non-functional in most states.

5 Environmental and Health Consequences

The consequences of poor waste management at tourist sites are severe and multidimensional. Marine plastic pollution degrades coral reefs and threatens marine biodiversity in coastal tourist zones. Waste dumped in river catchment areas contaminates drinking water sources for millions downstream. The burning of waste in hilly regions such as Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand deteriorates air quality and contributes to glacial retreat through black carbon deposition. Heritage monuments are defaced by graffiti, waste, and improper disposal, undermining their UNESCO-status and national value. Disease outbreaks linked to poor sanitation and solid waste management have been reported at several pilgrimage destinations, posing serious public health risks. Moreover, degraded aesthetics and environmental quality can deter high-value international tourists, reducing the economic returns of the tourism sector.

Prospects and Solutions

1 Smart Waste Management and Technology Integration

The application of smart technologies offers transformative potential for waste management at tourist destinations. IoT-enabled smart bins equipped with fill-level sensors can transmit real-time data to municipal authorities, enabling dynamic and efficient waste collection scheduling rather than fixed-time pickups. GPS-enabled waste collection vehicles, mobile apps for reporting

littering, and AI-powered waste segregation systems at collection points can significantly improve operational efficiency. Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of waste generation hotspots enables targeted infrastructure deployment and planning. Digital payment systems linked to eco-friendly initiatives, such as deposit-return schemes for plastic bottles, can incentivise responsible waste behaviour among tourists. States like Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim are already piloting such smart waste solutions, offering replicable models for other tourist-heavy states.

2 Community-Based Waste Management Models

Community participation is the cornerstone of effective waste management in tourist areas. Empowering local communities through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), waste pickers' cooperatives, and eco-tourism collectives can create both environmental and economic value. The Goa initiative where coastal communities are employed as beach cleaners and environmental monitors has shown promise in institutionalising community responsibility for tourist area cleanliness. In Rajasthan, artisan communities have been engaged in converting waste materials from tourist areas into handicrafts and souvenirs, creating livelihood opportunities while addressing the waste problem. Kerala's Suchitwa Mission provides a compelling example of participatory solid waste management that can be adapted for tourist destinations across India. Community homestays can be incentivised through green certification schemes that mandate waste segregation at source and adoption of composting.

3 Policy Reforms and Regulatory Frameworks

A dedicated National Tourist Area Waste Management Policy is urgently needed to fill the existing legislative vacuum. This policy should mandate carrying-capacity assessments for all major tourist destinations, enforce a single-use plastic ban within notified eco-sensitive tourist zones, and introduce Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) norms specifically for tourism-related packaging. Green tourism certification schemes, similar to those in operation in Europe and South-East Asia, should be made mandatory for hotels, resorts, and tourist operators above a threshold scale. Tourist eco-taxes or environmental levies, with funds earmarked exclusively for waste management and destination sustainability, offer a viable financing mechanism. The Swachh Paryatan initiative under Swachh Bharat Mission needs to be scaled up with dedicated funding, measurable targets, and regular third-party audits.

4 Zero-Waste Tourism and Circular Economy Approaches

The concept of zero-waste tourism, inspired by circular economy principles, presents a visionary but achievable goal for Viksit Bharat 2047. This approach envisions tourist destinations where waste is virtually eliminated through a combination of source reduction, reuse, recycling, composting, and energy recovery. Zero-waste markets and plastic-free tourism zones should be established at prominent destinations. Hotels and resorts can adopt circular supply chains by sourcing locally, using biodegradable packaging, composting kitchen waste into organic fertiliser for local farms, and recycling grey water for irrigation. The concept of "trash to treasure", where waste materials from tourist sites are upcycled into art installations and cultural exhibits, can itself become a tourism attraction while raising environmental consciousness among visitors.

5 Awareness, Education, and Behavioural Change

Sustainable waste management in tourist areas cannot be achieved through regulation and technology alone; a fundamental transformation in tourist behaviour is equally essential. Integrating responsible tourism and environmental stewardship into school and college curricula under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 can cultivate eco-conscious travellers for the future. At destination sites, multilingual signage, interpretive panels, and QR-code linked educational content can raise visitor awareness about local ecosystems and the impact of littering. Social media influencers and travel bloggers can be harnessed as powerful advocates for responsible waste disposal practices. Tourist guides and hospitality workers should be trained and certified as environment stewards. Gamification strategies, such as rewards and recognition for responsible tourist behaviour, can make eco-consciousness engaging and aspirational.

6 Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

Public-Private Partnerships offer a critical mechanism for bridging the funding and operational gaps in waste management at tourist destinations. Corporate entities operating in or benefiting from tourist areas can be leveraged for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)-funded waste management infrastructure. Private operators specialising in waste recycling, composting, and energy-from-waste facilities can be brought in through PPP models to manage waste processing plants at key tourist destinations. Hotel chains and resort developers should be mandated to include state-of-the-art waste management systems within their development plans as a condition for environmental clearances. International tourism companies can be required to offset the waste footprint of their Indian packages through verified environmental contributions.

Case Studies: Inspiring Models of Waste Management in Indian Tourism

Sikkim stands as India's foremost model of sustainable tourism and waste management. As India's first fully organic state, Sikkim has banned plastic bags since 1998, mandated organic waste composting at all homestays and hotels, and introduced entry-fee mechanisms to fund destination upkeep. The state's strict enforcement of the "bring your waste back" rule on high-altitude trekking routes has dramatically reduced litter in ecologically fragile zones.

Kerala's Responsible Tourism Mission presents another exemplary model. The programme integrates waste management into the tourism value chain by engaging local communities, enforcing waste audit mechanisms at tourism establishments, and promoting biodegradable and locally sourced products. The Bekal beach conservation initiative in Kerala has demonstrated how participatory beach clean-ups and eco-tourism can coexist with commercial tourism.

The "Green Pilgrimage Network" initiative at Rishikesh and Haridwar, supported by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), has introduced biodegradable aarti materials, composting of floral offerings, and mechanised riverbank cleaning, offering a replicable model for other pilgrimage cities.

Result and Discussion

The analysis reveals a paradoxical situation: India's tourism sector is growing at an impressive pace, yet the waste management infrastructure and governance frameworks at tourist destinations have not kept pace with this growth. The consequence is a deepening environmental crisis that threatens the long-term viability of the tourism sector itself. Successful models from Sikkim, Kerala, and Himachal Pradesh demonstrate that sustainable waste management in tourism is achievable when there is political will, community participation, technological adoption, and consistent enforcement.

The alignment of waste management strategies with Viksit Bharat 2047 requires a systemic approach where tourism planning, urban governance, environmental regulation, and private sector participation are integrated. The shift from linear waste disposal to circular economy models, the deployment of digital and smart technologies, and the cultivation of a responsible tourism culture collectively form the pillars of this transformation. Given the right policy environment and sustained investment, India has the capacity to reposition its tourist destinations as global exemplars of clean, green, and sustainable tourism.

It is important to note that waste management should not be seen merely as a civic hygiene issue but as a strategic tourism competitiveness factor. High-value international tourists increasingly make destination choices based on cleanliness, environmental standards, and sustainability credentials. A clean tourism environment directly enhances India's brand equity in the global tourism market, potentially attracting higher-spending visitors and generating greater foreign exchange revenues in line with the economic aspirations of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Conclusion

Waste management in tourist areas is not a peripheral concern but a central pillar of sustainable tourism development in India. The challenges are immense — ranging from infrastructural deficits and governance gaps to behavioural inertia and policy fragmentation — but they are not insurmountable. India possesses a wealth of traditional ecological knowledge, innovative civil society initiatives, and a growing cadre of sustainability-conscious citizens and businesses that can be harnessed to address this challenge.

As India marches confidently towards Viksit Bharat 2047, the transformation of its tourist destinations into models of cleanliness, ecological integrity, and smart governance must be placed at the heart of the national tourism strategy. Tourism that leaves a light footprint on the environment while maximising economic and cultural benefits is not only possible but is the only viable path forward. Through a convergence of smart technology, enlightened policy, empowered communities, and responsible tourists, India can realise the dream of being among the world's cleanest, greenest, and most welcoming tourism destinations by 2047.

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Original Article

Digital Storytelling in Indian Tourism: Challenges and Opportunities for Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

The rapid digital transformation of the global tourism industry has fundamentally altered the ways destinations are promoted, experienced, and perceived. In India, digital storytelling has emerged as a strategic communication approach that integrates narratives, multimedia technologies, social media engagement, and cultural representation to create immersive tourism experiences. Government initiatives such as ***Incredible India, Dekho Apna Desh****, and various state tourism campaigns increasingly employ storytelling techniques to communicate India's diverse heritage, spirituality, biodiversity, gastronomy, and contemporary tourism offerings. Simultaneously, the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 places tourism at the centre of inclusive economic development, employment generation, cultural diplomacy, and sustainable growth.*

This study qualitatively examines the role of digital storytelling in promoting Indian tourism while identifying the major challenges and future opportunities associated with its implementation in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047. Adopting an exploratory and descriptive research design, the study employs thematic content analysis of secondary data obtained from Ministry of Tourism publications, NITI Aayog reports, government policy documents, UNESCO and UN Tourism publications, peer-reviewed journal articles, official tourism portals, and digital tourism campaigns.

The findings indicate that digital storytelling has evolved beyond conventional destination marketing to become a multidimensional communication strategy encompassing destination branding, cultural preservation, visitor engagement, and digital innovation. Storytelling through short-form videos, immersive visual content, influencer collaborations, user-generated content, and interactive digital platforms significantly enhances destination image and tourist engagement. However, challenges including fragmented digital infrastructure, limited multilingual content, digital accessibility gaps, authenticity concerns, misinformation, uneven technological adoption, and inadequate integration of emerging technologies continue to restrict its transformative potential.

The study further identifies strategic opportunities through artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, smart tourism ecosystems, community-led storytelling, rural tourism promotion, digital entrepreneurship, sustainable tourism communication, and heritage interpretation. It proposes a conceptual framework positioning digital storytelling as a critical communication mechanism linking destination branding, digital engagement, sustainable tourism development, and inclusive economic growth. The study concludes that an integrated national digital storytelling strategy can significantly contribute to strengthening India's global tourism competitiveness while supporting the broader developmental objectives envisioned under Viksit Bharat 2047.

Keywords: *Digital Storytelling, Tourism Promotion, Destination Branding, Digital Tourism, Viksit Bharat 2047, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Communication, Digital Media, India*

Introduction

Tourism has increasingly emerged as one of the most influential sectors contributing to economic development, employment generation, cultural preservation, regional development, and international diplomacy. Beyond its direct contribution to national income, tourism stimulates multiple allied industries including transportation, hospitality, handicrafts, food services, entertainment, retail, and digital services. As nations compete to attract global travellers, destination promotion has evolved from traditional advertising towards immersive, technology-driven communication strategies capable of creating emotional engagement and memorable visitor experiences.

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The digital revolution has fundamentally transformed tourism communication. The widespread adoption of smartphones, high-speed internet, social media platforms, artificial intelligence, and immersive multimedia technologies has significantly altered how tourists discover destinations, evaluate travel options, and share travel experiences. Modern travellers increasingly rely on digital content rather than conventional promotional brochures or advertisements. Online reviews, travel blogs, destination videos, influencer-generated content, virtual tours, podcasts, short-form videos, and user-generated photographs collectively shape destination perceptions even before an individual physically visits a location.

Within this evolving communication landscape, **digital storytelling** has emerged as one of the most powerful approaches for destination branding and tourism promotion. Unlike conventional marketing that primarily focuses on information dissemination, digital storytelling constructs meaningful narratives around places, communities, heritage, traditions, festivals, cuisine, wildlife, spirituality, and lived experiences. These narratives foster emotional attachment, authenticity, and trust among prospective travelers while simultaneously enhancing destination identity. Digital storytelling therefore represents a convergence of communication, culture, technology, and marketing.

India possesses exceptional potential for digital storytelling owing to its unparalleled cultural diversity, ancient civilization, linguistic richness, ecological variety, architectural heritage, religious traditions, festivals, indigenous knowledge systems, and contemporary creative industries. The country is home to numerous UNESCO World Heritage Sites, diverse ecosystems ranging from the Himalayas to coastal regions, globally recognized spiritual destinations, vibrant culinary traditions, and rapidly expanding tourism infrastructure. Such diversity offers abundant opportunities for narrative-based tourism promotion capable of appealing to both domestic and international audiences.

Recognizing tourism as a key driver of national development, the Government of India has introduced several initiatives that integrate digital communication with tourism promotion. Campaigns such as *Incredible India*, *Dekho Apna Desh*, *Visit India Year*, digital tourism portals, thematic tourism circuits, and state-level destination branding initiatives increasingly employ visual storytelling, interactive websites, social media campaigns, documentaries, influencer collaborations, and digital engagement strategies to enhance destination visibility. These initiatives align with broader national programmes including Digital India, Smart Cities Mission, Startup India, Skill India, and Atmanirbhar Bharat, which collectively aim to strengthen India's digital ecosystem and economic competitiveness.

The vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**, which seeks to transform India into a developed nation by the centenary of independence, further expands the strategic significance of tourism. Under this vision, tourism is not merely viewed as a revenue-generating sector but as an instrument for inclusive development, employment creation, entrepreneurship promotion, regional balance, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and international soft power. Digital storytelling has the potential to become a critical communication mechanism supporting these objectives by promoting lesser-known destinations, encouraging responsible tourism, strengthening community participation, and enhancing India's global destination image.

Despite the growing adoption of digital communication in tourism promotion, several structural and operational challenges continue to limit its effectiveness. Uneven digital infrastructure across rural destinations, inadequate multilingual content, inconsistent digital branding among states, limited accessibility for persons with disabilities, concerns regarding authenticity, misinformation on social media, insufficient integration of emerging technologies, and fragmented stakeholder coordination represent significant barriers to achieving a cohesive national digital tourism strategy. Furthermore, existing literature predominantly examines destination marketing, social media tourism, or digital marketing independently, with comparatively limited attention given to digital storytelling as an integrated communication framework linked explicitly to the developmental aspirations of Viksit Bharat 2047.

The present study addresses this gap by exploring how digital storytelling can contribute to tourism development within India's long-term national development agenda. Rather than evaluating individual campaigns in isolation, the study synthesizes evidence from government publications, policy documents, tourism campaigns, academic literature, and international reports to identify recurring themes, communication strategies, challenges, and future opportunities. Through qualitative thematic analysis, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of digital storytelling as a strategic communication tool capable of strengthening destination branding, fostering sustainable tourism, enhancing digital engagement, and supporting inclusive economic growth.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the emerging scholarship on digital tourism communication while offering practical recommendations for policymakers, tourism authorities, destination marketers, media professionals, and researchers. By proposing an integrated conceptual framework linking digital storytelling with destination branding, tourist engagement, sustainable tourism, and national development, the study aims to position digital storytelling as a central pillar of India's tourism strategy in the journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047.

Literature Review

1 Introduction

The intersection of tourism, digital communication, and storytelling has emerged as a dynamic area of research over the past two decades. With the rapid diffusion of social media, artificial intelligence (AI), immersive technologies, and mobile internet, tourism promotion has shifted from traditional advertising to experience-centered digital narratives. Contemporary tourism marketing no longer focuses solely on informing potential visitors about destinations; instead, it seeks to create emotional engagement through stories that connect people with places, cultures, traditions, and lived experiences. Consequently, digital storytelling has become a strategic communication tool that enhances destination branding, visitor engagement, cultural preservation, and sustainable tourism development.

Recent scholarship indicates that digital storytelling integrates multimedia elements—including text, photography, videos, podcasts, interactive websites, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and user-generated content—to construct authentic narratives that influence travel decision-making and destination perception. Studies also suggest that storytelling contributes to destination competitiveness by strengthening emotional attachment, destination identity, and tourists' intention to visit. Despite increasing scholarly attention, relatively few studies have examined digital storytelling within the broader national development framework of **Viksit Bharat 2047**, thereby presenting an important research opportunity.

2 Evolution of Digital Storytelling in Tourism

Storytelling has historically been an integral component of tourism, enabling destinations to communicate their historical significance, cultural identity, myths, folklore, and heritage. Traditional tourism promotion relied heavily on brochures, guidebooks, television advertisements, and print media. However, the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies transformed tourism communication into an interactive and participatory process where tourists themselves contribute narratives through blogs, reviews, photographs, and social media platforms.

Recent systematic reviews demonstrate that tourism storytelling has evolved into a multidisciplinary field combining communication studies, marketing, cultural heritage, psychology, and digital technologies. Storytelling has been shown to improve visitor satisfaction, strengthen emotional connections with destinations, reinforce destination identity, and promote sustainable tourism by communicating local culture and environmental values. Researchers also highlight that digital storytelling increasingly incorporates immersive technologies such as VR and AR, enabling tourists to experience destinations virtually before travel and deepening engagement during and after visits.

Unlike conventional destination marketing, digital storytelling emphasizes narrative authenticity rather than promotional messaging. Emotional narratives about local communities, indigenous traditions, festivals, cuisine, crafts, and heritage create memorable destination experiences that foster stronger tourist loyalty and positive electronic word-of-mouth.

3 Digital Storytelling and Destination Branding

Destination branding represents one of the most extensively researched dimensions of tourism communication. Scholars argue that destinations compete not only through physical attractions but also through symbolic meanings, emotional experiences, and distinctive identities. Digital storytelling contributes significantly to destination branding by transforming geographical locations into meaningful places through compelling narratives.

Research indicates that successful destination brands communicate authenticity, uniqueness, emotional appeal, and cultural richness. Rather than highlighting only monuments or landscapes, storytelling contextualizes destinations by presenting human experiences, local traditions, historical narratives, festivals, cuisine, crafts, and everyday life. Such storytelling enhances tourists' cognitive and affective image of destinations while increasing destination differentiation within increasingly competitive tourism markets.

In India, destination branding has increasingly shifted toward narrative-based campaigns. National initiatives such as ***Incredible India*** **and** ***Dekho Apna Desh***, together with state tourism campaigns, use visual storytelling, documentaries, influencer collaborations, and digital media to position India as a culturally diverse and globally attractive destination. These campaigns emphasize experiential tourism rather than destination information, aligning with international branding trends.

4 Social Media and Digital Engagement in Tourism

Social media platforms have transformed tourism communication from one-way promotion into interactive dialogue between destinations and tourists. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and X enable destinations to communicate continuously with audiences while encouraging visitors to generate and share their own travel experiences.

Research consistently demonstrates that visual storytelling through photographs, short videos, reels, travel vlogs, and live streaming significantly influences destination awareness, travel motivation, and tourist behaviour. User-generated content is often perceived as more authentic than official advertisements, thereby increasing trust and reducing perceived travel risks. Influencer marketing further amplifies destination visibility among younger audiences by combining entertainment, authenticity, and peer credibility.

The emergence of algorithm-driven platforms has also altered destination marketing strategies. Tourism organizations increasingly employ data analytics, personalized recommendations, hashtags, and interactive campaigns to maximize audience engagement. Digital engagement has therefore become a strategic performance indicator for destination competitiveness.

5 Government Tourism Campaigns in India

The Government of India has increasingly recognized digital communication as a strategic component of tourism development. The Ministry of Tourism has introduced several digital initiatives aimed at promoting domestic and international tourism, strengthening destination branding, and improving visitor experiences.

The ***Incredible India*** campaign remains India's flagship tourism brand, integrating multimedia storytelling across digital platforms to showcase heritage, spirituality, wildlife, adventure, wellness, cuisine, and festivals. During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, initiatives such as ***Dekho Apna Desh*** encouraged domestic tourism through webinars, virtual experiences, digital campaigns, and destination awareness programmes. These initiatives align with broader national programmes such as Digital India and contribute to positioning tourism as a driver of inclusive economic development. Government reports increasingly emphasize technology-enabled tourism, digital infrastructure, skill development, sustainable destination management, and enhanced visitor services as priorities for future growth.

State tourism departments have similarly adopted destination-specific storytelling strategies, highlighting regional identities through localized narratives, festivals, crafts, gastronomy, and heritage assets. However, significant variation exists in the quality, consistency, multilingual accessibility, and technological sophistication of these campaigns.

6 Emerging Technologies and Smart Tourism

Technological innovation has substantially expanded the scope of digital storytelling. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, augmented reality, virtual reality, digital twins, geospatial technologies, chatbots, and big data analytics have transformed how destinations communicate with tourists and manage visitor experiences.

Immersive storytelling enables tourists to virtually explore museums, heritage monuments, national parks, and pilgrimage sites before travelling. AI-driven recommendation systems personalize travel content based on user preferences, while digital twins and smart tourism platforms enhance destination planning, visitor management, and sustainability. Current literature suggests that these technologies contribute not only to marketing effectiveness but also to heritage conservation, accessibility, and destination resilience.

Despite these advancements, many developing countries continue to experience technological disparities, particularly in rural destinations where digital infrastructure and technical capacity remain limited.

7 Digital Storytelling, Cultural Heritage, and Sustainable Tourism

An emerging body of research positions digital storytelling as a sustainable communication strategy capable of preserving cultural heritage while promoting responsible tourism. By documenting oral histories, traditional knowledge, indigenous practices, local crafts, festivals, and historical narratives through digital media, storytelling contributes to cultural continuity and community participation.

Recent qualitative studies demonstrate that digital storytelling strengthens ecological awareness, community engagement, destination authenticity, and sustainable tourism practices. Digital narratives not only promote destinations but also educate visitors about responsible behaviour, environmental conservation, and cultural sensitivity. **UNESCO** has similarly emphasized digital storytelling as an important mechanism for community empowerment, cultural preservation, and sustainable tourism development through digital technologies.

These findings suggest that digital storytelling aligns closely with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly those relating to decent work, sustainable cities, responsible consumption, and cultural heritage preservation.

8 Digital Storytelling and Viksit Bharat 2047

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 seeks to transform India into a developed nation through inclusive economic growth, technological advancement, innovation, sustainability, entrepreneurship, and cultural leadership. Tourism has been identified as a priority sector capable of generating employment, promoting regional development, strengthening India's global image, and supporting local economies.

Digital storytelling offers substantial opportunities within this developmental framework. By promoting lesser-known destinations, encouraging community participation, supporting women entrepreneurs, preserving intangible heritage, and integrating smart technologies into tourism communication, storytelling can strengthen destination competitiveness while ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth.

Nevertheless, existing literature rarely connects digital storytelling explicitly with India's long-term developmental vision. Most studies focus on destination marketing, digital marketing, or social media independently without examining their broader contribution to national development strategies. This conceptual disconnect highlights the need for interdisciplinary research linking tourism communication with public policy, digital transformation, and sustainable development.

9 Research Gap

The review of existing literature reveals several important gaps. First, while digital storytelling has received growing scholarly attention, research remains fragmented across tourism marketing, digital media, and cultural heritage studies, with limited interdisciplinary integration. Second, most existing studies focus on consumer behaviour, destination image, or social media marketing rather than examining storytelling as a strategic communication framework for tourism governance and national development.

Third, empirical studies on Indian tourism continue to emphasize destination branding without systematically analyzing the communication dimensions of government-led digital campaigns. Fourth, limited research investigates the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, immersive media, and smart tourism ecosystems within digital storytelling strategies. Finally, no comprehensive qualitative study has explicitly examined the challenges and opportunities of digital storytelling in relation to the developmental aspirations of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts a qualitative thematic analysis of secondary data drawn from government reports, tourism campaigns, policy documents, international publications, and scholarly literature to develop a comprehensive conceptual understanding of how digital storytelling can contribute to destination branding, sustainable tourism, inclusive growth, and India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

Table 2.1: Critical Comparison of Literature on Digital Storytelling in Tourism

Author(s) & Year	Study / Context	Methodology	Major Findings	Limitations	Research Gap Identified
Fog, Budtz, Munch & Blanchette (2010)	Strategic storytelling in branding	Conceptual	Storytelling enhances emotional engagement and brand identity.	General branding perspective; not tourism-specific.	Limited discussion on digital tourism communication in developing countries.
Lambert (2013)	Digital storytelling framework	Conceptual and practice-based	Multimedia storytelling strengthens	Focuses primarily on education and	Tourism applications remain underexplored.

			audience engagement and narrative communication.	communication.	
Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier (2008)	Online travel experiences	Qualitative	Online narratives significantly influence destination image and travel decisions.	Conducted during the early Web 2.0 era.	Does not examine AI-driven or immersive storytelling technologies.
Xiang & Gretzel (2010)	Role of social media in tourism	Literature review	Social media has become the primary source of tourism information.	Focuses on information search rather than storytelling.	Lacks analysis of destination narratives and policy implications.
Gretzel et al. (2015)	Smart tourism	Conceptual	ICT and smart technologies improve tourism management and visitor experiences.	Technology-centred approach.	Storytelling as a communication strategy is not explored.
Sigala (2020)	Tourism during COVID-19	Conceptual	Digital innovation accelerated tourism recovery and resilience.	Pandemic-specific context.	Long-term tourism communication strategies remain unexplored.
UN Tourism (2023)	Global tourism trends	Secondary data analysis	Digital transformation has become central to tourism competitiveness.	Global perspective with limited country-specific analysis.	Limited focus on India's communication ecosystem.
UNESCO (2022)	Digital heritage preservation	Policy analysis	Digital platforms support cultural preservation and heritage interpretation.	Focuses mainly on heritage institutions.	Limited integration with destination branding and tourism marketing.
Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2025–26)	Tourism policy and campaigns	Government report	Digital campaigns, sustainable tourism, and infrastructure are key priorities.	Policy-oriented; lacks communication evaluation.	No assessment of storytelling effectiveness.
NITI Aayog (2023)	Tourism and economic development	Policy review	Tourism is identified as a strategic driver for inclusive growth and employment.	Macro-policy perspective.	Communication dimensions of tourism promotion are absent.
Kumar & Singh (2021)	Digital marketing in Indian tourism	Qualitative review	Social media enhances destination visibility and tourist engagement.	Limited to marketing strategies.	Does not examine storytelling as an integrated communication framework.
Sharma & Verma (2022)	Destination branding in India	Case study	Heritage-based branding positively influences tourist perception.	Restricted to selected destinations.	National-level digital storytelling framework is missing.
Chhabra (2020)	Heritage tourism	Qualitative	Authentic cultural narratives enhance destination attractiveness.	Focuses primarily on heritage tourism.	Limited discussion on digital media integration.
Buhalis & Amaranggana (2015)	Smart destinations	Conceptual	Smart technologies improve destination competitiveness and visitor experience.	Pre-AI context.	Does not investigate narrative communication.
Neuhofer,	Technology-	Conceptual	Technology enriches	Focuses on	Storytelling

Buhalis & Ladkin (2015)	enhanced tourism		co-created tourism experiences.	technological innovation.	dimensions remain largely unexplored.
Hays, Page & Buhalis (2013)	Social media in destination marketing	Comparative review	Social media strengthens destination promotion and consumer engagement.	Examines marketing outcomes rather than narrative quality.	Limited attention to storytelling structures and emotional branding.
Kim & Fesenmaier (2017)	Tourism narratives	Qualitative	Emotional storytelling increases travel intention and destination attachment.	Conducted in international settings.	Requires contextual validation within India.
Recent AI Tourism Studies (2023–2025)	AI-driven tourism communication	Systematic review	AI personalizes tourism experiences through recommendation systems and chatbots.	Emerging field with limited empirical evidence.	Integration of AI with storytelling for Indian tourism remains underexplored.

Critical Synthesis

The reviewed literature demonstrates a clear evolution in tourism communication from traditional destination marketing to immersive, technology-enabled storytelling. Early studies primarily emphasized branding, destination image, and online information search, whereas recent scholarship increasingly focuses on digital engagement, immersive technologies, smart tourism, and user-generated content. Government reports similarly recognize digital transformation as essential for enhancing India's tourism competitiveness.

Despite these advances, five significant research gaps emerge:

1. **Fragmented scholarship:** Existing studies examine storytelling, destination branding, social media, smart tourism, and digital marketing separately, with limited interdisciplinary integration.
2. **Limited Indian evidence:** Much of the literature originates from Europe, North America, or East Asia, leaving a shortage of comprehensive qualitative studies focused on India's tourism communication ecosystem.
3. **Policy–communication disconnect:** Government reports emphasize tourism development and digital infrastructure but rarely evaluate how storytelling contributes to policy objectives, destination branding, or tourist engagement.
4. **Emerging technology gap:** Although AI, augmented reality, virtual reality, and smart tourism are gaining importance, their integration into digital storytelling strategies for Indian tourism remains insufficiently examined.
5. **Viksit Bharat 2047 perspective:** No existing study comprehensively investigates digital storytelling as a strategic communication tool supporting India's long-term developmental vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 through sustainable tourism, inclusive growth, cultural preservation, and digital innovation.

Accordingly, the present study addresses these gaps by employing a qualitative thematic analysis of secondary data from government publications, policy documents, tourism campaigns, peer-reviewed literature, and international reports to develop a holistic framework linking digital storytelling, destination branding, sustainable tourism, and national development.

Research Methodology

1 Research Design

The present study adopts a **qualitative research approach** employing an **exploratory and descriptive research design** to examine the role of digital storytelling in Indian tourism and its potential contribution towards the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**. Qualitative research is appropriate for investigating communication strategies, narratives, meanings, and policy perspectives that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measures. The exploratory nature of the study facilitates the identification of emerging themes in digital tourism communication, while the descriptive component enables a systematic interpretation of storytelling practices, challenges, and opportunities.

The study is grounded in an **interpretivist research paradigm**, which assumes that meanings are socially constructed and communicated through narratives, symbols, multimedia content, and digital interactions. Consequently, digital storytelling is examined as a strategic communication practice rather than merely a promotional activity.

2 Research Approach

The study follows an **inductive qualitative approach**, wherein patterns, categories, and themes emerge through systematic analysis of documentary evidence. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, the research seeks to interpret recurring patterns within digital tourism communication and develop a conceptual understanding of its contribution to tourism development and national policy objectives.

3 Nature of the Study

- Exploratory Research
- Descriptive Research
- Qualitative Study
- Secondary Data-Based Research
- Policy-Oriented Review

4 Research Objectives

1. To examine the role of digital storytelling in promoting tourism destinations in India.
2. To analyse storytelling strategies adopted in Indian tourism campaigns.
3. To identify the major challenges influencing digital tourism communication.
4. To explore opportunities for leveraging digital storytelling to achieve the objectives of Viksit Bharat 2047.
5. To propose a conceptual framework linking digital storytelling with sustainable tourism and national development.

5 Research Questions

RQ1: How is digital storytelling utilized in Indian tourism promotion?
RQ2: What storytelling strategies are employed across government tourism campaigns and digital platforms?
RQ3: What are the major challenges affecting digital storytelling in Indian tourism?
RQ4: How can digital storytelling contribute to sustainable tourism development and the realization of Viksit Bharat 2047?

6 Sample / Corpus

The unit of analysis comprises **digital tourism communication documents and campaign materials**. A purposive corpus of documents published between **2018 and 2026** has been selected to capture recent developments in India's digital tourism ecosystem.

Table 3.1 Corpus of the Study

Corpus Category	Type of Material	Approximate Number
Ministry of Tourism Annual Reports	Government Reports	8
Incredible India Campaign	Official Campaign Content	50+ digital assets
Dekho Apna Desh Campaign	Webinars, Videos, Promotional Material	40+
State Tourism Campaigns	Tourism Websites and Social Media Content	20 states
Official Tourism Websites	Destination Information	25 websites
NITI Aayog Reports	Policy Documents	10
UNESCO Publications	Heritage & Culture Reports	10
UN Tourism Publications	Tourism Development Reports	15
Peer-reviewed Journal Articles	Research Papers	50
Newspaper Archives	Tourism News and Policy Coverage	40 articles
Tourism Promotion Videos	YouTube and Digital Campaigns	100+ videos

The corpus is selected using **purposive sampling**, ensuring that each document is directly relevant to digital tourism communication, destination branding, digital storytelling, or tourism policy.

7 Sampling Technique

The study employs **Purposive Sampling**, a non-probability sampling technique widely used in qualitative research. Documents were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

Inclusion Criteria

- Published between 2018 and 2026
- Official Government publications
- Ministry of Tourism documents
- NITI Aayog reports
- UNESCO publications
- UN Tourism publications
- Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Official tourism campaign materials
- English-language publications
- Publicly accessible documents

Exclusion Criteria

- Blogs without institutional credibility
- Commercial advertisements lacking official association
- Duplicate publications
- Non-peer-reviewed opinion pieces
- Unverified social media posts

8 Data Sources

The study relies exclusively on **secondary data** obtained from authentic and credible sources.

Primary Documentary Sources

- Ministry of Tourism Annual Reports

- Incredible India Portal
- Dekho Apna Desh Campaign
- NITI Aayog Publications
- Government Policy Documents
- Tourism Statistics
- Digital India Reports

International Sources

- UN Tourism Reports
- UNESCO Publications
- World Bank Tourism Reports
- OECD Tourism Reports

Academic Sources

- Scopus-indexed journals
- Web of Science journals
- UGC CARE-listed journals
- Books
- Conference proceedings

Media Sources

- Official tourism websites
- Press Information Bureau (PIB)
- National newspapers
- Tourism magazines
- Government YouTube channels
- Official social media accounts

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection followed four sequential stages:

Stage I: Identification of relevant government policies, tourism campaigns, and official publications.

Stage II: Retrieval of peer-reviewed academic literature from Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and institutional repositories.

Stage III: Collection of multimedia tourism campaign content, including websites, promotional videos, and social media posts.

Stage IV: Organization of all documents into a digital repository and preparation for coding and thematic analysis.

10 Analysis Technique

The study employs **Thematic Analysis** supported by **Qualitative Content Analysis** following the six-stage framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Stage 1

Data Familiarization

- Reading reports
- Reviewing campaign materials
- Observing videos
- Examining digital narratives

Stage 2

Initial Coding

Codes were assigned to recurring communication elements such as:

- Heritage
- Spirituality
- Adventure
- Culture
- Festivals
- Wildlife
- Food
- Sustainability
- Digital Innovation
- Community Participation
- Storytelling
- Influencer Marketing

Stage 3

Searching for Themes

Codes were grouped into broader themes.

Stage 4

Reviewing Themes

Themes were refined by comparing evidence across multiple data sources.

Stage 5

Defining Themes

Final themes included:

- Digital Storytelling Practices
- Destination Branding
- Digital Platforms
- Emerging Technologies
- Challenges
- Opportunities for Viksit Bharat 2047

Stage 6

Interpretation

Themes were interpreted using communication and tourism theories to develop an integrated conceptual framework.

11 Coding Framework

Theme	Sub-theme	Sample Codes
Storytelling	Heritage	Culture, Monuments, Festivals
Storytelling	Nature	Wildlife, Eco-tourism
Storytelling	Spiritual	Pilgrimage, Wellness
Storytelling	Food	Cuisine, Culinary Tourism
Technology	AI	Chatbots, Personalization
Technology	AR/VR	Virtual Tours
Digital Platforms	Social Media	Instagram, YouTube, Facebook
Engagement	User Participation	Reviews, Influencers, UGC
Sustainability	Community Tourism	Rural Tourism, Local Livelihoods
Challenges	Accessibility	Language, Infrastructure
Challenges	Authenticity	Misinformation, Commercialization
Opportunities	Viksit Bharat	Employment, Innovation, Smart Tourism

3.12 Key Variables

Since this is a qualitative study, variables are treated as analytical constructs rather than measurable statistical variables.

Category	Variable	Description
Independent Construct	Digital Storytelling	Narrative-based communication using multimedia technologies
Mediating Construct	Digital Engagement	Audience interaction through digital platforms
Mediating Construct	Destination Branding	Perception and image of tourism destinations
Mediating Construct	Technology Adoption	AI, AR/VR, Smart Tourism applications
Dependent Construct	Tourism Development	Visitor attraction, destination competitiveness, sustainable growth
Outcome Construct	Viksit Bharat 2047	Inclusive development, employment generation, cultural preservation, digital transformation

3.13 Theoretical Lens

The study is informed by multiple complementary theories:

Theory	Relevance
Narrative Transportation Theory	Explains how stories influence tourist attitudes and behavioural intentions.
Destination Branding Theory	Interprets how narratives shape destination identity and image.
Uses and Gratifications Theory	Explains audience motivations for consuming tourism content.
Media Richness Theory	Highlights the effectiveness of multimedia storytelling over text-based communication.
Digital Engagement Theory	Explains user interaction, participation, and co-creation in digital tourism ecosystems.

The integration of these theories provides a comprehensive analytical lens for understanding how digital storytelling influences destination branding, tourist engagement, and sustainable tourism development.

3.14 Trustworthiness of the Study

To enhance methodological rigour, the study adopts the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985):

- **Credibility:** Use of authoritative government reports, international publications, and peer-reviewed literature.
- **Transferability:** Rich contextual description of digital tourism communication to enable applicability in similar settings.
- **Dependability:** Transparent documentation of data collection, coding procedures, and analytical decisions.
- **Confirmability:** Triangulation across policy documents, campaign materials, and academic sources to minimize researcher bias.

3.15 Ethical Considerations

The study relies exclusively on publicly available secondary sources. No human participants were involved; therefore, formal ethical approval was not required. All ideas, data, and quotations will be appropriately acknowledged through APA 7th edition referencing to maintain academic integrity and avoid plagiarism.

3.16 Limitations of the Methodology

- The study is based solely on secondary data and does not include primary stakeholder perspectives.
- Findings depend on the availability and quality of published documents and campaign materials.
- Thematic interpretation may involve researcher subjectivity despite systematic coding procedures.
- The study focuses primarily on national-level campaigns, which may not fully capture local or regional variations in digital storytelling practices.

Despite these limitations, the methodological design is appropriate for developing a comprehensive understanding of digital storytelling in Indian tourism and its relevance to the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

7. Conclusion

Digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the tourism sector, shifting destination promotion from conventional advertising toward immersive, narrative-driven communication. This study examined the role of digital storytelling in Indian tourism through a qualitative analysis of secondary sources, including government publications, policy documents, tourism campaigns, international reports, and scholarly literature. The findings demonstrate that digital storytelling has emerged as a strategic communication approach that extends beyond destination marketing to encompass cultural preservation, destination branding, community engagement, sustainable tourism, and digital innovation.

The thematic analysis revealed that Indian tourism campaigns increasingly employ multimedia narratives, visual storytelling, user-generated content, influencer collaborations, and interactive digital platforms to communicate the country's cultural diversity, heritage, spirituality, biodiversity, cuisine, and experiential tourism offerings. Campaigns such as *Incredible India* and *Dekho Apna Desh* illustrate the Government of India's transition from information-oriented promotion to experience-oriented digital communication, aligning tourism branding with broader national initiatives such as Digital India and the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Government reports further indicate that tourism continues to be recognized as a strategic contributor to employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, regional development, entrepreneurship, and cultural diplomacy.

Despite these positive developments, the study also identified several structural and communication-related challenges. Uneven digital infrastructure, inconsistent destination branding across states, limited multilingual content, accessibility barriers, concerns regarding authenticity and misinformation, fragmented stakeholder coordination, and the relatively slow adoption of advanced technologies continue to constrain the effectiveness of digital storytelling. These issues highlight that technological availability alone cannot ensure successful tourism communication; rather, integrated policy support, institutional collaboration, digital literacy, and community participation are essential for creating authentic and inclusive tourism narratives.

The analysis further suggests that digital storytelling offers substantial opportunities for achieving the objectives of Viksit Bharat 2047. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, virtual reality, digital twins, big data analytics, and smart tourism ecosystems have the potential to personalize visitor experiences, improve destination management, promote lesser-known destinations, strengthen rural tourism, preserve cultural heritage, and generate sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities. Community-led storytelling and user-generated content can democratize tourism communication while enhancing authenticity, destination trust, and visitor engagement. International tourism organizations similarly emphasize digital transformation as a key driver of future tourism competitiveness and sustainable development.

The principal theoretical contribution of this study lies in conceptualizing digital storytelling as an integrated communication framework that connects destination branding, digital engagement, sustainable tourism, and national development. Unlike previous studies that have primarily examined destination marketing, social media, or digital technologies in isolation, this research integrates communication theory, tourism studies, public policy, and digital transformation within the context of India's long-term developmental vision. The proposed framework positions digital storytelling as a strategic enabler of inclusive growth, cultural preservation, responsible tourism, and economic resilience.

From a policy perspective, the study recommends the formulation of a National Digital Tourism Storytelling Framework that integrates central and state tourism agencies, cultural institutions, technology providers, local communities, and creative industries. Such a framework should prioritize multilingual storytelling, AI-enabled personalization, accessibility, digital skill development, ethical content creation, and community participation to strengthen India's global tourism competitiveness.

Investments in immersive technologies, smart destination management, and digital heritage interpretation can further enhance India's position as a leading tourism destination while contributing to employment generation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable regional development.

Although the study provides a comprehensive synthesis of existing literature and policy documents, it is limited by its reliance on secondary data and documentary analysis. Future research should incorporate primary data through interviews with policymakers, tourism professionals, content creators, digital marketers, local communities, and tourists to validate and refine the conceptual framework proposed in this study. Comparative studies across Indian states and international destinations may also provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of different digital storytelling strategies.

In conclusion, digital storytelling represents far more than a communication tool; it is an emerging strategic asset capable of transforming how India communicates its cultural identity, heritage, and tourism experiences to global audiences. If supported by coherent policy, technological innovation, community participation, and sustainable development principles, digital storytelling can significantly strengthen India's tourism ecosystem and contribute meaningfully to the realization of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

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Original Article

National Tourism Policy Analysis

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Abstract
Rather than introducing a separate National Tourism Policy, India has chosen to weave tourism into its wider economic, infrastructure, and urban development agenda. This integrated approach positions tourism as a key contributor to national growth, with the Ministry of Tourism focusing on regulatory reforms, digital governance, and targeted investments announced in the Union Budget 2026–27.
Keywords: *Tourism Policy, Tourism, Union Budget, India*

Introduction

Tourism is one of India's most significant service industries, contributing substantially to economic growth, employment generation, and regional development. According to the Economic Survey, the sector contributes nearly 5% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and provides livelihoods to approximately 7.6 crore people. India currently attracts about 1.5% of global international tourist arrivals. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) 2024–25 estimates that India's tourism economy is valued at USD 231.6 billion, making it the eighth-largest tourism economy in the world. Recognising its economic potential, the Union Budget 2026–27 has prioritised investments in tourism infrastructure and destination development. However, the industry's growth continues to be constrained by complex regulations, multiple approval systems, and administrative inefficiencies. Simplifying the regulatory environment is therefore essential to enhance investment, improve ease of doing business, and strengthen India's competitiveness in the global tourism market.

Research methodology

The source of data for this research is Secondary Data which refers to data taken from an existing source. The researcher has studied the tourism policies available and draws attention to the objectives of each of the policies, their area of focus, strategies suggested by the various plans in order to achieve the objectives and limitations if any.

Key strategic goals driving the travel sector across India and your region include

Infrastructure and Connectivity

A major priority is improving accessibility to tourist destinations. The government plans to develop five flagship tourism destinations in the Purvodaya region while expanding sustainable transport through the deployment of around 4,000 electric buses. At the same time, new high-speed rail corridors linking cities such as Mumbai, Pune, and Bengaluru are expected to make travel faster and more convenient.

Business-Friendly Reforms

To encourage investment and reduce administrative hurdles, proposed reforms include replacing the conventional hotel classification process with a self-certification system. Digital "Entity Lockers" are also being introduced to streamline documentation and simplify compliance with regulatory requirements.

Strengthening Heritage Tourism

India is investing in the conservation and promotion of its cultural legacy by transforming 15 important archaeological sites including Lothal and Dholavira into immersive heritage destinations. Preservation efforts are also being extended to temples, monasteries, and other culturally significant landmarks across the Northeastern states.

Expanding Medical and Eco-Tourism

The country is strengthening its position in medical value tourism through the creation of five regional healthcare hubs in partnership with private stakeholders.

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Alongside this, India is promoting eco-tourism and wildlife conservation on the global stage through initiatives such as the Global Big Cat Summit.

Developing a Skilled Tourism Workforce

Recognizing the importance of quality visitor experiences, the Ministry has launched a 12-week blended learning program to train approximately 10,000 tourist guides across 20 iconic destinations. The initiative, conducted in collaboration with the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), aims to enhance professional skills and service standards throughout the tourism sector.

Tourism Sector in India: Importance, Challenges, and the Need for Regulatory Reforms

Importance of the Tourism Sector in India

Economic Contribution

Tourism plays a crucial role in strengthening the national economy by increasing foreign exchange earnings, boosting GDP, and expanding India's participation in the global tourism industry.

Growth Across Related Industries

The tourism sector generates a strong multiplier effect by stimulating demand in hospitality, transportation, retail, handicrafts, entertainment, and other supporting industries, thereby encouraging broader economic development.

Employment Generation

As a labour-intensive sector, tourism creates employment opportunities across a wide range of skill levels, benefiting both urban and rural populations and supporting inclusive growth.

Showcasing India's Heritage

India's rich cultural traditions, historical monuments, diverse landscapes, and unique festivals make the country an attractive destination for domestic and international travellers, promoting cultural appreciation and heritage conservation.

Strengthening India's International Image

A well-developed tourism sector enhances India's global reputation by providing visitors with safe, high-quality, and memorable travel experiences, thereby improving the country's position as a preferred international destination.

Major Challenges Facing the Tourism Sector

Environmental Degradation

Rapid tourism growth can place pressure on natural ecosystems through increased waste generation, pollution, and habitat disturbance, threatening biodiversity and ecological balance.

Infrastructure Gaps

Many tourist destinations, particularly in remote and rural regions, continue to face inadequate transport connectivity, accommodation facilities, sanitation, and other essential infrastructure.

Seasonal Nature of Tourism and High Costs

Several destinations experience significant seasonal fluctuations in visitor numbers, resulting in uneven income throughout the year. Additionally, high taxation, including 18% GST on many tourism services, raises travel costs and reduces price competitiveness.

Managing Large Tourist Gatherings

Mass gatherings such as the Maha Kumbh Mela, which may attract hundreds of millions of visitors, require extensive planning, crowd control, security arrangements, and public service delivery to ensure safety.

Exchange Rate Fluctuations

Variations in currency value influence international travel spending. For example, the depreciation of the Indian rupee by around 3% in 2023 affected tourist expenditure patterns.

Shortage of Skilled Human Resources

The tourism industry continues to face a shortage of professionally trained personnel. Only around 30% of tourist guides possess formal training, and language barriers often affect the quality of services provided to international visitors.

Safety and Disaster Risks

Natural disasters, such as the 2013 Kedarnath cloudburst, highlight the vulnerability of tourism destinations and underscore the importance of disaster preparedness and visitor safety.

Pressure on Wildlife Destinations

Unregulated wildlife tourism can disturb fragile ecosystems, increase stress on endangered species, and damage natural habitats if conservation measures are not effectively implemented.

Conclusion

The Policy will be in effect for 10 years starting from the notification date unless it is subsequently extended. The majority of the policy's requirements demand simultaneous and coordinated action from the central level, state governments, local governments, and industry stakeholders. Growth of the tourism sector will impact the Indian economy in terms of spreading benefits across the country including remote areas and providing employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to youth, women, marginalized sections of the society and those in the informal sector.

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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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4) Ministry of Tourism
5) PIB
6) Union Budget 2026-27

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Original Article

An Empirical Study on Tourism Growth, Tourism Startups, and Employment Generation in India"

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the Indian economy and plays a significant role in promoting economic growth, entrepreneurship, and employment generation. This study examines the growth of tourism in India and their contribution to employment generation. The study is based on secondary data collected from reliable sources, including the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), and UN Tourism. The analysis covers international tourist arrivals, domestic tourist visits, the percentage share of major states and Union Territories in domestic tourism, the growth of tourism startups, and employment generated by the tourism sector. Descriptive statistical techniques such as tables, percentages, growth rates, and trend analysis are used to examine the data.

Keywords: *Tourism, Travel & Tourism Startups, Employment Generation, Domestic Tourist Visits, International Tourist Arrivals, Economic Development, India.*

Introduction

Tourism startups in India have developed into an essential part of the innovation ecosystem, especially in areas such as travel technology, sustainable tourism, adventure tourism, heritage interpretation, and hospitality services. A 2024 tourism-startup showcase identified 25 emerging travel and tourism startups and noted that India had over 15,000 DPIIT-recognized travel and tourism startups spread across 262 districts.

Startup incubation is important in this sector because tourism businesses often need early-stage support in funding, mentoring, digital adoption, destination access, and market linkage. Government-backed incubation and startup schemes have become central to helping tourism ventures move from idea stage to scalable enterprises.

Review of literature

UN Tourism (2025)

After covide-19 pandemic international tourism has recovered strongly approximately **1.46 billion in 2004 according to un tourism report.** Asia and the Pacific recorded the highest improvement due to better international travel and supportive government policies

Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2024)

According to the annual report of Ministry of Tourism, domestic tourism in India has developed drastically over the last decade. Government initiatives vary schems such as **Swadesh Darshan**, **PRASHAD**, and **Dekho Apna Desh** have contributed to tourism development.In 2024, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra accounted for the largest share of domestic tourist visits.

DPIIT – Startup India (2024)

India's tourism sector has grown rapidly new starups with new technology, service and payment methods are which provide new solution The number of Travel & Tourism startups increased from **208 in 2020** to **627 in 2024**, reflecting growing entrepreneurial interest in the tourism sector The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) reported continuous growth in recognized startups.

World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) (2025)

TheTravels and Tourism sector creating one of the country's largest employers. According to World Travel & Tourism Council the travel and tourism sector generated approximately **46.3 million jobs in India in 2024**, representing around **9% of total employment.**

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NITI Aayog (2023)

NITI Aayog emphasized that particularly in rural and heritage destinations tourism is a main driver of complete economic growth, it highlighted the need for innovation, digital transformation, and entrepreneurship to improve tourism services and create sustainable employment.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the growth of tourism in India during the study period.
2. To analyze the trend of DPIIT-recognized Travel & Tourism startups in India.
3. To assess the contribution of the tourism sector to employment generation.
4. To examine the relationship between tourism growth and employment generation.

Research Hypotheses

H1 International tourist arrivals have a significant positive effect on the growth of tourism

H2 -There is a significant positive relationship between tourism growth and employment generation in India.

Significance of study

This study is significant because tourism startups generate jobs, promote local economies, and strengthen destination competitiveness. Startup incubation in tourism can support rural tourism, eco-tourism, heritage tourism, and digitally enabled travel services, which are especially relevant for India's diverse regions

Methodology

- This study uses a descriptive and analytical research design based on secondary data from Ministry of Tourism reports, and published sources on tourism entrepreneurship
- Analysis is mainly based on percentage comparison, trend interpretation,

Tourism in India –

Tourism is particularly helpful for developing countries because it can develop small businesses, support women and youth employment, and expand the economy beyond a few industries. Tourism in country helps by creating jobs, growing income, improving infrastructure, and supporting local culture and businesses. It can also reduce poverty and bring investment to rural and remote areas. Tourism is essential because it supports the economy, people, and culture at the same time.

India has many travels option such as rich heritage, wildlife, pilgrimage, which make

India's tourism sector more attractive In 2023, India welcomed 9.24 million foreign tourists, had 2,509.63 million domestic tourist visits, and tourism added more than INR 19.13 trillion to the economy. The government is also approaching tourism through transportation and policy support. Indian tourism creates demand, and tourism startups turn that demand into a new service model to improve travel, tourism, or visitor experiences uses technology or services like booking, homestays, guides, and travel planning.

Table1.: International Tourist Arrivals by (sub) Region

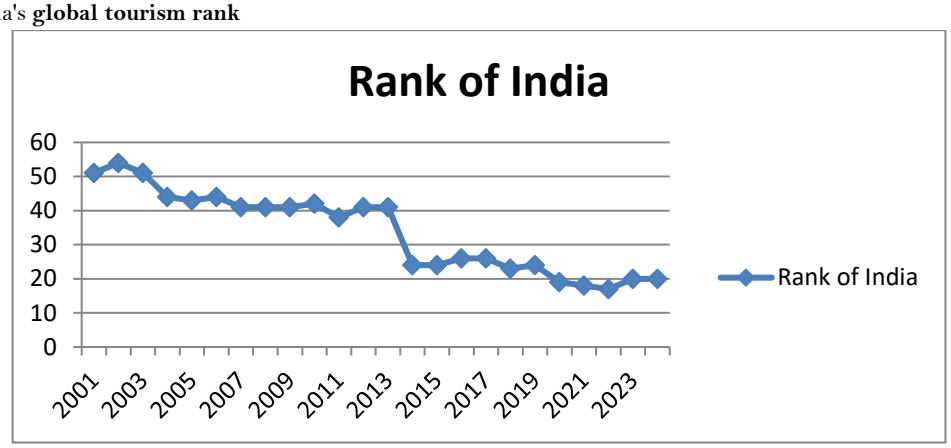
Region/Subregion	2019	2023	2024*	Share (%) 2024*	Change (%)24/23	Change (%)24/19
World	**1466**	**1306**	**1465**	**100.00**	**12.17**	**-0.07**
Europe	**743.90**	**710.20**	**755.70**	**51.58**	**6.41**	**1.59**
NorthernEurope	82.10	79.00	85.20	5.82	7.85	3.78
WesternEurope	202.10	200.30	211.00	14.40	5.34	4.40
Central/EasternEurope	152.80	118.40	134.80	9.20	13.85	-11.78
Southern/ Meditt.Europe	306.90	312.50	324.70	22.16	3.90	5.80
AsiaandthePacific	**362.10**	**237.40**	**317.50**	**21.67**	**33.74**	**-12.32**
North-EastAsia	146.00	87.90	122.00	8.33	38.79	-16.44
South-EastAsia	139.40	90.60	118.40	8.08	30.68	-15.06
Oceania	17.50	13.90	17.50	1.19	25.90	0.00
SouthAsia	59.20	45.00	59.60	4.07	32.44	0.68
Americas	**219.30**	**200.20**	**216.60**	**14.78**	**8.19**	**-1.23**
NorthAmerica	151.30	134.30	144.60	9.87	7.67	-4.43
Caribbean	26.10	24.60	27.30	1.86	10.98	4.60
CentralAmerica	12.90	13.00	14.20	0.97	9.23	10.08
SouthAmerica	29.00	28.20	30.40	2.08	7.80	4.83
Africa	**68.80**	**65.10**	**73.90**	**5.04**	**13.52**	**7.41**
NorthAfrica	26.80	25.20	28.10	1.92	11.51	4.85
Sub-SaharanAfrica	42.00	39.90	45.80	3.13	14.79	9.05
MiddleEast	**71.60**	**93.40**	**101.20**	**6.91**	**8.35**	**41.34**
India	**17.91**	**18.89**	**20.57**	**1.40**	**8.89**	**14.85**

Source: UNTourism, World Tourism Barometer May2025

The above table shows comparison between **International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs)** worldwide and in India from **2001 to 2024**. It shows that India's **global tourism rank improved from 51st place in 2001 to 20th place in 2024**, showing steady progress in

attracting international tourists. Although both global tourism and India's tourism sector experienced a sharp decline in **2020** due to the **COVID-19 pandemic**, tourism recovered strongly in the following years. By **2024**, India had regained momentum and further strengthened its position in the global tourism industry.

Chart No 1 India's **global tourism rank**



Source: UN Tourism, World Tourism Barometer May2025

India ranked 20th globally, attracting 20.57 million international tourists, marking a 14.85% increase over2019andan8.89%risefrom2023

Table No: 2 Year wise Domestic Tourist Visits in Million

Year	TouristVisits		AnnualGrowthRate	
	Domestic	Foreign	Domestic	Foreign
1991	66670303	3146652	–	–
2001	236469599	5436261	7.43	-7.76
2011	864532718	19497126	15.63	8.86
2012	1045047536	18263074	20.88	-6.33
2013	1142529465	19951026	9.33	9.24
2014	1282801629	22334031	12.28	11.94
2015	1431973794	23326163	11.63	4.44
2016	1615388619	24714503	12.81	5.95
2017	1657546152	26886684	2.61	8.79
2018	1853787719	28851130	11.84	7.31
2019	2321982663	31408666	25.26	8.86
2020	610216157	7171769	-73.72	-77.17
2021	677632981	1054642	11.05	-85.29
2022	1731013539	8587562	155.45	714.26
2023®	2508817710	19241212	44.93	124.06
2024	2948190825	20942074	17.51	8.84

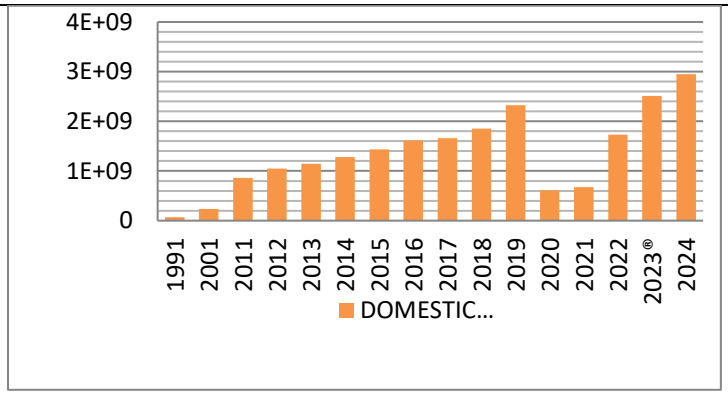
Source- Annual Report 2025 Indian Tourism

This table explain that tourist visits in India increased stoutly over time, especially domestic tourism, while foreign tourism also grew but at a much smaller scale. The pointed drop in 2020 and 2021 was due to the pandemic, and both domestic and foreign visits improved robustly in 2022, 2023, and 2024

Chart No -2 foreign tourism vists from 2011 to 2014



Chart no -3 Domestic tourism vists from 2011 to 2024



India's tourism sector has grown rapidly in recent years and has become an important part of the service economy, generating employment and supporting regional development. Along with traditional travel businesses, a new wave of tourism startups has emerged to improve travel planning, hospitality services, local experiences, and digital convenience for tourists.

According to table no1 and table no 2 which showing that international tourism arriving percentage from 2001 to 2024 is rapidly increasing and compare to work tourism india having 20th rank. according to above table International tourist arrivals have a significant positive effect on the growth of tourist hypothesis 1 is accepted

Table No *3 Percentage share of Major* 10 States/UT sin Domestic Tourist Visits in 2024

Uttra pradesh	**21.94**
Tamil Nadu	10.41
Karnataka	10.33
abdhrapradesh	3.85
Rajasthan	7.80
Maharashtra	6.42
waetbengal	6.26
Gujarat	6.24
Madhya pradesh	4.52
Telangana	2.99

SOURCE- ANNUAL REPORT 2025 INDIAN TOURISM

These startups use technology to offer solutions such as online booking, trip discovery, rural homestays, smart hospitality, and travel assistance, making tourism more accessible, efficient, and customer-friendly The authorized DPIIT data shows **627 recognized startups in the Travel & Tourism sector in 2024**, compared with 581 in 2023, indicating continued expansion. The 2024 tourism disruptors report further states that there are **over 15,000 DPIIT-recognized travel and tourism startups across 262 districts**, showing that the sector has spread beyond major metros.

Tourism and employment generation

Tourism is one of the largest employment-generating sectors in India because it creates **direct, indirect, and induced employment** in hotels, transport, restaurants, travel agencies, handicrafts, and other tourism-related services

Table no 4 - Tourism and employment generation and GDP

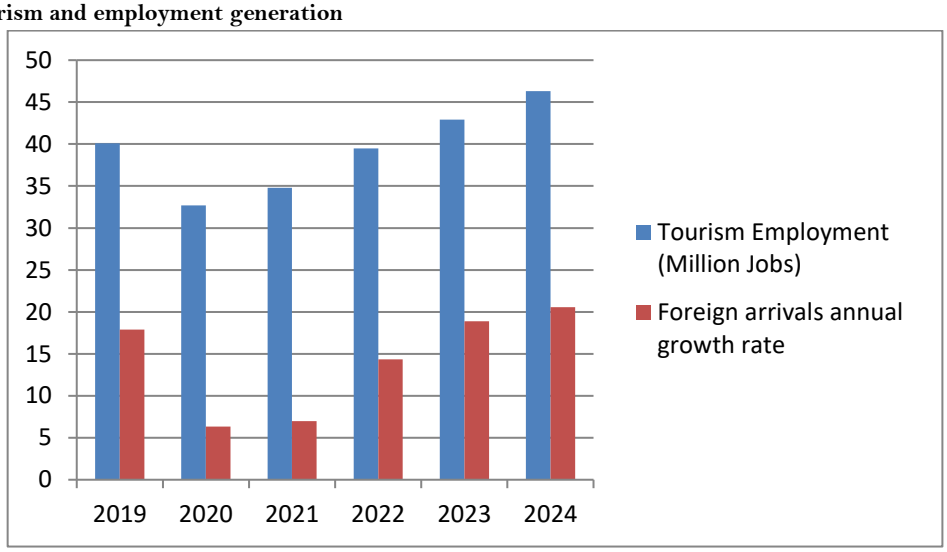
Year	**Tourism Employment (Million Jobs)**	TourismDirect Employment (inmillion)	Tourism DirectGDP (RsCrore)	**Direct contribution of tourism(%)to:**
2019	40.1	33.08	4,92,371	2.61
2020	32.7	30.28	5,41,167	2.69
2021	34.8	29.68	1,53,966	0.78
2022	39.5	30.55	2,13,653	0.91
2023	42.9	33.22	7,11,341	2.65
2024	46.3	36.90	8,18,117	2.72

SOURCE- ANNUAL REPORT 2025 INDIAN TOURISM

Table 4 shows the employment generated by India's travel and tourism sector from 2019 to 2024. The sector supported **40.1 million jobs in 2019**, before declining to **32.7 million jobs in 2020** due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As tourism activities

resumed, employment increased steadily, reaching **34.8 million in 2021**, **39.5 million in 2022**, and **42.9 million in 2023**. By **2024**, the sector supported a record **46.3 million jobs**, accounting for **9.1% of total employment in India**. These figures indicate that tourism has recovered strongly after the pandemic and continues to be a major source of employment and economic growth in the country. According to above data hypothesis 2 is accepted that there is a significant positive relationship between tourism growth and employment generation in India.

Chart No **4 Tourism and employment generation**



Source- Annual Report 2025 Indian Tourism

Outcome

The 2024 evidence suggests that tourism in India is expanding and which showing trmendus growth in employment generation The sector is becoming more technology-driven, with startups in AI, sustainable tourism, create experiences, mobility, and heritage engagement. Tourism sector helps in increasing GDP growth, it creating new employment its increase the flow of foreign currency all these develop economic condition of the country

Conclusion

The Travels and Tourism sector creating one of the country's largest employers. The findings indicate that India's tourism sector has experienced substantial growth over the study period. International tourist arrivals and domestic tourist visits have increased significantly, while India's position in global tourism has improved. Although the tourism industry experienced a temporary decline during the COVID-19 pandemic, it recovered rapidly, with employment reaching record levels by 2024. The study concludes that tourism play an important role in strengthening the tourism ecosystem by encouraging innovation, improving service delivery, and creating employment opportunities

Suggestion

The study recommends strengthening policy support for tourism startups, improving digital infrastructure, promoting sustainable tourism practices, and enhancing skill development to maximize the sector's contribution to employment generation and economic development. The findings provide useful insights for policymakers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and tourism stakeholders in formulating strategies for the sustainable growth of India's tourism industry

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Original Article

Tourism Industry in Uttarakhand

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Abstract:
In modern world tourism is emerged as one of the largest service-sector industry and generates national income as well as job opportunities especially for local population and become an avenue of economic and social development and cultural exchange. Various international agencies like World Tourism Organization (WTO) have pointed out the vast development potential of tourism, particularly with reference to developing nations like India. The travel and tourism industry provides hospitality to visitors to the place as well as services that ensure the customers' demands are met. Tourism provides significant economic support to a country. Additionally, the travel and tourism industry's job is to promote the nation so that as many people as possible visit there and even inspire others to do so. Tourism, in addition to providing to clients or visitors, also caters to persons in need of employment. This industry employs people, hence lowering the country's unemployment rate. Uttarakhand has a thriving and well-established tourism business. It seeks to promote, satisfy, and employ its consumers by offering excellent amenities and recreational opportunities, and so contributes to the country's GDP. Uttarakhand's tourist business is essential and is recognized as one of the primary foundations.

Keywords: *Tourism, Hospitality, Inlanders, Outlanders, Economic Support, Infrastructure, Lowering, Employment, GDP*

Introduction:

Uttarakhand, known as the Land of the Gods or the Land of the Gods, is located in the western Himalayas of India. Uttarakhand is a state located in India. Its captivating mountains, deep valleys, and natural beauty have made it a popular tourist destination. Uttarakhand is rich in both natural and religious tourist attractions. Tourism is emerging as a key source of revenue and employment for the state. Consequently, the state government is formulating a comprehensive action plan and establishing an institutional framework through a multi-dimensional tourism policy to ensure the planned and rapid development of this sector. The interim government, formed at the time of the state's inception, announced the Uttarakhand Tourism Policy on April 26, 2001. The key features of this policy are as follows:

- To develop Uttarakhand as a tourist destination and showcase its cultural diversity and potential.
- To promote eco-tourism, ensuring that tourism activities are environmentally friendly and aligned with the conservation of natural resources.
- To enhance public-private sector collaboration in providing services to tourists based on their specific preferences and economic capabilities.
- To utilize information technology for the promotion of tourist destinations at national and international levels.
- To strive for increased capital investment in tourism from various sources.
- To develop institutional and adventure tourism alongside recreational tourism.

To ensure the rapid, comprehensive, and integrated development of tourism, the 'Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board' will be constituted through an Act, bringing about fundamental changes to the existing departmental structure. The board will include five tourism sector experts who will provide advice and guidance to the government on tourism-related matters. It will feature three directors responsible for project formulation, finance and investment, and publicity and marketing, respectively. The board will serve as the apex advisory body for tourism-related issues in the state; the Tourism Minister will act as its Chairman, the Tourism Development Commissioner as Vice-Chairman, and the Secretary as the Chief Executive Officer.

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The tourism sector and self-employment opportunities have played a pivotal role in Uttarakhand's economic progress. Tourism encompasses the social and personal development of individuals who travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for leisure, work, or other purposes. It has been a key driver of economic growth in the state. According to data from 2020–2021, tourism-related businesses in Uttarakhand generated revenue of approximately Rs. 24,000 crore. A significant portion of this revenue comes from famous tourist destinations, national parks, and religious pilgrimage sites. Nainital, Mussoorie, Rishikesh, Haridwar, Kedarnath, Badrinath, and Jim Corbett National Park are among the state's major tourist attractions. Beyond revenue generation, tourism has created numerous employment opportunities for local residents. The sector provides direct and indirect employment to a large number of people; businesses such as hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, adventure sports, and the handicraft industry have flourished due to tourism. This has not only boosted the income of local communities but also contributed to the state's overall socio-economic development. Alongside the tourism sector, self-employment opportunities have also played a crucial role in Uttarakhand's economic advancement. The state government has taken several measures to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment. Various schemes and programs have been implemented to encourage people to start their own businesses. These initiatives have helped create a favorable environment for small-scale industries, agro-based enterprises, and handicrafts, all of which contribute significantly to the state's economy. The impact of tourism and self-employment on Uttarakhand's economy extends beyond revenue and job creation; it has also contributed to infrastructure development and improved connectivity. Uttarakhand offers numerous self-employment opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Literature Review:

Based on existing literature, information regarding various studies related to destination image is presented below:

Crompton (1979) identified nine motives for leisure travel that influence destination choice: escape from the everyday environment, self-exploration and evaluation, relaxation, prestige, nostalgia, strengthening family bonds, social interaction, novelty seeking, and education. Gunn (1985) proposed that destination image evolves in a sequence, progressing from 'organic image' through 'induced image' to 'complex image'.

Gunn's (1985) conceptual framework was validated by Fakeye and Crompton (1991), who found significant differences in image perceptions among non-visitors, first-time visitors, and repeat visitors.

Moutinho, J.C., and Miner, M. (1998) described image not as a singular entity, but as a mental construct composed of various nodes and associations. A 'schema' is viewed as a hypothetical cognitive structure that integrates small units of information into higher-level, interconnected, and meaningful units known as nodes; these nodes form a mental network acting as fundamental building blocks.

According to Ahmed (1991), the duration of the visit and the type of accommodation significantly influence tourists' perceptions. Buhalis (2000) observed that most destinations primarily consist of the following elements: attractions (natural, man-made, artificial, purpose-built, heritage, and special events); accessibility (the entire transport system, including routes, terminals, and vehicles); amenities (accommodation, food and beverage, shops, and other tourist services); and activities (all activities available at the destination and what tourists engage in during their visit).

On the other hand, 'cultural distance' was a factor that—at least to some extent—influenced people's perceptions of a destination's image prior to visiting. Specifically, individuals may feel more confident visiting places where the culture aligns with their own cultural values. In their study, Beerli, Isabel Sánchez García, and Silvia Sáenz Blas (2009) analyzed the cognitive component of destination image from two perspectives. First, they examined and analyzed its structure based on three dimensions identified in the literature—functional, mixed, and psychological ...was conducted using factor analysis. Secondly, they employed structural equation modeling to examine the impact of these factors on the overall image tourists formed of the destination and on their future behavioral intentions. The results revealed that psychological and functional factors had the greatest influence on the overall destination image. A consistent effect of overall image on future behavioral intentions was observed; specifically, functional factors were linked to the intention to revisit, while psychological factors were associated with the intention to recommend the destination to others. A study by Dolores M. Vivas, M.L.A. Roeder G., J. Alberto Castañeda, Carmen M. Cerbort, and Dermotros B. Harlas (2011) found that the pre-trip image of a destination formed by tourists—based on the information sources they utilized—was influenced by the level of uncertainty avoidance inherent in their national culture. Notably, tourists from cultures with high uncertainty avoidance (such as France, Belgium, or Italy) formed a more favorable image of the destination when relying solely on travel agencies compared to using both travel agencies and the internet. Conversely, the image formed by tourists from cultures with low uncertainty avoidance (such as Britain) remained unaffected by the use of the internet alongside travel agencies; their perception was not influenced by the source of information.

Research Methodology:

This study adopts an analytical approach to examine the role of tourism in the economic progress of Uttarakhand. It utilizes secondary data collected from books, research journals, and doctoral theses. Tourism is a significant activity in Uttarakhand, as it contributes substantially to both revenue and employment generation. According to the State TSA, tourism is estimated to contribute 2.96 percent directly to the state's Gross Value Added and 11.8 percent to state employment.



Problems and Challenges:

Tourism plays a pivotal role in Uttarakhand's economic progress. The state's natural beauty and tourist destinations attract a large number of visitors, thereby creating employment opportunities for the local population. The tourism industry fosters business prospects in sectors such as hospitality, dining, transportation, and adventure sports.

However, there are challenges as well. Maintaining ecological balance and ensuring environmental conservation is crucial, particularly in the state's mountainous regions. Excessive overcrowding and unplanned development can adversely affect the environment and local culture. Furthermore, the seasonal nature of tourism often means that people do not secure year-round employment. Certain areas also suffer from a lack of adequate infrastructure, connectivity, and essential amenities.

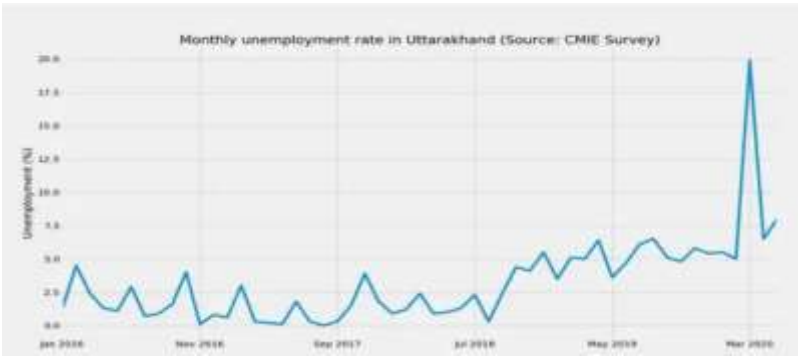
The government and local administration have addressed these issues and taken steps towards sustainable tourism development. Initiatives such as self-employment opportunities and tourism-related training programs are being implemented, providing locals with avenues for employment and economic growth.

When considering the role of tourism in Uttarakhand's economic growth and the availability of self-employment opportunities, several challenges emerge. Potential issues include:

1. Infrastructure Development: Examining how the lack of adequate infrastructure—such as transport and accommodation facilities—hinders the growth of tourism and self-employment opportunities in Uttarakhand.
2. Seasonal Nature of Tourism: Investigating how the seasonal nature of tourism impacts the stability of self-employment opportunities and the overall economic progress of Uttarakhand.
3. Environmental Sustainability: Understanding the environmental impact of tourism and identifying measures to promote sustainable tourism practices that strike a balance between economic growth and environmental conservation.
4. Skill Development and Training: Analyzing the availability and impact of skill development programs aimed at enhancing employability and promoting self-employment opportunities within the tourism sector.

These are just a few examples, but there are many other aspects to consider.





Objectives of the study:

1. To assess the role of the tourism industry in the economic progress of Uttarakhand.
2. To examine the opportunities for tourism development in the region.
3. To suggest measures for promoting and developing tourism in Uttarakhand.
4. To analyze tourism development in the context of tourist arrivals in Uttarakhand.
5. To critically evaluate the infrastructure facilities essential for promoting tourism.



Tourism Activities in the State:

Pilgrimage: Pilgrimage has traditionally been a major sector of tourism in the state. It is home to significant pilgrimage sites associated with various religions. The most renowned among these include Badrinath, Kedarnath, Yamunotri, Gangotri, Haridwar, Hemkund Lokpal, Nanakmatta, Meetha-Reetha Sahib, Piran Kaliyar, and Purnagiri. Several important religious journeys also take place in the state, most notably the Nanda Devi Raj Jat and the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra. Additionally, there are other pilgrimage sites—such as Panch Badri, Panch Kedar, Panch Prayag, and Patal Bhuvaneshwar—whose development requires priority attention.

Cultural Tourism: The state boasts a rich and vibrant cultural heritage. Countless local fairs and festivals are held here—such as Jhanda Mela (Dehradun), Surkanda Devi Mela (Tehri), Magh Mela (Uttarkashi), Nanda Devi Mela (Nainital), Chaiti Mela (Udham Singh Nagar), Purnagiri Mela (Champawat), Piran Kaliyar Mela (Haridwar), Jauljibi Mela (Pithoragarh), and Uttarayani Mela (Bageshwar)—demonstrating the immense potential for cultural tourism in the state. Natural Beauty: The state features numerous captivating tourist destinations, including Mussoorie ('Queen of the Hills'), the lake region of Nainital, Kausani, Pauri, Lansdowne, Ranikhet, Almora, Pithoragarh, Munsiyari, and Binsar.

Adventure Tourism: The state is a paradise for adventure sports. A wide range of activities is available here, including mountaineering (Bhagirathi, Chaukhamba, Nanda Devi, Kamet, Pindari, Sahasratal, Milam, Kafni, Khatling, Gomukh), trekking, skiing (Auli, Dayara Bugyal, Munsiyari, Mundali), skating, water sports (at various locations), and hang-gliding. Adventure sports like paragliding (at Pithoragarh, Jolly Grant, and Pauri) make the state one of the most attractive destinations for adventure sports, not just in India but across the globe.

Wildlife Tourism: Apart from the world-renowned Corbett National Park, the state boasts several other attractive destinations for wildlife tourism. These include Rajaji National Park, Govind Pashu Vihar, Asan Barrage, Chilla, and Saptarishi Ashram; the latter four are particularly excellent for bird enthusiasts.

Eco-tourism: The state possesses an amazing diversity of flora and fauna. Consequently, it is an ideal location for eco-tourism projects and activities such as jungle safaris, trekking along mountain and forest trails, nature walks, and 'catch-and-release' fishing for Mahseer and other fish species. All these activities should be conducted in a manner that fosters environmental awareness and preserves the delicate ecological balance.

Leisure and Relaxation Tourism: The clean, fresh, and invigorating atmosphere makes this state a preferred destination for relaxation and leisure. From the modern amenities available in Mussoorie and Nainital to the pristine natural beauty of snow-capped peaks, rivers, and forests, the state offers tourists everything they could desire for recreation and relaxation. Tourism is a vital component of international trade. The tourism industry generates significant revenue and foreign exchange, playing a major role in economic development; it is a primary source of foreign exchange at the national level and represents one of the fastest-growing sectors in the global economy.



The Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board is providing training to turn tourism into a source of self-employment; by March, over 4,000 people will have the opportunity to undergo this training. The Board has already trained 3,010 individuals with the aim of making tourism a livelihood, and plans to train a total of 4,000 people by March. To familiarize tourists with the state's heritage, archaeology, history, and culture, the Tourism Department launched a training program in collaboration with the central council, THSC. Under this initiative, 730 heritage tour guides were trained in locations such as Rishikesh, Gangolihat, Dharchula, Barkot, Ramnagar, Kainchi Dham, Roorkee, Mukteshwar, Lohaghat, Kotdwar, Kashipur, Devprayag, Ranikhet, Dwarahat, Almora, Haridwar, Chakrata, Nanakmatta, Munsiyari, Berinag, Mori, Someshwar, Hanol, and Lansdowne. Additionally, 500 taxi drivers were trained in Dehradun, Rishikesh, Kotdwar, Nainital, Almora, Kathgodam, and Tanakpur. Along the Char Dham Yatra route, 1,280 people—including guest house caretakers, food outlet owners, servers, sanitation workers, and cooks—received training. Furthermore, 500 nature guides have been trained for locations such as Mussoorie, Nainital, Nanakmatta, Dehradun, Binsar, Haridwar, Pauri, Rudraprayag, Bageshwar, Lohaghat, and Munsiyari. By next March, 270 heritage tour guides will be trained at various tourist destinations. Training will also be provided to guest house caretakers, food outlet owners, servers, sanitation workers, and cooks along the Char Dham Yatra route. Additional Director Poonam Chand stated that those who have undergone

the training have already started finding employment. The Lansdowne Hotel Association has decided to hire such people on a rotational basis. For approximately 49.8 percent of foreign tourists visiting Uttarakhand, the purpose of the trip was sightseeing or visiting tourist attractions. Additionally, around 18.7 percent of tourists visited for reasons such as health and yoga. Together, these two groups accounted for more than 80 percent of the total foreign tourists visiting Uttarakhand.

Table-1: Arrival of foreign tourists by purpose of vi

Objective	Number	Percent
Sightseeing Holiday	**117**	**49.8**
Business/Conference/Meeting	**21**	**8.9**
Education	**14**	**5.9**
Health/Yoga, etc.	**44**	**18.7**
Pilgrimage/Religious Ceremony	**39**	**16.7**
Total	**235**	**100**

The main attractions for tourists visiting these places were natural beauty (29.4 %), spiritual centres (25.9 %), trekking (25.5 %), wildlife and nature trails (8.1%), and hill resorts (9.4 %). The percentage distribution of tourists based on these attractions is presented in Table 2

Table 2: Distribution of tourists based on the source of attraction

Source of Attraction	Number	Percent
Natural Beauty	**69**	**29.4**
Mountain Resort	**22**	**9.4**
Wildlife and Nature Trails	**19**	**8.1**
River Rafting	**04**	**1.7**
Tracking	**60**	**25.5**
Spiritual Centre	**61**	**25.9**
Total	**230**	**100**

For 40.3% of tourists, guidebooks were the primary source of information about Uttarakhand, followed by information obtained from friends and relatives (37.8%). Other key sources of information included websites (28.9%), travel magazines (21.4%), tour operators (14.9%), advertisements in electronic media (9.4%), and advertisements in print media (9.0%). A profile of tourists based on their sources of information is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Tourists by Source of Information

Source	Number	Percentage
Newspapers/Magazines	09	4.5
Travel Magazines	43	21.4
Travel Books	81	40.3
Advertisements in Print Media	18	9.0
Advertisements in Electronic Media	19	9.4
Websites	58	28.9
Tourism Promotion Exhibitions	01	0.5
Tour Operators	30	14.9
India Tourism Office	08	4.0
Indian Embassy	04	2.0
Friends and Relatives	76	37.8
Others	36	17.9
Total	383	190.6

Note: Due to multiple responses, the percentages do not add up to 100. A total of 383 responses were received from 201 tourists.

46.3 Tourist attractions were the primary factors drawing tourists to Uttarakhand. Key among these were religious and pilgrimage sites (45.3%), health and yoga facilities (24.9%), and recommendations from friends and relatives (21.4%). A profile of the tourists based on these factors is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Tourists by Motivating Factors

Motivating Factor	Number	Percentage
Tourist Attractions	93	46.3
Health/Yoga Facilities	50	24.9
Religious and Pilgrimage Sites	91	45.3
Educational Institutions	13	6.5
Availability of Affordable Packages	05	2.5
Advice from Travel Agents	04	2.0
Advice from Friends and Relatives	43	21.4
Publicity and Advertisements	02	1.0
Others	24	11.9
Total	325	161.8

Note: Due to multiple responses, the percentages do not add up to 100. A total of 325 responses were received from 201 tourists.

Out of every 100 rupees spent by tourists, 35 rupees go towards accommodation, 20 rupees on food and beverages, 13 rupees on local travel within Uttarakhand, and 12 rupees on travel to and from the state. Expenses incurred on travel outside Uttarakhand are not included here, although such costs are likely to exist. Nevertheless, the total tourist expenditure contributing to Uttarakhand's economy cannot exceed half of the total cost associated with the entire journey covering both the arrival and departure legs.

Table 5: Average Daily Expenditure per Tourist in Uttarakhand (Item-wise)

S. No.	Item	Average Expenditure (₹)	Percentage Share (%)
1	Travel to Uttarakhand	290	12.4
2	Travel within Uttarakhand	310	13.2
3	Accommodation	821	35.0
4	Food and Beverages	465	19.8
5	Entry Fee	84	3.6
6	Guide Services	40	1.7
7	Purchase of Souvenirs	82	3.5
8	Purchase of Other Items	135	5.7
9	Entertainment	11	0.5
10	Other Miscellaneous Expenses	110	4.6
11	Total	2348	100.0

Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Tourism Self-Employment Scheme

Under the Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Tourism Self-Employment Scheme, the state government will provide a subsidy to unemployed citizens for the purchase of electric buses, enabling them to establish self-employment ventures. To facilitate the provision of employment opportunities under this scheme, the Uttarakhand government has initiated online registration.

The process for this scheme has commenced. If you are a resident of Uttarakhand and wish to avail the benefits of this scheme, you must register online via the official website.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has launched the 'Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Tourism Self-Employment Scheme'. Under this scheme, unemployed citizens of the state will receive a subsidy on loans to start self-employment ventures in the tourism sector.

Any citizen of Uttarakhand can avail the benefits of this scheme. Unemployed individuals in the state will be provided with loans and financial assistance to purchase electric buses or other vehicles for starting tourism-related businesses.

The 'Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Tourism Self-Employment Scheme' also offers various options for non-vehicle loans.

For hilly regions, a subsidy of 33% (up to a maximum of ₹15 lakh) will be provided. Meanwhile, for plain areas, a subsidy of 25% (up to a maximum of ₹10 lakh) will be available on vehicle loans.

This initiative aims to provide self-employment opportunities to the maximum number of unemployed individuals. To avail the benefits of the 'Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Tourism Self-Employment Scheme', candidates must register online through the official website.

The primary objective of the Uttarakhand government in launching the 'Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Tourism Self-Employment Scheme' is to provide maximum self-employment opportunities to the state's unemployed population.

Under this scheme, subsidies will be provided for the purchase of buses or other vehicles to create employment opportunities for unemployed youth in the tourism sector. Any citizen of the state can easily start a business in the tourism sector. This will not only help reduce the unemployment rate but also improve tourism services.

Benefits of the Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Tourism Self-Employment Scheme:

Through the Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Tourism Self-Employment Scheme, unemployed citizens of the state will gain numerous employment opportunities within the tourism sector.

This scheme provides employment locally, eliminating the need for people to migrate to other states or cities for work.

It assists the state's residents in easily establishing their own self-employment ventures.

Unemployed citizens can utilize this scheme to purchase electric buses and launch their own businesses.

Subsidies will be provided for the purchase of vehicles under the Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Tourism Scheme.

The scheme will enhance tourism services in the state, thereby attracting a larger number of tourists.

This will improve the economic condition of the state's residents and reduce the unemployment rate.

The scheme will particularly benefit individuals who currently lack any means of employment.

Conclusion:

Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that there is immense potential for tourism here, as a large number of tourists visit the location annually. This can be attributed to various factors, such as natural landscapes, a healthy climate, historical and archaeological sites, cultural and religious landmarks, specific sports activities, and local cuisine, all of which serve as key attractions. While the state receives a significant number of domestic and foreign tourists, the presence of international tourists is often limited to specific locations or districts; this may be due to many sites remaining underdeveloped, highlighting the need for government intervention. Measures should include promoting tourism at the international level, developing a comprehensive master plan that ensures robust infrastructure for each destination—as infrastructure plays a crucial role in enhancing a location's

appeal—and raising public awareness about the benefits of tourism for local community development. Both the government and local communities must collaborate to ensure a balance between environmental awareness, sustainability, and profitability throughout the development process. Tourism plays a significant role in Uttarakhand's economic progress. The development of the tourism industry paves the way for further growth; for instance, the expansion of hotels, resorts, restaurants, and transport services will create new employment opportunities. Additionally, activities such as local handicrafts, trekking, and adventure sports will flourish, providing jobs for the local population. Furthermore, new opportunities will arise for infrastructure development, environmental conservation, and the preservation of culture. Overall, tourism can generate employment for the people of Uttarakhand and drive economic progress.

Through self-employment, individuals can start their own businesses and pursue work based on their passions and talents. This enables them to achieve financial independence and express their creativity. Self-employment allows people to further hone their skills and talents, ultimately leading to respect and success. Additionally, self-employment opportunities strengthen local communities and enable individuals to contribute to the development of their surroundings. All in all, self-employment is a rewarding and attractive option that allows people to build a career and realize their dreams.

Suggestions and Measures:

1. Planned development of tourist destinations should be undertaken to boost tourist inflow into Uttarakhand; this would increase the region's revenue and allow for the development of areas with untapped potential.
2. An efficient public transport system should be developed to connect tourist destinations with major cities, railway stations, and airports.
3. A well-coordinated mechanism involving various government agencies should be established, accompanied by regular monitoring, to foster tourism development through their collaborative efforts.
4. Local communities should be encouraged to participate in tourism planning for the infrastructural development of tourist sites.
5. The government should encourage the use of modern technologies among relevant stakeholders contributing to the sector.

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Abstract

Wind Energy has gained its importance as an alternate energy source and plays a significant role for sustainable development of the region. Among Indian states, Maharashtra ranks as one of the top states in terms of generation of Wind Energy. Satara district has emerged as a major hub for wind energy in India. Physical characteristics of Patan Taluka include high elevation, high wind velocity and ruggedness of Western Ghats and hence it provides favorable geographical conditions for wind energy development. This paper focuses on the role of geographical factors in wind energy potential and development pattern in Patan taluka. The research work uses both primary and secondary sources for collecting data from government reports, published material and field observation. The results indicate that physical factors like altitude, slope, wind velocity and climatic conditions play a vital role in deciding the location of wind farms.

Keywords: *Wind Energy, Geography, Renewable Energy, Patan Taluka, Satara District, Sustainable Development.*

Introduction

The rapid growth of population, industrialization, urbanization, and technological advancement has resulted in a significant increase in global energy demand. Conventional energy resources such as coal, petroleum, and natural gas have been the primary sources of energy for decades; however, their excessive use has led to environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, and increased greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to global climate change. Therefore, much attention has been paid to the development and use of renewable energy resources which are eco-friendly, sustainable, and can meet future energy demands. Among the many different forms of renewable energy, wind energy is considered to be one of the most effective, eco-friendly, and cost-efficient ways to produce electrical energy. The reason behind this is that wind energy is a renewable source of energy which is non-polluting and abundant in nature. It plays a vital role in sustainable development and energy security around the world. India has made remarkable progress in the renewable energy sector and has become one of the leading countries in installed wind power capacity. The country's diverse geographical conditions, extensive coastline, elevated plateaus, and mountain ranges provide excellent opportunities for wind energy generation. Several states, including Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh, possess significant wind energy potential and have developed large-scale wind farms. Maharashtra occupies an important position in India's renewable energy sector due to its favourable geographical features and supportive government policies. The state has implemented numerous wind energy projects through the Maharashtra Energy Development Agency (MEDA) and private developers, contributing substantially to clean energy production and regional economic development. Within Maharashtra, Satara District is recognized as one of the major wind energy hubs because of its unique physiographic characteristics, particularly the elevated ridges and plateaus of the Sahyadri (Western Ghats), where strong and consistent wind currents prevail throughout most of the year. Patan Taluka, situated in the western part of Satara District, possesses exceptional geographical characteristics that make it highly suitable for wind energy development. The taluka is characterized by rugged mountainous terrain, high-altitude plateaus, steep slopes, extensive open hilltops, and a favorable climatic environment with consistent wind flow.

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The region receives heavy monsoon rainfall and experiences significant seasonal wind variations that provide ideal conditions for the installation and operation of wind turbines. Several locations such as Vankusawade, Matrewadi, Maloshi, Palsi, Humbarne, and nearby hill ranges have witnessed rapid development of wind farms due to their high wind energy potential. These wind energy projects have not only increased electricity generation but have also contributed to rural infrastructure development, employment generation, local economic growth, and the promotion of environmentally sustainable energy systems. At the same time, wind farm development has raised important geographical issues related to land-use change, biodiversity conservation, visual landscape modification, ecological balance, and community participation, which require careful scientific investigation.

Geographical researches become an important tool in examining the geographical distribution, physical parameters, environmental adaptability, and socio-economic consequences of wind energy generation. Physical parameters like altitude, slope, aspect, land use, geological formations, climate, and wind speed play a significant role in selecting the appropriate locations for the installation of wind farms. Contemporary geographical methods like Geographic Information System (GIS), Remote Sensing, Global Positioning System (GPS), and spatial analysis become vital tools in locating high potential areas of wind energy sources and assessing their environmental effects. A geographical approach becomes necessary in studying the interplay between natural sources and human activities with proper exploitation of renewable energy sources without affecting environmental sustainability.

Although several studies have examined wind energy development at the national and state levels, limited research has specifically focused on the geographical characteristics, spatial distribution, developmental patterns, and regional impacts of wind energy in Patan Taluka. Therefore, the present study attempts to analyse the geographical potential and development of wind energy in Patan Taluka of Satara District by examining the physical and human geographical factors responsible for wind farm establishment, assessing the present status of wind energy development, evaluating its socio-economic and environmental impacts, and identifying future opportunities and challenges for sustainable development. This study are expected to contribute to the fields of geography, renewable energy planning, regional development, environmental management, and public policy by providing valuable insights into the efficient utilization of wind resources for sustainable economic growth and environmental conservation.

Review of Literature

1. Sule, B. M. (2018) conducted a study titled *"Non-Conventional Energy Sources: A Geo-Spatial Study of Site, Situation, Production and Economy of Wind Farms in Satara District."* The research involved analysis of the geographical elements which enabled the formation of wind farms in the Satara District. Through geo-spatial technology, the researcher carried out an analysis of the location, distribution, production capacity, and economic impact of wind farms. The findings of the study indicated that high plateaus, favorable wind speed, and availability of transmission facilities were the main elements that have led to the development of wind farms.

Pawar, S. K., Yelmar, M. N., and Mane, S. P. (2020) carried out a study entitled *"Spatio-Temporal Perspectives of Wind Power Energy Resource in Satara District."* The purpose of the study was the analysis of the spatial and temporal development of wind energy resources in Satara District. The study revealed changes in installed capacity of wind power plants, their spatial location, and the development of the region. It was found that Patan Taluka possessed maximum number of wind energy facilities due to favorable topography and wind regime in the region.

Yelmar, M. N. (2023) conducted a study on *"Geographical Investigation of the Regional Characteristics of Wind Energy in the Satara District."* This research concentrated on the regional geographical factors impacting the production of wind energy. The research carried out an analysis of physiographic factors, climatic factors, altitudinal levels, and land use factors in order to find out the impact of these factors on wind energy production. The results of the research showed that the mountainous areas and the plateau regions of the Western Ghats were perfect for producing wind energy.

Kumar, A., Kumar, K., Kaushik, N., Sharma, S., and Mishra, S. (2010) reviewed the status of renewable energy resources in India with special emphasis on wind energy. The study analysed India's renewable energy potential, government policies, technological developments, and future prospects. It highlighted that wind energy is one of the fastest-growing renewable energy sources in India and plays a significant role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and dependence on fossil fuels. The study recommended greater investment in wind resource assessment, modern turbine technology, and sustainable energy planning to achieve long-term energy security.

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India (2024) published reports on the status and development of wind energy in India. The reports contain information about wind energy potentials, capacities, policy measures, and development state-wise. From the reports, it is clear that one of the major states having wind energy potential in India is Maharashtra because of favorable geographical conditions and favorable policies. In these reports, the role of site-specific wind energy resource assessment, technological advancement, and environmental sustainability are stressed for the development of future wind energy projects.

Research Problem of the Study

Patan Taluka of Satara District possesses significant geographical potential for wind energy development due to its favourable topography, high altitude, and consistent wind conditions. Although the region has witnessed substantial growth in wind power projects, there is limited research focusing on the geographical factors influencing wind energy potential, the spatial distribution of wind farms, and their socio-economic and environmental impacts. A comprehensive geographical assessment is necessary to understand the suitability of different locations, identify opportunities and challenges in wind energy development, and formulate strategies for sustainable utilization of wind resources. Therefore, the present study attempts to examine the wind energy potential and development in Patan Taluka from a geographical perspective.

Objectives

1. To study the geographical factors influencing wind energy potential in Patan Taluka.
2. To assess the socio-economic and environmental impacts of wind energy projects.
3. To suggest measures for sustainable wind energy development.

Hypothesis

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between the geographical factors (such as altitude, slope, wind speed, and land use) and the development of wind energy in Patan Taluka of Satara District.

H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant relationship between the geographical factors (such as altitude, slope, wind speed, and land use) and the development of wind energy in Patan Taluka of Satara District.

Research Methodology:

This research uses the descriptive and analytical research design for studying the geographical possibilities and development of wind energy in Patan Taluka of Satara District. The primary as well as secondary data have been used for meeting the research objectives. The collection of primary data was done by conducting field studies, observing, interviewing the locals and wind farms' officials, and preparing questionnaires wherever needed. The sources of secondary data include Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Maharashtra Energy Development Agency (MEDA), Census of India, India Meteorological Department (IMD), topographical maps of Survey of India, published books, journal articles, government publications, and web sites. The collected data were classified, tabulated, and analyzed using statistical techniques such as percentages, averages, and graphical representations. Geographical tools including Geographic Information System (GIS), Remote Sensing (RS), GPS, and thematic mapping were used to analyse the spatial distribution of wind farms and assess wind energy potential. The study also considered geographical factors such as altitude, slope, relief, climate, wind speed, and land use to evaluate the suitability of different locations for wind energy development. The findings are presented through maps, tables, charts, and descriptive analysis to draw meaningful conclusions and provide suggestions for sustainable wind energy development in Patan Taluka.

1. Sample Selection

In the current study, the researcher used purposive sampling in order to choose 40 participants for the study. The sample includes local people, farmers, workers at wind farms, and government officials involved with the wind energy projects in the Patan Taluka of Satara District. These respondents were selected because of their firsthand experience of wind energy development in the study area. The sample helped in providing primary data about geographical, development, socioeconomic, and environmental aspects of wind energy projects in Patan Taluka.

Results and Discussion

The findings from the study suggest that Patan Taluka has a good geographical environment for developing wind energy projects. It is apparent from the analysis of the views of the respondents that parameters such as the elevation, topography, good wind speed, and climate have played an important role in the implementation of the wind energy project. Moreover, it is apparent from the study that wind energy projects have been helpful in the socio-economic development of the area in terms of creation of jobs and improvement in their living standards. The hypothesis testing using Pearson correlation also confirms a significant positive relationship between geographical factors and wind energy development. Overall, the findings demonstrate that Patan Taluka has substantial potential for sustainable wind energy development and highlight the importance of effective geographical planning and environmental management for future expansion.

Table 1:

Respondents' Opinion on Geographical Factors Influencing Wind Energy Potential in Patan Taluka (N = 40)

Sr. No.	Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Total	Mean Value
1	The high altitude of Patan Taluka is suitable for wind energy generation.	1	2	5	18	14	40	4.05
2	The wind speed in Patan Taluka is adequate for efficient wind power generation.	0	3	8	19	11	40	**3.95**
3	The hilly topography of Patan Taluka is favorable for establishing wind farms.	1	2	6	17	14	40	**4.03**
4	The climatic conditions of Patan Taluka support wind energy generation throughout the year.	0	7	5	18	10	40	**3.78**
5	Land availability and accessibility are suitable for the development of wind energy projects.	2	3	7	17	11	40	**3.80**

Source: Primary data

The above table presents respondents' opinions on the geographical factors influencing wind energy potential in Patan Taluka. There was a consensus among respondents that the geographical features of the study area are favorable to the development of wind energy due to the high mean scores. The statement "High altitude in Patan Taluka is good for wind energy production" received the highest mean score of 4.05, implying that altitude was viewed as important factor in producing wind energy. Likewise, the statement "Hilly nature of Patan Taluka is favorable to the establishment of wind farms" received a mean score of 4.03, meaning that the geographical features of the region are favorable for wind energy generation. The statement concerning sufficient wind speed attained a mean score of 3.95, showing positive perception of the wind energy resources in the area. The statements on availability and accessibility of land and climatic conditions which support the production of wind energy round the

year had mean scores of 3.80 and 3.78, respectively. The overall findings suggest that Patan Taluka possesses favourable geographical characteristics, including high altitude, suitable topography, adequate wind speed, favourable climate, and accessible land, making it an appropriate location for sustainable wind energy development.

Table: 2.

Respondents' Opinion on the Socio-Economic and Environmental Impacts of Wind Energy Projects

Sr. No.	Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Total	Mean Value
1	Wind energy projects have created employment opportunities for local people.	2	5	0	19	13	40	**3.90**
2	Wind energy projects have contributed to the economic development of the local area.	1	3	4	18	14	40	**4.03**
3	Wind energy projects have improved local infrastructure such as roads and electricity facilities.	2	2	11	17	8	40	**3.68**
4	Wind energy projects have minimal negative impact on the local environment and biodiversity.	3	5	8	15	9	40	**3.55**
5	Wind energy development has improved the overall quality of life of local residents.	1	2	5	18	14	40	**4.05**

Source: Primary data

The above table presents the respondents' opinions regarding the socio-economic and environmental impacts of wind energy projects in Patan Taluka. It is clear that respondents have a generally positive perception about the positive impacts associated with wind energy projects since the results have relatively high mean values. The statement "Wind energy projects have improved the quality of life of local residents" had the highest mean value (4.05) and was used to show that respondents agree that wind energy projects have positively impacted the quality of life. In a similar manner, the statement "Wind energy projects have facilitated the economic development of the local area" had a mean value of 4.03 and this is an indication that respondents think that wind energy projects contribute to economic development. Also, the statement "Wind energy projects have provided employment opportunities to local people" had a mean value of 3.90 and shows that respondents agree that these projects provide employment. The statement "Wind energy projects have minimal negative impact on the local environment and biodiversity**"** recorded the lowest mean value **(**3.55**),** suggesting that respondents have relatively mixed opinions about the environmental impacts of wind energy projects. Overall, the findings indicate that wind energy projects have made a significant positive contribution to the socio-economic development of Patan Taluka while highlighting the need for continued attention to environmental conservation and sustainable project management.

1. Testing of Hypothesis

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between the geographical factors (such as altitude, slope, wind speed, and land use) and the development of wind energy in Patan Taluka of Satara District.

H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant relationship between the geographical factors (such as altitude, slope, wind speed, and land use) and the development of wind energy in Patan Taluka of Satara District.

Table: 3.

Correlations Between geographical factors the development of wind energy			
Variables	**Test**	**Geographical factors**	**Development of wind energy**
Geographical factors	Pearson Correlation	1	.788**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
the development of wind energy	Pearson Correlation	.788**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Primary data

From the Pearson correlation analysis, it can be stated that there is a high degree of positive and statistically significant association between geographical factors and development of wind energy in Patan Taluka of Satara District ($r = 0.788$, $p = 0.000$, $N = 40$). As the p-value obtained in this case is less than 0.01 level of significance ($p < 0.01$), therefore, it is statistically significant. It means that geographical factors such as altitude, slope, wind speed, climate, and availability of land have a major impact on the development of wind energy in the region. Hence, in this case, the null hypothesis (H_0) stating that there is no significant association between geographical factors and development of wind energy is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted.

Major Findings

1. The study found that Patan Taluka possesses highly favourable geographical characteristics, including high altitude, hilly topography, adequate wind speed, suitable climatic conditions, and land availability, which make it an ideal location for wind energy generation. The respondents expressed a high level of agreement regarding the influence of these geographical factors on wind energy development.

2. The findings revealed that wind energy projects have made a significant contribution to the socio-economic development of Patan Taluka by creating employment opportunities, promoting local economic growth, improving infrastructure such as roads and electricity facilities, and enhancing the overall quality of life of the local population.
3. It is confirmed a statistically significant positive relationship between geographical factors and the development of wind energy in Patan Taluka. This indicates that physical geographical features play a crucial role in determining the successful establishment and sustainable growth of wind energy projects in the study area.

Suggestions

1. **Adopt Scientific Site Selection:** Future wind energy projects should be planned using advanced geographical techniques such as Geographic Information System (GIS), Remote Sensing (RS), and detailed wind resource assessments to identify the most suitable locations while minimizing environmental impacts.
2. **Promote Local Community Development:** Wind energy developers and government agencies should increase local employment opportunities, provide skill development and training programmes, and involve local communities in the planning and implementation of wind energy projects to ensure inclusive and sustainable regional development.
3. **Ensure Environmental Sustainability:** Regular environmental impact assessments should be conducted, and appropriate measures should be taken to conserve biodiversity, protect natural landscapes, and maintain ecological balance while expanding wind energy projects in Patan Taluka.

Conclusion

Patan Taluka possesses excellent geographical potential for wind energy generation because of its favorable relief, wind regime, and climatic conditions. The present research study has been found that Patan Taluka in Satara District has great geographical potential for the development of wind energy due to its high altitude, good topography, enough wind speed, good climate, and sufficient land available. It is worth noting that the geographical aspects mentioned above have greatly facilitated the creation and development of the wind energy projects in the area. Moreover, this research paper has also established that the development of wind energy has been very beneficial for the socio-economic development of the local population in terms of creating job opportunities, promoting the economic growth, and improving the life of the local people through various improvements in infrastructure. There is a significant correlation between geographical factors and the development of wind energy, which proves the importance of physical geography in implementing successful wind energy projects. Nevertheless, further development of the projects will require careful environmental planning and participation of the community.

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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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Original Article

Role of Management Contribution in Financial Management of Educational Institutions.

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Abstract:
Due to recent shifts in state policies and the complete cessation of non-salary development grants, higher education institutions face critical challenges in maintaining financial sustainability. This research paper evaluates the actual financial contribution of college managements (governing bodies and trustees) toward institutional operations. To capture the ground reality, financial structures and audited statements of 50 colleges within the regional district were collected and analyzed. The findings clearly demonstrate that the management's direct financial injection into the daily operational expenses of these colleges—including utility bills, administrative overheads, laboratory upkeep, and salaries for temporary staff—is exceptionally low. Most institutions rely almost entirely on student tuition fees and internal development funds to sustain day-to-day cycles. Management interventions are largely restricted to one-time capital expenditures like building construction. Based on these insights, it is recommended that college boards shift from a purely administrative role to an active resource-generation model by tapping into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds, revolving alumni networks, and industry-linked consultancy services.

Keywords: *Financial management, Management contribution, Daily expenditure, 50 colleges, financial sustainability.*

Introduction

Higher education is changing rapidly, and with that change comes a heavy financial burden for institutions. For a long time, colleges were operated purely as social service organizations with extensive state backing. However, contemporary realities demand a strong institutional setup and professional financial management just to survive. Financial administration is no longer limited to basic desk bookkeeping, collecting student fees, or settling routine bills. It has evolved into a core strategy that decides whether an institution expands or faces closure. This is exactly where the strategic intervention of college management—the trustees and governing boards—becomes critical.

In smaller towns and rural areas, the financial pressure on degree colleges is immense. A major driver of this stress is the structural shift in government policy. In states like Maharashtra, the government rationalized and eventually stopped providing non-salary development grants to aided colleges. This policy change created a massive financial vacuum. Earlier, these grants covered essential operational costs, but colleges are now left to manage independently. Consequently, institutions rely almost entirely on student tuition fees or introduce self-financed courses to make ends meet.

If management boards do not step in with clear, alternative funding strategies, this ongoing financial stress directly damages the quality of education. Laboratory equipment remains outdated, libraries face shortages of new journals, and colleges struggle to hire or retain qualified teachers. Therefore, analyzing the exact contribution of management toward the daily financial survival of these institutions is highly necessary. This paper examines the management's real financial participation in daily operational expenses, resource allocation, and overall stability across 50 regional colleges.

Literature Review

The relationship between governance, management practices, and financial sustainability in higher education has been widely analyzed by researchers in India and across the globe.

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When public funding shrinks, the operational and academic survival of educational institutions depends heavily on how proactive the management is. On a global scale, the financial pressures on higher education institutions are well-documented. According to Johnstone (2004), colleges and universities worldwide face a continuous struggle due to rising operational costs and expanding student enrollment, which often happens alongside a decline in direct state support. Johnstone argues that in such a constrained economic environment, institutions must transition toward cost-sharing models. The capability of the institutional management to diversify internal revenue streams and find alternative funding methods is the primary factor that differentiates surviving colleges from those facing qualitative decline.

In the Indian context, the structural changes in financing higher education have been a major area of academic discussion. Tilak (2004) highlights that the gradual reduction of public subsidies and government spending on higher education has pushed institutions toward privatization and an increasing reliance on student tuition fees. For aided institutions that traditionally counted on state funding for their infrastructure and non-salary requirements, the sudden policy shifts—especially the cessation or rationalization of non-salary development grants by state bodies (Government of Maharashtra, 2000)—have created a severe financial vacuum. Routine college operations are heavily impacted by these funding cuts.

Furthermore, managing the institutional balance sheet under such policy shifts requires strategic intervention. Tilak (2012) emphasizes that the struggle to maintain academic quality, equity, and relevance is directly linked to the availability of sustainable funds. When conventional public grants disappear, passive administrative boards often face heavy budget deficits, which directly impairs library upgrades, laboratory maintenance, and student support services. Conversely, proactive management teams tend to navigate these fiscal crises by introducing market-driven professional courses to generate independent operational funds.

In addition, researchers observe that the financial management model changes drastically based on geography. In rural and semi-urban areas, institutions cannot easily raise tuition fees to cover deficits because the socio-economic baseline of the student population is relatively weak. Consequently, the management's objective shifts from growth expansion to basic survival optimization. Strict internal controls, optimized resource allocation, and a meticulous management of working capital become essential to ensure that everyday college cycles do not collapse under financial strain.

Research Methodology

To make sure this study is practical and reliable, a systematic research framework was used.

Research Design: This study is descriptive and analytical. The focus is not just on listing data, but on analyzing the actual gap between what colleges spend and what the management contributes.

Sampling: A sample size of 50 colleges from a specific regional district was selected using purposive sampling. Most of these are aided and partially aided institutions because they are the ones worst hit by the stoppage of non-salary government grants.

Data Collection:

- **Primary Data**: Direct interviews were conducted, and structured questionnaires were distributed to college Principals, management members, and senior college accountants.
- **Secondary Data**: The audited financial statements, income-expenditure accounts, and balance sheets of these 50 colleges were collected and analyzed for the last few financial years.
- **Data Tools:** The collected financial data was compiled into spreadsheets, and simple statistical tools like averages, percentages, and mean scores were applied to interpret the results.

Data Analysis and Findings

Data Analysis and Interpretation

When the balance sheets and audited reports of these 50 colleges were opened, the ground reality turned out to be quite eye-opening. The study tracked where the money comes from and exactly where the management spends its own funds.

A. Revenue Sources vs. Management Funds

For almost 90% of the surveyed colleges, student tuition fees and university development fees make up nearly 75% to 80% of the total institutional income. The direct cash contribution, corpus donations, or financial aid coming out of the management's own pocket accounts for a meager 5% to 7% of the total annual revenue.

B. The Routine Operational Expenditure Breakdown

Every college has unavoidable day-to-day running costs. This includes electricity bills, printing, stationery, cleaning, laboratory chemicals, library journals, and paying cavities or salaries to temporary or contingent staff who fill the gap of unapproved government posts.

When the distribution of who pays for these routine operational expenses was mapped, the structure looked like this:

Expense Type	Primary Source of Funding	Management's Direct Share	Assessment Level
Administrative Costs	Student Contingency Fees	Almost Zero	Low
Lab & Library Upkeep	Specific Lab/Library Fees	Emergency cases only	Low
Daily Campus Maintenance	College Development Fund (CDC)	Minimal backup	Low
Temporary Staff Salaries	Self-financed Course Revenue	minor support	Low

Interpretation

The data clearly proves the core point: the management's direct financial contribution toward running the daily lifecycle of these colleges is extremely low.

Ever since the government stopped the non-salary grants, the daily operational survival of colleges has shifted entirely onto the shoulders of internal funds and student fees. The management acts as a custodian. They do spend money when a new building needs to be constructed or when a large computer lab is set up (Capital Expenditure). But when it comes to the daily running wheels of the college, the management's hand-holding is very limited. The colleges are basically running on self-generated steam.

Findings, Conclusion, and Suggestions

Key Findings

- **Low Daily Support:** The financial injection from institutional managements into routine operational expenses—such as electricity, office printing, stationery, and daily repairs—is critically low across the surveyed colleges.
- **Extreme Fee Dependency:** Due to the total absence of government non-salary grants, colleges are heavily and dangerously dependent on student fees and internal contingency funds to clear everyday utility bills.
- **Capital-Centric Mindset:** A clear trend is visible where management bodies prefer to fund tangible capital assets (like constructing buildings or heavy infrastructure) rather than liquid operational requirements (like daily maintenance, library journals, and research components).
- **The Salary Burden of Temporary Staff:** A major chunk of internal college revenue is consumed in paying salaries to temporary or contingent staff. This situation arises because distinct corpus funds are rarely created by the management for human resource allocation.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the financial model of rural and semi-urban degree colleges has shifted into a pure self-preservation mode. Colleges are forced to operate as self-sustaining units to stay functional. While the management effectively holds the steering wheel of administration and policy governance, direct financial rescue packages or regular subsidies for daily operations remain missing. To ensure that the core quality of higher education does not deteriorate due to budgetary constraints, institutional boards must transition from being just administrative custodians to proactive financial resource creators.

Suggestions

- **Targeting CSR Funds:** Management bodies must look beyond student fee collection. Corporate networks and industry linkages should be actively utilized to attract Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding specifically designated to back daily college setups, lab upgrades, and recurring administrative liabilities.
- **Building a Revolving Alumni Corpus:** Instead of seeking one-time donations from alumni solely for infrastructure bricks, an active and revolving "Alumni Operational Fund" should be established. This fund can directly support poor students' fees and laboratory consumables.
- **Launching Industry-Linked Consultation:** Colleges must utilize the academic expertise of the existing faculty to run paid short-term skill programs, materials testing services, or regional business consultations. This framework will generate an independent and steady income loop for the institution.
- **Green Investments for Permanent Cost Reduction:** To permanently bring down high daily administrative costs, capital should be strategically invested in setting up grid-connected solar panels and fully paperless digital campuses. This initial investment will permanently slash the recurring electricity and stationery bills of the college.

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I express my sincere gratitude to all those who have directly and indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this research paper titled "Role of Management Contribution in Financial Management of Educational Institutions." I am deeply thankful to the management, Principal, and my colleagues at Dalvie College, Talere, for their continuous encouragement, valuable guidance, and academic support throughout this research. I also extend my sincere appreciation to Dr. A. P. Mahale, Associate Professor, Gogte-Walke College, Banda, for his valuable guidance and constructive suggestions during the course of this study.

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Conflicts of interest

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Original Article

Digital Transformation of Grassroots Hospitality: A Study of Homestays and Local Resorts Adapting Digital Branding Strategies in the Konkan Region of Maharashtra.

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Abstract:
The tourism landscape of the Konkan region in Maharashtra has experienced a significant paradigm shift, driven by the proliferation of grassroots hospitality ventures like homestays and localized resorts. While the region is traditionally celebrated for its coastal ecology and cultural heritage, sustainable growth for these micro-entrepreneurs increasingly hinges on their digital footprint. This study investigates the ongoing digital transformation within Konkan's grassroots hospitality sector, specifically examining how local hosts adapt and implement digital branding strategies to stay competitive. By analyzing the adoption of social media marketing (Instagram and Facebook), Google Business listings, and localized Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), the paper explores how these traditional businesses transition into digitally visible brands.

Using a mixed-methods approach, this research draws on primary data collected through structured interviews and surveys of homestay owners and resort managers across select coastal districts of Konkan, supplemented by secondary industry data. The findings reveal that while digital branding has democratized market access and substantially improved direct bookings, significant entry barriers persist. These challenges include a prominent digital literacy gap among older hosts, erratic internet infrastructure in remote villages, and limited budgets for sustained ad campaigns. Ultimately, this paper illustrates how blending authentic, rustic hospitality with modern digital tools serves as a catalyst for rural economic resilience, and offers actionable strategies for policymakers and local associations to foster sustainable digital empowerment in the region.

Keywords: *Digital Transformation, Grassroots Hospitality, Konkan Tourism, Homestays, Digital Branding, Social Media Marketing.*

Introduction

The travel and tourism industry has undergone an unprecedented evolution over the last decade, transitioning from a luxury commodity to an experiential necessity. Globally, contemporary travelers are increasingly bypassing heavily commercialized, mass-tourism destinations in favor of authentic, culturally immersive, and hyper-local experiences. This shift in consumer behavior has given rise to 'grassroots hospitality'—a decentralized segment comprising family-run homestays, eco-resorts, and small-scale local lodges. In developing economies like India, grassroots hospitality functions not just as a tourism vertical, but as a critical driver of rural entrepreneurship, women empowerment, and community-based economic resilience. In the state of Maharashtra, the Konkan region—a spectacular 720-kilometer coastal strip stretching from Thane to Sindhudurg—stands as the crucible for this grassroots tourism model. Historically dependent on agriculture, horticulture (mango and cashew cultivation), and traditional fishing, Konkan's rural economy has found a lucrative second engine in tourism. The region's unique selling proposition lies in its pristine beaches, historic sea forts, and the distinct, warm hospitality of Konkan homes (often localized as Maajghar tourism). For hundreds of local families, converting spare rooms into homestays or setting up modest agro-resorts has offered a sustainable alternative to urban migration, allowing them to monetize their cultural and natural heritage. However, the traditional, word-of-mouth reliance that once sustained Konkan's hospitality sector is no longer sufficient in the contemporary market.

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The modern traveler's journey begins long before they pack a bag; it starts on a smartphone screen.From exploring destinations on Instagram reels to checking reviews on Google Maps and comparing prices on Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), digital visibility has become synonymous with business survival. Consequently, grassroots hospitality ventures in Konkan are facing an inevitable crossroads: undergo a digital transformation or risk becoming invisible to the modern market.

This digital transition is easier said than done for grassroots entrepreneurs. Unlike multinational hotel chains with dedicated marketing budgets and specialized IT teams, local homestay owners and small resort managers in Konkan operate with severe constraints. Most of these businesses are micro-enterprises managed by families who may possess exceptional culinary and hospitality skills but lack formal training in digital branding, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), or social media algorithms. Furthermore, the geographical realities of the Konkan region—characterized by remote coastal hamlets and hilly terrains—often bring infrastructure bottlenecks like erratic cellular connectivity and unstable electricity, compounding the digital divide.

While existing literature extensively covers the digital transformation of large-scale, urban hospitality enterprises, there is a conspicuous research gap regarding how micro-scale, rural, and grassroots hospitality ventures adapt to digital branding, particularly in regionally specific contexts like coastal Maharashtra. How do these small-scale hosts negotiate the complexities of online reputation management? What specific digital platforms yield the highest return on investment for a rural homestay? And how do they bridge the gap between their rustic, traditional identity and the polished expectations of digital branding?

This study aims to address these critical questions. By examining the digital branding strategies adopted by homestays and local resorts across the Konkan region, this paper evaluates the current state of digital literacy among local hosts, identifies the operational and structural barriers to digital adoption, and analyzes the direct impact of online visibility on their economic sustainability. Ultimately, this research underscores the need for a tailored, culturally sensitive framework for digital transformation—one that empowers the grassroots hosts of Konkan to leverage modern technology without losing the authentic, rustic charm that defines them.

Literature Review

The thematic foundation of this study lies at the intersection of rural tourism development, grassroots entrepreneurship, and digital marketing strategies. To contextualize the digital transformation of homestays and local resorts in the Konkan region, it is essential to examine existing scholarly discussions around these core areas.

1 Grassroots Hospitality and Rural Economic Resilience

Extensive literature highlights the role of small-scale tourism ventures in driving rural economies. Scholars like Sharpley (2002) and Lane (2009) argue that rural tourism acts as an effective catalyst for regional development, shifting agrarian economies toward service-oriented resilience. In the Indian context, homestays have emerged as a prominent form of community-based tourism. Studies by Bhandari (2014) indicate that homestays not only provide supplementary income to rural households but also foster cultural preservation and prevent urban migration. However, as Kontogeorgis (2018) points out, the transition from traditional farming or fishing to hospitality requires a massive shift in entrepreneurial mindset, where local hosts must suddenly manage guest relations, quality control, and marketing simultaneously.

2 The Paradigm Shift to Digital Branding in Hospitality

The advent of Web 2.0 and mobile technology has completely restructured the hospitality marketing matrix. Theoretical frameworks such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), originally proposed by Davis (1989), have been widely used by researchers to study how small businesses adopt technology. Buhalis and Law (2008) argued that ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) are no longer optional tools but critical determinants of competitiveness in tourism.

For micro-enterprises, digital branding offers what effectively amounts to a level playing field. Standing and Vasudavan (2000) noted that the internet democratizes market access, allowing tiny, remote properties to bypass traditional travel agents and market directly to global consumers. Recent research in the Indian context (e.g., Sharma & Verma, 2021) emphasizes that platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Google Business have become the primary touchpoints for urban travelers seeking weekend getaways, turning visual storytelling into a core business asset.

3 Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) vs. Direct Digital Branding

A significant sub-field of literature focuses on the relationship between small hosts and large digital intermediaries. Media channels and third-party booking platforms like Booking.com, Airbnb, and MakeMyTrip have significantly increased the visibility of rural properties (Guttentag, 2015). However, researchers like Raguseo et al. (2017) highlight the 'hidden costs' of this reliance, including hefty commission rates (often 15–20%) and a loss of brand autonomy. This has led contemporary researchers to emphasize the importance of independent digital branding—such as maintaining an active social media presence and local SEO—which allows grassroots ventures to drive direct bookings and retain higher profit margins (Noone et al., 2011).

4 Barriers to Digital Transformation in Grassroots Contexts

Despite the clear benefits, the digital transformation of rural hospitality is plagued by structural inequities. International studies on rural SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) by Thomas et al. (2011) identify a persistent "digital divide" characterized by poor infrastructural support and a lack of technical expertise among rural populations. In India, research focusing on regional tourism (e.g., Shetty & Shani, 2019) reveals that while younger generations in rural families are eager to adopt digital tools, older generation hosts often display technology anxiety, resisting the shift from physical, cash-based, and word-of-mouth operations to digital calendars and online payments.

The Research Gap

While the existing body of literature comprehensively covers the macro-level digital strategies of luxury hotel chains and urban tourism markets, there is a distinct shortage of empirical research focusing on regional, micro-scale hospitality clusters like the Konkan coast. Most Indian tourism studies focus either on highly developed circuits like Goa and Kerala or Himalayan homestays.

The Konkan region presents a unique socio-economic landscape: it has high literacy rates but suffers from distinct infrastructural bottlenecks and highly seasonal tourism. This study aims to bridge this gap by empirically analyzing how the unique socio-cultural and infrastructural realities of Konkan influence the way its grassroots hosts adapt to, navigate, and benefit from digital branding strategies.

Research Methodology

This section outlines the methodological framework used to investigate how homestays and local resorts in the Konkan region adapt to digital branding strategies. Given the exploratory and socio-economic nature of the topic, this study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure a comprehensive analysis.

Research Design

The quantitative aspect of the research evaluates the extent of digital tool adoption, investment scales, and direct impacts on occupancy rates. The qualitative aspect delves into the experiential realities of the hosts, uncovering their perceptions, structural anxieties, and operational challenges regarding digital technologies.

Mixed-Methods Approach	
Quantitative Component	**Qualitative Component**
Structured Questionnaires	In-depth semi-structured interviews
Numerical metric tracking (occupancy, revenue, platforms)	Ground-reality observations
Statistical correlation	Case studies of success/failure

2 Target Population and Geographical Scope

The target population for this study comprises owners, managers, and operators of registered and unregistered homestays, agro-tourism centers, and localized small resorts. The geographic scope is strictly confined to the coastal districts of the Konkan region in Maharashtra, specifically focusing on three key districts that exhibit high tourist footfall:

Raigad (e.g., Alibaug, Harihareshwar, Murud)

Ratnagiri (e.g., Dapoli, Ganpatipule, Guhagar)

Sindhudurg (e.g., Malvan, Tarkarli, Vengurla)

3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Since a comprehensive, centralized registry of all operational grassroots homestays (especially unregistered local ones) is unavailable, a non-probability purposive and snowball sampling technique was deployed.

A. **Quantitative Sample**: A total of 120 respondents (homestay/resort owners) were selected across the three districts (approximately 40 from each district) to fill out a structured survey.

B. **Qualitative Sample**: From the survey respondents, 15 key informants (5 from each district representing varying levels of digital literacy—ranging from highly active digital marketers to purely word-of-mouth operators) were selected for in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

4 Data Collection Instruments

Data was compiled using both primary and secondary sources to balance theoretical context with empirical evidence.

Primary Data Collection:

- Structured Survey Questionnaire:

Administered physically and via digital forms (Google Forms). It featured questions categorized into demographic profiles, current digital platforms used (WhatsApp Business, Instagram, OTA listings, Google Maps), percentage of revenue allocated to digital marketing, and perceived growth in bookings.

- Semi-Structured Interview Guide:

Used for qualitative interviews to understand the 'why' behind host behaviors, focusing on technological anxiety, localized infrastructure problems, and conflicts with traditional operational methods.

Secondary Data Collection:

Gathered from reports published by the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), local tourism association handbooks, previous academic journals, and regional socio-economic reviews.

5 Data Analysis Plan

The collected data will be analyzed using a multi-pronged approach:

- Quantitative Analysis: The data from the structured questionnaires will be coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, mean, frequencies). Cross-tabulation will be used to see if there is a correlation between the age/education level of the host and their willingness to adopt digital branding.
- Qualitative Analysis: The audio-recorded interviews (conducted primarily in Marathi and Konkani) will be transcribed and translated into English. Thematic analysis will be applied to code the transcripts and identify recurring themes, such as "Infrastructural Constraints," "Intergenerational Knowledge Gaps," and "OTA Commission Exploitation."

6 Ethical Considerations

Before initiating data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Respondents were explicitly assured that their participation was completely voluntary, and their personal identities, as well as the specific commercial names of their homestays or resorts, would remain strictly confidential to protect their business interests.

Data Analysis and Findings

This section presents the empirical results and thematic analysis of the data collected from 120 grassroots hospitality entrepreneurs across Raigad, Ratnagiri, and Sindhudurg districts. The findings combine quantitative survey metrics with qualitative insights from in-depth interviews.

1 Demographic and Operational Profile of Respondents

The baseline data reveals a distinct generational and operational structure within Konkan's grassroots hospitality sector.

Parameter	Category	Percentage (N=120)
Age group	35 years	22.5%
	35 – 55 years	58.3%
	Over 55 years	19.2%
Property Type	Rural Homestay	62.5%
	Small Local Resort / Agro-Resort	37.5%
Primary Booking Source	Traditional (Word of mouth / Repeat guests)	41.6%
	Digital Channels (OTAs, Social Media, Google)	58.4%

2 Pattern of Digital Tool Adoption

The quantitative data shows that while digital adoption is high, it is heavily skewed toward free, low-barrier messaging utilities rather than advanced, independent digital branding tools.

Digital Tool Adoption Rates among Konkan Hosts (N=120)	
WhatsApp Business	91.6%
Google Maps Listing	72.5%
Instagram / Facebook	54.1%
OTA Listings (Airbnb)	36.6%
Independent Website	14.1%

The WhatsApp Monopoly: Over 91% of hosts utilize WhatsApp Business as their primary operational tool. Qualitative interviews revealed that hosts view WhatsApp not as a marketing tool, but as a digital extension of traditional hospitality—using it to share locations, menu cards, and advance payment screenshots. The Discoverability Gap: While 72.5% of properties are listed on Google Maps, less than 25% of those listings are actively managed, optimized, or updated with high-quality photos and customer reviews.

3 Correlation Between Host Age and Digital Branding Autonomy

A cross-tabulation analysis indicates a powerful relationship between the age of the operator and the type of digital branding strategy they deploy. The Intergenerational Dynamic: In properties managed by hosts over the age of 50, digital tools are either completely avoided or entirely outsourced to younger family members living in cities like Mumbai or Pune.

Interviews revealed a common pattern: "My son handles the Instagram page from Pune. He takes the bookings and tells me on WhatsApp who is arriving on Friday. I only handle the cooking and physical hosting." (Respondent from a Dapoli homestay). While this keeps the business digitally active, it creates an operational lag, especially when replying to real-time customer inquiries.

4 Financial Impact of Digital Branding vs. Dependency Costs

The study analyzed the financial trade-off between independent digital branding (social media and direct Google bookings) and heavy reliance on Online Travel Agencies (OTAs).

The Digital Branding Trade-Off	
Independent Digital Branding	**Heavy Ota Dependency**
80-90% direct booking margins	15-20% commission per booking
High effort required for content	Automated inventory management
Vulnerable to algorithm shifts	Rigid cancellation policies hurt
Builds a loyal customer base	small rural hosts

Quantitatively, properties that actively invested even a nominal amount (₹2,000–₹5,000 per month) in local Facebook/Instagram ads or Google Map optimization reported a 35% higher net profit margin compared to properties that relied entirely on OTAs, which charge high commissions.

5 Core Challenges to Grassroots Digital Transformation

Through thematic analysis of the qualitative interviews, three critical structural barriers to digital branding were identified:

A. Infrastructural Bottlenecks (The Grid Problem)

In remote coastal pockets of Guhagar and Velas, erratic cellular network infrastructure severely damages digital conversion rates. A host from Mandwa noted: "If a tourist messages me on Instagram for a weekend booking, they expect a reply in ten minutes. If the power is out and my tower drops for four hours, they book another place. My bad network looks like bad service to the customer."

B. Content Creation and Storytelling Fatigue

Unlike urban businesses, grassroots hosts find it difficult to constantly generate high-quality visual content. Maintaining an active Instagram feed requires consistent photography, video editing skills, and an understanding of trending audio—skills that do not naturally align with running a kitchen and managing property maintenance.

C. The Fear of Digital Fraud and Review Manipulation

A significant portion of respondents expressed deep anxiety regarding online financial scams and the weaponization of online reviews. Several small resort owners reported instances where guests threatened bad Google reviews unless given heavy discounts on food or checkout times, highlighting a unique vulnerability of small brands to digital reputation damage.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusion:

The digital transformation of grassroots hospitality in the Konkan region is not merely a technological upgrade; it is a fundamental socio-economic shift. This study demonstrates that while digital branding has successfully democratized market access for small-scale homestays (Ghar-guti) and local resorts, the transition remains highly uneven. A sharp contrast exists between highly visible, youth-managed properties and traditional, older-generation ventures that struggle to move beyond basic utilities like WhatsApp. Ultimately, Konkan's unique strength lies in its rustic, uncommercialized charm and authentic hospitality. The challenge of digital transformation is to build robust online identities without diluting this cultural authenticity. Bridging the digital divide through localized support and infrastructure will be the deciding factor in whether Konkan's grassroots tourism ecosystem can achieve long-term economic sustainability.

Key Findings

Based on the data analysis, the study highlights the following concrete findings:

- The Digital Paradox: High adoption of basic communication tools (WhatsApp at 91.6%) does not translate into effective brand ownership. Most hosts lack independent web assets or optimized search visibility.
- The Generational Divide: Micro-scale hospitality in Konkan relies heavily on urban-dwelling younger family members to manage online reputations, creating operational delays in guest communication.
- Economic Inefficiency: Over-reliance on third-party Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) cuts into the slim profit margins of rural hosts due to high commission structures.
- Infrastructural Vulnerability: Unstable cellular connectivity and electricity in rural coastal belts act as a direct barrier to real-time digital customer engagement.

Suggestions and Policy Recommendations

To foster a balanced and sustainable digital ecosystem for Konkan's hospitality sector, the following multi-stakeholder interventions are suggested:

1. Creation of Localized Digital Hospitality Cooperatives

Instead of competing individually against massive hotel chains, local homestay owners should form district-level digital cooperatives (e.g., Ratnagiri Homestay Association). These bodies can run unified destination-marketing campaigns, creating a shared local brand that drives direct traffic away from high-commission OTAs.

2. Capacity Building via 'Digital Literacy' Bootcamps

The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), in collaboration with regional commerce colleges, should organize localized, hands-on workshops.

Focus areas: Basic smartphone photography, managing a Google Business Profile, navigating digital payment security, and responding professionally to online reviews.

Target: Empowering the actual on-ground hosts (often homemakers and senior citizens) rather than relying on external management.

3. Strategic Focus on Vernacular and Micro-Influencer Marketing

Since a significant chunk of tourists visiting Konkan come from urban hubs within Maharashtra (Mumbai, Pune, Nashik), digital branding should aggressively leverage regional language (Marathi) storytelling. Partnering with micro-influencers who focus on eco-tourism and authentic regional cuisine yields a much higher return on investment for small budgets than expensive broad-spectrum digital ads.

4. "Digital-Detox" Branding as a Counter-Strategy

For properties located in extreme shadow zones with poor network connectivity (e.g., deep inside remote valleys or specific beach pockets), hosts can turn this infrastructure deficit into a unique selling proposition (USP). Branding the property explicitly as a "Digital Detox Destation" appeals heavily to overworked urban professionals looking to disconnect from their screens.

5. Institutional Support for Digital Infrastructure

The state government must prioritize strengthening high-speed fiber-optic connectivity (under initiatives like BharatNet) across coastal tourist routes. Reliable internet is no longer just an administrative need; it is a core piece of tourism infrastructure that directly impacts rural livelihoods.

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

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Original Article

Development of Tourism in Chhattisgarh: An Overview

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Abstract

Tourism plays a significant role in the socio-economic development of a region by generating employment, promoting cultural heritage, and contributing to economic growth. Chhattisgarh, known for its rich natural resources, ancient temples, waterfalls, wildlife sanctuaries, tribal culture, and archaeological sites, has emerged as a promising tourism destination in India. The state offers diverse tourism opportunities, including eco-tourism, heritage tourism, religious tourism, adventure tourism, and cultural tourism. Government initiatives, improved infrastructure, and promotion of local traditions have contributed to the steady growth of the tourism sector. However, challenges such as limited connectivity, inadequate tourism facilities, lack of awareness, and environmental concerns continue to hinder its full potential. This paper provides an overview of the development of tourism in Chhattisgarh by examining its major tourist attractions, tourism policies, economic significance, and the challenges and opportunities for sustainable tourism development. The study concludes that with effective planning, infrastructure development, community participation, and sustainable tourism practices, Chhattisgarh has the potential to become one of India's leading tourism destinations.

Keywords:*Tourism Development, Chhattisgarh, Eco-tourism, Cultural Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Religious Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Tribal Culture, Tourism Infrastructure, Economic Development*

Introduction

Chhattisgarh, formed as a separate state in 2000, is one of India's emerging tourism destinations. Known for its rich tribal culture, dense forests, waterfalls, wildlife, ancient temples, Buddhist heritage, caves, and archaeological sites, the state possesses immense tourism potential. Nearly 44% of the state's geographical area is under forest cover, making it particularly suitable for eco-tourism and nature-based tourism. Tourism in Chhattisgarh has evolved from a relatively unexplored sector to an important component of regional development. The state government and the Chhattisgarh Tourism Board have undertaken various initiatives to promote sustainable tourism, improve infrastructure, and attract domestic and international visitors. Chhattisgarh, popularly known as the "Land of Forests," is one of India's most resource-rich and culturally diverse states. Created on 1 November 2000, the state has gradually emerged as an important tourism destination due to its unique combination of natural beauty, tribal heritage, archaeological wealth, religious significance, and biodiversity. Nearly 44 percent of the state's geographical area is covered by forests, making it an ideal destination for eco-tourism and nature-based recreation.Tourism in Chhattisgarh has witnessed significant growth during the last two decades. The state government, through the Chhattisgarh Tourism Board and various tourism policies, has focused on developing tourism infrastructure, promoting lesser-known destinations, attracting investments, and ensuring sustainable tourism practices. Today, tourism is increasingly recognized as an important contributor to economic development, employment generation, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation.

Tourism Resources of Chhattisgarh

Natural Attractions

Nature is one of the strongest pillars of tourism development in Chhattisgarh. The state is blessed with picturesque landscapes, waterfalls, forests, caves, rivers, and wildlife sanctuaries:Chitrakote Waterfall (often called the "Niagara of India")

,Tirathgarh Waterfall, Kanger Valley 3 National Park and 11 wildlife centuries make the state strong hub of tourism and these attractions support eco-tourism, adventure and wildlife tourism in Chhattisgarh.

Tribal & folk culture

The state is home to a large tribal population with unique traditions, festivals, handicrafts, dances, and lifestyles. Bastar region, in particular, offers opportunities for tribal and cultural tourism through,Bastar Dussehra, Traditional tribal art and crafts, Indigenous cuisine, Folk music and dance Cultural tourism provides visitors with authentic experiences while generating income for local communities.

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Religious Tourism

Chhattisgarh has several important religious and pilgrimage centers, including Bhoramdeo Temple ,Danteshwari Temple ,Rajim (Prayagraj of Chhattisgarh) ,Sirpur Buddhist Complex Ratanpur Mahamaya Temple ,Dongargarh Bambleshwari Temple .These destinations attract thousands of pilgrims annually.

Archaeological and Heritage Tourism

The state possesses a rich historical places like sirpur, Madku, Rock paintings, Buddhist monasteries etc. These heritage assets enhance the state appeal among among history and archaeology enthusiasts.



Growth and Development of Tourism

Government Initiatives

The Government of Chhattisgarh has implemented several measures to promote tourism:

Establishment of the Chhattisgarh Tourism Board and Tourism Development

The establishment of the **Chhattisgarh Tourism Board (CTB)** has played a pivotal role in the systematic development and promotion of tourism in the state. Created to plan, coordinate, and implement tourism-related activities, the Board serves as the nodal agency responsible for identifying tourism potential, developing tourist destinations, and enhancing tourism infrastructure. The CTB has focused on promoting Chhattisgarh's unique attractions, including waterfalls, wildlife sanctuaries, archaeological sites, tribal culture, and eco-tourism destinations. Through destination development projects, marketing campaigns, participation in tourism fairs, and collaboration with government and private stakeholders, the Board has increased the visibility of the state as an emerging tourism destination. The organization has also emphasized sustainable tourism development by encouraging community participation, conservation of natural resources, and preservation of cultural heritage. As a result, tourism has contributed to employment generation, local economic development, and improved livelihoods in many parts of the state.

Formulation of Tourism Policies and Investment Incentives

To accelerate tourism growth, the Government of Chhattisgarh has formulated various tourism policies aimed at attracting domestic and foreign investment. These policies provide a strategic framework for infrastructure development, destination promotion, and private sector participation in tourism projects. The state offers several investment incentives, including subsidies, tax concessions, capital investment support, land allocation assistance, and simplified approval procedures for tourism-related enterprises. Special incentives are provided for the development of hotels, resorts, eco-tourism facilities, convention centers, amusement parks, and tourism transport services. The policies also encourage Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models to mobilize private capital and expertise in the tourism sector. Furthermore, priority is given to projects that promote sustainable tourism, tribal tourism, heritage conservation, and rural tourism. These policy measures have created a favorable investment environment, enhanced tourism infrastructure, generated employment opportunities, and strengthened Chhattisgarh's position as a promising tourism destination in India.

Promotion of eco-tourism and rural tourism

Chhattisgarh has emphasized sustainable tourism development. Eco-tourism projects in forest and tribal areas encourage conservation while creating livelihood opportunities for local communities. Villages such as Dhudmaras in Bastar have gained national and international recognition for sustainable tourism practices. The Government of Chhattisgarh has undertaken numerous initiatives to promote tourism as a catalyst for economic development, employment generation, cultural preservation, and regional growth. Recognizing the state's immense potential in natural, cultural, tribal, archaeological, and religious tourism, the government has adopted a comprehensive strategy that focuses on infrastructure development, destination promotion, community participation, and sustainable tourism practices. The Chhattisgarh Tourism Board plays a crucial role in planning and implementing tourism-related projects, attracting investments, and promoting the state as an emerging tourist destination at national and international levels.

One of the major initiatives of the government has been the development of tourism infrastructure across the state. Significant investments have been made in improving road connectivity to major tourist destinations, constructing tourist accommodation facilities, establishing information centers, developing wayside amenities, and enhancing basic services such as sanitation, drinking

water, and parking facilities. Improved infrastructure has increased accessibility to remote yet attractive destinations such as Bastar, Kanger Valley National Park, Chitrakote Waterfall, Tirathgarh Waterfall, and Mainpat, thereby encouraging tourist arrivals and extending tourism benefits to less developed regions.

Eco-tourism has emerged as a priority area in the state's tourism development strategy. Chhattisgarh possesses extensive forest resources, rich biodiversity, and scenic landscapes that provide immense opportunities for nature-based tourism. The government has promoted eco-tourism through the development of nature camps, trekking routes, wildlife observation facilities, and community-managed tourism projects. These initiatives aim not only to attract tourists but also to encourage environmental conservation and create sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities residing near forest areas. Eco-tourism destinations such as Kanger Valley National Park and Mainpat have become increasingly popular among domestic and international visitors.The promotion of tribal tourism represents another significant initiative undertaken by the government. Chhattisgarh is home to several indigenous tribal communities whose unique traditions, customs, festivals, handicrafts, and lifestyles constitute a valuable cultural resource. The government has implemented various programs to showcase tribal heritage through cultural festivals, handicraft exhibitions, tribal museums, and tourism circuits. Efforts have also been made to encourage homestay facilities and community-based tourism in tribal regions, enabling tourists to experience local culture while generating income for tribal households. Such initiatives contribute to cultural preservation while simultaneously supporting rural development.The Government of India's Swadesh Darshan Scheme and the recently launched Swadesh Darshan 2.0 have further strengthened tourism development efforts in Chhattisgarh. Under these schemes, financial assistance has been provided for the development of tourism infrastructure, destination management, heritage conservation, and sustainable tourism projects. The focus is on creating integrated tourism circuits that enhance visitor experiences while ensuring environmental sustainability and community participation. Recent projects such as the development of the Mayali-Bagicha tourism destination in Jashpur district exemplify this approach by combining eco-tourism, tribal tourism, and local economic development.

Religious and spiritual tourism has also received considerable attention from the state government. Important pilgrimage centers such as Rajim, Dongargarh, Danteshwari Temple in Dantewada, and Bhoramdeo Temple have been developed through improved infrastructure, better visitor facilities, enhanced transportation networks, and promotional campaigns. Religious festivals such as Rajim Kumbh attract thousands of devotees and tourists annually, contributing significantly to the local economy and strengthening the state's tourism profile.In addition to natural and religious attractions, the government has focused on preserving and promoting the rich archaeological and historical heritage of Chhattisgarh. Sites such as Sirpur, Malhar, and Ratanpur have been developed as heritage tourism destinations through conservation projects, archaeological research, visitor amenities, and cultural promotion. Sirpur, in particular, has gained national recognition for its historical significance and attracts scholars, researchers, and tourists interested in India's ancient heritage.The organization of cultural festivals and events has become an effective tool for tourism promotion in the state. Festivals such as Bastar Dussehra, Madai Festival, Rajim Kumbh, and the Sirpur National Dance and Music Festival showcase the rich cultural traditions of Chhattisgarh and attract visitors from across the country. These events not only enhance the state's cultural identity but also provide opportunities for local artisans, performers, and entrepreneurs to benefit from tourism-related activities.The government has also emphasized skill development and community participation in tourism. Training programs for tourist guides, hospitality workers, local entrepreneurs, and homestay operators have been introduced to improve service quality and generate employment opportunities. Community-based tourism initiatives ensure that local residents become active stakeholders in tourism development and directly benefit from tourism revenues. This approach promotes inclusive growth and strengthens support for tourism conservation efforts.Furthermore, digital marketing and branding initiatives have been adopted to enhance the visibility of Chhattisgarh as a tourist destination. The use of websites, social media platforms, promotional campaigns, tourism fairs, and digital content has helped create awareness about the state's unique attractions. The government's branding efforts emphasize Chhattisgarh's pristine waterfalls, dense forests, vibrant tribal culture, rich heritage, and spiritual destinations, thereby positioning the state as a distinctive tourism destination in India.Overall, the tourism development initiatives undertaken by the Government of Chhattisgarh reflect a balanced approach that integrates economic growth, environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and community welfare. Through infrastructure development, eco-tourism promotion, tribal tourism initiatives, heritage conservation, religious tourism enhancement, and skill development programs, the state is steadily emerging as an important tourism destination. These efforts not only contribute to increasing tourist arrivals but also play a significant role in generating employment, reducing regional disparities, and fostering sustainable development across Chhattisgarh.

Tourist Circuits

In Chhattisgarh, for the tourism development, tourist circuits are framed covered regionwise tourist places .It enhance the tourism activities in the state. These are :

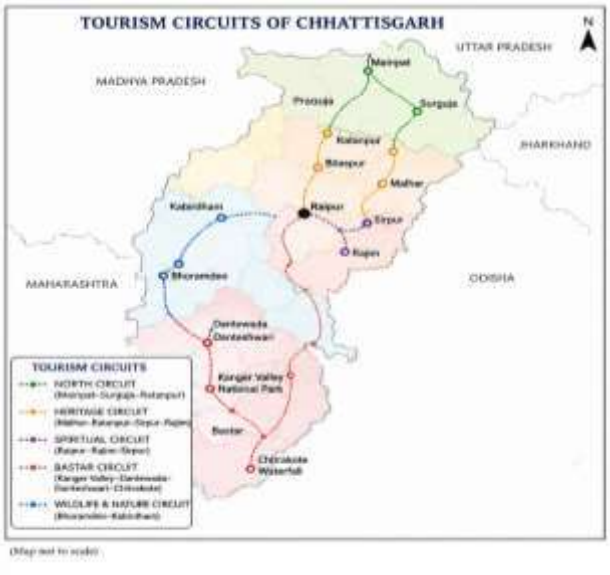
Northern Circuit: It covers the touris places of arguja & Koriya district . Mainpat "shimala of Chhattisgarh", Ramgarh, Sita Bengara, Various Waterfalls , Ratanpur , Chaiturgarh, Pali etc.

Heritage Circuit(Malhar-Sirpur –Rajim): This circuit connect the archeological and historical sites of Chhattisgarh. Rajim is the prime pilgrimage centre of Chhattisgarh located in the confluence of river Mahanadi,pairi and sodhu and hosts RAJIM KUMBH. Sirpur is world famous destination of Buddhism .

Bastar Circuit: In this circuit, one can enjoy the tribal rich culture and traditions of the state . It has scenic beauty of kanger Valley National Park, Kutumsar caves , Chitrkut &Tirathgarh Waterfall . It is also famous for Tribal art formsi.e.. Bell metal craft (Dhokra Art) ,Wood carving ,Bamboo handicrafts ,Wrought iron craft ,Terracotta art

Spiritual Circuit: Somnath, Damakheda, Dongargarh, Rajim, Dhamtari etc centres for spiritual beliefs in Chhattisgarh.

Natural & Eco tourist circuits: This circuit is focused on 11 wildlife centuries & 3 national parks are the major tourism resources in Chhattisgarh. Barnavapara, Udanti, Achanakmar,



Public-private partnership models for tourism infrastructure

Private Partnership (PPP) models play a significant role in the development of tourism infrastructure in Chhattisgarh by combining government support with private sector investment, expertise, and management efficiency. The state government has encouraged private participation in the development of hotels, resorts, eco-tourism facilities, adventure tourism centers, wayside amenities, convention centers, and tourist transport services. Under the PPP approach, the government provides land, basic infrastructure, policy support, and incentives, while private partners invest capital and manage operations. This model helps reduce the financial burden on the government and accelerates the development of high-quality tourism facilities. In Chhattisgarh, PPP initiatives have been promoted at major tourist destinations such as Chitrakote Waterfall, Tirathgarh Waterfall, Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary, and Sirpur to enhance accommodation, recreational facilities, and visitor services. The partnership model also encourages sustainable tourism development by incorporating modern technology, environmental conservation measures, and community participation. Through PPP-based tourism projects, Chhattisgarh aims to improve tourist satisfaction, generate employment opportunities, attract domestic and international investment, and strengthen the state's position as an emerging tourism destination in India.

Participation in national and international tourism fairs and exhibitions: These efforts aim to increase tourist arrivals and generate employment opportunities.

Infrastructure Development

1. Tourism development has been supported through:
2. Improvement of road connectivity
3. Development of tourist accommodation facilities
4. Expansion of hospitality services
5. Better transportation networks
6. Digital promotion and information services

Recent infrastructure projects and hospitality investments are expected to strengthen the tourism sector further.

Improvement of Road Connectivity:

Road connectivity is a fundamental requirement for tourism development in Chhattisgarh. The state government has undertaken various initiatives to improve and widen roads connecting major tourist destinations such as Chitrakote Waterfall, Tirathgarh Waterfall, Sirpur, Mainpat, and the Bastar region. Better road infrastructure reduces travel time, enhances accessibility, and ensures safe and comfortable journeys for tourists. Improved connectivity also promotes regional development by linking remote tribal and eco-tourism destinations with major urban centers and transport hubs.

Development of Tourist Accommodation Facilities:

The availability of quality accommodation is essential for attracting and retaining tourists. Chhattisgarh has focused on developing a range of lodging facilities, including hotels, resorts, guest houses, eco-cottages, tribal homestays, and government-run tourist lodges. These facilities cater to different categories of tourists, from budget travelers to luxury seekers. The expansion of accommodation infrastructure enhances the overall tourist experience and encourages longer stays, thereby increasing tourism revenue and local employment opportunities.

Expansion of Hospitality Services:

Hospitality services play a crucial role in creating a positive image of a tourist destination. In Chhattisgarh, efforts have been made to improve hospitality standards through skill development programs, training of tourism personnel, and the promotion of local cuisine and cultural experiences. The growth of restaurants, travel agencies, tour operators, guides, and recreational services contributes to a more satisfying and memorable experience for visitors. Enhanced hospitality services also help in building a competitive tourism industry within the state.

Better Transportation Networks:

An efficient transportation network is vital for seamless tourist movement. Chhattisgarh has improved its air, rail, and road transport systems to strengthen tourism accessibility. The expansion of air services through Swami Vivekananda Airport in Raipur, improved railway connectivity to major tourist centers, and the introduction of local transport facilities such as buses, taxis, and tourist vehicles have facilitated easier travel within the state. A well-integrated transportation network encourages tourist mobility and promotes the exploration of diverse attractions.

Digital Promotion and Information Services:

Digital technologies have become an important tool for tourism promotion and management. Chhattisgarh Tourism utilizes websites, social media platforms, mobile applications, virtual tours, and online booking systems to provide information and

promote tourist destinations. Digital platforms offer tourists easy access to details about attractions, accommodations, transportation, events, and travel itineraries. Effective digital promotion enhances the visibility of Chhattisgarh's tourism resources, attracts a wider audience, and supports informed travel planning, thereby contributing to the growth of the tourism sector.The sector has the potential to become a significant driver of economic diversification and regional development.

Challenges in Tourism Development

Despite its vast potential, Chhattisgarh faces several challenges: Despite possessing abundant natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, tribal traditions, historical monuments, and wildlife resources, the tourism sector in Chhattisgarh faces several challenges that hinder its full development. One of the major constraints is the limited availability of tourism infrastructure in remote and interior regions, where many attractive destinations lack adequate accommodation, visitor facilities, and basic amenities. The state also suffers from insufficient national and international marketing, resulting in low visibility compared to established tourist destinations in India. Consequently, awareness among potential tourists about Chhattisgarh's tourism attractions remains relatively low. Connectivity issues, including inadequate road networks and limited public transport services in certain areas, further restrict tourist access to many destinations. Another significant challenge is the shortage of trained tourism professionals, such as guides, hospitality staff, and tourism managers, which affects the quality of visitor services. Environmental concerns have also emerged due to the risk of uncontrolled tourism growth, which can lead to ecological degradation, waste generation, and disturbance of fragile ecosystems. Additionally, historical security concerns in some parts of the state, particularly in certain districts affected by insurgency-related activities, have negatively influenced the perception of safety among tourists. Addressing these challenges through infrastructure development, capacity building, sustainable tourism practices, effective promotion, and enhanced security measures is essential for realizing the full tourism potential of Chhattisgarh.

Challenges in Tourism Development in Chhattisgarh

Limited Tourism Infrastructure in Remote Areas

Many of Chhattisgarh's prominent tourist attractions, particularly in Bastar, Surguja, Kanker, and Dantewada districts, are located in remote and forested regions. Although these destinations possess immense tourism potential, they often lack adequate hotels, resorts, restaurants, tourist information centers, sanitation facilities, and emergency services. This shortage of infrastructure reduces tourist comfort and limits the number of visitors that these destinations can accommodate.

Insufficient National and International Marketing

Compared to states such as Rajasthan, Goa, Kerala, and Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh receives less promotional attention at the national and international levels. Despite attractions such as Chitrakote Waterfall, Tirathgarh Waterfall, Sirpur, Mainpat, and the rich tribal culture of Bastar, the state's tourism resources remain relatively unknown. Limited branding and promotional campaigns have restricted its ability to attract larger numbers of domestic and foreign tourists.

Low Awareness among Potential Tourists

A significant number of travelers across India are unaware of the diverse tourism opportunities available in Chhattisgarh. Many tourists associate the state primarily with mining and industrial activities rather than tourism. As a result, destinations with high scenic, cultural, and historical value remain underexplored. Greater awareness through digital media, tourism fairs, educational campaigns, and travel publications is needed to enhance the state's tourism profile.

Connectivity Issues in Certain Destinations

Although major cities such as Raipur, Bilaspur, and Jagdalpur have improved transportation facilities, several tourist destinations still face accessibility challenges. Remote waterfalls, wildlife sanctuaries, caves, and tribal villages often have inadequate road conditions and limited public transport services. These connectivity issues increase travel time and discourage tourists from visiting less accessible attractions.

Lack of Trained Tourism Professionals

The tourism industry in Chhattisgarh faces a shortage of professionally trained guides, hospitality staff, language experts, and tourism managers. Many local communities involved in tourism activities have limited access to specialized training programs. This affects service quality, tourist satisfaction, and the overall competitiveness of the state's tourism sector. Skill development initiatives are essential to improve hospitality standards and create employment opportunities.

Environmental Concerns Related to Uncontrolled Tourism Growth

Natural attractions such as Chitrakote Waterfall, Tirathgarh Waterfall, Kanger Valley National Park, and Mainpat are environmentally sensitive areas. Increasing tourist arrivals without proper planning may lead to littering, pollution, habitat disturbance, and degradation of natural resources. Sustainable tourism practices, waste management systems, and environmental awareness programs are necessary to protect these valuable ecosystems for future generations.

Historical Security Concerns in Some Regions

Certain districts of southern Chhattisgarh, particularly parts of Bastar, Sukma, Bijapur, and Dantewada, have historically experienced security challenges related to Left-Wing Extremism. Although the security situation has improved considerably in recent years, negative perceptions continue to affect tourism growth. Many potential visitors remain hesitant to travel to these regions despite their rich cultural heritage and natural attractions. Strengthening security, improving public confidence, and promoting positive tourism experiences are important for overcoming this challenge.

Conclusion

Chhattisgarh possesses immense tourism potential based on its natural landscapes, waterfalls, forests, wildlife, archaeological sites, and tribal culture. However, challenges related to infrastructure, promotion, awareness, connectivity, skilled manpower, environmental sustainability, and security need to be effectively addressed. With strategic planning and sustainable development policies, the state can emerge as one of India's leading tourism destinations in the coming decades.With proper planning, sustainable management, and effective promotion, Chhattisgarh can achieve the top rank in the country.

Future Prospects: Vision 2047 Initiatives Emphasizing Tourism Development

The **Vision 2047** framework aims to transform Chhattisgarh into a developed and globally recognized state by the centenary year of India's independence. Tourism has been identified as a key sector for economic growth, employment generation, cultural preservation, and regional development. Under this vision, the state seeks to develop world-class tourism infrastructure, improve connectivity to major tourist destinations, and promote sustainable tourism practices. Special emphasis is being placed on the development of eco-tourism, heritage tourism, tribal tourism, wellness tourism, and adventure tourism to diversify the state's tourism offerings.The Vision 2047 strategy also focuses on upgrading tourist facilities through the construction of quality accommodation, interpretation centers, wayside amenities, digital information systems, and improved transportation networks. Major destinations such as Chitrakote Waterfall, Tirathgarh Waterfall, Sirpur, Mainpat, Kanger Valley National Park, and Bastar's

tribal cultural landscapes are expected to be developed as integrated tourism circuits. The government aims to attract greater private investment through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models and encourage community participation to ensure inclusive and sustainable tourism development.Digital transformation forms another important component of the Vision 2047 agenda. The use of smart tourism technologies, online booking platforms, virtual tours, GIS-based tourism mapping, and social media marketing will enhance the visibility of Chhattisgarh's tourism resources at national and international levels. Furthermore, skill development programs for local youth, hospitality workers, guides, and entrepreneurs will strengthen human resource capacity and improve service quality. By integrating infrastructure development, environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and technological innovation, Vision 2047 seeks to position Chhattisgarh as a leading tourism destination in India while ensuring balanced regional development and long-term socio-economic benefits for local communities.can emerge as one of India's leading tourism destinations.

Conclusion

Chhattisgarh possesses exceptional tourism resources ranging from natural landscapes and wildlife to tribal culture, religious centers, and archaeological heritage. Over the past two decades, significant efforts have been made to develop tourism infrastructure, promote eco-tourism, and attract investment. Although challenges remain, the state's abundant resources and strategic initiatives provide a strong foundation for future growth. Sustainable tourism development can play a crucial role in economic progress, employment generation, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation, making tourism a vital component of Chhattisgarh's development strategy.

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Original Article

Role Of Chhath Puja in Promoting Rural Tourism in Bihar

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Abstract

Chhath Puja is a major festival of Bihar's cultural, religious, and social identity, presenting a unique example of nature worship, sun worship, water conservation, and community participation. This festival is not only a symbol of faith but also holds immense significance for the development of rural tourism. Chhath Puja, celebrated in rural areas of Bihar, attracts tourists from both India and abroad due to its traditional folk culture, folk songs, handicrafts, local cuisine, cleanliness, natural ghats, and community cooperation. As a result, local employment, small and cottage industries, transportation, handicrafts, agriculture-based products, and the rural economy receive direct and indirect boosts. This study is based on secondary data, analyzing information from the Bihar Tourism Department, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, the National Statistical Office, the 2011 Census, various research papers, books, and government reports. The study used descriptive and analytical research methods. Based on available data and literature, it is clear that during Chhath Puja, there is a significant increase in tourist arrivals, local businesses, hotel and transportation services, and religious tourism activities in Bihar, thereby expanding economic opportunities in rural areas. The study concludes that if Chhath Puja is integrated with rural tourism policy, infrastructure development, clean ghats, environmental protection, digital promotion, and active participation of the local community, it can give Bihar's rural tourism a new identity at the national and global levels. This research highlights the important role of Chhath Puja in achieving sustainable tourism, preservation of cultural heritage, and the goal of a developed Bihar and a developed India @ 2047.

Keyword: *Chhath Puja, Bihar tourism, Rural, traditional, culture*

Introduction

India holds a unique identity worldwide due to its rich cultural, religious, and folk traditions. These traditions have not only maintained the cultural continuity of Indian society but have also significantly contributed to the growth of the tourism industry. Rural tourism has emerged as an effective medium for sustainable development, as it connects local culture, traditional lifestyles, natural resources, and community participation with economic opportunities. Bihar, an important center of ancient civilization, religious heritage, and folk culture, holds immense potential for rural tourism. Chhath Puja holds a special place in Bihar's cultural life. This festival, based on sun worship and gratitude to nature, holds a unique identity within Indian religious traditions. The most important characteristics of Chhath Puja are its simplicity, discipline, cleanliness, environmental sensitivity, and community cooperation. During this festival, the cleaning of rivers, ponds, and other water sources in villages, the singing of traditional folk songs, local handicrafts, traditional cuisine, and collective religious rituals vividly showcase the cultural diversity of rural life. These elements become a center of attraction for tourists from India and abroad. Rural tourism is not limited to religious pilgrimages; it also promotes the local economy, self-employment, women's empowerment, cottage industries, agriculture-based products, and the preservation of cultural heritage. The increase in demand for local transportation, accommodation, food services, handicrafts, and traditional products during Chhath Puja has a positive impact on the income of rural communities. Furthermore, this festival presents a powerful example of social harmony, community participation, and environmental responsibility. This paper analyzes the role of Chhath Puja in the development of rural tourism in Bihar. The study aims to understand how this folk festival can contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage, local economic development, employment generation, and the promotion of sustainable tourism.

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The research also critically evaluates the current challenges and future prospects facing rural tourism, offering useful suggestions for policy development to develop Bihar as a strong global destination for cultural and rural tourism.

Data and Methodology

This study is based on qualitative and descriptive-analytical research methods. The objective of the research is to comprehensively analyze the impact of Chhath Puja on rural tourism development, local economy, cultural preservation, and community participation in Bihar. The study primarily used secondary data. Data was collected from the Bihar Tourism Department, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, the National Statistical Office, the 2011 Census, NITI Aayog, the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, various research papers, books, theses, government reports, and peer-reviewed journals. In addition, published reports and statistical documents related to Chhath Puja, religious tourism, and rural tourism were also analyzed.

The data obtained were analyzed using content analysis and comparative analysis. The research analyzed key indicators of rural tourism—tourist arrivals, local employment, cottage industries, handicrafts, transportation, accommodation facilities, and cultural activities. To ensure the study's reliability, triangulation of data from various sources was performed. This method helps to understand the relationship between Chhath Puja and rural tourism in a scientific and objective manner.

Mythological Background of Chhath Puja

Many mythological beliefs are prevalent regarding the origin of Chhath Puja. According to a famous tale, King Priyavrat and his wife Malini were childless. Maharishi Kashyapa performed a Putrayeshti Yagna for them and gave the sacred kheer obtained from the yagna to the queen to consume. As a result, a son was born, but he was stillborn. Distressed by the loss of his son, the king was contemplating giving up his life in the cremation ground when Goddess Shashthi appeared. Describing herself as the sixth part of the fundamental power of creation, she explained the method of her worship and assured him that by observing the fast and worshipping with devotion, he would be blessed with children and happiness and prosperity. The king worshipped the goddess and was blessed with a son again. This incident is considered the basis of the tradition of Chhath Puja. Chhath festival is primarily a folk festival dedicated to the worship of the Sun God and Chhathi Maiya. It is celebrated twice a year—Chaitra Shukla Shashthi (Chaiti Chhath) and Kartik Shukla Shashthi (Kartik Chhath). This four-day festival emphasizes strict fasting, purity, community participation, and gratitude to nature. It is particularly popular in Bihar, Jharkhand, eastern Uttar Pradesh, and the Terai region of Nepal, while today it has gained widespread recognition among the Indian diaspora in India and many other countries around the world.

Economic Impact - The Backbone of the Rural Economy

Huge Boom in Local Markets

Rural markets become bustling 20 days before Chhath. Sales of bamboo daura, soup bowls, earthen lamps, coconuts, sugarcane, sweet potatoes, bananas, apples, and oranges increase by 300-400%. Small shopkeepers in villages earn their entire year's income in these 10 days. There is no shortage of employment during these days, and everyone starts doing business.

Self-Employment and Women's Empowerment

Women play a direct role in Chhath Puja, empowering them further. Women work to increase their income through all these means. Women's self-help groups prepare and sell thekua, kasar, and rice laddus in packets. "Bihar Chhath Prasad" is now also sold on Amazon and Flipkart. This provides direct income to women at home.

Work for Handicrafts and Traditional Artisans

Potters, bamboo craftsmen, garland makers, and incense stick vendors take orders two months in advance. Chhath Puja has saved Bihar's traditional handicrafts from extinction. Handicrafts play a significant role in Chhath Puja, a traditional festival that benefits all sections of society.

Boom in Transportation and Hospitality

Chhath Puja is mostly celebrated in villages, which attracts people from other countries or other parts of India to Bihar to witness Chhath Puja, and food and drinks are provided, boosting tourism. Demand for buses, tempos, boats, and autos to travel to villages increases significantly. Homestays have now opened in some villages, where urban residents can stay for two or three days to experience the "real Chhath."

Social and Cultural Impact

Becoming a Brand of Bihar's Cultural Identity

Chhath is the only festival in the world where offerings are made to the setting and rising sun. UNESCO is considering including it in the list of "Intangible Cultural Heritage." This has given Bihar global recognition. Chhath Puja has now become a global festival, not just local. It is celebrated in many parts of the world. Wherever there are Bihari migrants, it is celebrated with great pomp and show.

Revival of Folk Music and Folk Art

Chhath songs like "Usha Ke Nayanwa Se..." and "Kerwa ke patawa pe " now receive millions of views on YouTube. Village folk singers earn the most during these days. Tourists visit villages to listen to live folk songs. Folk songs hold immense significance during Chhath Puja. Many Indian artists have gained popularity by singing Chhath Puja songs, including Pawan Singh, Kalpana, Alka Yagnik, Palak, Sarda Sinha etc.

Community Unity and Social Harmony

Forgetting caste, religion, or rich-poor differences, the entire village comes together to build the ghat. Tourists are deeply impressed by this "community-based tourism." During Chhath, the community atmosphere becomes very friendly, fostering brotherhood. People celebrate together, go to the ghat and clean it, which maintains social harmony. Both of these people become involved in Chhath Puja.

Promotion of Diaspora "Roots Tourism

Bihari's living in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Gujarat, and abroad inevitably visit the village to celebrate Chhath. An average family spends 40,000-50,000 rupees in the village. This is called "Diaspora Tourism." Both these activities provide a unique opportunity for Bihar tourism. Diaspora people not only come for Chhath Puja but also bring others with them to witness the traditional grandeur of Chhath Puja.

Environment and Infrastructure

Rejuvenation of ponds, rivers, and ghats

Before Chhath, panchayats and villagers collect donations to clean the ghats, install lighting, and build changing rooms. The government also provides assistance under the "Chief Minister Rural Ghat Scheme." This prepares the area for tourism year-round. During Chhath Puja, infrastructure is improved, unpaved roads are made passable, lighting is installed, and other basic amenities are taken care of. This festival also promotes environmental sustainability.

Eco-tourism and nature-based tourism

Chhath is free of pollution. Banana trees, earthen lamps, and offerings—all natural. Foreign tourists visit it as a "Zero-Waste Festival." Chhath Puja is completely ecosystem-driven; nature is harmed in no way, and almost everything is obtained from nature itself. Therefore, it can be called an eco-friendly or eco-tourism festival.

Rural Cleanliness Campaign Gains Momentum

Due to Chhath, villagers keep their ponds and riverbanks clean throughout the year. This has greatly helped the Swachh Bharat Mission. Cleanliness holds a special significance during Chhath Puja. This includes cleaning everything from homes to roads to ponds and rivers where Chhath is celebrated.

Photography and Film Tourism

The view of the ghats illuminated with millions of diyas during sunrise and sunset is considered one of the most beautiful in the world. Organizations like National Geographic and the BBC provide coverage every year. This promotes the villages for free. Journalists and photographers from India and abroad come to cover Chhath Puja, which promotes tourism.

Digital and Social Media Promotion

"Village Chhath" videos go viral on Reels, Vlogs, and YouTube Shorts. #BiharChhath trends. Young tourists seek out village ghats as "Instagram able Locations." In the age of social media, Chhath Puja promotion spreads at a rapid pace. The world sees how Chhath Puja is celebrated and is eager to be a part of it and witness it. Therefore, they come to Bihar and celebrate it with joy.

Place in Government Tourism Policy

The Bihar Tourism Department now runs a tour package called "Chhath in Rural Bihar." Villages around Patna, Bhagalpur, and Munger have been included on the tourist map. The Bihar government is very focused on tourism, which has led to Chhath Puja emerging as an important festival and is promoted by the Bihar government.

Cultural Education and Experiential Tourism

Urban children and foreign tourists come to villages and learn how to perform puja without a priest or an idol. This is a prime example of "Experiential Tourism."

Turning Seasonal Tourism into a 4-Day Mega Event

Chhath, which occurs after Diwali and before winter, has created a new tourism season in rural areas in October-November. Hotels and travel agencies focus on this.

Connecting the Younger Generation with Villages

Chhath helps urban youth avoid disconnection from their villages. They create content and do business. This promotes "Reverse Migration."

Challenge: Waste and Crowd Management

The arrival of millions of people over four days increases waste. In the future, there is a need for "Green Chhath" and "Plastic-Free Ghats." Chhath Puja has its limitations and challenges. Mosquitoes see some dirt on hands after Chhath Puja, which needs to be cleaned.

Challenge: Basic Facilities

Most rural ghats still lack toilets, drinking water, and medical facilities. If these facilities are improved, tourism could increase tenfold. The basic facilities at Akshar Bhumi on the Chhath Ghat are not up to the mark. This needs to be improved so that the villagers and the government can provide the basic amenities needed for those who gather there.

Future: "Chhath Circuit Tourism

A "Chhath Tourism Circuit" could be created along the banks of the Ganges River in Bhagalpur-Naugachia-Khagaria. A package of Boat Ride + Village Stay + Chhath Experience + Folk Music could be offered here. This could give Bihar a brand like Gujarat's "Rann Utsav." Furthermore, Bihar should also support hotspots that promote Chhath Puja and connect the Chhath Puja circuit.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this research paper is that Chhath Puja is not just a festival, but a heritage of social and cultural values. Tradition and values are intertwined in Chhath Puja. Social participation holds a special significance. Our joint families, in turn, worship God with devotion, which fosters social reform and sends a positive message to society. Chhath festival contributes to our sustainable development, benefiting us through tourism and eco-tourism. The benefits of tourism do not lead to a loss of per capita income for Bihar. Research papers on this matter have their own significance. People come, observe the place, and through their analysis, inform the world about the sacred festival celebrated here. Traditional materials are often used in Chhath Puja, with small-scale industries having their own significance. Since this is a traditional festival, special attention is paid to rituals. Both rivers, ponds,

and public spaces are thoroughly cleaned and decorated like a bride. In modern times, the festival is becoming more and more celebrated in many countries. Why is it not celebrated in Bihar. It is also celebrated in places like the United States, Suriname, Mauritius, Canada, Australia, and other places. Many types of self-employment opportunities are available in this festival, which, along with tourism, promote self-employment, which is why we promote Chhath Puja.

Chhath Puja is not just a faith for Bihar, but an *engine of rural development*. It brings crores of rupees worth of business, employment, and recognition to the villages every year without any government expenditure. If planned properly, Chhath can make Bihar India's "largest cultural-rural tourism brand."

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Original Article

Agro-Tourism in Maharashtra: A Catalyst for Rural Development and The Vision of Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

India is primarily an agrarian economy, where rural development is a crucial component of national progress. In recent decades, the agricultural sector has faced numerous challenges, such as diminishing farm incomes, climatic uncertainties, rural unemployment, and land fragmentation. Agro-tourism has emerged as an ground-breaking diversification strategy that links agriculture with tourism, preserves rural culture and traditions, and simultaneously creates supplementary income opportunities for farmers. Maharashtra is recognized as a leader in agro-tourism development due to its varied agro-climatic conditions, active institutional support, and rich cultural heritage.This study examines the role of agro-tourism in Maharashtra as a catalyst for rural development and its contribution toward attaining the goal of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'. The study is based on secondary data collected from government reports, research articles, policy documents, tourism reports, and existing literature. This study underlines the socio-economical, environmental, and cultural advantages of agro-tourism and analyzes its potential in creating employment, curbing rural migration, empowering women, preserving local traditions, and fostering sustainable development.The research reveals that agro-tourism contributes significantly to the entrepreneurship development, diversification of rural livelihoods, community participation and the enhancement of local infrastructure. Moreover, it line up directly with the objectives of 'Viksit Bharat 2047', mainly in areas such as sustainable agriculture, rural prosperity, inclusive development, and self-reliant villages. The conclusion of this study is that, with proper policy support, infrastructural development, digital marketing, skill development, and financial support, agro-tourism can become a transformative strength for rural Maharashtra and donate significantly to India's long-term development goals.

Keywords*: Agri-tourism, Rural Development, Maharashtra, Viksit Bharat 2047*

Introduction

Historically, agriculture has been the backbone of the Indian economy. Regardless of rapid industrialization and urbanization, a major part of India's population depends directly or indirectly on agriculture for its living. On the other hand, the sector faces several challenges, such as market price fluctuations, climate change, diminishing profitability, shrinking landholdings, and rising production costs. These challenges have heightened the call for for additional income-generating activities in rural areas.Agro-tourism has come into sight as one such ground-breaking solution. It encompasses tourism activities organized on farms or in rural areas that offer tourists the chance to experience agricultural operations, traditional cuisine, rural lifestyles, and the natural environment, cultural practices. Agro-tourism flyovers the gap between urban and rural communities while simultaneously creating alternative sources of income for farmers.Maharashtra state is considered the native land of structured agro-tourism in India. The state boasts a varied agricultural landscape, ranging from Nashik's vineyards and the mango orchards of Konkan to the sugarcane fields of Western Maharashtra, the cotton fields of Vidarbha, and horticultural zones across various districts. These agricultural attributes offer a robust base for the development of agro-tourism.Under the 'Viksit Bharat 2047' initiative, the Government of India has set a goal to transform the country into a developed nation by 2047. This vision gives emphasis to rural transformation, inclusive growth, sustainable development and creation of employment, entrepreneurship and the modernization of agriculture. Agro-tourism directly contributes to achieving objectives such as increasing rural income, boosting local industries, and ensuring the sustainable use of rural resources. Against this backdrop, the present study examines the role of agri-tourism in fostering rural development in Maharashtra and highlights its significance in the context of realizing the broader goals of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.

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Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To understand the concept and importance of agro-tourism in Maharashtra.
2. To analyze the contribution of agro-tourism to rural development.
3. To study the socio-economic benefits of agro-tourism for rural communities and farmers.
4. To discover the challenges facing the agro-tourism sector in Maharashtra.
5. To assess the role of agro-tourism in attaining the goal of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.
6. To recommend strategic measures to strengthen agro-tourism as a strategy for sustainable rural development.

Data and Methodology

This study is descriptive and analytical in nature and based on secondary data.

Source of Data-

This information has been compiled from research articles and journals related to agro-tourism, reports by the 'Agro Tourism Development Corporation' (ATDC), documents regarding the tourism and agriculture policies of the Government of Maharashtra, reports from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, academic books and theses, publications by NABARD and NITI Aayog, as well as published literature on sustainable tourism and rural development.

Methodology

This study employs methods such as qualitative content analysis and a comparative review of existing literature. It examines various aspects of agro-tourism, including economic impact, employment generation, rural entrepreneurship, cultural preservation, and sustainability. The findings of the study have been analyzed within the context of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.

Result and Discussion

Concept of Agro-Tourism

Agro-tourism is an emerging form of rural tourism that combines agriculture with recreation, education, and cultural experiences. Agro-tourism offers tourists opportunities to visit farms, experience rural lifestyles, participate in agricultural activities, and interact directly with the farming community. Distinct from conventional tourism, agro-tourism provides authentic and interactive experiences through activities such as fruit picking, farm visits, bullock-cart rides, rural games, organic farming demonstrations, traditional food preparation, nature walks, cultural programs, and livestock management demonstrations. Such activities not only offer entertainment but also teach visitors regarding agricultural practices, rural traditions, and environmental conservation. Agro-tourism has gained popularity due to the rising demand for eco-friendly and experiential tourism; it is mainly trendy among urban residents seeking a respite from the hectic pace of city life.From the perspective of rural development, agro-tourism generates optional livelihood opportunities by enabling farmers to earn supplementary income through accommodation, catering services, the sale of farm produce and recreational activities. It also promotes sustainable agriculture by cheering organic farming, the responsible management of resources and biodiversity conservation. Moreover, agro tourism strengthens the bonds between urban and rural communities by preserving conventional knowledge, promoting rural culture, and raising awareness about agriculture.. Thus, agro-tourism has emerged as an effective strategy for achieving sustainable rural development while contributing to the broader goals of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.

Maharashtra as a Hub of Agro-Tourism

Maharashtra has emerged as a leading state in India for agro-tourism, driven by its abundant agricultural resources, diverse terrain, rich cultural heritage, and robust institutional support. The state's favourable agro-climatic environment facilitate the farming of a wide range of crops, including grapes, bananas, mangoes, cotton, sugarcane, turmeric, soybeans, vegetables, and flowers. This agricultural variety enables agro-tourism centres to provide exceptional seasonal experiences-such as fruit picking, organic farming, vineyard tours and crop cultivation thereby attracting tourists during the year.Beyond its agricultural prosperity, Maharashtra boasts a exciting rural culture that enriches the tourism experience. Lavani, Tamasha, Bharud, Dhangari Gaja, and Koli Dance such type of traditional folk art forms give genuine cultural experiences while helping to conserve the state's artistic heritage. Agro-tourism initiatives such as rural festivals, local cuisine, handicrafts, and traditional farming practices further enhance and generate supplementary employment opportunities for rural communities.Natural attractions-such as Konkan coastline, Sahyadri mountain range, rivers, forests, water bodies, and hill stations combine seamlessly with agricultural experiences, nature-based recreation, and eco-tourism to enhance the appeal of agro-tourism destinations. Organizations like the 'Agri-Tourism Development Corporation' (ATDC) have also played a pivotal role by providing farmers with training, project guidance, marketing support, and networking opportunities. Due to this Maharashtra has secured a leading position in agro-tourism at the national level and made a significant contribution to sustainable rural development.

Economic Impact on Rural Development

Agro-tourism has emerged as a vital catalyst for rural economic development by boosting farmers' incomes, creating employment, and fostering entrepreneurship. A key contribution is the creation of diverse income streams, allowing farmers to earn revenue beyond traditional agricultural produce. Income generated from farm stays, accommodation, sales of farm produce, traditional cuisine and catering, recreational activities, and guided farm tours reduces farmers' dependence on volatile agricultural markets and random crop prices. These varied revenue sources enhance the family's financial security and make stronger the flexibility and capacity of the rural economy.Agro-tourism also generates major employment opportunities. It creates direct jobs for farm guides, food suppliers, hospitality staff, event coordinators, and accommodation managers, while providing indirect employment benefits to artisans, local vendors, handicraft makers, transport drivers, and agricultural suppliers. These opportunities are particularly beneficial for rural youth, as they encourage participation in local economic activities and curb migration to cities.This tourism sector also fosters rural entrepreneurship by supporting farmers, self-help groups of women, rural youth, and artisans to begin small-scale enterprises stands on local resources. Growing demand for handicrafts, processed foods, organic products, dairy products, traditional snacks and locally made gifts creates new market opportunities and boosts rural industries. Women play a significant role by managing homestays, preparing traditional food, organizing cultural events and crafting handicrafts thereby recovering their financial independence and social status. Likewise, rural youth build up entrepreneurial skills in fields such as tourism services, hospitality management and digital marketing.The 'multiplier effect' of agro-tourism extends beyond agriculture, strengthening sectors such as transport services, food processing, handicrafts, local markets, and other rural

industries. Increased tourist spending boosts the circulation of money within the rural economy, thereby strengthening local value chains and fostering inclusive economic development. Accordingly, agro-tourism makes a significant contribution to poverty alleviation, increasing farmers' incomes, job creation, and sustainable development.

Social Impact on Rural Communities

The social impact of agro-tourism extends beyond mere economic gains; it fosters social inclusion, women's empowerment, community participation and cultural conservation. A crucial contribution is the decrease of rural-to-urban migration. By generating employment opportunities in the villages themselves, agro-tourism supports rural youth to stay in their own communities rather than migrating to urban areas in the search of work. Rural youth gain opportunities in sectors such as hospitality, tourism management, event organization, farm guiding and transportation, thereby developing local economic conditions.Agro-tourism furthermore plays a vital role in women empowerment. Women in the rural area aggressively contribute in activities like food preparation, handicraft production, home stay management, the marketing of local products and cultural events. This participation boosts family income, fosters financial independence, and strengthens their role in decision-making processes within both the family and the community. Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs), in particular, benefit significantly from agro-tourism; they produce value-added goods and provide tourism-related services, which encourage gender equality and entrepreneurship.Community development is another key contribution, as agro-tourism supports joint action, cooperation at the village level, and community engagement. Successful agro-tourism centres rely on mutual cooperation among farmers, artisans, youth groups, and local organizations-whether for organizing tourism activities, maintaining cleanliness, conserving natural resources, or delivering quality services. Such teamwork enhances social harmony, develops local governance, and drives contributory rural development. Agro-tourism contributes to cultural preservation by safeguarding rural traditions that are otherwise threatened by globalization and urbanization. Folk dances, traditional cuisine, village fairs, agricultural rituals, local knowledge, and handicrafts serve as major attractions for tourists. This cultural wealth generates economic value while simultaneously encouraging local communities to preserve their heritage. Tourists gain access to authentic rural experiences, while local residents develop a greater sense of pride in their cultural uniqueness. Thus, agro-tourism proves to be an efficient medium for promoting social sustainability and preserving India's rich cultural variety.In short, the joint social and economic contributions of agro-tourism underscore the significance of inclusive strategy for rural development. Agro-tourism supports inclusive and sustainable development by boosting income, creating jobs, empowering women, curbing migration, enhancing community participation, and preserving cultural heritage. These results gear to the objectives of 'Viksit Bharat 2047,' which give emphasis to social equity, prosperous villages and balanced regional development.

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability has turn into a crucial aspect of agro-tourism, as it promotes an accountable management of natural resources alongside eco-friendly agricultural practices. Unlike mass tourism, agro-tourism relies on healthy agricultural landscapes, a clean atmosphere, and biodiversity; consequently, environmental conservation is necessary for its long-term success. As visitors more and more prefer organic food and nature-based experiences, many agro tourism centres have accepted sustainable farming practices for instance organic farming, composting, incorporated pest management, and rainwater harvesting. These practices decrease the extreme use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, increase soil fertility, preserve water resources, and encourage environmentally accountable agriculture. Organic farming not only guards ecosystems but also increases the market value of agricultural produce, thus creating supplementary income for farmers.Agro-tourism also makes a significant contribution to biodiversity conservation. To enhance the appeal of tourist destinations, farmers are encouraged to preserve indigenous crop varieties, traditional livestock breeds, medicinal plants, orchards, wetlands, forests, and other natural ecosystems. Such conservation efforts protect valuable inherent resources, preserve ecological balance and develop resilience against climate change. Varied agricultural landscapes offer tourists exclusive recreational and educational experiences, making biodiversity both a vital tourism asset and an environmental necessity.An additional main role of agro-tourism is the support of environmental awareness. Through activities such as farm visits, nature walks, organic farming demonstrations, tree-planting drives, and interactions with farmers, tourists gain firsthand knowledge about agriculture, the conservation of natural resources, and sustainable lifestyles. These experiences help tourists recognize the significance of protecting soil, water, forests, and biodiversity, while also encouraging environmentally accountable behaviour in their daily lives. Simultaneously, local communities turn into more aware of sustainable resource management, as environmental quality straight impacts tourist fulfilment and business success. Thus, agro-tourism serves as an useful platform for environmental learning, preservation, and climate-resilient rural development.

Agro-Tourism and the Vision of Viksit Bharat 2047

The vision or goal of 'Viksit Bharat 2047' (Developed India 2047) is to convert India into a developed nation through inclusive economic growth, sustainable development, technical improvement and rural richness. Agro-tourism aligns with this dream by creating a comprehensive model for rural development that integrates agriculture, tourism, entrepreneurship, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation. It contributes straight to key national development priorities by generating employment, rising rural income, strengthening the local economy and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.The most important contribution of agro-tourism is comprehensive economic growth. Through avenues such as farm stays, local cuisine services, guided tours, recreational activities and the direct sale of agricultural produce agro-tourism reduces regional disparities and improves the standard of living for rural communities by providing farmers with alternative income sources. This allows farming families to actively participate in the nation's economic development rather than relying solely on traditional agriculture.Agro-tourism sector generates vast employment opportunities for rural youth, women and farmers. While straight employment is generated in food services, hospitality, tourism management and farm operations, indirect employment benefits extend to transporters, artisans, local vendors, and suppliers of agricultural inputs. These opportunities help to reduce unemployment, curb rural-to-urban migration and elevate the quality of life in villages. Furthermore, the participation of women in areas such as home-stay management, handicrafts, traditional cooking, and cultural programs fosters gender equality and promotes inclusive development. Agro-tourism promotes sustainable farming by encouraging diversified agriculture, organic farming, value addition and the direct sale of agricultural produce. These practices enhance farm productivity while preserving natural resources and preventing environmental degradation. Simultaneously, this sector supports the objectives of 'Digital India' and 'Smart Villages' by connecting rural enterprises with national and international tourists through digital marketing, online booking platforms, mobile applications, websites, and digital payment systems. Digital technology expands market reach, improves business competence and makes stronger the competitiveness of agro-tourism destinations.An additional significant role is the support of self-reliant villages (Atmanirbhar Gram). To strengthen the rural economy, agro-tourism leverages local resources, indigenous knowledge, traditional skills, and community participation.

Revenue generated from tourism passes within the village, benefiting farmers, artisans, transport service providers, women's self-help groups and small-scale enterprises. Furthermore, by promoting folk arts, traditional cuisine, village festivals, handicrafts, and indigenous agricultural knowledge, agro-tourism helps protect India's affluent cultural heritage. Thus, agro-tourism serves as an incorporated model of rural development that robustly supports the multifaceted goals of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.

Challenges and Policy Recommendations

Regardless of the immense potential for agro-tourism in Maharashtra, its expansion and long-term sustainability face numerous challenges. Inadequate rural infrastructure is a main hurdle, encompassing poor road connectivity, irregular power supply, inadequate sanitation facilities, limited accommodation options and poor internet connectivity. These shortcomings diminish tourist happiness and hinder private investment in the agro-tourism sector.One more significant challenge is the lack of awareness among farmers about tourism management, marketing strategies, customer expectations and planning of business. While several farmers acquire outstanding agricultural knowledge, they often lack the managerial skills and entrepreneurial required running successful agro-tourism centres. Financial constraints also limit development. Farmers often lack the capital needed for infrastructure development, promotional efforts, accommodation and recreational activities. Inadequate access to institutional credit and subsidies further discourages investment.Agro-tourism also faces marketing-related challenges, mainly because of a limited digital presence. Several agro-tourism centres rely mostly on local publicity and fail to adequately utilize websites, social media platforms, digital payment facilities and online booking systems. Therefore, their capacity to attract national and international tourists remains limited. Furthermore, a lack of skills in hospitality management, customer service, digital marketing, communication, and tourism operations impacts service quality and tourist fulfilment. The seasonal nature of tourism dependent on agricultural cycles, weather conditions and holiday periods leads to fluctuations in tourist arrivals and irregular income. Addressing these challenges requires a range of strategic measures. Primary, the government must prioritize infrastructure development by recovering rural roads, water supply, electricity, sanitation, healthcare and digital connectivity. Enhanced infrastructure will progress accessibility and elevate the overall tourist experience. Second, financial support for agro-tourism infrastructure investment should be strengthened through subsidized loans, easy credit facilities, start-up funding, tax incentives, and public-private partnerships (PPPs).Third, capacity-building programs should be frequently organized for farmers, women entrepreneurs and rural youth. These programs can enhance their knowledge in areas such as hospitality management, entrepreneurship, communication, customer service, sustainable tourism practices and digital marketing. Universities involved in the agriculture and tourism sectors and agricultural extension centres should collaborate to offer focused training and certificate courses.Furthermore, larger importance should be given to the social media campaigns, digital promotion through dedicated agro-tourism portals, mobile applications and online booking systems. Digital marketing will considerably get better the ability to reach tourists and enhance business visibility. Additionally, accepting a 'cluster-based' development approach can support nearest agro-tourism centres and villages to split resources, connect in joint marketing, and offer integrated tourism packages that provide diverse experiences to tourists. Ultimately, agro-tourism should be incorporated with national development programs such as the 'Digital India', 'Skill India', 'PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises' (PMFME) scheme, 'Start-up India', the 'National Rural Livelihood Mission' (NRLM). Such synergy will make stronger rural entrepreneurship, financial enclosure, skill development, digital connectivity and value addition.In short, by combining agriculture, tourism, environmental conservation, entrepreneurship, and cultural preservation, agro-tourism has emerged as an effective medium for sustainable rural development in Maharashtra. Even though challenges regarding infrastructure, finance, marketing and skills persist, efficient strategy support and public participation can provide a significant boost to the sector's growth. Supporting agro-tourism will boost farmers' income, generate employment, empower women and the youth, and preserve natural and cultural heritage. This will contribute significantly to achieving the goal of 'Viksit Bharat 2047', ultimately making rural Maharashtra more prosperous, capable, and self-reliant.

Conclusion

Agro-tourism has appeared as an effective tool for rural transformation in Maharashtra. By incorporating agriculture and tourism, it produces additional income, generates employment opportunities, strengthens rural entrepreneurship, empowers women and conserve cultural heritage. This sector offers a sustainable path to improve rural livelihoods by dipping dependence on traditional agricultural income.Diverse agricultural resources of Maharashtra, natural attractions, rich cultural traditions, and institutional support have laid a strong foundation for the expansion of agro-tourism. Though, coordinated strategic measures are required to address challenges related to infrastructure, financing, public awareness, and marketing.This study concludes that agro-tourism is not only a tourism-related activity but a complete strategy for rural development. By fostering inclusive growth, sustainable agriculture, self-reliant villages, and socio-economic empowerment, this sector directly bolsters the objectives of 'Viksit Bharat 2047' (Developed India 2047). Through effective planning, the use of technology and the participation of various stakeholders, agro-tourism can become a transformative force in achieving rural prosperity and contributing to the journey of making India a developed nation by 2047.

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Original Article

Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Justice Delivery in India: A Critical Legal and Ethical Analysis of Access to Justice.

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Abstract

Around the world, including in India, the administration of justice is changing due to the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into legal systems. e-Courts, virtual hearings, e-Filing, case management systems, legal research tools, and predictive analytics are examples of AI-powered technologies that have the potential to improve access to justice, decrease case backlogs, increase judicial efficiency, and increase transparency. However, there are important legal, ethical, and constitutional issues with privacy, algorithmic bias, accountability, transparency, data protection, and the maintenance of judicial independence that are brought up by the use of AI in the administration of justice. Through an analysis of its effects on access to justice within the parameters of the Indian Constitution, this paper critically investigates the role of AI in the future of justice delivery in India. It assesses the potential benefits of AI as well as the difficulties in putting it into practice, and it investigates whether the current legal and regulatory framework is sufficient. The study uses a doctrinal research methodology that draws from scholarly literature, government reports, statutes, court rulings, and constitutional provisions. The study comes to the conclusion that although AI has the potential to greatly enhance judicial administration, it should only be used as an assistive tool under human judicial supervision. To guarantee that AI supports an effective, inclusive, and citizen-centric justice delivery system in India, appropriate legal safeguards, ethical standards, transparency, accountability, and strong data protection mechanisms are crucial.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Justice Delivery; Access to Justice; Indian Judiciary; Digital Justice; Legal Ethics; E-Courts.

Introduction

A key component of constitutional democracy and the rule of law is the justice delivery system. A strong legal system guarantees the defense of fundamental rights, settles conflicts quickly, and fosters public trust in the legal system. Rapid technological development in recent years, especially in the area of artificial intelligence (AI), has had a major impact on how legal systems around the world operate. Through programs like the e-Courts Project, e-Filing, virtual courts, online dispute resolution, digital case management, and AI-based legal research tools, India has embraced digital judicial reforms. These developments are intended to enhance judicial effectiveness, decrease case backlogs, boost openness, and increase public access to justice. AI could help judges, attorneys, and court administrators with administrative decision-making, document analysis, legal research, and case scheduling.Despite these advantages, there are significant ethical and legal issues with integrating AI into the administration of justice. Careful consideration must be given to issues like algorithmic bias, lack of transparency, cybersecurity, personal data protection, accountability for automated decisions, and the maintenance of judicial independence. Fairness, due process, and public confidence in the judiciary may all be impacted by an over-reliance on AI.The impact of artificial intelligence on the future of justice delivery in India is examined critically in this essay. It assesses the advantages and disadvantages of AI while looking at how it might affect constitutional access to justice. Additionally, the study makes suggestions to guarantee that technological advancement enhances justice, equity, and the rule of law rather than undermines them.

Objectives of the Study

1.To critically examine how AI affects judicial efficiency and access to justice.
2.To investigate how artificial intelligence functions within India's legal system.
3.To assess critically the constitutional, ethical, and legal issues surrounding the application of AI in the legal system

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4.To evaluate how well India's institutional and legal framework governs the use of AI in the administration of justice.
5.To recommend policies for the ethical, open, and responsible application of AI in the Indian legal system.

Research Questions

1. How is Artificial Intelligence transforming the justice delivery system in India?
2. What opportunities does AI provide for improving access to justice and judicial efficiency?
3. What are the major legal, ethical, and constitutional challenges arising from the use of AI in the judiciary?
4. Is the existing legal framework in India adequate to regulate AI in justice delivery?
5. What policy and legal reforms are necessary to ensure responsible and ethical use of AI in the Indian judicial system?

Research Methodology

The research methodology used in this study is **doctrinal (qualitative**). Secondary sources, such as the Indian Constitution, statutes, court rulings, Law Commission reports, government publications, policy documents, journal articles, books, reports from international organizations, and other academic literature, serve as the main foundation for this research. To analyze the opportunities and challenges related to AI in justice delivery, pertinent digital judicial initiatives, such as the e-Courts Project and AI-based judicial applications, are critically examined. The study makes recommendations for improving access to justice in India and uses descriptive and analytical methods to assess the legal, ethical, and constitutional ramifications of AI.

Artificial Intelligence and Justice Delivery: Concept and Evolution

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the term used to describe computer systems that are able to carry out tasks like learning, reasoning, problem-solving, language processing, and decision-making that typically require human intelligence. By automating repetitive tasks, improving legal research, analyzing case data, and boosting judicial efficiency, artificial intelligence (AI) helps judges, attorneys, and court administrators. Through technologies like online dispute resolution, document review, case management, and predictive analytics, artificial intelligence has become a crucial component of judicial administration worldwide. The e-Courts Mission Mode Project, digitization of court records, virtual hearings, e-Filing, and AI-based legal research tools have all accelerated the development of AI in India's justice delivery system. AI has the potential to revolutionize the legal system by increasing accessibility and efficiency, but in order to maintain justice, fairness, and the rule of law, it must operate as an assistive technology under judicial supervision.

AI Applications in the Indian Judiciary

To enhance court administration and justice access, India has progressively incorporated artificial intelligence into its legal system. AI-enabled tools for legal research, document translation, transcription, and case management have been implemented by the Supreme Court and several High Courts. Judicial procedures have been greatly modernized by programs like the e-Courts Project, the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), e-Filing, virtual courts, digital case management systems, and AI-assisted legal research. AI also facilitates case scheduling, automated cause lists, language translation, and the retrieval of legal information, all of which lessen administrative burdens and boost productivity. Faster case resolution, more transparency, less paperwork, and better accessibility for litigants and legal professionals are all benefits of these technological advancements.

Recent AI Initiatives in the Indian Judiciary.

India has introduced several technology-driven initiatives that demonstrate the growing role of Artificial Intelligence in judicial administration. The Supreme Court Portal for Assistance in Court Efficiency (SUPACE) is an AI-based research tool that assists judges in legal research, identifying relevant precedents, and analysing case materials. It functions only as a decision-support system and does not replace judicial reasoning. The Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software (SUVAS) is an AI-powered translation tool that translates judicial documents and judgments into regional languages, thereby promoting linguistic accessibility and improving access to justice. The National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) is a digital platform that provides real-time information on pending and disposed cases across Indian courts. It enhances transparency, accountability, and judicial efficiency by enabling effective monitoring of case pendency. Further, e-Courts Phase III, launched by the Government of India, aims to establish a fully digital, paperless, and citizen-centric judiciary through AI-enabled technologies, digital infrastructure, interoperable court systems, and secure online judicial services.

Access to Justice in the Digital Era

One of the most important aspects of the rule of law and a basic constitutional value is access to justice. Through online case filing, virtual hearings, electronic court fee payment, digital access to judgments, and online dispute resolution procedures, the Indian judiciary's digital transformation has increased access to legal services. AI-powered technologies make it easier and more affordable for citizens, especially those living in remote areas, to access legal services. Significant obstacles still exist, though, such as the digital divide, insufficient technology infrastructure, low digital literacy, cybersecurity threats, privacy issues, and unequal access to digital resources. Thus, even though AI and digital technologies can improve access to justice, their application must be transparent, inclusive, and backed by strong ethical and legal protections to guarantee that no segment of society is left out of the justice system.

Legal, Ethical, and Constitutional Challenges

There are a number of legal, moral, and constitutional issues with integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into the Indian legal system. From a legal standpoint, India presently lacks a thorough legal framework that expressly regulates the application of AI in judicial decision-making. Data protection, cybersecurity, liability, and regulatory supervision are still major concerns. To protect people's rights and privacy, judicial data collection and processing must adhere to statutory and constitutional protections.Algorithmic bias, a lack of transparency, and limited explainability are potential ethical issues with AI systems that could jeopardize justice and public trust in the legal system. AI cannot completely replace human reasoning, empathy, and contextual understanding, all of which are necessary for judicial decisions. Therefore, rather than taking the place of judicial discretion, AI should only serve as a tool for decision-making.According to Articles 14 and 21 of the Indian Constitution, the use of AI must be in line with the values of equality, due process, natural justice, and the right to life and personal liberty. Transparency, accountability, equity, and equal access to justice must all be guaranteed in any AI-assisted legal system. Therefore, to control the responsible application of AI while upholding judicial independence and the rule of law, a balanced legal framework is necessary.

Constitutional Dimensions of AI and Access to Justice

The use of Artificial Intelligence in the justice delivery system must remain consistent with the constitutional framework of India. Article 14 guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the laws, requiring AI systems to operate without bias or discrimination. Article 19 protects freedoms such as speech and expression, making transparency and accountability in AI-driven judicial processes essential. Article 21, as interpreted by the Supreme Court, guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, which includes the right to privacy, dignity, fair procedure, and access to justice. AI applications must therefore respect these constitutional guarantees.Further, Article 32 empowers individuals to approach the Supreme Court for the enforcement of fundamental rights. The increasing digitisation of judicial processes should strengthen, rather than restrict, citizens' ability to seek constitutional remedies. Article 39A, a Directive Principle of State Policy, obligates the State to ensure equal justice and provide free legal aid. AI-enabled legal services, online courts, and digital legal assistance can significantly contribute to achieving the constitutional objective of equal access to justice, provided technological barriers do not exclude vulnerable sections of society.

Judicial Perspectives

The Indian judiciary has delivered several landmark judgments that provide constitutional guidance for the use of technology and Artificial Intelligence. **In Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017), the Supreme** Court recognised the right to privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21, making data protection and privacy essential considerations in AI-based judicial systems.

In Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978), the Court held that the procedure established by law must be just, fair, and reasonable. This principle requires AI-assisted judicial processes to remain transparent, accountable, and consistent with natural justice.

In Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar (1979), the Supreme Court recognised the right to speedy justice as an integral part of Article 21. AI technologies that reduce delays and improve case management can contribute significantly to fulfilling this constitutional mandate.

In Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India (2020), the Supreme Court emphasised the importance of internet access in exercising constitutional freedoms. This decision highlights the need for reliable digital infrastructure to ensure meaningful access to online judicial services and digital justice.

Comparative Perspectives

Artificial intelligence has been incorporated into the legal systems of several jurisdictions, which can teach India important lessons. With the AI Act, the European Union created a risk-based regulatory framework that prioritizes accountability, transparency, human oversight, and the defense of fundamental rights. This strategy offers a crucial framework for controlling AI in the legal system. While maintaining human control over final court decisions, the United States mainly uses AI for legal research, document review, and case management. To increase productivity, case management, and public access to legal services, the UK has incorporated AI into court administration and digital justice initiatives.Through AI-enabled court services, intelligent case management, online dispute resolution, and technology-driven judicial administration, Singapore has become a global leader in digital justice. Although issues with accountability, transparency, and algorithmic bias are still being discussed, China has created AI-supported Smart Courts that aid in legal research, document analysis, and judicial administration.By embracing globally recognized AI governance principles, such as human oversight, transparency, explainability, data protection, algorithmic accountability, and respect for constitutional values, India can learn a lot from these jurisdictions. These steps will guarantee that AI enhances the administration of justice while preserving the rule of law and fundamental rights.

Suggestions and Recommendations

To ensure the responsible and effective integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the Indian justice delivery system, the following measures are recommended:

1. Enact a comprehensive legal framework to regulate the use of AI in the judiciary, ensuring transparency, accountability, and protection of fundamental rights.
2. Ensure that AI functions only as an assistive tool and does not replace judicial discretion or human decision-making.
3. Develop ethical guidelines for the design, deployment, and use of AI systems in courts to prevent algorithmic bias and discrimination.
4. Strengthen data protection and cybersecurity measures to safeguard judicial records and personal information.
5. Expand digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, and technological resources, particularly in rural and remote areas, to promote inclusive access to justice.
6. Provide regular training and capacity-building programmes for judges, lawyers, and court staff on AI technologies and digital judicial processes.
7. Promote transparency through explainable AI systems and independent audits of AI applications used in judicial administration.
8. Encourage collaboration among the judiciary, government, academic institutions, and technology experts to develop citizen-centric AI solutions for justice delivery.

Conclusion

Through increased efficiency, decreased case pendency, increased transparency, and increased access to justice, artificial intelligence has the potential to completely change the Indian legal system. The importance of technology in modernizing judicial administration is demonstrated by digital initiatives like e-Courts, virtual hearings, e-Filing, and AI-assisted legal research. But there are also significant ethical, legal, and constitutional issues with AI use, such as privacy, algorithmic bias, accountability, transparency, and judicial independence. AI should therefore be viewed as a tool that supports human judges rather than taking their place. The responsible use of AI requires a well-balanced legal framework that is backed by moral principles, efficient regulation, strong data protection, and ongoing judicial supervision. India can harness the advantages of AI while upholding the values of justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law by taking a human-centric and constitutionally compliant approach. The future of justice delivery in India lies not in replacing judges with Artificial Intelligence but in responsibly integrating AI to strengthen constitutional values, judicial efficiency, and equitable access to justice. As Artificial Intelligence continues to evolve, India must adopt a balanced, human-centric, and constitutionally compliant approach that promotes innovation while safeguarding fundamental rights, judicial independence, and public confidence in the justice delivery system.

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Original Article

Stories that Travel: The impact of Indian English Literature in Promoting Cultural Tourism and Global Branding for Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

This paper explains how Indian English Literature (IEL) and higher education support tourism in our country. The Indian government has started an impressive plan called Viksit Bharat 2047 to make India a stronger and more powerful nation. Most plans mainly focus on building roads, national highways, national and international airports. However, this paper shows that stories are also very important to bring more and more visitors from other countries. This paper explains how books by writers like R. K. Narayan, Amitav Ghosh, and William Dalrymple depict Indian heritage sites.The paper also shows how university students learn from this study. When students prepare classroom presentations on literary tourism, they improve their English. This increases their confidence level and gives them effective career opportunities in travel writing, writing tourism-related content, and destination management. By studying global examples like Shakespeare tourism in the United Kingdom and anime tourism in Japan, this paper guides a practical way to link classroom learning with tourism for India's new image around the world.

Keywords*: Indian English Literature, Heritage Tourism, Higher Education, Student Presentations, Cultural Diplomacy, Viksit Bharat 2047.*

Introduction:

India is now working to achieve an important goal called Viksit Bharat 2047. Our nation's project aims to make India a developed country by the year 2047. When Indian people hear the word development, they think about economic growth, large Industrial factories, and smart city projects. But actual development is not complete without cultural pride. We must protect our old history and share it with the world. Tourism is the very effective and important way to do this. It helps bring foreign investment and creates strong international relationships, and provides many jobs at the local level. Traditional tourism planning in India mainly focuses on physical infrastructure. The government is ready to invest large amounts of money to build modern airports, better national highways, and good restaurants. These things are important. However, infrastructure alone cannot make a place popular. A tourist does not travel thousands of miles just to see a clean hotel, restaurant room or a smooth road. Travelers look for real experiences and interesting stories. The emotional connection with a destination is often created by books and cultural narratives. For a different country like India, English literature works as a strong and impressive global medium. India has hundreds of old local traditions, many regional languages, and important historical events. Indian English Literature shares these rich local stories and shows them in a global language. When a reader in America or England reads an Indian novel, they get to know Indian life. R. K. Narayan and Amitav Ghosh have introduced Indian places and culture to world readers even before they visit our nation. At that time, this way of storytelling also improves higher education. When university students study these literary works, they do not just read fiction. They also understand the nation's culture and geography. When students give presentations on these topics, they improve their English communication skills. This better command of English helps them find many opportunities in international careers. Therefore, this paper explains how Indian English Literature and university classrooms can work together to support tourism and help young people to develop useful skills.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand how Indian English Literature presents historical monuments and cultural heritage to international readers.

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- To look at successful international examples of literary tourism and see how India can learn from them.
- To find out how college students can career skills by connecting English language learning with tourism concepts.
- To show the role of student research presentations in introducing local and hidden tourist places to global audiences.
- To identify the missing link between academic curricula and tourism plans in India.
- To suggest easy and practical steps to connect literature, higher education, and tourism to help build a developed India by 2047.

Data and Methodology

This study uses a simple qualitative approach to connect different areas: English literature, geography, and tourism studies. We analyze novels, travel writing, and creative non-fiction written by Indian writers in English. The goal is to see how real places become well-known cultural landmarks through these books. We also check the latest tourism policies of the Government of India and look at the main ideas of the National Education Policy (NEP 2020). To keep the paper highly natural and easy to read, difficult academic words are not used. The sentences are short, and clear, making the important arguments easy for everyone to understand.

Global Benchmarks: Turning Books into Tourism Capitals

The United Kingdom: The Empire of Literary Trails

The experience of the United Kingdom shows that books and writers can help local tourism and the economy. Stratford-upon-Avon is widely known as the birthplace of William Shakespeare. The city of Bath uses a similar idea through the famous writer Jane Austen. The city holds the Jane Austen Festival every year. This proves that a great story can continue to support a city's economy for many years without relying on heavy industries.

New Zealand: The Middle-Earth Transformation

New Zealand illustrates how stories adapted into films can transform a country's tourism industry. The country has always been famous for natural beauty. However, tourism increased significantly after the release of *The Lord of the Rings* films, which were based on J. R. R. Tolkien's books. The government preserved filming locations such as Hobbiton, which continues to attract international visitors.

Japan: Anime Pilgrimages and Regional Revival

Japan uses its modern pop culture and manga literature incredibly well. Many famous graphic stories and anime series take place in quiet and ordinary Japanese villages. Fans from around the world visit Japan to experience locations featured in anime. This creative idea has successfully brought high-spending young visitors, effectively reviving rural economies that had earlier faced economic problems.

Country	Literary/Media Agent	Tourism & Economic Impact
United Kingdom	Shakespeare & Jane Austen	Strong heritage tourism; Many international tourists
New Zealand	Lord of the Rings Ecosystem	Long-term economic growth; Better world tourism image
Japan	Manga & Anime Locations	Growth of small villages; More youth participation
India (Proposed)	Indian English Literature & Student Presentations	Local job opportunities; Better international recognition

Literature and Real places in India

R. K. Narayan's Malgudi

R. K. Narayan created the fictional town of Malgudi, but it reflects the culture, places, and everyday life feel deeply connected to South India. In *The Guide*, he vividly portrays familiar local settings, making them feel authentic and relatable. Although Malgudi is imaginary, it inspires people to explore places with a similar cultural atmosphere.

Amitav Ghosh: Discovering the beauty of the Sundarbans

In *The Hungry Tide*, Amitav Ghosh brings the Sundarbans to life through a compelling blend of human experiences and the natural environment.

William Dalrymple: Bringing Indian history to Life

William Dalrymple has a remarkable ability to make history engaging through his books, especially *City of Djinns*. Dalrymple's work demonstrates how literature can introduce India's architectural and cultural legacy to a global audience in a meaningful and lasting way.

Higher Education Tourism: Practical Benefits for Students

Combining tourism and English literature gives students practical and professional skills.

Preparing for Professional Communication skills

When students study literature alongside tourism, they naturally learn to communicate better. The tourism sector needs simple, polite, and effective language. By reading how famous authors describe different places, students learn to create interesting content.

Active Student Presentations as a Tool for Local Tourism

In modern colleges, classrooms are more interactive. For instance, when an English student gives a presentation on a topic like "The Representation of Varanasi in Indian Travel Writing," it brings several great benefits:

- **Research and Practical Learning**

Students develop research skills through books, digital sources, maps, and local interactions. These activities improve their research abilities and help them better understand the history, culture, and significance of different places.

- **Creating New Career Opportunities**

A strong foundation in English, combined with knowledge of tourism, opens the door to a variety of career options.

- **Content Writing and Travel Journalism**

Travel magazines, tourism websites, and tourism departments regularly look for people who can create engaging travel content in English. Students can work as travel writers, bloggers, journalists, or digital content creators.

Heritage Tour Curators: Traditional tour guides usually only repeat historical dates and numbers.

A literature graduate can share the real stories behind monuments. This makes the trip much more enjoyable for foreign tourists.

Indian English Literature as Cultural Soft Power

A nation's identity is shaped not only through economic progress but also through its culture, literature, and ideas. Literature has the unique ability to introduce a nation's values, traditions, history, and way of life to readers across the world. This influence, often called soft power, because it attracts people through knowledge and stories rather than political or economic influence.

Result and Discussion: Overcoming Gaps for Viksit Bharat 2047

The Current Problem: Working in Silos

Right now, India has a major roadblock. Our government departments usually work separately. For example, the Ministry of Education designs college courses. On the other hind, the Ministry of Tourism handles tourism branding and building infrastructure. There is almost no teamwork between them. Students study beautiful books about Indian heritage in classrooms, but tour companies do not use this student knowledge to create holiday packages. Because of this missing link, we lose many good chances to promote our country to the global audience.

The Future Outlook

By 2047, India aims to become one of the world's leading tourist destinations, welcoming tourists from different countries. To do this, we need to build a system where literature and higher education work together with the tourism industry. Special tourism areas, such as literary trails and eco-tourism, are not affected much by different seasons. They bring visitors throughout the year.

Conclusion

India's cultural heritage and literature are equally significant as its physical infrastructure. In order to realize the concept of Viksit Bharat 2047, it is essential to make use of the country's literary heritage along with the ideas, creativity, and initiatives of the learners and faculty members of the country's higher education institutions. Indian English Literature acquaints people worldwide about India's heritage, past, and diverse cultures. People get interested in visiting any particular location on reading about the place through books. Thus, when literature is linked to tourism, not only tourists are attracted, but also the importance of several places gets recognized. Higher Educational universities can play a significant role by motivating students to understand the link between literature and tourism. Discussions in classrooms, visits to fields, travel writings, and researches are some activities which not only enhance the communication skills of the students but also impart an in-depth knowledge of Indian culture to them. Such activities are beneficial for their future career in tourism, media, education, content writing, and cultural management.

Better cooperation among universities, tourism bodies, the local community, and cultural institutions will open up a range of opportunities to create sustainable tourism and development. The telling of stories from the region in clear and simple English and via digital media will enable foreign travelers to discover some of the lesser known cultural assets of India. To conclude, Indian English Literature is not just something that is taught in classroom studies in India. It can also serve as an effective way to promote the culture, tourism, skills and, even more importantly, a good image of India internationally. Education, through literature, can help in creating Viksit Bharat 2047.

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Future Tourism for Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors contributing significantly to economic development, employment generation, cultural exchange, and infrastructure growth. In India, tourism plays a strategic role in national development, contributing approximately 5–6% of GDP while supporting millions of direct and indirect jobs. Under the vision of ***Viksit Bharat 2047****, India aspires to become a developed nation by the centenary of independence. Tourism is expected to become a major pillar in achieving this objective through sustainable growth, digital transformation, cultural preservation, global competitiveness, and inclusive economic development. This research paper examines the future of tourism in India in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047, identifies opportunities and challenges, and proposes strategies to transform India into a global tourism leader by 2047. Studies and policy discussions suggest that tourism could contribute nearly 10% of GDP by 2047 if supported through infrastructure, sustainability, innovation, and governance reforms.*

Keywords: *Viksit Bharat 2047, Tourism Development, Sustainable Tourism, Digital Tourism, Smart Tourism, Artificial Intelligence (AI)*
Eco-Tourism,Tourism Infrastructure Economic Growth Employment Generation, Cultural Heritage,Rural Tourism, Community-Based Tourism,Tourism Policy,Digital Transformation.

Introduction

Tourism is often called the "sunrise industry" because of its powerful impact on economic growth and social transformation. India possesses extraordinary tourism potential because of its geographical diversity, historical monuments, cultural heritage, spiritual destinations, biodiversity, and traditional knowledge systems. From the Taj Mahal to the Himalayas, from Goa Beaches to Kerala backwaters, India offers diverse experiences unmatched globally.

The Government of India has introduced the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**, a roadmap aimed at transforming India into a developed nation by 2047. Tourism has been recognized as a critical sector because it connects infrastructure, employment, entrepreneurship, foreign exchange earnings, and cultural diplomacy. The Ministry of Tourism and industry bodies have projected major expansion targets, including stronger GDP contribution, large-scale job creation, and significant growth in inbound tourism.

This paper studies how tourism can evolve as a strategic engine in achieving the broader goals of Viksit Bharat.

Objectives of the Study

The present research paper aims to study the future prospects of the tourism sector in India in the context of **Viksit Bharat 2047** and analyze its role in national development. The major objectives of the study are as follows:

1. **To examine the importance of tourism in India's economy** and analyze its contribution toward Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and infrastructure development.
2. **To study the future potential of the tourism sector in achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047** and understand how tourism can contribute to India's long-term economic growth and global competitiveness.
3. **To analyze the latest developments in Digital Tourism and Smart Tourism** including Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), smart mobility systems, digital payment infrastructure, and integrated digital tourism platforms transforming the tourism industry.
4. **To examine recent developments in Sustainable Tourism Development** with focus on eco-tourism, environmental conservation, green infrastructure, responsible tourism practices, and community-based tourism models supporting long-term sustainable growth.

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5. **To identify the major challenges affecting future tourism development in India**, including infrastructure gaps, environmental degradation, over-tourism, climate change vulnerability, safety concerns, skill shortages, and weak destination management systems.
6. **To suggest strategic solutions and policy recommendations** for strengthening India's tourism sector and transforming it into a globally competitive, technologically advanced, and sustainable industry by 2047.
7. **To evaluate the role of tourism as a catalyst for inclusive development** by promoting employment generation, rural development, cultural preservation, entrepreneurship, and balanced regional economic growth in India.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on a **descriptive and analytical research methodology** aimed at examining the future prospects of tourism development in India in the context of **Viksit Bharat 2047**. The research primarily focuses on understanding the role of tourism as a major contributor to economic growth, sustainable development, technological transformation, and national development.

The study is based on **secondary data collection methods**, where information has been gathered from various reliable and authentic sources such as government reports, policy documents, research papers, industry publications, academic journals, newspapers, tourism statistics reports, and official websites. Important sources of data include reports published by the **Ministry of Tourism, Government of India**, **World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)**, **Press Information Bureau (PIB)**, **Invest India**, **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**, and other tourism-related national and international organizations.

Qualitative analysis has been used to examine recent developments in **Digital Tourism, Smart Tourism, Sustainable Tourism Development, and major challenges affecting future tourism growth.**

Thus, the methodology adopted in this study is primarily **descriptive, analytical, and secondary-data based**, suitable for examining future opportunities, challenges, and policy directions in the tourism sector.

Importance of Tourism in India's Economy

Tourism is a multi-sector industry affecting hospitality, transportation, handicrafts, food services, aviation, retail, and digital services. Tourism is one of the most important sectors of the Indian economy because it contributes directly to **GDP growth, employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, infrastructure development, and regional development**. As India moves toward the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**, tourism is expected to become a major pillar of economic transformation.

1. Major Contribution to India's GDP

Tourism significantly contributes to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through hotels, transportation, travel services, entertainment, restaurants, and related industries.

Recent estimates show:

- Tourism contributed **5.22% of India's GDP in FY 2023–24** according to Ministry of Tourism estimates.
- According to WTTC estimates, the broader travel and tourism sector contributed **6.6% of national GDP in 2024**, equal to approximately **$249.3 billion (₹21 lakh crore+)**. (Vision India 2047 in Relation to the Indian Tourism Industry, Its Sustainable Efforts, and its Advantages -An Assessment).

This makes tourism one of India's largest service-sector contributors. Higher tourism spending increases national income and stimulates growth across many connected industries.

2. Employment Generation on a Massive Scale

Tourism is labor-intensive and creates both **direct and indirect employment opportunities**. It provides job in:

- Hotels and hospitality
- Airlines and railways
- Tour operations
- Travel agencies
- Restaurants
- Local transportation
- Tourist guides
- Event management
- Handicrafts and local markets

Current employment statistics:

- Tourism supports approximately **46.3 million jobs** in India (about **9.1% of total employment**) according to WTTC estimates.
- Government estimates indicate **36.9 million direct jobs** and **47.72 million indirect jobs**, accounting for **13.34% of total employment**.

Thus, tourism creates employment opportunities for both highly skilled professionals and local workers in rural and urban areas.

3. Source of Foreign Exchange Earnings

International tourists bring foreign currency into India, strengthening the country's foreign exchange reserves.

Key figures:

- India earned approximately **₹51,532 crore in foreign exchange earnings from tourism by mid-2025**.
- International tourism spending in India reached nearly **₹3.1 lakh crore in 2024**, exceeding pre-pandemic levels.

Foreign tourists spend on hotels, shopping, transportation, medical treatment, heritage tourism and cultural experiences. Thus, higher foreign exchange earnings improve balance of payments and strengthen economic stability.

4. Infrastructure Development

Tourism forces governments to invest in infrastructure improvements.

This includes:







- Airports
- Roads and highways
- Railway connectivity
- Metro transport systems
- Hotels and resorts

- Digital payment systems
- Public sanitation and cleanliness

Examples:

- Expansion of airports under **UDAN Scheme**
- Better road connectivity to pilgrimage and heritage destinations
- Smart city development improving tourism accessibility

Thus, infrastructure built for tourism benefits local residents and improves long-term productivity.

5. Growth of Domestic Tourism Economy

Domestic tourism has become the backbone of India's tourism sector. Recent trends:

- Domestic tourism visits increased **17.5% in 2024 compared to the previous year**.
- Domestic tourism spending now contributes nearly **88% of total tourism expenditure in India**.

Popular domestic tourism categories:

- Religious tourism
- Hill station tourism
- Beach tourism
- Adventure tourism
- Wellness tourism

Thus, domestic travel supports continuous demand even when international tourism slows.

6. Supports Rural and Regional Development

Tourism creates economic opportunities in less-developed regions.

Examples:

- Homestays in Himalayan villages
- Tribal tourism in Northeast India
- Desert tourism in Rajasthan
- Backwater tourism in Kerala
- Eco-tourism in Meghalaya

Tourism helps local communities earn through:

- Handicrafts
- Food services
- Transport
- Cultural performances
- Accommodation services

For example, states like **Uttar Pradesh** have seen massive religious tourism growth, with more than **156 crore visitors over nine years**, boosting local economies significantly. Tourism reduces regional inequality by bringing income to smaller towns and villages.

7. Boost to Allied Industries

Tourism supports many connected sectors. Industries benefiting include:

- Aviation
- Hotel industry
- Food processing
- Handicrafts
- Retail businesses
- Taxi services
- Entertainment industry
- Cruise tourism
- Event management

For example, hotel demand in India is projected to grow **10–15% annually**, driven largely by domestic tourism demand. Growth in tourism creates a multiplier effect throughout the economy.

8. Promotes India's Cultural and Global Brand

India attracts visitors through its unique heritage and culture. Major attractions include:

- Taj Mahal
- Red Fort
- Varanasi Ghats
- Yoga tourism
- Ayurveda tourism
- Spiritual tourism

Tourism strengthens India's international image and acts as a form of **soft power diplomacy** A strong global brand increases foreign investment and international partnerships. Tourism is a strategic sector for India's economic growth. It contributes significantly through:

Economic Area	Contribution
GDP Contribution	5.22% – 6.6%
Employment	46+ million jobs
Foreign Exchange	₹51,532 crore+
Domestic Tourism Growth	+17.5% growth
Employment Share	Up to 13.34% of workforce

Tourism is not only a travel industry — it is a powerful engine for **employment generation, infrastructure development, rural empowerment, foreign exchange earnings, and sustainable economic growth**, making it crucial for achieving **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

Tourism and Vision of Viksit Bharat 2047

Viksit Bharat 2047 represents India's ambition to become economically advanced, technologically driven, environmentally sustainable, and socially inclusive. Tourism supports this vision in multiple ways:

- Generating large-scale employment
- Encouraging entrepreneurship
- Strengthening infrastructure development
- Promoting India's global image
- Preserving heritage and traditions
- Driving rural economic transformation

Tourism is expected to move from being a service sector to becoming a strategic development sector. By 2047, India aims to position tourism as one of the largest contributors to national income. Industry discussions such as the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality have projected ambitions of a multi-trillion-dollar tourism economy by 2047.

Emerging Trends Shaping Future Tourism in India

1. Digital Tourism and Smart Tourism

Digital transformation has fundamentally changed the tourism industry worldwide. The integration of advanced technologies such as **Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), Blockchain, Big Data Analytics, Cloud Computing, Smart Mobility Systems, and Digital Payment Infrastructure** has given rise to **Digital Tourism** and **Smart Tourism**. These technologies are reshaping how travellers plan, experience, and evaluate tourism services.

For India, digital tourism has become increasingly important in achieving the national vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**, where technology-driven growth, sustainable development, and global competitiveness are central objectives. The tourism industry is moving from traditional service models toward intelligent and connected tourism ecosystems that improve convenience, operational efficiency, sustainability, and tourist satisfaction.

1.1. National Digital Tourism Mission (NDTM): Building India's Digital Tourism Ecosystem

One of India's most significant developments in tourism digitization is the **National Digital Tourism Mission**, launched by the **Ministry of Tourism**. The mission aims to create an integrated digital tourism infrastructure connecting all stakeholders in the tourism ecosystem.

Major objectives include:

- Creation of a unified tourism database
- Centralized digital registration of tourism service providers
- Integration of hotels, airlines, transport providers, and travel agencies
- AI-based traveller recommendation systems
- Seamless digital booking infrastructure
- Real-time tourism analytics and demand forecasting

The mission seeks to digitally connect thousands of tourism businesses across India.

According to an industry study by **EY India**, digital transformation in tourism could improve operational efficiency by nearly **25–30% over the next decade**. (Ernst & Young India (2025), *The Great Indian Traveller: Trends Shaping Indian Travel Industry).* A unified digital ecosystem reduces inefficiency, increases transparency, and improves tourist experiences.

1.2. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Revolutionizing Tourism Services

Artificial Intelligence has emerged as one of the biggest technological drivers in global tourism development. AI applications include:

- AI-powered virtual travel assistants
- Personalized destination recommendations
- Chatbots handling customer queries 24/7
- Dynamic pricing systems for airlines and hotels
- Automated language translation services
- Facial recognition systems at airports
- Predictive analytics for travel demand forecasting

AI systems analyse traveller preferences and deliver highly personalized travel recommendations.

Recent global tourism reports indicate that **more than 70% of travelers worldwide now use digital platforms before making booking decisions**, while AI-based recommendation systems increasingly influence purchasing behavior. India has accelerated AI adoption through national digital infrastructure and the **India AI Impact Summit 2026**, where tourism was identified as a major sector for AI integration. (World Economic Forum (2025), *AI Transformation in Global Tourism Industry).*

AI improves efficiency, reduces costs, and enhances customer satisfaction.

1.3. Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) Tourism Experiences

Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality technologies are transforming tourism marketing and visitor experiences. Applications include:

- 360-degree virtual destination tours



Figure 1: Virtual Reality (VR) Tourism Experience in Heritage Sites

Demonstrates 360-degree virtual tours allowing tourists to experience destinations digitally before visiting physically.

- Virtual previews of hotels and resorts before booking



Figure 2: Augmented Reality (AR) in Heritage Tourism

Shows AR technology enhancing visitor engagement through interactive historical reconstructions at monuments and museums.

- Digital heritage reconstruction of historical monuments
- Interactive museum experiences
- Immersive cultural storytelling experiences



Figure 3: Digital Tourism Infrastructure in India
Represents the use of digital platforms and smart technologies for tourism management, online booking, and destination promotion. (***Source:*** *Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2026); EY India Tourism Report (2025); Digital Tourism Development Reports).*

India has increasingly adopted VR technology in heritage tourism development. The Government of India has invested in **digital experience centers** for heritage tourism, especially within Buddhist tourism circuits and cultural destinations.
The official tourism ministry reports released in 2026 indicate significant budget allocations for digital heritage experience projects.(Ministry of Tourism India Reports (2026 Tourism Infrastructure Reports)) VR increases tourist engagement and strengthens destination marketing.

1.4. Smart Airports and Intelligent Mobility Systems

Smart transportation systems are becoming central to modern tourism development.
India has rapidly modernized aviation and transportation infrastructure.
Major technological developments include:

- Contactless airport check-in systems
- Facial recognition boarding systems
- Smart baggage tracking systems
- AI-based airport crowd management
- Integrated digital ticketing systems
- GPS-based tourism transport services
- Smart city transportation integration

Recent infrastructure statistics show:

- India has expanded to **150+ operational airports** under aviation expansion programs.
- Major airport modernization projects are improving connectivity to tourism destinations in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.
  Examples include:
- Vande Bharat Express improving intercity tourist travel
- Metro connectivity expansion in tourism-focused cities
- Smart transport integration under the Smart Cities Mission

Better transportation reduces travel barriers and increases tourist accessibility.
(Press Information Bureau India (Infrastructure and Tourism Development Reports, 2026))

1.5. Rapid Growth of Mobile-Based Tourism Platforms

Smartphone technology has completely transformed traveler behavior.
Today, most tourists rely on mobile devices for:

- Flight booking
- Hotel reservations
- Restaurant discovery
- Navigation and maps
- Language translation

- Cab booking
- Travel itinerary management
- Digital payments

Popular digital tourism platforms include:

- MakeMyTrip
- IRCTC Tourism
- Airbnb
- Booking.com

Recent industry studies show:

- More than **80% of travel bookings in India now occur through digital platforms**.

Mobile-first users dominate travel booking behavior, especially among younger travelers. (EY India Travel Industry Report (2025))
Mobile ecosystems improve convenience and reduce dependence on traditional travel agents.

1.6. UPI and Cashless Tourism Revolution

India's digital payment infrastructure has become one of the strongest pillars supporting digital tourism. Tourists increasingly use:

- UPI payments
- QR code payments
- Mobile wallets
- Contactless payment systems
- International payment integrations

Recent major development:
National Payments Corporation of India has expanded **UPI international acceptance**.
By 2026:

- Indian UPI payments are accepted in **9+ countries internationally**
- Millions of domestic tourists rely on digital payments rather than cash transactions

Recent data from the **National Payments Corporation of India** shows UPI processing **billions of monthly transactions**, making tourism spending faster and safer.
Cashless tourism reduces transaction friction and improves financial accessibility. (NPCI Official Website)

1.7. Smart Destination Management Systems

Tourism governance is increasingly becoming data-driven.
Smart destination management includes:

- Real-time crowd monitoring
- Tourist flow analytics
- Digital ticketing systems
- GPS movement monitoring
- Tourist safety monitoring systems
- Predictive demand management systems

Recent development:
The Government of Maharashtra has introduced a **Destination Management Model** to modernize tourism planning.
This model focuses on:

- Better infrastructure coordination
- Sustainable tourism management
- Prevention of over-tourism
- Real-time visitor management systems

Improves governance efficiency and protects destinations from overcrowding.
(Times of India (2026), Maharashtra Tourism Destination Management Initiative)

1.8. Smart Tourism Supporting Sustainable Development

Future tourism growth requires balancing economic expansion with environmental sustainability.
Technology is supporting sustainable tourism through:

- AI-based waste management systems
- Smart water conservation in hotels
- Energy-efficient smart buildings
- Carbon footprint monitoring systems
- Wildlife monitoring sensors in eco-tourism zones
- Smart electricity management systems

Government policy increasingly integrates sustainability with tourism development.
The **Union Budget 2026–27** emphasized sustainable destination development supported by digital infrastructure. Allows tourism expansion without environmental damage.
Union Budget India Information Portal

Statistical Snapshot of Digital and Smart Tourism Growth

Indicator	Latest Statistics
Tourism GDP Contribution	6.6% of GDP
Tourism Industry Value	$249.3 Billion
Online Travel Booking Share	80%+
Tourism Jobs Supported	46.3 Million
Digital Payment Adoption	UPI dominant nationwide
Countries Accepting UPI	9+ countries
Operational Airports	150+
Expected Annual Tourism Growth	12–15% annually

Sources: WTTC, Ministry of Tourism India, EY India, PIB India, NPCI (2025–2026)

Sustainable Tourism Development

Sustainable Tourism Development refers to tourism practices that meet present tourism needs while protecting environmental resources, preserving cultural heritage, supporting local communities, and ensuring economic benefits for future generations. It focuses on balancing **economic growth, environmental conservation, and social inclusion**.

As India moves toward **Viksit Bharat 2047**, sustainable tourism has become a strategic priority because uncontrolled tourism growth can damage ecosystems, create waste management problems, cause over-tourism, and threaten biodiversity. In recent years, India has adopted new policies and technological innovations that promote responsible tourism and environmentally sustainable destination development.

1. National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism (Government of India)

One of the most significant recent developments is the **Ministry of Tourism - National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism**. The strategy focuses on long-term sustainability principles across tourism planning and management.

Key focus areas include:

- Environmental sustainability
- Climate resilience in tourism destinations
- Sustainable management of natural resources
- Promotion of eco-tourism destinations
- Reduction of carbon emissions from tourism activities
- Community participation in tourism development
- Green certification systems for hotels and tourism businesses

The policy integrates tourism growth with India's climate and sustainability commitments.

This strategy ensures tourism growth without damaging natural ecosystems and local communities.

(Ministry of Tourism India – National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism)

2. Union Budget 2026–27 Focus on Eco-Tourism and Sustainable Tourism Infrastructure

The **Government of India Union Budget 2026–27** introduced major sustainable tourism development projects. Important initiatives include:

- Development of **Mountain Trails** in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jammu & Kashmir
- **Eco and Nature Trails** in Araku Valley and Western Ghats
- **Turtle Conservation Tourism Trails** in Odisha, Karnataka, and Kerala
- **Bird Watching Trails** around Pulicat Lake
- Development of **15 archaeological heritage destinations** using conservation-based tourism models.

These projects focus on low-impact tourism while protecting biodiversity and natural ecosystems. Recent government budget allocations have significantly increased investment in sustainable tourism infrastructure. Encourages tourism growth while protecting ecological resources.

(Press Information Bureau India – Budget 2026 Tourism Announcement)

3. Rapid Growth of Eco-Tourism in India

Eco-tourism has become one of the fastest-growing tourism segments in India. Eco-tourism focuses on: Wildlife conservation tourism

- Forest tourism
- Protected area tourism
- Nature-based tourism
- Community-managed tourism activities

Examples of rapidly developing eco-tourism destinations:



Figure 1: Eco-Tourism and Wildlife Conservation at Kaziranga National Park
Illustrates sustainable tourism practices focused on biodiversity conservation, wildlife protection, and responsible visitor management in protected natural ecosystems.



Figure 2: Kerala Responsible Tourism Mission – Community-Based Sustainable Tourism
Shows Kerala's sustainable tourism model promoting local employment generation, community participation, waste reduction, and environmentally responsible tourism development.



Figure 3: Sustainable Tourism Development in Sikkim
Represents eco-friendly tourism initiatives in mountainous regions through nature conservation, green tourism infrastructure, and preservation of fragile ecosystems.

- Kaziranga National Park
- Kerala Responsible Tourism Mission
- Sikkim Eco-tourism Programs
- Jim Corbett National Park Wildlife Tourism

Recent sector reports indicate India's tourism sector is expected to grow at **7–9% CAGR during the next decade**, with eco-tourism becoming a major growth segment. Eco-tourism generates income while preserving biodiversity.

(Invest India – Sustainable Tourism Growth Report)

4. Responsible Tourism Mission in Kerala – Model for Sustainable Tourism
Kerala has become one of India's leading examples of sustainable tourism through its **Responsible Tourism Mission**. The program focuses on:

- Community-based tourism development
- Local employment generation
- Promotion of local handicrafts
- Sustainable accommodation systems
- Plastic waste reduction programs
- Women-led tourism enterprises
- Local cultural preservation

The Kerala model connects local communities directly with tourism revenue generation. It has become an internationally recognized model for community-led sustainable tourism.
Ensures tourism benefits local communities instead of only large corporations. (Kerala Responsible Tourism Mission Reports (Government of Kerala Tourism Department)Kerala Tourism Official Portal)

5. Sustainable Hotel Industry Expansion and Green Hospitality
India's hospitality industry is increasingly adopting sustainable practices. Hotels now focus on:

- Solar energy systems
- Rainwater harvesting
- Energy-efficient building design
- Waste recycling systems
- Plastic-free hospitality operations
- Green building certifications
- Smart water management systems

Recent development:
Royal Orchid Hotels announced expansion plans for **50 new hotels** while focusing on sustainable infrastructure models. Industry reports estimate **10–15% annual growth in hotel demand**, creating pressure for environmentally sustainable hotel development. Green hotels reduce tourism-related environmental damage. (Reuters Business Report (June 2026))

6. Community-Based Tourism and Rural Tourism Development
Sustainable tourism increasingly focuses on empowering rural communities.
Recent initiatives support:

- Village tourism
- Homestay tourism models
- Tribal tourism
- Agricultural tourism
- Local craft tourism

The objective is to distribute tourism income beyond major cities. States increasingly promote local community participation in tourism planning. Benefits include:

- Local employment generation
- Reduction in urban migration
- Preservation of local culture
- Rural economic development

Supports inclusive development while reducing regional inequality.
(State of Tourism of India Report 2026)

Managing Over-Tourism and Destination Protection
One of the biggest global tourism challenges is **over-tourism**, where too many visitors damage local ecosystems. Recent examples globally show governments limiting tourism activities to protect fragile ecosystems. India has increasingly adopted destination management systems to regulate tourist flow in environmentally sensitive areas.
Recent example: Tourism in the **Sundarbans Tiger Reserve** was temporarily suspended in June 2026 to protect ecological conditions and manage environmental concerns. Protecting fragile ecosystems ensures long-term tourism sustainability. (Times of India (June 2026))

Tourism Growth with Climate and ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) Standards

Modern tourism planning increasingly uses **ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance)** principles.

Tourism businesses now focus on:

- Carbon-neutral tourism operations
- Sustainable investment practices
- Renewable energy use
- Climate adaptation planning
- Responsible waste management
- Biodiversity protection programs

Several Indian states are now integrating ESG frameworks into tourism planning. For example, **Maharashtra** is increasingly promoting ESG-led tourism infrastructure development. Aligns tourism growth with international sustainability standards. (Business and tourism sector ESG development reports (2026))

Statistical Snapshot of Sustainable Tourism Development

Indicator	Latest Statistics
Tourism Sector Growth Forecast	7–9% CAGR
Tourism GDP Contribution by 2028 (Projected)	USD 512 Billion
Hotel Industry Growth	10–15% annually
Operational Sustainable Tourism Trails	4+ major national eco-trail programs
Archaeological Sustainable Tourism Projects	15 major heritage sites
Eco-Tourism Expansion	Fastest growing tourism segment
Foreign Tourist Revenue Potential	$56 Billion by 2030

Sources: Ministry of Tourism India, PIB India, Invest India, WTTC Reports (2025–2026)

Conclusion

Sustainable tourism development has become one of the most important priorities in India's tourism strategy. Recent initiatives such as the **National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism**, **Union Budget 2026 eco-tourism projects**, **Kerala Responsible Tourism Mission**, **green hotel development**, **community-based tourism**, and **ESG-led destination planning** demonstrate India's commitment toward responsible tourism growth.

For **Viksit Bharat 2047**, sustainable tourism will ensure that economic growth does not come at the cost of environmental destruction or cultural loss. Tourism development in the future must focus not only on increasing tourist numbers but also on preserving resources for future generations.

Major Challenges for Future Tourism Development

Tourism is expected to become one of the strongest pillars supporting India's vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**. However, despite rapid growth in domestic and international tourism, the sector continues to face structural, environmental, technological, and governance-related challenges. Recent developments in 2025–2026 show that while India is investing heavily in tourism expansion, major barriers still threaten sustainable long-term growth.

To transform India into a globally competitive tourism economy by 2047, these challenges must be addressed through strategic reforms, infrastructure modernization, skill development, sustainable planning, and policy innovation.

1. Infrastructure Deficit and Last-Mile Connectivity Problems

One of India's biggest tourism challenges remains inadequate infrastructure. Although India has expanded airport infrastructure significantly, many tourism destinations continue to suffer from poor last-mile connectivity. Major problems include poor road conditions near tourism sites, limited rural transportation, inadequate public sanitation systems, poor internet connectivity in remote tourism areas and lack of affordable accommodation infrastructure.

Recent reports show:

- India has **150+ operational airports**, yet many heritage and eco-tourism destinations remain poorly connected.
- Industry reports estimate tourism infrastructure investment gaps remain one of the biggest constraints to international tourism competitiveness.

Recent example:

Heavy tourist congestion in **Manali** led authorities to recommend transport infrastructure overhaul because nearly **10,000–12,000 tourist vehicles enter daily during peak seasons**, causing severe congestion.

Solution

- Improve last-mile connectivity roads
- Expand regional transport systems under tourism circuits
- Build affordable accommodation infrastructure
- Improve digital connectivity in remote destinations

2. Over-Tourism and Environmental Degradation

Over-tourism has emerged as a major global tourism challenge. High tourist concentration damages fragile ecosystems and exceeds carrying capacity limits. Major environmental impacts include forest destruction, waste accumulation, water pollution, traffic congestion, wildlife disturbance and increased carbon emissions.

Recent examples:



Figure 1: Over-Tourism and Crowd Pressure at Goa Beach Destinations
Illustrates excessive tourist concentration at coastal destinations leading to waste generation, environmental degradation, pressure on local infrastructure, and challenges in sustainable tourism management.



Figure 2: Traffic Congestion in Manali Due to Rapid Tourism Growth
Shows the impact of inadequate transport infrastructure and excessive tourist vehicle inflow causing severe traffic congestion during peak tourism seasons.



Figure 4: Environmental Damage Caused by Over-Tourism in Himalayan Regions

Demonstrates the negative impact of uncontrolled tourism growth including waste pollution, ecosystem destruction, overcrowding, and increasing pressure on fragile mountain environments.

- Goa recorded **over 1.1 crore tourist arrivals**, creating crowd-management and waste challenges.
- Tourism in the **Sundarbans Tiger Reserve** was temporarily suspended in June 2026 to protect ecological conditions.

Solution

- Introduce carrying-capacity regulations
- Limit tourist entry in ecologically fragile destinations
- Promote eco-tourism and off-season tourism
- Implement digital crowd monitoring systems

3. Declining Foreign Tourist Arrivals and Global Competition

India has enormous tourism potential but continues to underperform in attracting international tourists compared with global competitors. Recent reports indicate:

- India recorded approximately ***5.6 million foreign tourist arrivals until August 2025***, lower than competing destinations.
- Thailand received nearly ***35 million international tourists***, significantly outperforming India.

Major reasons are Visa delays, weak international tourism marketing, high travel costs, poor international brand positioning and competition from countries such as Thailand, Singapore, and Dubai. Industry analysis suggests India's inbound tourism recovery remains slower than expected.

Solution

- Expand e-visa access for more countries
- Strengthen international tourism campaigns
- Increase global branding investment
- Develop premium international tourism experiences

4. Skill Gap and Shortage of Trained Tourism Professionals

Tourism growth requires skilled human resources. India continues to face shortages in:

- Professional tourist guides
- Multilingual hospitality staff
- Digital tourism specialists
- Destination managers
- Hotel management professionals
- Customer service experts

The **Union Budget 2026–27** emphasized hospitality skill development and tourism workforce modernization. The Major concern is that rapid tourism expansion is creating demand faster than workforce training capacity. Government policy now prioritizes establishment of new hospitality training institutions.

Solution

- Establish tourism skill development institutes nationwide
- Introduce digital tourism training programs
- Expand hospitality education programs
- Improve foreign language training for guides

5. Safety, Security, and Tourist Trust Issues

Safety remains one of the most important factors affecting tourism competitiveness.
Key concerns include:

- Tourist scams
- Overcharging by local operators
- Women traveler safety concerns
- Fraud in transport and accommodation booking
- Cyber fraud through fake booking websites

Academic studies continue identifying safety perception as a major barrier to international tourism growth. Challenges particularly affect solo travelers and foreign tourists unfamiliar with local systems.

Solution

- Dedicated tourism police units in major destinations
- Verified digital booking systems
- Tourist grievance redressal platforms
- Stronger cyber fraud monitoring systems

6. Seasonal Tourism Dependency and Uneven Revenue Distribution

Many Indian tourism destinations remain highly seasonal.
Examples:

- Himalayan tourism peaks only during summer
- Beach tourism concentrated during winter seasons

- Religious tourism concentrated around festivals

Problems caused:

- Low off-season employment
- Underutilized infrastructure during non-peak months
- Revenue instability for local communities

Tourism studies show seasonal dependency continues reducing year-round economic efficiency in many states.

Solution

- Promote year-round tourism circuits
- Develop convention and business tourism
- Encourage indoor cultural tourism experiences
- Promote monsoon tourism packages

7. Weak Destination Management and Poor Urban Planning

Rapid tourism growth often exceeds urban infrastructure capacity. Recent examples include overcrowding in major destinations where roads, parking systems, sanitation systems, and waste management cannot handle visitor numbers. Example: States increasingly report destination management failures caused by uncontrolled visitor growth. The tourism sector increasingly demands **data-driven destination management systems**. Tourism policy discussions now emphasize destination-led planning rather than unregulated tourism expansion.

Solution

- Smart destination management systems
- AI-based visitor analytics
- Urban tourism planning models
- Better parking and public transport infrastructure

8. Climate Change and Disaster Vulnerability

Climate change has become a major threat to tourism development. Climate-related risks include:

- Flooding in hill stations
- Coastal erosion affecting beach tourism
- Heatwaves reducing travel demand
- Forest fires damaging eco-tourism zones
- Landslides in Himalayan tourism regions

Recent policy discussions increasingly link tourism planning with climate resilience. Tourism infrastructure now needs adaptation to climate-related risks. National and state governments are integrating climate resilience into tourism development frameworks.

Solution

- Climate-resilient tourism infrastructure
- Disaster management systems in tourism zones
- Sustainable construction regulations
- Carbon-neutral tourism development policies

Statistical Snapshot of Current Tourism Challenges

Challenge	Latest Statistics
Foreign Tourist Arrivals (2025)	~5.6 million
Goa Tourist Footfall	1.1 Crore+
Operational Airports	150+
Manali Peak Traffic	10,000–12,000 vehicles/day
Hotel Industry Demand Growth	10–15% annually
Tourism Sector Revenue Forecast by 2028	US$ 59 Billion
Tourism Growth Forecast	7% CAGR

(Sources: Ministry of Tourism India, PIB India, Reuters, IBEF, Drishti IAS Reports (2025–2026))

Conclusion

India's tourism sector has enormous growth potential, but future development faces serious challenges including **infrastructure deficits, environmental degradation, declining foreign tourist arrivals, workforce skill shortages, safety concerns, seasonal dependency, poor destination management, and climate change risks**.

For **Viksit Bharat 2047**, tourism policy must focus not only on increasing tourist numbers but also on building resilient, sustainable, technologically advanced, and globally competitive tourism systems. If India successfully addresses these structural barriers, tourism can become one of the strongest engines driving long-term national development. Tourism will play a transformative role in India's journey toward **Viksit Bharat 2047**. The sector offers immense opportunities for economic growth, employment generation, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and international diplomacy.

India possesses natural beauty, historical richness, cultural diversity, and technological capability to emerge as a global tourism leader. However, achieving this vision requires long-term planning, sustainable development practices, infrastructure modernization, digital innovation, skill development, and effective governance.

If India successfully aligns tourism policies with national development objectives, tourism can become one of the strongest pillars supporting a developed India by 2047. The future of tourism in India is not merely about travel; it is about nation-building, inclusive growth, global competitiveness, and creating a prosperous India for future generations. In the journey toward Viksit Bharat, tourism will not simply support development — it will actively shape it.

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Original Article

Tourism Credit and Financial Inclusion: Catalysts for Sustainable Tourism Development and Inclusive Economic Growth

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Abstract

The potential for both tourism and sustainable tourism development can be augmented through targeted policies that facilitate inclusive economic growth and entrepreneurship by enabling greater access to financial services for both new and established businesses. The connection between these various resources (including savings, insurance, and digital technology) enhances the capacity of entrepreneurs to engage in tourism-related businesses and, ultimately, to invest in local economies and strengthen their own resilience.

To better understand the disparity between existing tourism financing options and the principles of financial inclusion as they relate to tourism, the author reviews current literature and proposes a relationship between tourism credit access, performance of tourism enterprises, local economic development, and social inclusion. Overall, the positions provide evidence that increasing financial inclusion will enhance tourism's ability to compete globally by removing barriers to access to financial resources, providing an environment that stimulates innovation, and promoting participation in tourism-related business activity. In addition to these findings, the study also provides recommendations for developing financial products to promote inclusive development through tourism financing, developing infrastructure to facilitate access to digital financial services, and creating awareness about the importance of tourism to the economies of local communities through financial education programs. The broad conclusion of this research reinforces the emerging discussion of the importance of accessible financial systems to enable tourism to be an engine for long-term equitable economic development.

Keywords: *Tourism Credit, Financial Inclusion, Sustainable Tourism, MSMEs, Economic Development.*

Introduction

As one of the most rapidly growing sectors around the world, Tourism has a largeimpact on GDP, job generation, and earnings as well as on the development of regions due to its ability to stimulate economic activities across transportation, accommodation, food services, retail trade and cultural industries, and therefore it offers a strategic way of helping to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While tourism provides an often-uneven distribution of benefits to areas where tourism-related businesses do not have sufficient access for many stakeholders. Access to financial resources is necessary for business creation, growth and sustainability. However, many tourism businesses are required to be capital intensive to create their support services in developing their infrastructure, incorporating technology, improving service quality and in establishing brand awareness through marketing their respective brands. Furthermore, many of the smaller tourism operators face substantial barriers to obtaining formal credit due to having little or no collateral, short or no credit history, high transaction costs, and/or being perceived as high-risk business opportunities. This stands true for the rural tourism sector, for female entrepreneurs, and for informal operators. Much focus has been directed toward identifying possible solutions that would reduce discrepancies in economic opportunities and achieve inclusive economic growth. Financial inclusion can be defined as providing access to financial products and services to all groups within society regardless of their socioeconomic status.The opportunities available to entrepreneur, investor and use of financial resources to manage risks and create wealth through financial inclusion; Financial Inclusion is becoming Increasingly Relevant in Today's Dialogue of Development. Financial inclusion and tourism credit will provide the methodology for establishing social empowerment.

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The growing importance of tourism as a method of creating development will continue to become more apparent in the future.Very few studies have looked at how access to financial resources through financial inclusion affects tourism performance, and only a few examine the ways in which tourism can develop and what these developments might be through including tourism credit in financial service delivery to hospitality enterprises and establishing financial relationships as a component of developing tourism. The purpose of this research will be threefold; First to review the concept and rationale for providing tourism credit to tourism enterprises so as to facilitate the establishment and operation of tourism businesses; Second to conduct further research into how financial inclusion can be enhanced for the provision of credit for tourism purposes; Third to develop a conceptual framework detailing the interdependent relationship between tourism credit and financial inclusion and how both can be leveraged to facilitate the development of sustainable tourism and economically inclusive economic growth. This research will also provide recommendations for stakeholders including government agencies, financial institutions, and tourism stakeholders in order to improve access to financial resources for conducting tourism-related activities. The areas of study that this paper is intended to address are: tourism credit; sustainable tourism; and the tourism economic theory, development finance theory, and the theories related to developing sustainably, thereby enhancing our understanding of how future tourism systems can be financially inclusive and more resilient to future growth.

Review of literature

Beck et al. (2008) small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a significant role in the tourism sector. However, such enterprises often have difficulty accessing established financial systems. Financial barriers lead to a decrease in the growth potential for SMEs, especially in regions where the economy is still being developed. Touristic micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) face other challenges, such as seasonal revenues, where people do not have a consistent income, which complicates access to loans.

Suri and Jack (2016) digitizing financial systems helps to resolve these issues and make progress towards financial inclusion. It has been shown that digital financing is an important tool for engaging underserved individuals in the economy and thereby contributing to their economic activities. The importance of digital financing for small tourism operators is in facilitating their transactions, facilitating their making reservations online, and allowing these operators to manage their finances.

Scheyvens & Biddulph, (2018) sustainable tourism includes not only environmental and social aspects but also economic accessibility. Financial inclusion contributes to sustainable tourism development, as it allows local communities to gain access to tourism value chain, thus making it possible for them to profit from tourism. Moreover, as soon as local entrepreneurs gain access to finance, the benefits from tourism are distributed among many people, making it possible for the locality to reduce poverty.

G20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion (2020) impact of tourism on economic development There are many benefits available to entrepreneurs in an inclusive financial environment. Tourism-related credit involves the provision of financial resources to support various tourism activities, including accommodation experiences, transportation processes, cultural activities, and rural tourism projects. In order to achieve successful tourism development, it is crucial to have the right financial instruments that will enable innovations, developments of the infrastructure, and businesses in tourism area. By having access to credit resources, tourism-related businesses can improve their services, use new technologies, and adapt to market needs.

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021) constitutes a unique form of funding specifically designed to aid tourism-related actions like lodging, transport, culture, and rural tourism. The tourism sector requires efficient financial tools that can help enhance the quality of infrastructure, innovations, and entrepreneurship. Access to credit makes it possible for tourism companies to enhance the quality of services, use technologies, and adapt to market changes.

Demirgüç-Kunt et al. (2022) the concept of financial inclusion has attracted a lot of attention, being used as a method of inequality reduction and inclusive growth promotion. The authors state that provision of access to official finance helps families improve their well-being while firms manage their financial risks.

World Bank (2022) shows how financial inclusion helps businesses to find necessary resources for successful operations; services offered by business in tourism sector become affordable for the population.

Research Gap

There exists a considerable amount of literature on the topics of tourism development and financial inclusion; however, studies are limited that show how tourism credit interacts with financial inclusion processes. Most studies focused on assessing the impact of tourism on economic growth or assessing the financial inclusion process in general.

There has been little research on the interaction between financial inclusion and tourism credit, nor has there been any exploration of how financial inclusion facilitates access to tourism credit and how access to tourism credit influences tourism entrepreneurs and local development processes. Moreover, it is worth noting that there are hardly any qualitative studies exploring the experiences of tourism stakeholders. This project will aim to address this gap in previous research by studying tourism credit in the process of tourism development and inclusive economic growth.

Research Methodology

Research methodology is an important building block as it forms the basis for conducting research successfully since it assists in collecting and analyzing data. Research design serves to describe the aims of research as well as may provide the means to understand the research process in detail.

Research Design

This research methodology is oriented towards understanding trends and changes regarding financial access in tourism and will be based on government reports, tourism statistics, reports of financial institutions, academic articles, research papers, policy documents and national and international organization databases that provide information related to:

Data Source

Published data is acquired from various types of documents which include government reports, statistics on tourism, banks' reports, research papers and journals, reports and publications on policies, and databases published by different international and national organizations. Very important sources include the data published by tourism ministry, central banks, agencies involved in inclusion of people in banking, etc (UNWTO). Secondary data contains data on the following matters:

- Existence and development of tourism credits
- banking digital • development of tourism institutions
- government policies helping tourism financing

Data Collection Method

Relevant documents and publications were chosen through a systematic review of existing literature and official reports. The information that was selected was checked for relevance to the aims of the research, trustworthiness of the materials used, and relevance to the problem of tourism credit and financial inclusion. The gathered information was sorted by the principal topics that included credit accessibility, availability of financial services, tourism entrepreneurship and sustainable development in tourism.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the availability and accessibility of tourism credit among tourism-related entrepreneurs and businesses.
2. To interpret the level of financial inclusion among stakeholders in the tourism sector.
3. To examine the role of tourism credit and financial inclusion in supporting tourism development and economic opportunities.

Scope of the Study

The research aims to delve into the effect of financial inclusion strategies and tourism credit facilities on tourism development, assist entrepreneurs and increase inclusive economic growth. It also describes the barriers to financing and points to the solutions for those working in tourism.

Limitation of the study:

The conclusions of research rely on the earlier documents, reports, and publications, with results being dependent on how complete and accurate the prior reports are. Even though the aim is to gather some personal experience information from entrepreneurs in tourism, it seems probable that their own data collection will be necessary.

Data Analysis

The selected secondary data were analyzed through the techniques of qualitative and descriptive content analysis. Through comparison of studies, reports and policy documents, some trends regarding tourism credit and financial inclusion were discovered. Content analysis helped to find out various issues, policies related to financial inclusion in tourism.

1. Growth of Tourism Credit and Access to Finance

The analysis of secondary data clearly indicates that access to credit is important for enhancing and sustaining tourism-related processes. The external funding is necessary for the establishment and growth of tourism-related enterprises as well as for technology application and development of services in tourism. Nonetheless, even though there is availability of formal credit, it is not always present, so many small businesses face difficulties in obtaining loans regardless of the availability of collateral, sufficient crediting history and enough information about possible sources of funding. The study shows that having an access to better tourism-related credit services will help to improve the level of entrepreneurship in the tourism industry

2. Role of Financial Inclusion in Tourism Development

According to the findings, the popularity of Dunns forum among the local communities helped a lot in increasing their involvement in different tourism activities. It is worth mentioning that with the introduction of savings accounts, various ways of electronic payments, as well as different financial services, the number of locals involved in tourism started to grow considerably. Besides, by coming up with a better alternative to informal sources of funding, and to payment solutions, financial inclusion provides better ways for the local communities to join the tourism economy.

3. Challenges in Accessing Tourism Finance

Although financial products like tourism loans are becoming available, there are still a multitude of barriers that prevent businesses from accessing these funds (according to statistics). One example is that small tourism enterprises have difficulty in obtaining loans from banks due to the high liquidity risks, lack of seasonal revenue, absence of surety, and insufficient financial literacy (understanding of financial matters). Additional problems are faced by small tourism firms situated in low-income and rural areas. Although there are prospective sources of financing for tourism businesses (financial institutions), in practice, there are very few possibilities for borrowing funds in such areas. Furthermore, these companies are not aware of the existing chances of accessing public funds for business support.

Challenges	Impact on Tourism Enterprises
Lack of collateral	Difficulty obtaining formal loans
Limited financial literacy	Low awareness of credit schemes
Seasonal tourism income	Irregular repayment capacity
Informal business operations	Limited access to banking services
Rural banking limitations	Reduced financial accessibility

These challenges indicate that financial inclusion should focus not only on access to bank accounts but also on effective credit availability and financial capability.

4. Contribution to Entrepreneurship and Employment Generation

The results indicate that the benefits of tourism credit and financial inclusion in terms of entrepreneurship development and employment generation are substantial. Financial assistance allows individuals and communities to establish tourism-related businesses, such as homestays, food services, handicrafts businesses, and transport services. By facilitating the access to financing, the benefits of tourism development reach broader segments of the society. This results in increased income of the communities that operate tourism businesses, contributing to the financing of many rural communities, entrepreneurs, and small business owners.

5. Role of Government Initiatives and Financial Policies

The review of policies shows that government-backed programs on financial inclusion and tourism development facilitate the access to funding. Therefore, initiatives promoting e-banking and entrepreneurship development create opportunities for tourism business participants. However, there is a need for improvement in the coordination between the tourism authorities and financing agencies in order to ensure that financing sources reach tourist businesses.

Relationship Between Tourism Credit and Financial Inclusion

The notion of tourism credit is closely linked to that of tourism entrepreneurship, as the former allows tourism stakeholders to get access to financing, while the latter promotes the financing of entrepreneurship activities. The correlation between tourism credit and entrepreneurship can be demonstrated as follows:

1. Promotion of Entrepreneurship

Access to tourism credit enables people to start tourism-related businesses, thus creating jobs and sources of income.

2. Rural Development

Many rural tourism-related destinations are located in rural areas where access to financial services is limited.

3. Women's Economic Empowerment

Financial services and credit facilities allow women business owners to engage in tourism-related goods and services, such as handicraft products, homestay facilities, and food services.

4. Digital Transformation

Digital financial services enable safe transactions, online transactions, and contactless payments while providing customers with a better quality of service and tourism businesses with enhanced efficiency.

Challenges

However, tourism financing and financial inclusion are not as effective due to several challenges, which include:

- No collateral from small businesses
- Low financial literacy
- High interest rates
- Insufficient banking infrastructure in remote locations
- Seasonality of income • Low awareness of government financing schemes

Policy Recommendations

To support tourism credit and financial inclusion, policymakers are recommended to:

1. Establish specialized financing schemes for tourism.
2. Introduce microfinance programs for entrepreneurs in rural areas.
3. Expand the digital financial network.
4. Promote financial literacy and training in entrepreneurship.
5. Establish partnerships between public institutions and businesses in tourism financing.
6. Introduce credit guarantees for small tourism companies.

Discussion

It has been revealed that there exists a connection between tourism finance (with both credit and financial inclusion) which greatly affects the growth of different industries within this area of tourism. The tourism finance serves as another source of funds for the investors and as the way to get the access to financing. The result obtained also shows the support of previous research which determined that financial inclusion systems facilitate the development of entrepreneurs, reduce the gap between the rich and the poor, and contribute to achieving the goals of sustainability; however, not all entrepreneurs can benefit from tourism financing without financial education, institutional help, and proper access to banking services. Thus, it would be reasonable to implement instruments of financial inclusion, increase availability of loans and create financial products close to tourism.

Conclusion

Reference to financial inclusion as one of the factors necessary for the improvement of tourism lies in this article where secondary data suggest that tourism enterprises especially small-sized ones receive financing. Thanks to credits, the entrepreneurs can grow their business through improvements in their infrastructure, service quality, digitalization, and advent of other tourism services. Improvements in the accessibility of banking services, digital financial platforms along with financial literacy initiatives have contributed to the growth of financial access thus making financial resources accessible for all participants of tourism-related value chains. Nevertheless, in the case of tourism, credit has many limitations like the necessity of collateral thus limiting the opportunities of rural tourism entrepreneurs to gain financing. To solve problems related to the tourism credit policy, authors made the conclusion that financial inclusion allows gaining access to finances needed for starting and expanding a business while tourism credit makes financial resources accessible for anyone engaged in business activity. If the sustainable development of tourism is needed, it is necessary to implement various financial products for tourism businesses, to simplify the provision of credits to the beneficiaries, to improve technology and to develop financial literacy of the participants in tourism market.

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Original Article

Intersecting Vulnerabilities: An Intersectional Lens on Tribal and Non-Tribal Sugarcane Labourers in Maharashtra's Sugar Belt

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Abstract

This article applies an intersectional framework to examine the compounded oppressions faced by sugarcane labourers in Maharashtra, India, with a focus on disparities between tribal and non-tribal groups. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Solapur district, it reveals how axes of caste, gender, class, migratory status, and secondary citizenship intersect to produce differentiated experiences of exploitation, health precarity, educational denial, and cultural marginalisation. Tribal labourers, predominantly from Bhil communities in northern Maharashtra, endure harsher conditions compared to non-tribal counterparts from drought-prone Marathwada regions, including lower wages, inferior living arrangements, and heightened gendered violence. The analysis integrates Crenshaw's intersectionality with Indian critiques of caste and labour, highlighting how systemic neglect perpetuates intergenerational cycles of poverty. Findings underscore the need for policy interventions that address these interlocking structures, advocating for targeted protections for marginalised workers. This study contributes to debates on informal labour and social exclusion in agrarian economies.

Keywords*: Intersectionality, sugarcane labour, tribal communities, gender, caste, migration, Maharashtra*

Introduction

Maharashtra's sugarcane sector, a cornerstone of the state's agrarian economy, exemplifies the paradoxes of India's rural development. As the second-largest producer of sugarcane nationally, with 14 lakh hectares under cultivation and an annual output of 105.99 million tonnes (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2023-24), the industry generates substantial wealth. Yet, this prosperity is unevenly distributed, benefiting a narrow elite of factory owners and politicians while marginalising the labourers who sustain it. These workers, often seasonal migrants from historically disadvantaged communities, face entrenched exploitation amid regional disparities, drought, and policy failures. This article employs Kimberle Crenshaw's intersectionality framework (1989, 1991) to unpack the multilayered vulnerabilities of sugarcane labourers, comparing tribal (primarily Bhil from Khandesh) and semi / non-tribal (largely Vanjari and Maratha from Marathwada) groups. Intersectionality posits that oppressions are not additive but mutually constitutive, where identities like caste, gender, class, and migratory status converge to shape unique experiences of discrimination. In the Indian context, this lens aligns with Gopal Guru's (2017) critique of social sciences' elitism, urging theorisation from marginalised perspectives, and Sharmila Rege's (2006) work on caste-gender intersections.Key paradigms explored include (1) caste as a structuring force of labour hierarchies; (2) gender dynamics amplifying women's burdens; (3) class-based precarity tied to landlessness and debt; (4) migratory status conferring secondary citizenship, denying entitlements; and (5) regional dispossession exacerbating these overlaps. Based on original ethnographic fieldwork, the article addresses gaps in existing literature by foregrounding comparative insights and lived realities.

Literature Review

Scholarship on Maharashtra's sugarcane labourers highlights themes of socio-economic marginalisation, migration, gender exploitation, health crises, and theoretical intersections, providing a foundation for this intersectional analysis. Socio-economic analyses reveal how caste and class intersect to reproduce labour precarity. Kendre (2011) profiles 200 migrants from Beed to Kolhapur, showing dominance by Scheduled Castes (e.g., Matang, Mahar), Nomadic Tribes (e.g., Lamani, Bhil), and Other Backward Classes, with upper castes absent.

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Illiteracy rates near 50%, coupled with cynicism toward education due to bribery barriers, underscore how caste exclusion intersects with economic dispossession. Asawa (2020), surveying workers across 30 factories, maps migration patterns by caste: Vanjari from Beed dominate western Maharashtra destinations, while Bhils cluster in Nashik or Gujarat. Over 85% of women and 65% of men are illiterate, entrenching intergenerational disadvantage. Guru (2017) critiques this as epistemic violence, where marginalised experiences are reduced to data for elite theorisation, reinforcing cultural hierarchies.Migration studies frame sugarcane work as a compulsion amid agrarian distress. Abbas (2016) argues internal migrants face de facto secondary citizenship, denied welfare in host regions despite legal status. Shiralkar et al. (2019) detail Beed's role as a migration epicentre, with failed schemes like MGNREGS pushing landless tribes (e.g., Vanjari, Banjara) into informal contracts. Wages via the 'koyta' (couple-based) system leave women financially dependent. Shinde (2020) applies push-pull theory: drought pushes, advances pull into debt. Lagad and Khurangar (2025) link migration to tehsil-level irrigation disparities, while Salunkhe and Sharma (2017) note 90% landlessness and 66% illiteracy among Kopargaon workers.Feminist perspectives illuminate gender intersections with labour and health. Shinde and Rakshase (2022) document hysterectomies among Vadar, Bhil, and Lamani women, driven by unhygienic conditions and productivity pressures. Shaikh (n.d.) situates this in broader exploitation, noting women's 12–14-hour shifts plus domestic duties. Bhalerao and Mane (2024) highlight post-childbirth uterus removal as normalised, blending patriarchy with capitalist demands. Phull (n.d.) terms it 'mass womb-icide', linking it to drought and mukadam coercion, affecting 200,000 migrating children.Health literature exposes bodily tolls. Kale and Shinde (2017) find poor BMI among Beed-Kolhapur migrants, with women disproportionately underweight due to nutrient-deficient diets. Deficiencies in protein, vitamins, and iron impair child development and pregnancies, yet studies overlook caste-BMI links, inviting intersectional scrutiny. Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) intersectionality - structural, political, representational - resonates here. Structural intersections compound violence for marginalised women; political ones sideline them in movements; representational erasures distort narratives. In India, Collins and Bilge (2016) adapt this to local contexts, while Breman (1978, 1990, 2020) critiques informal labour's 'footloose' nature, mirroring secondary citizenship.

Gaps persist

While socio-economic and migration studies abound, few compare tribal/non-tribal experiences intersectionally. Gender work often generalises, neglecting caste variations; children's narratives are underexplored. This article bridges these by integrating ethnographic data with theoretical paradigms.

Methodology

This qualitative study adopts a mixed-methods approach, emphasising ethnography to capture lived intersections. Fieldwork occurred over one week in January 2024 near Vitthalrao Shinde Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana, Karkamb, Solapur district - a sugar belt hub. The site was selected for its diverse labour pool: non-tribal migrants from Beed (230-300 km away) and tribal Bhils from Dhule/Nandurbar (over 500 km). Data collection involved participant observation (e.g., joining cutting tasks), semi-structured interviews (n=15, including couples and children), focus groups, and visual documentation (photographs of processes and settlements). Themes emerged from daily routines, health discussions, and festival observations (Makar Sankranti). A survey component gathered socio-economic data on education, wages, and health.Analysis was thematic, guided by intersectionality: codes for caste, gender, class, migration, and citizenship were iteratively applied. Ethical considerations included informed consent, anonymity, and reflexivity - acknowledging my Beed origin for empathetic yet critical positioning.
Limitations: short duration and single site constrain generalisability, though depth compensates.

Findings

Field observations reveal stark intersections shaping labourers' lives, with tribal groups facing amplified precarity.

Labour Hierarchies and Political Economy:

Non-tribal workers (e.g., Vanjari, Maratha) operate under direct mukadam-factory contracts, receiving ₹1-1.5 lakh advances per couple, bullock carts, and ₹310/tonne cutting plus ₹350 transport. They supplement via fodder sales (₹200/day). Tribal workers, however, face indirect, opaque systems: grouped into larger 'toli' (8-9 couples filling lorries), earning less (₹200-250/tonne) with no advances or carts, relying on risky tractor ladders. Caste underpins this: non-tribals' awareness enables negotiation; tribals' marginalisation yields exploitation. Class intersects: non-tribals own small land (e.g., one of them holds 32 acres), buffering distress; tribals, landless, migrate compulsively. Generally,Non-tribal sugarcane cutters from Marathwada had specific schedules (morning to evening) and terms of working whereas for tribals, the timing and working hours depended on the whims of the tractor owner i.e. whenever the tractor got unloaded at the factory. I have seen them working in the dark fields at midnight.

Health and Lifestyle Precarity:

Non-tribals access basic amenities most of the time facilitated by sugar factories - potable water, toilets, electricity - near factories, enabling semi-permanent settlements with LPG, grains, and cattle. Diets include milk; lifestyles incorporate cultural practices. Tribals endure makeshift tents without sanitation, relying on open fields, having hardly a single bulb for 8-10 torpulin makeshift tents, open canal water for both using and drinking leading to poor hygiene and BMI. Kale and Shinde's (2017) underweight findings manifest acutely: tribal women report iron deficiencies, irregular menstrual cycles; men use toddy as a 'tonic' for exhaustion. Migration as secondary citizenship denies healthcare: tribals, farther from origins, lack PDS rations, exacerbating malnutrition. I observed in the field that most of the non-tribal sugarcane cutters had their relatives where they had migrated. They had good connections with locals. But, the scenario with the tribal sugarcane cutters was completely different. Due to their unhygienic living conditions, different language and culture they were treated with suspicion, less dignity and most of the time as an instrument for entertainment.

Gender Dynamics

Women across groups bear double burdens, but intersections vary. Non-tribal women (married at 14) handle cutting, childcare, and domestics, facing hysterectomies. Yet, they control small earnings as they have little coordination between the couple. Tribal women endure worse. 12–18-hour shifts, sexual harassment risks in isolated fields most of the times by tractor owner and mukadam, and patriarchal koyta systems erasing autonomy. Early marriages compound health risks; caste amplifies vulnerability - Bhil women face representational erasure as 'tribal others.

Educational Denial and Intergenerational Impacts

Children's lives intersect migration, class, and gender. Non-tribal children attend local schools before they migrate, but after repetitive seasonal migration many drop out. Lack of the confidence and feeling of lagging behind is one of the major reasons to not continue education. Such students continue engaging as new generation sugar cane cutters. When it comes to tribal children, most of them were not even enrolled in school. Though the child marriage was common across the group, the age of marriage amongst tribal was less than non-tribals. Across the sections girl child had an additional task to look after her younger siblings and perform domestic tasks at the field.

Cultural and Festival Dimensions

The event of Makar Sankranti highlights disparities. This was the day to take a break from work, wear new clothes, celebrate festivals by going to nearby pilgrimage cities like Pandharpur, having festive food like puran poli, rituals, and rest. The same day of the festival was different for tribal workers. The tribal group returned from the field by finishing their remaining task, had little food, receiving a token ₹300 as a bonus to celebrate the festival. The group went to the market, lost almost all their bonus in fulfilment of basic necessities like rice and flour, few returned with high doses of alcohol. The festival day was like another normal day for tribal children, spending naked, half-filled stomachs. Case studies crystallise that a tribal couple endures debt-bondage post-marriage; a non-tribal family leverages awareness for stability; children's narratives reveal lost futures.

Discussion

Intersectionality elucidates how paradigms co-constitute vulnerabilities. Caste structures hierarchies: tribals as 'nomadic others' face deeper exclusion than non-tribals, aligning with Guru's (2017) epistemic critique. Gender intersects caste/class: women's bodies become sites of control, per Crenshaw's (1991) structural dimension - hysterectomies as reproductive injustice, more acute for tribal women due to isolation. Class and migration confer secondary citizenship (Abbas, 2016): tribals' distant origins deny welfare, politicising marginalisation (Crenshaw's political axis). Representational erasures (e.g., policy ignoring tribal specifics) sustain invisibility. Breman's (2020) 'footloose labour' frames this as capitalist strategy, intersecting regional dispossession - Marathwada's drought vs. Khandesh's underdevelopment.These overlaps perpetuate cycles: children's denial reproduces labour pools. Yet, resilience emerges - festivals as resistance sites, echoing Rege's (2006) call for narrating marginalised voices.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

This article demonstrates intersectionality's value in revealing sugarcane labourers' differentiated oppressions, with tribals bearing compounded burdens. It calls for policies addressing these axes: enforce direct contracts to curb mukadam exploitation; deploy mobile health/education units targeting tribals; criminalise coercive hysterectomies with gender-sensitive support; and promote cooperatives for collective bargaining. Diversify livelihoods in origin regions via skill training. Future research should expand sites for broader insights. By centering marginalised narratives, this study advances equitable agrarian justice.

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Original Article

From Tea Gardens to Tourist Destinations: Reimagining Tea Tourism in Assam for the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

Tea tourism has emerged as an important niche tourism segment that combines agriculture, heritage, culture, ecology, and hospitality. Assam, the largest tea-producing state in India, possesses immense potential to develop tea tourism as a sustainable model of regional development. The state's vast tea plantations, colonial heritage, biodiversity, cultural diversity, and globally recognized tea industry provide a strong foundation for tourism expansion. However, despite these advantages, tea tourism in Assam remains relatively underdeveloped compared to other tea-producing regions of the world. This paper critically examines the prospects and challenges of tea tourism in Assam and explores how it can be reimagined to meet the demands of twenty-first-century tourism. The study adopts a qualitative and descriptive approach based on secondary sources, including government reports, academic literature, tourism policies, and industry publications. The findings indicate that tea tourism can contribute significantly to employment generation, rural development, cultural preservation, and economic diversification. Nevertheless, inadequate infrastructure, weak marketing strategies, limited community participation, and environmental concerns continue to hinder its growth. The paper argues that a comprehensive policy framework emphasizing sustainability, digital promotion, heritage conservation, and community empowerment is essential for transforming Assam into a globally recognized tea tourism destination. The study concludes by recommending strategic interventions that can strengthen tea tourism and contribute to inclusive and sustainable development in Assam.

Keywords: *Tea Tourism; Sustainable Development; Assam Tea Industry; Heritage Tourism*

Introduction

Tourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy, contributing significantly to employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development (WTTC, 2023; UNWTO, 2023). In recent years, the tourism industry has witnessed a shift from conventional sightseeing to experiential tourism, where tourists seek authentic cultural, ecological, and heritage-based experiences (Richards, 2021; Page, 2019). This transformation has encouraged the emergence of specialized tourism sectors such as eco-tourism, agro-tourism, wellness tourism, and heritage tourism (Sharma, 2019; Singh, 2021). Tea tourism represents one such emerging niche that combines agricultural production with tourism experiences. Tea tourism involves visits to tea plantations, tea factories, heritage bungalows, tea museums, and tea-tasting centres. It enables tourists to engage with the history, culture, and production processes associated with tea cultivation (Jolliffe, 2007; Tewari, 2021). Globally, countries such as Sri Lanka, China, Kenya, and Japan have successfully integrated tea production with tourism, generating substantial economic benefits for local communities (Jolliffe, 2007). Assam occupies a unique position in the global tea industry. Since the discovery of indigenous tea plants in the early nineteenth century, the state has become one of the world's most important tea-producing regions. Assam tea is internationally renowned for its distinctive flavour, strong liquor, and bright colour. The tea industry contributes significantly to the state's economy and provides employment to millions of people directly and indirectly. The tea gardens of Assam are not merely centres of agricultural production; they are repositories of history, culture, architecture, and biodiversity. Colonial-era bungalows, expansive tea estates, diverse ethnic communities, and scenic landscapes create ideal conditions for tourism development. Recognizing this potential, both government agencies and private stakeholders have increasingly focused on tea tourism as a means of promoting sustainable economic development.

Despite these advantages, tea tourism in Assam remains underdeveloped. Limited infrastructure, inadequate marketing, lack of trained personnel, and insufficient integration with broader tourism circuits have restricted its growth. Therefore, there is a need to critically assess the current status of tea tourism and explore strategies for its future development.

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Objectives

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the prospects of tea tourism in Assam.
2. To analyze the major challenges confronting tea tourism development.
3. To assess the socio-economic significance of tea tourism in Assam.
4. To suggest policy measures for strengthening tea tourism in the twenty-first century.

Data and Methodology

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature. It relies primarily on secondary data collected from various sources, including books, research articles, government reports, tourism policy documents, Tea Board publications, Assam Tourism Development Corporation reports, newspapers, journals, and online databases.

The study adopts a qualitative methodology to analyze the opportunities and challenges of tea tourism in Assam. Relevant literature on tourism development, heritage tourism, sustainable tourism, and tea tourism has been reviewed to develop a comprehensive understanding of the subject. The analysis focuses on the tourism potential of tea estates, policy initiatives, economic contributions, and developmental constraints. The study does not involve primary field surveys; however, it synthesizes available evidence to provide policy-oriented recommendations for enhancing tea tourism in Assam.

Historical Foundations of Tea Tourism in Assam

The origins of Assam's tea industry can be traced back to 1823, when indigenous tea plants were reportedly discovered by Robert Bruce in the forests of Upper Assam (Baruah, 2020; Tea Board India, 2023). This discovery marked a turning point in the economic and social history of the region. Prior to this period, China held a near monopoly over the global tea trade. Recognizing the commercial potential of Assam's indigenous tea varieties, the British East India Company initiated experimental cultivation in the region. The success of these experiments led to the establishment of the first commercial tea plantations in the 1830s, laying the foundation for a thriving tea industry.

Over the following decades, Assam emerged as one of the most important tea-producing regions in the world. Vast tracts of land were converted into tea estates, and a plantation-based economy developed rapidly under colonial administration. The tea industry contributed significantly to employment generation, infrastructure development, and international trade. Railways, roads, and river transport systems were expanded primarily to facilitate the transportation of tea to national and international markets. As a result, tea became not only an economic commodity but also an integral part of Assam's identity and cultural landscape. The tea gardens established during the colonial period were more than just centres of agricultural production. They evolved into self-contained settlements with distinctive architectural and social characteristics. Many tea estates still preserve colonial-era bungalows, managers' residences, clubs, factories, churches, and administrative buildings (Verma, 2020; Timothy & Boyd, 2015). These structures reflect a unique blend of British colonial architecture and local environmental adaptations. Spacious lawns, wooden verandas, high roofs, and elegant interiors continue to evoke the atmosphere of a bygone era (Das, 2021; Bezbaruah, 2019).

In recent years, these heritage assets have gained recognition as valuable tourism resources. Heritage tea tourism has emerged as an important niche within Assam's broader tourism sector. Visitors are attracted not only by the scenic beauty of endless stretches of lush green tea plantations but also by the rich historical narratives associated with the growth of the tea industry. Tourists can explore century-old tea factories, learn about traditional tea-processing techniques, and experience the lifestyle once associated with colonial tea planters.

Tourism Potential of Assam's Tea Gardens

One of the most significant strengths of Assam's tea tourism sector lies in its distinctive natural and cultural landscape. Research on rural and experiential tourism suggests that tourists increasingly seek destinations that offer authentic experiences, scenic beauty, and meaningful engagement with local cultures (Richards, 2021; Page, 2019). Assam's tea estates, spread across thousands of hectares of lush green terrain, provide precisely such an environment. The vast stretches of tea bushes interspersed with rivers, forests, and rolling landscapes create a unique visual appeal that attracts nature enthusiasts, photographers, and leisure travelers from across the world (Bhattacharyya, 2018; Deka, 2020). The attractiveness of tea tourism in Assam extends beyond its physical scenery. Contemporary tourism studies emphasize the growing importance of experiential tourism, where visitors actively participate in activities rather than merely observing attractions. In this context, Assam's tea gardens offer a diverse range of immersive experiences that enable tourists to understand the history, culture, and production processes associated with tea. Visitors can observe and participate in tea-plucking activities, explore tea-processing factories, and engage in tea-tasting sessions that showcase the distinctive flavours and qualities of Assam tea. Such activities provide educational value while simultaneously enhancing visitor satisfaction. Furthermore, the presence of colonial-era heritage bungalows and plantation infrastructure adds a historical dimension to the tourism experience. Heritage tourism research highlights that tourists are increasingly interested in destinations that combine natural beauty with historical narratives. The opportunity to stay in restored tea estate bungalows allows visitors to experience a unique blend of history, architecture, and hospitality. At the same time, cultural performances and interactions with tea garden communities offer insights into the traditions, lifestyles, and cultural practices of the diverse groups associated with Assam's tea industry.

In addition, the ecological richness of tea-growing regions supports nature-based tourism activities such as bird-watching, plantation walks, and wildlife observation. These experiences align with global trends toward sustainable and eco-friendly tourism. Consequently, Assam's tea tourism sector possesses a competitive advantage by integrating natural attractions, cultural heritage, historical significance, and participatory experiences. This combination not only enhances the overall tourist experience but also contributes to the sustainable development of rural economies and the preservation of the region's unique cultural and environmental resources.

Economic, Cultural and Sustainable Development Significance of Tea Tourism

Research on rural tourism and sustainable development highlights that tea tourism has emerged as an effective strategy for diversifying agricultural economies while simultaneously promoting cultural preservation and environmental sustainability. In the context of Assam, tea tourism possesses considerable economic significance because it provides tea estates with an additional

source of income beyond conventional tea production (Singh, 2021; Rogerson, 2017). This diversification is particularly important in periods of volatility in international tea markets, where fluctuations in tea prices can affect the profitability of plantation enterprises. By attracting domestic and international tourists, tea estates can generate revenue through accommodation services, guided tours, tea-tasting experiences, heritage tourism activities, and recreational programme. Beyond its direct contribution to tea estates, tea tourism creates extensive employment opportunities across multiple sectors, including hospitality, transportation, food services, handicrafts, tour operations, and cultural industries (Rogerson, 2017; Hazarika, 2019). Studies indicate that tourism-based economic activities often produce multiplier effects, benefiting local entrepreneurs through the establishment of homestays, restaurants, souvenir outlets, and eco-tourism ventures. Such developments contribute to rural economic growth and encourage infrastructure improvements in relatively remote tea-growing regions, thereby enhancing the quality of life for local communities.

Equally important are the cultural dimensions of tea tourism. Assam's tea gardens are inhabited by diverse ethnic groups, particularly tea tribes whose ancestors migrated from different parts of India during the colonial era. These communities possess rich cultural traditions expressed through distinctive languages, music, dance forms, folklore, handicrafts, and culinary practices (Nath, 2022; Richards, 2021). Tea tourism provides a valuable platform for showcasing and preserving these cultural resources. Through cultural performances, traditional festivals, indigenous cuisine, and craft exhibitions, tourism strengthens cultural identity while generating supplementary income for local residents. From the perspective of sustainable development, tea tourism aligns closely with contemporary principles of responsible tourism. Unlike many large-scale tourism projects, tea tourism utilizes existing agricultural landscapes and heritage assets, thereby minimizing environmental disruption (UNWTO, 2023; Zaman, 2021). When managed effectively, it can support biodiversity conservation, heritage preservation, and community participation. The adoption of eco-friendly practices such as waste management, renewable energy utilization, and responsible visitor behaviour further enhances sustainability outcomes. Consequently, tea tourism represents an integrated model of development that simultaneously promotes economic diversification, cultural revitalization, environmental stewardship, and inclusive rural development in Assam.

Reimagining Tea Tourism for the Twenty-First Century

Contemporary tourism research emphasizes innovation, digital engagement, and sustainability as key drivers of destination competitiveness (Yadav, 2022; Page, 2019). To remain relevant in the twenty-first century, Assam's tea tourism sector must adopt technology-driven promotional strategies, including virtual tours, social media marketing, mobile applications, and online reservation platforms. Integrating tea tourism with wildlife, river, cultural, and spiritual tourism can create diversified tourism circuits that encourage longer visitor stays and greater economic benefits (Government of Assam, 2022; Bhattacharyya, 2018). Furthermore, the development of experiential products such as tea harvesting, blending workshops, wellness retreats, and culinary experiences can meet the growing demand for authentic and immersive travel. Equally important is the adoption of sustainable tourism practices that ensure environmental conservation, heritage protection, and community participation (Richards, 2021; Jolliffe, 2007).

Conclusions

Tea tourism represents a unique opportunity to combine Assam's agricultural heritage, cultural diversity, and natural beauty into a sustainable tourism model. The state's globally recognized tea industry provides a strong foundation for developing a distinctive tourism identity. Tea tourism can contribute to economic diversification, employment generation, rural development, and cultural preservation while promoting sustainable use of natural resources. However, the sector continues to face significant challenges related to infrastructure, accommodation, marketing, skill development, environmental management, and community participation. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts from government agencies, tea estate owners, tourism stakeholders, and local communities. The future of tea tourism in Assam depends on the adoption of innovative, inclusive, and sustainable development strategies. By investing in infrastructure, strengthening branding, empowering local communities, preserving heritage assets, and integrating technology into tourism promotion, Assam can successfully transform its tea gardens into globally recognized tourist destinations. Reimagined in this manner, tea tourism can emerge as a powerful instrument of regional development and position Assam as a leading experiential tourism destination in the twenty-first century.

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Original Article

Sustainable Tourism and the Indian Constitution Constitutional & Environmental Law

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Abstract

Tourism is among the fastest-growing sectors of the Indian economy, contributing significantly to national income, foreign exchange earnings and rural employment, yet its unregulated expansion into ecologically fragile zones—Himalayan hill stations, coastal wetlands, forested wildlife corridors, pilgrimage towns and heritage precincts—has generated a widening conflict between developmental aspirations and environmental sustainability. This paper undertakes a doctrinal and comparative constitutional analysis of the extent to which the Indian constitutional framework, particularly the fundamental right to life under Article 21, the Directive Principle contained in Article 48A, and the Fundamental Duty enshrined in Article 51A(g), provides an adequate normative architecture for regulating tourism in an environmentally sustainable manner. The study traces the judicial evolution of the right to a healthy environment from Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra through Subhash Kumar, Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum, Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action, T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad, A.P. Pollution Control Board v. M.V. Nayudu, M.C. Mehta v. Kamal Nath, M.I. Builders v. Radhey Shyam Sahu and Sachidanand Pandey v. State of West Bengal, demonstrating how the Supreme Court has repeatedly been called upon to reconcile tourism-driven development with ecological preservation. It situates this jurisprudence within the broader statutory matrix comprising the Environment (Protection) Act 1986, the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980, the Biological Diversity Act 2002, the Water and Air Acts, the Coastal Regulation Zone Notifications and Eco-Sensitive Zone regulations, and evaluates their interplay with Ministry of Tourism policy instruments. The paper critically examines the impact of mass and unregulated tourism on biodiversity hotspots, forest ecosystems, wildlife corridors, coastal and marine environments, hill stations and pilgrimage destinations, drawing on carrying-capacity studies and recent regulatory interventions in Uttarakhand, Goa, Ladakh and the Andaman Islands. It further analyses the application of constitutionally embedded principles—the Precautionary Principle, the Polluter Pays Principle, the Public Trust Doctrine, Sustainable Development, Intergenerational Equity and the Environmental Rule of Law—to the tourism sector, and undertakes a comparative constitutional survey of South Africa, Brazil, Bhutan, Costa Rica, Australia and the European Union to identify transferable regulatory models, particularly Bhutan's "high value, low volume" policy and Costa Rica's payment-for-ecosystem-services architecture. The paper situates India's obligations within the global sustainability agenda, examining Sustainable Development Goals 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15, and India's commitments under the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Employing a doctrinal methodology supplemented by comparative and policy analysis, the paper argues that while India's constitutional jurisprudence has been transformative in embedding environmental values into the fundamental rights discourse, statutory implementation remains fragmented, tourism policy remains largely promotional rather than regulatory, and community and indigenous participation remains inadequately institutionalised. It concludes with evidence-based recommendations for a dedicated Sustainable Tourism Framework Law, mandatory carrying-capacity assessments.

Keywords: *Sustainable Tourism; Article 21; Article 48A; Article 51A(g); Environmental Constitutionalism; Precautionary Principle; Public Trust Doctrine; Coastal Regulation Zone; Eco-Sensitive Zones; Sustainable Development Goals*

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strengthened Environmental Impact Assessment scrutiny for tourism infrastructure, and greater devolution to local and tribal self-governance institutions, while identifying avenues for future empirical research on tourism carrying capacity and climate vulnerability in Himalayan and coastal India.

Introduction

1.1 Background and Research Problem

As the UNWTO has observed, tourism is uniquely double-edged among economic sectors: it is dependent on environmental quality for its own long-term viability, yet is also a direct contributor to environmental stress.[1] Tourism occupies a paradoxical position in Indian public policy. It is simultaneously promoted as an engine of economic growth, employment generation and soft-power diplomacy, and increasingly recognised as a driver of environmental degradation in the very landscapes—Himalayan valleys, coral reefs, mangrove estuaries, tiger reserves and heritage cities—that constitute its principal attraction. [2] The devastating 2013 Uttarakhand floods, the ecological collapse of Himalayan towns such as Joshimath, seasonal water crises in hill stations, coral bleaching along Indian coasts, and chronic solid-waste crises at pilgrimage centres such as Kedarnath and Amarnath illustrate that unregulated tourism growth carries a discernible environmental cost that is only belatedly reflected in law and policy. [3] Against this backdrop, the Indian Constitution offers a distinctive, tripartite normative structure for environmental governance: the fundamental right to life and personal liberty under Article 21, judicially expanded to embrace the right to a wholesome environment; the Directive Principle under Article 48A obligating the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife; and the Fundamental Duty under Article 51A(g) requiring every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment. [4] This paper interrogates whether this constitutional architecture, as developed through five decades of jurisprudence, is adequate to discipline the tourism sector toward ecological sustainability, or whether it remains an aspirational framework insufficiently operationalised through binding sectoral regulation.

1.2 Research Objectives

The paper pursues four objectives: first, to analyse the constitutional interrelationship between Articles 21, 48A and 51A(g) as they bear upon environmental protection; second, to trace the evolution of environmental jurisprudence through landmark decisions with particular attention to cases implicating tourism infrastructure; third, to map the statutory and regulatory framework governing sustainable tourism and assess its constitutional grounding; and fourth, to evaluate India's framework against comparative constitutional models and international sustainability commitments in order to identify legislative and policy gaps.

1.3 Research Questions

The study addresses the following questions: (a) How have Articles 21, 48A and 51A(g) been judicially synthesised to construct an enforceable environmental jurisprudence, and what is the doctrinal status of Article 48A and Article 51A(g) given their non-justiciable character under Article 37? [5] (b) To what extent has this jurisprudence been applied specifically to tourism-related development? (c) Does India's sectoral legislation adequately translate constitutional environmental values into binding regulatory standards for the tourism industry? (d) What comparative and international models offer normative guidance for reform?

1.4 Research Methodology

The paper adopts a doctrinal legal research methodology, following established conventions of black-letter and policy-oriented legal scholarship,[6] involving systematic analysis of constitutional text, Supreme Court and High Court judgments, central legislation, and delegated regulations including the Coastal Regulation Zone Notifications and Eco-Sensitive Zone notifications. This is supplemented by comparative constitutional analysis of select jurisdictions selected for their distinctive regulatory innovations in tourism-environment governance, and by policy analysis drawing upon reports of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), the Ministry of Tourism, NITI Aayog, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The analysis is critical and evaluative rather than purely descriptive, and is structured to test the adequacy of existing constitutional and statutory tools against empirically documented environmental stresses generated by tourism.

2. The Constitutional Framework for Environmental Protection

2.1 Article 21: The Right to a Wholesome Environment

Article 21 of the Constitution provides that "no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law." [7] The transformation of this provision from a narrow guarantee against arbitrary executive detention

[1] UNWTO, Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals (2017).

[2] National Tourism Policy documents of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, project tourism as a priority sector for GDP growth and employment, while carrying limited binding environmental conditionalities; see Ministry of Tourism, Draft National Tourism Policy (2022).

[3] See generally Ravi Chopra et al., Report of the Expert Body to Study the Environmental-Geological Impact of Hydroelectric Projects in the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi Basins (Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change 2014).

[4] India Const. arts. 21, 48A, 51A(g).

India Const. art. 37 (providing that the Directive Principles "shall not be enforceable by any court").

Shyam Divan & Armin Rosencranz, Environmental Law and Policy in India (2d ed. 2001).

India Const. art. 21.

into an expansive reservoir of substantive rights began with Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, which read into Article 21 a requirement that the "procedure established by law" be fair, just and reasonable. [8] This expansive reading was itself the product of a broader post-Emergency jurisprudential shift toward substantive due process reasoning.[9] This expansive reading enabled the Court, over the following decade, to hold that the right to life encompasses the right to live with human dignity, which in turn includes the right to a clean and healthy environment. [10] The doctrinal breakthrough for environmental rights specifically came in Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra v. State of U.P., the Doon Valley limestone-mining case, in which the Supreme Court, invoking its continuing mandamus jurisdiction under Article 32, ordered the closure of ecologically destructive limestone quarries, effectively treating environmental degradation as a constitutionally cognisable harm even before the right was expressly articulated in Article 21 terms. [11] The Court subsequently made the linkage explicit in Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar, holding unambiguously that "the right to live is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution and it includes the right of enjoyment of pollution free water and air for full enjoyment of life." [12] This right was further consolidated in Virender Gaur v. State of Haryana, where the Court held that Article 21 protection extends to the right to a "clean, decent and safe environment," including protection of parks and open spaces from unauthorised construction—a proposition of direct relevance to tourism infrastructure disputes. [13]

2.2 Article 48A: The Directive Principle

Article 48A, inserted by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, directs that "the State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wild life of the country." [14] Although Article 37 renders the Directive Principles judicially non-enforceable in isolation, the Supreme Court has consistently treated Article 48A as an interpretive aid that informs the content of Article 21 and legitimises legislative and executive environmental intervention. [15] The doctrine of harmonious construction between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles, first articulated in Kesavananda Bharati v. State of erala and refined in Minerva Mills v. Union of India, provides the constitutional logic by which Article 48A, though non-justiciable per se, nonetheless constrains the permissible scope of executive action and informs statutory interpretation. [16]

2.3 Article 51A(g): The Fundamental Duty

Article 51A(g), also introduced by the Forty-second Amendment, casts upon every citizen the duty "to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures." [17] While Fundamental Duties are similarly non-justiciable, courts have used Article 51A(g) to impose obligations on citizens, corporations and local bodies engaged in commercial activity, including tourism operators, and to reinforce the reasonableness of restrictions placed on individual and commercial liberty under Articles 19(1)(g) in the interest of environmental protection. [18]

2.4 The Interrelationship of Articles 21, 48A and 51A(g)

The Supreme Court has, particularly since the early 1990s, treated Articles 21, 48A and 51A(g) as a mutually reinforcing constitutional triad rather than as isolated provisions. [19] Article 48A supplies the substantive normative content—environmental protection as a state goal; Article 51A(g) supplies the corresponding citizen-facing obligation; and Article 21 supplies the enforceable fundamental-rights vehicle through which both are judicially operationalised, typically via public interest litigation invoking Article

Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, (1978) 1 SCC 248.

See generally Granville Austin, Working a Democratic Constitution: The Indian Experience (1999).

Francis Coralie Mullin v. Administrator, Union Territory of Delhi, (1981) 1 SCC 608 (holding that the right to life includes the right to live with human dignity).

Rural Litig. & Entitlement Kendra v. State of U.P., (1985) 2 SCC 431; see also 1985 AIR 652.

Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar, 1991 AIR 420: (1991) 1 SCC 598.

Virender Gaur v. State of Haryana, (1995) 2 SCC 577.

India Const. art. 48A, inserted by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, § 10.

Sachidanand Pandey v. State of W.B., 1987 AIR 1109: (1987) 2 SCC 295 (invoking Articles 48A and 51A(g) while reviewing a state government's decision to lease zoo land to a hotel chain for tourism development).

Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala, (1973) 4 SCC 225; Minerva Mills Ltd. v. Union of India, (1980) 3 SCC 625 (holding that Parts III and IV of the Constitution together constitute the "conscience of the Constitution").

[17]India Const. art. 51A(g).

[18]M.C. Mehta v. Union of India, (1988) 1 SCC 471 (Ganga Pollution Case) (invoking Article 51A(g) to justify closure of polluting tanneries).

[19]See T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad v. Union of India, (1997) 2 SCC 267 (treating forest conservation as flowing jointly from Article 21 and Article 48A).

32 or Article 226. [20] This triadic synthesis is of particular significance for tourism regulation because much tourism infrastructure—hotels, resorts, roads, ropeways—is developed by private or quasi-private actors whose activities fall outside the direct disciplinary reach of Part III rights (which classically bind the State) but are nonetheless susceptible to regulation through the horizontal application of Article 48A-informed statutory law and the vertical application of Article 21 against permitting authorities. [21]

3. Evolution of Environmental Jurisprudence: Landmark Decisions

3.1 Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra: The Genesis

The Dehradun Valley litigation, often described as India's first major environmental case, arose from a letter petition alleging that unchecked limestone quarrying in the Mussoorie hills was causing landslides, water scarcity and ecological collapse. [22] The Court's willingness to order closure of economically productive but environmentally destructive mines—despite the absence of an express constitutional environmental right at the time—established the template of continuing mandamus that would later structure the Godavarman forest-protection litigation and much of India's judicially-managed environmental governance.

3.2 Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar

Although the petition itself was dismissed for want of bona fides, the Court's obiter dictum that Article 21 encompasses the right to pollution-free water and air became the foundational proposition for all subsequent environmental rights litigation in India. [23]

3.3 Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum v. Union of India

This case, arising from unchecked discharge of untreated tannery effluent into the Palar river in Tamil Nadu, is the doctrinal fulcrum of Indian environmental law. The Court held that the Precautionary Principle and the Polluter Pays Principle "have been accepted as part of the law of the land," reasoning that they formed part of customary international environmental law which, being not inconsistent with municipal law, stood incorporated into Indian domestic law. [24] The Court further articulated the concept of Sustainable Development, drawing on the Brundtland Report, as the touchstone against which industrial and developmental activity—including, by direct extension, tourism infrastructure—must be measured. [25]

3.4 Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action v. Union of India

In the "Bichhri village" case, concerning groundwater contamination by chemical industries in Rajasthan, the Court applied the Polluter Pays Principle to impose absolute liability on polluters for remediation costs, independent of proof of negligence, thereby reinforcing the compensatory dimension of environmental constitutionalism. [26]

3.5 M.C. Mehta v. Kamal Nath: The Span Motel Case

Of direct relevance to sustainable tourism, this case concerned a motel resort built by a private company on the banks of the river Beas in Himachal Pradesh, on forest land regularised and leased to it by the State Government, and involving unauthorised interference with the river's natural flow to protect the resort from flooding. [27] The Supreme Court held that the Public Trust Doctrine—under which certain natural resources such as rivers, forests, seashores and air are held by the State in trust for public use and cannot be diverted to private, commercial ends—forms part of Indian law, and that the lease in favour of the motel was accordingly quashed. [28] Kamal Nath remains the paradigmatic Indian authority establishing that tourism infrastructure cannot be sited or operated in derogation of the public's collective interest in ecologically significant common resources.

3.6 Sachidanand Pandey v. State of West Bengal

Here, the Supreme Court reviewed a decision of the West Bengal government to lease land within the Alipore Zoological Garden in Calcutta to the Taj Group of Hotels for construction of a five-star hotel, explicitly invoking Articles 48A and 51A(g) as standards against which to test the bona fides of governmental decision-making in tourism-related land allocation. [29] While the Court ultimately upheld the lease on the facts, finding that ecological considerations, including the impact on migratory birds, had in fact been taken into account, the judgment is doctrinally significant for establishing that governmental decisions promoting tourism are subject to judicial review on environmental grounds, even though courts will not substitute their own policy judgment for that of the executive absent evidence of a failure to consider relevant ecological factors. [30]

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[20] Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action v. Union of India, (1996) 3 SCC 212 (the "Bichhri village" case, applying the "polluter pays" principle and treating environmental protection as inseparable from Article 21).

[21] Kamal Nath, discussed infra-Part 3.5, illustrates precisely this dynamic: private resort development on leased forest land was disciplined via public trust doctrine grounded in Article 21 and Article 48A.

[22] Rural Litig. & Entitlement Kendra v. State of U.P., (1985) 2 SCC 431.

[23] Subhash Kumar, 1991 AIR 420.

[24] Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum v. Union of India, AIR 1996 SC 2715: (1996) 5 SCC 647.

[25] Id.

[26] Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action v. Union of India, (1996) 3 SCC 212.

[27] M.C. Mehta v. Kamal Nath, (1997) 1 SCC 388.

[28] Id.

[29] Sachidanand Pandey v. State of W.B., 1987 AIR 1109: (1987) 2 SCC 295.

[30] Id.

3.7 M.I. Builders (P) Ltd. v. Radhey Shyam Sahu

The Court invalidated the construction of an underground shopping complex beneath a public park in Lucknow, holding that the park, as a public trust resource, could not be diverted to essentially commercial use even under the guise of decongestion, and ordered restoration of the park at the builder's cost. [31] The case extends the public trust logic of Kamal Nath from natural watercourses to urban public spaces of heritage and recreational significance—precisely the category of sites most vulnerable to tourism-driven commercialisation.

3.8 T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad v. Union of India

Arising from a petition to protect the Nilgiris forests from illegal timber felling, this litigation evolved into a continuing mandamus of unprecedented scope, through which the Supreme Court redefined "forest" for the purposes of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 to include all areas recorded as forest in government records "irrespective of the ownership, classification or nature of the land," and instituted the Central Empowered Committee to monitor compliance nationwide, including in relation to forest diversions for tourism infrastructure such as resorts, roads and ropeways within protected areas. [32]

3.9 A.P. Pollution Control Board v. M.V. Nayudu

In this case concerning the location of a polluting industry near drinking-water reservoirs, the Court elaborated the scientific and evidentiary basis of the Precautionary Principle, holding that the burden of proof shifts to the proponent of a potentially harmful activity to demonstrate that it will not cause environmental damage, and recommended the establishment of specialised environmental courts possessing both judicial and scientific expertise—a recommendation that materialised, over a decade later, in the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010. [33]

3.10 Fomento Resorts and Public Trust in Coastal Tourism

The public trust doctrine was extended specifically to coastal and beach-access contexts in Fomento Resorts and Hotels Ltd. v. Minguel Martins, where the Court held that access to a beach could not be blocked by a resort developer, since beaches and the sea are natural resources held in trust for the public, and reaffirmed that the State, as trustee, cannot permit private tourism infrastructure to extinguish public access rights. [34] Read together, this line of authority—Kamal Nath, M.I. Builders and Fomento Resorts—and has attracted sustained academic commentary on the judicial extension of trusteeship principles beyond their traditional common-law riparian origins[35] constitutes a coherent, judicially developed body of "tourism-specific" environmental constitutionalism, even though none of the enabling legislation used for adjudication was tourism-specific.

4. Statutory and Regulatory Framework Governing Sustainable Tourism

4.1 The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986

Enacted in the aftermath of the Bhopal gas tragedy as an umbrella legislation pursuant to Article 253 read with India's obligations under the 1972 Stockholm Declaration, the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 empowers the Central Government to take all measures necessary to protect and improve environmental quality, including standard-setting, restriction of industrial location, and environmental impact assessment. [36] The Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, 2006, issued under Section 3 of the Act, brings tourism-related construction—including hotel and resort projects above prescribed thresholds—within a mandatory prior-clearance regime, although smaller tourism projects frequently fall below notified thresholds and thereby escape scrutiny. [37]

4.2 The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and Eco-Tourism Guidelines

The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 establishes Protected Areas—National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves—within which tourism activity is regulated by statutorily mandated zonation. [38] Following the Supreme Court's directions in the Godavarman proceedings, the National Tiger Conservation Authority issued Guidelines for Ecotourism in and around Protected Areas in 2012, mandating that core or critical tiger habitats be capped at a maximum of twenty per cent for tourism activity and that State-level Ecotourism Strategies be prepared for each tiger reserve. [39]

4.3 The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980

By requiring prior Central Government approval for the diversion of forest land to non-forest use, the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 directly constrains the expansion of tourism infrastructure—hotels, ropeways, helipads and roads—into forested

[31] M.I. Builders (P) Ltd. v. Radhey Shyam Sahu, (1999) 6 SCC 464: AIR 1999 SC 2468.

[32] T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad v. Union of India, (1997) 2 SCC 267.

[33] A.P. Pollution Control Bd. v. Prof. M.V. Nayudu (Retd.), (1999) 2 SCC 718.

[34] Fomento Resorts & Hotels Ltd. v. Minguel Martins, (2009) 3 SCC 571.

[35] Armin Rosencranz & Michael Jackson, The Delhi Pollution Case: The Supreme Court of India and the Limits of Judicial Power, 28 Colum. J. Envtl. L. 223 (2003).

[36] Environment (Protection) Act, No. 29 of 1986, India Code (1986).

[37] Ministry of Env't, Forest & Climate Change, Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, S.O. 1533(E) (Sept. 14, 2006).

[38] Wildlife (Protection) Act, No. 53 of 1972, India Code (1972).

[39] Nat'l Tiger Conservation Auth., Ecotourism Guidelines for Tiger Reserves and Protected Areas (2012), issued pursuant to In re: T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad, Interlocutory Application concerning tourism in tiger reserves.

landscapes, and has been the principal statutory vehicle through which the Godavarman continuing mandamus has been operationalised.[40] [41]

4.4 The Biological Diversity Act, 2002

Enacted to give effect to India's obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity, this Act establishes a three-tier institutional structure—the National Biodiversity Authority, State Biodiversity Boards, and Biodiversity Management Committees—and mandates access and benefit-sharing arrangements for the commercial use of biological resources and associated traditional knowledge, a provision of direct relevance to ecotourism operators marketing biodiversity and indigenous knowledge as tourism products.[42] [43]

4.5 The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981

These Acts establish Central and State Pollution Control Boards empowered to regulate effluent and emission standards, and are of particular relevance to hotel, resort and pilgrimage-town infrastructure that generates sewage and solid waste far in excess of local carrying capacity, as documented in Himalayan pilgrimage towns such as Kedarnath, Badrinath and Amarnath.[44] [45]

4.6 Coastal Regulation Zone Notifications

Issued under Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notifications—originally in 1991 and most recently consolidated in 2019—regulate construction activity within defined distances of the high-tide line, classifying coastal areas into CRZ-I to CRZ-IV categories with differentiated permissible activity, including tourism infrastructure such as beach resorts and shacks. [46] Litigation such as Goa Foundation v. Diksha Holdings Pvt. Ltd., concerning the construction of a beach resort within the CRZ, illustrates the recurring tension between coastal tourism development and CRZ compliance, with the Court in that instance permitting construction subject to strict conditions after finding substantial regulatory compliance. [47]

4.7 Eco-Sensitive Zones

Under the Environment (Protection) Rules, 1986, the MoEFCC notifies Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries, within which specified categories of tourism-related activity—new hotels and resorts in particular—are prohibited or regulated, in line with the Supreme Court's directions that a minimum buffer be maintained around protected areas unless a site-specific zonal master plan justifies a lesser extent. [48]

4.8 National and State Tourism Policy Instruments

The Ministry of Tourism has, since 2022, articulated commitments to "sustainable and responsible tourism" through instruments such as the National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism and the Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD schemes for destination and pilgrimage infrastructure development, alongside the National Tourism Policy framework. [49] However, these remain predominantly promotional and infrastructure-financing instruments rather than binding regulatory frameworks with enforceable environmental conditionalities, a gap examined further in Part 9.

5. Impact of Tourism on Ecosystems: A Critical Analysis

5.1 Biodiversity and Forest Ecosystems

Unregulated tourism infrastructure expansion—new resorts, roads and homestays—within and adjoining Protected Areas fragments wildlife corridors and increases human-wildlife conflict, a concern that has repeatedly surfaced in the Godavarman proceedings concerning forest diversion for tourism-linked construction. [50] The Wildlife Institute of India and the National Tiger

[40] Ministry of Env't, Forest & Climate Change, Consolidated Guidelines under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 (2023 ed.).

[41] Forest (Conservation) Act, No. 69 of 1980, India Code (1980).

[42] Convention on Biological Diversity, June 5, 1992, 1760 U.N.T.S. 79, art. 15 (access and benefit-sharing).

[43] Biological Diversity Act, No. 18 of 2003, India Code (2002).

[44] Central Pollution Control Board, Status of Water Quality in Hill Towns of Uttarakhand (2019).

[45] Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, No. 6 of 1974, India Code (1974); Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, No. 14 of 1981, India Code (1981).

[46] Ministry of Env't, Forest & Climate Change, Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, S.O. 19(E) (Jan. 6, 2011); Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, S.O. 19(E) (Jan. 18, 2019).

[47] Goa Found. v. Diksha Holdings (P) Ltd., (2001) 2 SCC 97.

[48] See In re: T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad, order dated Apr. 9, 2019 (regarding ESZ around protected areas); Ministry of Env't, Forest & Climate Change, Guidelines for Declaration of Eco-Sensitive Zones (2011).

[49] Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism (2022); Ministry of Tourism, Swadesh Darshan 2.0 Guidelines (2023).

[50] T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad, (1997) 2 SCC 267 and subsequent orders.

Conservation Authority have documented that vehicular tourism inside core tiger habitats causes measurable behavioural stress in wildlife populations, prompting the twenty per cent core-area cap referenced above. [51]

5.2 Coastal and Marine Ecosystems

Coastal tourism in Goa, Kerala and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands has been associated with mangrove clearance, sand dune destabilisation and coral reef degradation from unregulated diving and construction activity, notwithstanding the CRZ regime; enforcement gaps persist particularly in relation to unauthorised shacks and resorts operating without requisite clearances. [52]

5.3 Hill Stations and Himalayan Ecosystems

The carrying-capacity crisis in Himalayan hill stations—Shimla, Mussoorie, Nainital, and more recently Joshimath—reflects the cumulative environmental cost of unplanned tourism-driven urbanisation, including groundwater depletion, unstable slope construction, and inadequate solid-waste and sewage infrastructure, issues extensively documented in the Chopra Committee report on the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi basins,[53] and corroborated by subsequent expert findings on the Joshimath subsidence event commissioned following the 2013 Uttarakhand disaster. [54]

5.4 Pilgrimage Destinations and Heritage Sites

High-footfall pilgrimage centres such as Kedarnath, Vaishno Devi and Amarnath, and heritage cities such as Agra and Varanasi, experience acute seasonal stress on water, sanitation and solid-waste systems; the Taj Trapezium litigation, in which the Supreme Court directed relocation or conversion of polluting industries around the Taj Mahal to protect the monument from atmospheric degradation exacerbated by unmanaged mass tourism traffic, remains the leading illustration of judicial intervention to reconcile heritage tourism with environmental protection. [55]

5.5 Protected Areas and Wildlife Corridors

The tension between ecotourism revenue generation for conservation financing and habitat disturbance remains unresolved in Indian policy; while ecotourism is promoted as a conservation-compatible livelihood strategy for communities adjoining Protected Areas, empirical monitoring of core-zone visitor numbers against carrying-capacity ceilings remains inconsistent across States.[56] [57]

6. Constitutional Principles Applied to Sustainable Tourism

6.1 The Precautionary Principle

As articulated in Vellore Citizens and elaborated in M.V. Nayudu, the Precautionary Principle requires that the absence of full scientific certainty regarding environmental harm not be used as a reason for postponing preventive measures, and places the burden of proving environmental safety on the proponent of an activity—a standard directly applicable to environmental clearance decisions for tourism infrastructure in ecologically sensitive zones. [58]

6.2 The Polluter Pays Principle

Applied in Vellore Citizens and Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action, this principle requires that the tourism operator responsible for pollution—untreated sewage discharge from a resort, for instance—bear both the cost of remediation and compensation to affected communities, a standard that finds only partial statutory reflection in current hotel-licensing and pollution-control-consent regimes.[59] [60]

6.3 The Public Trust Doctrine

As developed in Kamal Nath, M.I. Builders and Fomento Resorts, the Public Trust Doctrine holds that certain resources—rivers, forests, seashores, parks and open spaces—are held by the State in trust for the public and cannot be alienated for private commercial tourism use in derogation of public access and ecological integrity. [61] This doctrine is arguably the most tourism-specific of the constitutional principles identified in this paper, given that a disproportionate share of the litigation applying it has arisen directly from tourism infrastructure disputes.

6.4 Sustainable Development

First substantively articulated in the Indian context in Vellore Citizens by reference to the Brundtland Report's definition—development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs—Sustainable Development has since been applied to balance economic and ecological considerations in cases such as Narmada Bachao Andolan v.

[51] Nat'l Tiger Conservation Auth., Ecotourism Guidelines (2012).

[52] Goa Found. v. Diksha Holdings, (2001) 2 SCC 97; S. Jagannath v. Union of India, (1997) 2 SCC 87 (concerning shrimp aquaculture in the coastal zone, illustrative of the broader enforcement challenge in CRZ areas).

[53] Chopra et al., supra note 2.

[54] Chopra et al., supra note 2.

[55] M.C. Mehta v. Union of India, (1997) 2 SCC 353 (Taj Trapezium Case).

[56] Wildlife Institute of India, Guidelines for Tourism in and around Protected Areas (2012).

[57] Nat'l Tiger Conservation Auth., Ecotourism Guidelines (2012).

[58] Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum, AIR 1996 SC 2715; A.P. Pollution Control Bd. v. M.V. Nayudu, (1999) 2 SCC 718.

[59] Central Pollution Control Board, Guidelines for Consent Management for Hospitality Sector Units (2016).

[60] Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action, (1996) 3 SCC 212.

[61] Kamal Nath, (1997) 1 SCC 388; M.I. Builders, (1999) 6 SCC 464; Fomento Resorts, (2009) 3 SCC 571.

Union of India and Essar Oil Ltd. v. Halar Utkarsh Samiti, and constitutes the interpretive lens through which tourism development is properly assessed under Article 48A.[62] [63]

6.5 Intergenerational Equity

Rooted in Article 48A and Article 51A(g) alike, the principle of intergenerational equity—the notion that natural and cultural heritage resources must be preserved for future generations—was invoked in Godavarman's forest jurisprudence and finds particular resonance in tourism contexts where irreversible environmental damage (coral reef destruction, glacial retreat exacerbated by black-carbon deposition from vehicular tourism, or loss of heritage fabric) forecloses future generations' enjoyment of the same resource. [64]

6.6 Environmental Rule of Law

The cumulative effect of this jurisprudence is what scholars have termed an "environmental rule of law"—a body of enforceable standards, procedural safeguards (public hearings, environmental impact assessment)[65] and judicially supervised compliance mechanisms (the Central Empowered Committee, the National Green Tribunal) that collectively discipline development, including tourism development, within constitutionally sanctioned ecological limits. [66]

7. Comparative Constitutional Perspectives

7.1 South Africa

Section 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 expressly guarantees the right to an environment "not harmful to health or well-being" and to have the environment protected through reasonable legislative and other measures that secure ecologically sustainable development while promoting justifiable economic and social development—an express textual right that India's Article 21 jurisprudence has arrived at only through interpretation.[67] [68] South Africa's approach offers a comparative model of codifying, rather than judicially inferring, the environment-tourism development balance.

7.2 Brazil

Article 225 of the Brazilian Constitution similarly guarantees an ecologically balanced environment as "an asset of common use and essential to a healthy quality of life," imposing a duty on both the State and the community to defend and preserve it for present and future generations, and has been the constitutional basis for regulating ecotourism concessions within Brazil's extensive protected-area system, including the Amazon.[69] [70]

7.3 Bhutan

Bhutan's "high value, low volume" tourism policy, underpinned by a constitutionally mandated minimum forest cover of sixty per cent under Article 5 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008, and operationalised through a Sustainable Development Fee levied on international visitors, represents perhaps the most direct constitutional linkage between tourism policy and environmental sustainability found in any comparable jurisdiction, and offers a potential model for India's own high-footfall Himalayan destinations. [71]

7.4 Costa Rica

Article 50 of the Costa Rican Constitution guarantees every person the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment, a provision that has underpinned Costa Rica's globally recognised payment-for-ecosystem-services programme, financed substantially through ecotourism revenue and fuel taxes,[72] and credited with reversing decades of deforestation while sustaining one of the world's most ecotourism-dependent economies. [73]

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[62] World Comm'n on Env't & Dev., Our Common Future (Brundtland Report) (1987).

[63] Narmada Bachao Andolan v. Union of India, (2000) 10 SCC 664; Essar Oil Ltd. v. Halar Utkarsh Samiti, (2004) 2 SCC 392.

[64] T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad, (1997) 2 SCC 267.

[65] EIA Notification, S.O. 1533(E) (2006), para 7 (public consultation requirement).

[66] See UNEP, Environmental Rule of Law: First Global Report (2019) (documenting the concept's cross-jurisdictional development, including in India).

[67] See Jonathan Verschuuren, Principles of Environmental Law: The Ideal of Sustainable Development and the Role of Principles of International, European, and National Environmental Law (2003) (comparative discussion of codified environmental rights).

[68] S. Afr. Const., 1996, § 24.

[69] Lei No. 9.985, de 18 de Julho de 2000, D.O.U. de 19.7.2000 (Braz.) (National System of Conservation Units).

[70] Constituição Federal [C.F.] [Constitution] art. 225 (Braz., 1988).

[71] Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan art. 5, § 3 (2008).

[72] Ley Forestal No. 7575 (Costa Rica 1996) (establishing the Payment for Environmental Services programme).

[73] Constitución Política de la República de Costa Rica art. 50 (1949, as amended).

7.5 Australia

While lacking an express constitutional environmental right, Australia regulates tourism within its World Heritage-listed properties, including the Great Barrier Reef, through the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth), which mandates strategic assessment of tourism activity likely to have a significant impact on matters of national environmental significance—illustrating that robust statutory frameworks can partially substitute for the absence of an express constitutional right,[74], a lesson relevant to India's own statute-heavy, constitutionally-inferred model. [75]

7.6 The European Union

The European Union does not guarantee an individual environmental right in its founding treaties but Article 37 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union requires that "a high level of environmental protection...be integrated into the policies of the Union," and EU tourism-relevant instruments—including the Habitats Directive and the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive[76]—establish binding, supranational minimum standards applicable across member States' tourism sectors, offering a federal-regulatory model of environmental mainstreaming distinct from India's rights-based approach. [77]

8. Climate Change, Global Sustainability Commitments and International Obligations

8.1 Sustainable Development Goals

India's tourism-environment framework must be read against its commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), which specifically targets protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage; SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), Target 12.b of which calls for developing and implementing tools to monitor sustainable tourism's development impacts; SDG 13 (Climate Action); SDG 14 (Life Below Water), directly implicated by coastal and marine tourism; and SDG 15 (Life on Land), implicated by forest and mountain tourism. [78] NITI Aayog's SDG India Index tracks state-level performance on these goals, though tourism-specific indicators remain underdeveloped within the Index's current methodology.[79] [80]

8.2 The Paris Agreement

India's Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement commit it to reducing the emissions intensity of GDP and enhancing forest and tree cover as a carbon sink—commitments in direct tension with high-emission forms of tourism such as vehicular hill-station tourism and aviation-dependent long-haul travel, and in direct synergy with forest-based ecotourism that maintains standing forest cover for carbon sequestration. [81]

8.3 The Convention on Biological Diversity

India ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1994 and subsequently enacted the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 to give it domestic effect, including access and benefit-sharing obligations directly relevant to biodiversity-based ecotourism enterprises operating in Protected Areas and community forests. [82]

8.4 The Ramsar Convention

India is party to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance and has designated over eighty Ramsar sites, many of which—Chilika Lake, Sundarbans, Keoladeo National Park—are significant wildlife-tourism destinations requiring careful balancing of visitor access against wetland ecological character under the Convention's "wise use" principle. [83]

8.5 The UNESCO World Heritage Convention

India's forty-plus UNESCO World Heritage properties, spanning natural sites (Western Ghats, Kaziranga, Sundarbans) and cultural sites (Taj Mahal, Hampi, Ajanta and Ellora), are subject to the Convention's obligation to ensure identification, protection,

[74]Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975 (Cth) (Austl.).

[75]Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (Austl.).

[76]Council Directive 2011/92/EU, 2012 O.J. (L 26) 1 (EIA Directive).

[77]Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union art. 37, 2012 O.J. (C 326) 391; Council Directive 92/43/EEC, 1992 O.J. (L 206) 7 (Habitats Directive).

[78]U.N. Gen. Assembly, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, U.N. Doc. A/RES/70/1 (Sept. 25, 2015).

[79]NITI Aayog, SDG India Index and Dashboard 2023-24: Partnerships in the Decade of Action.

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[82]Convention on Biological Diversity, June 5, 1992, 1760 U.N.T.S. 79.

[83]Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat, Feb. 2, 1971, 996 U.N.T.S. 245 (Ramsar Convention).

conservation and transmission to future generations, obligations that domestic courts have invoked, as in the Taj Trapezium litigation, to justify environmental restrictions on tourism-adjacent economic activity. [84]

8.6 Ecotourism, Community Participation and Indigenous Rights

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 recognises community forest resource rights that intersect directly with ecotourism development on forest land, requiring free, prior and informed consent of forest-dwelling communities under Section 4 before diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes,[85] including tourism infrastructure, and Gram Sabha consent has been held mandatory in this context by the Supreme Court's directions in the Niyamgiri litigation concerning the Dongria Kondh tribe. [86] Responsible tourism models that institutionalise community equity participation—as piloted in Kerala's Responsible Tourism Mission[87]—represent the most constitutionally coherent application of the Article 51A(g) duty framework, transforming an abstract citizen duty into concrete community entitlement.

8.7 ESG and Corporate Accountability in Tourism

The Securities and Exchange Board of India's Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting framework, applicable to India's top listed companies including major hospitality chains, requires disclosure of environmental impact indicators, extending corporate accountability for sustainable tourism practice beyond traditional command-and-control regulation into market-based ESG disclosure mechanisms.[88] [89]

9. Critical Evaluation: Adequacy of the Constitutional Framework and Identified Gaps

9.1 Strengths of the Constitutional Framework

The judicial synthesis of Articles 21, 48A and 51A(g) has produced an unusually rights-protective jurisprudence by comparative standards, enabling courts to intervene in tourism development decisions—Sachidanand Pandey, Kamal Nath, M.I. Builders, Fomento Resorts—even absent tourism-specific legislation, through the flexible, evolving content of the right to life and the interpretive gravitational pull of the Directive Principles and Fundamental Duties. [90] The continuing mandamus technique deployed in Godavarman has additionally enabled sustained judicial oversight of forest-tourism interface issues that ordinary adjudication, structured around discrete disputes, could not achieve.

9.2 Structural and Implementation Gaps

Notwithstanding this jurisprudential strength, significant gaps persist. First, India lacks a dedicated Sustainable Tourism Act; the sector is regulated indirectly through general environmental statutes never drafted with tourism-specific risks in contemplation, producing threshold and enforcement gaps—particularly for small and medium hospitality establishments that fall below EIA notification thresholds yet cumulatively generate significant environmental stress in high-footfall destinations. [91] Second, carrying-capacity assessment—central to sustainable tourism planning internationally—remains largely absent from Indian environmental clearance processes, which are project-specific rather than destination-cumulative in orientation, a deficiency starkly exposed by the Joshimath subsidence crisis. [92] Third, Article 48A and Article 51A(g), being non-justiciable, depend entirely on judicial willingness to read them into Article 21 on a case-by-case basis, producing doctrinal unpredictability and leaving vast tracts of tourism development effectively unregulated absent litigation.[93] [94] Fourth, community participation mechanisms, while formally robust under the Forest Rights Act and Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, remain inconsistently implemented in

[84]Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Nov. 16, 1972, 1037 U.N.T.S. 151; M.C. Mehta v. Union of India, (1997) 2 SCC 353.

[85]Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, No. 2 of 2007, § 4(2)(e), India Code (2006).

[86]Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, No. 2 of 2007, India Code (2006); Orissa Mining Corp. Ltd. v. Ministry of Env't & Forest, (2013) 6 SCC 476 (Niyamgiri case).

[87]Kerala Dep't of Tourism, Responsible Tourism Mission: Policy Framework (2017).

[88]SEBI, Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting Format (2021), Principle 6 (environment).

[89]SEBI, Circular on Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting, SEBI/HO/CFD/CMD-2/P/CIR/2021/562 (May 10, 2021).

[90]See Parts 2 and 3, supra.

[91]EIA Notification, S.O. 1533(E) (2006).

[92]Chopra et al., supra note 2.

[93]Rajamani, supra note 44.

[94]India Const. art. 37.

practice, with Gram Sabha consultation frequently reduced to a procedural formality in tourism-infrastructure clearances.[95] [96] Fifth, Ministry of Tourism policy instruments remain overwhelmingly promotional and infrastructure-financing in character, with limited binding environmental conditionalities attached to schemes such as Swadesh Darshan, in contrast to Bhutan's fee-based sustainability financing model. [97]

9.3 Institutional Fragmentation

Regulatory authority over tourism-environment interface issues is fragmented across the MoEFCC, the Ministry of Tourism, State Pollution Control Boards, State Tourism Departments, local self-government institutions and, in Scheduled Areas, Gram Sabhas, without a unifying statutory or institutional mechanism for coordinated destination-level planning, a gap that a dedicated sustainable tourism framework law could address through mandatory inter-agency destination management plans.

10. Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

10.1 Evidence-Based Findings

This study finds, first, that Indian constitutional jurisprudence has developed a robust, if judicially contingent, framework treating environmental protection as integral to the right to life, with a distinct and coherent sub-body of Public Trust Doctrine jurisprudence directly addressing tourism infrastructure. Second, it finds that this constitutional jurisprudence has not been adequately translated into tourism-specific binding regulation, leaving enforcement dependent on general environmental statutes and episodic litigation. Third, it finds that comparative jurisdictions—Bhutan and Costa Rica in particular—demonstrate that constitutionally or statutorily mandated sustainability financing mechanisms can operationalise abstract environmental principles into concrete fiscal and regulatory tools in ways India has yet to replicate systematically. Fourth, it finds that carrying-capacity assessment and cumulative destination-level environmental planning remain the most significant methodological gap in India's tourism-environment governance.

10.2 Recommendations

The paper recommends: (a) enactment of a dedicated Sustainable Tourism Framework Law operationalising Articles 48A and 51A(g) through binding destination-level carrying-capacity assessments, mandatory environmental conditionalities on tourism financing schemes, and a Sustainable Tourism Fee modelled on Bhutan's Sustainable Development Fee, ring-fenced for local environmental infrastructure and conservation financing; (b) lowering and rationalising EIA notification thresholds specifically for hospitality construction in Eco-Sensitive Zones, CRZ areas and Himalayan hill states; (c) statutory recognition of cumulative, destination-level environmental assessment, distinct from project-specific clearance, particularly for pilgrimage and hill-station destinations; (d) strengthening of Gram Sabha consent mechanisms under the Forest Rights Act and PESA in tourism-infrastructure clearances, with independent social audit; (e) institutional consolidation through a National Sustainable Tourism Coordination Authority bridging the MoEFCC and Ministry of Tourism mandates; and (f) mainstreaming ESG-based sustainability disclosure requirements across the formal hospitality sector, extending beyond the current SEBI-regulated listed-company universe.

10.3 Conclusion

The Indian constitutional framework, through the interpretive synthesis of Articles 21, 48A and 51A(g), has proved a remarkably resilient vehicle for embedding environmental values into the governance of tourism, particularly through the Public Trust Doctrine jurisprudence exemplified by Kamal Nath, M.I. Builders and Fomento Resorts. Yet constitutional principle alone cannot substitute for the granular, destination-specific regulatory architecture that sustainable tourism management requires. The persistence of ecological crises in Joshimath, in Himalayan pilgrimage towns, and along India's coastlines demonstrates that the gap between judicially articulated constitutional values and everyday regulatory practice remains wide. Bridging this gap requires translating Article 48A's aspirational command and Article 51A(g)'s citizen-facing duty into enforceable, sector-specific legal obligations—a task that remains substantially before the Indian legislature rather than its courts.[98]

10.4 Future Research Directions

Future research should undertake empirical, field-based carrying-capacity studies for India's principal tourism destinations; comparative empirical assessment of the fiscal and ecological outcomes of sustainability-fee models in Bhutan and Costa Rica as applied to Indian contexts; doctrinal tracking of post-2020 National Green Tribunal jurisprudence on tourism infrastructure; and interdisciplinary research combining constitutional law with climate science to assess the differentiated vulnerability of Himalayan and coastal tourism destinations to climate change.

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Original Article

Use of social media and its impact on Travel

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Abstract

Social media has revolutionized the travel and tourism industry by transforming the way people search for information, plan trips, share experiences, and influence the travel decisions of others. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok have become powerful sources of destination information, travel reviews, recommendations, and user-generated content. These platforms enable travelers to make informed choices while providing tourism businesses with effective marketing and customer engagement opportunities. Social media also promotes lesser-known destinations, enhances customer interaction, and supports influencer marketing, thereby contributing to tourism growth. However, challenges such as misinformation, negative reviews, privacy concerns, and increasing marketing costs require careful management. Overall, social media has become an indispensable component of the modern travel industry, benefiting both travelers and tourism stakeholders through improved communication, promotion, and digital connectivity.

Keywords: Social Media, Travel Industry, Tourism, Digital Marketing, Travel Planning, Online Reviews, Influencer Marketing, Tourism Promotion.

Introduction

The use of social media has become widespread. It has altered the ways in which we interact with one another, use available information, and make purchases. The travel and tourism industry has also undergone a significant transformation in the past decade due to the emergence of social media. According to a survey, around 43% of people currently travelling won't even consider a destination without finding it on social media first. The hashtag "travel" has more than 74.4 billion views on TikTok, while Instagram features over 624 million posts related to travel. These statistics illustrate the notable impact of social media on prospective travellers, its influential role in the travel industry, and its potential for promoting diverse destinations.

Social Media Inspires Travel

Social media has the power to break down barriers and bring people together. This presents various opportunities for people to engage in travel, connect with diverse cultures, and explore new destinations. The advent of social media has not only facilitated the planning of trips, but also enabled the sharing of travel experiences, thereby serving as a source of inspiration for others to embark on their own journeys. It has altered the way people find information about travel destinations. The vast amount of content available on digital and social media gives travellers a better idea of what to expect before they arrive at their destination and has made it easier for people to discover unique and off-the-beaten-path destinations they may not have heard of before. Increased Travel Knowledge With the help of social media platforms, we can now find information about travel destinations. The vast amount of content available on digital and social media gives travellers a better idea of what to expect before they arrive at their destination and has made it easier for people to discover unique and off-the-beaten-path destinations they may not have heard of before. about travel destinations. The vast amount of content available on digital and social media gives travellers a better idea of what to expect before they arrive at their destination and has made it easier for people to discover unique and off-the-beaten-path destinations they may not have heard of before.

Influences travel decisions

According to a survey, over 35% of all travellers use social media to inspire their travel plans. The influence is much higher among the younger generations. 50% of travellers under the age of 40 use social media as a source of inspiration. A large percentage of millennials, who are typically aspirational and experience-driven travellers, base their trip decisions largely on how Instagrammable a given destination is. Social media has also made travel easier. Almost every step of the travel process, from planning to booking to customer service, can now be handled through a social media platform. Additionally, this platform also facilitates seamless interaction of tourists with locals, enabling them to gain valuable insights and creating opportunities for more authentic experiences.

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Research and reviews

The rise of social media has led to a more transparent landscape for travel. Individuals are increasingly inclined to share their experiences, enabling travellers to gain insights into both the positive as well as the negative aspects of a particular destination. This wealth of information serves as a valuable resource for making informed decisions. People also dedicate a significant amount of time to conducting research prior to embarking on a journey to a new destination. Online reviews have become an essential resource for making informed decisions regarding accommodations, food, local attractions, and more.

Influencer marketing

Through social media platforms, travellers also share their experiences with a larger audience than ever before, resulting in the rise of "influencer" travellers who use their online following to persuade others to visit similar destinations. Content in various formats such as reels, shorts, and vlogs has gained popularity among consumers to explore different destinations and gather valuable insights for planning their upcoming trips. Due to their substantial following, influencers possess the ability to impact the travel choices of their followers and have become a valuable tool for travel companies seeking to collaborate with them to promote their services and enhance public awareness.The points presented above clearly demonstrate that social media has a significant role in the travel industry. It helps inspire travellers, influence their travel decisions, and promote various travel destinations.

Social Media and the Travel Industry

Social media has emerged as an essential tool for the travel industry, offering numerous advantages for hotels, travel agents, and online travel agencies (OTAs). With billions of active users on major social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and TikTok, they present unparalleled reach to businesses operating in the tourism sector. Social media platforms provide marketing opportunities that empower travel marketers to implement comprehensive strategies and effectively engage their target audience. The platforms are also used to create more engaging and personalised campaigns for their target audience, as well as attract users with promotional offers and giveaways. Companies also use these platforms to interact with customers by responding to their posts, queries and messages and by providing guidance on their services.Social media provides companies with powerful tools to reach large audiences and build relationships with people all over the world. It also enables businesses to measure and track the impact of their marketing campaigns, monitor customer engagement and conversions, and optimise campaigns for the best possible resultsIt can therefore be confidently stated that social media has become a crucial component of the strategic operations employed by tourism companies. It is now an invaluable business tool due to its extensive reach, efficient customer service, and user-friendly booking options. According to the International Tourist Research Centres, 88% of tourism businesses actively employ social media platforms to promote travel and assess consumer sentiments.

The Challenges posed by the Digital Media

The use of social and digital media has greatly benefited the tourism industry, resulting in significant sales growth and increased customer engagement. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are also several challenges associated with these platforms. The brand image of a company is a crucial aspect that significantly contributes to its success and performance, but the presence of negative interactions and reviews on social media can present a significant challenge, as it may dissuade prospective consumers from proceeding with their travel plans or engaging with the company. Social media can also be used to spread misinformation. This can have a negative impact on the tourism industry and can deter people from visiting certain destinations. Additionally, companies need to know that privacy laws vary from country to country. Content that might be acceptable in one country might not be acceptable in another, so companies need to stay up-to-date on the latest regulations and laws. Social media campaigns can be costly as well. Companies must carefully manage their budgets to make sure that their campaigns are cost-effective and profitable.

Overall, it is important for companies to be careful when using social media for their marketing campaigns and to be aware of the potential risks that may arise. With the right strategies and techniques, social media can be a powerful tool for helping travel and tourism businesses succeed.

Conclusion

It is quite clear that the increasing influence of social media has significantly impacted the tourism industry, and this influence is continuing to grow in prominence. As a significant proportion of leisure travellers now rely on social media for travel inspiration and to share their travel experiences, social media has emerged as an important tool for travel companies. A traveller spends, on average, over 400 digital moments before making a booking decision. This means that not only does digital media inspire us to travel, but it is also a trusted source of information, verification, and recommendations. It is therefore becoming an essential component of travel and tourism companies' strategic operations to target potential customers, engage with existing customers, and promote their services.Social media platforms provide companies with the opportunity to establish direct connections with travellers, enabling them to gain valuable insights into their behaviours and preferences. Brands have leveraged the expansive reach, paid advertising, and advanced targeting options offered by social media platforms to widen and diversify their audience base, connecting with a larger spectrum of people from across the globe. In the future, digital media has the potential to merge as one of the largest influencers in the global travel industry, driving growth simultaneously as it keeps connecting more and more travellers to their favourite brands.

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Artificial Intelligence and Potential of Democracy in India

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Abstract

AI is reshaping society's crossways the globe and has emerge as one of the important technologies of the contemporary era. Its applications make bigger far further than industry and systematic research, considerably influencing governance, political process, and democratic institutions. In India, AI is more and more being included into electoral campaign, public service release, and policy formulation, managerial decision-making and political message. This paper examines the evolving role of AI in India's democratic structure by assessing its potential payback as well as its linked risks. It additional discuss the importance of embryonic ethical principles, transparent regulatory mechanisms, and accountable AI governance frameworks to ensure that scientific modernization supports democratic principles, safeguard fundamental rights, and promote inclusive governance.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Democracy, Digital Governance, Political communiqué, AI Principles, Electoral Integrity.*

Introduction

AI refers to the aptitude of computer systems to replicate human cognitive function, including learning, reasoning, decision-making, language understanding, and analytic. Over the past decade, AI has evolved fast and has become an essential part of a variety of sectors, counting public administration, electoral processes, social media, governance, and democratic institution. Democracy is found on values such as public participation, lucidity, accountability, free and fair elections, and the protection of fundamental rights. The growing adoption of AI in governance has created new possibilities for improving administrative efficiency, ornamental public service release, and partisan informed policy decision. As governments more and more rely on AI-driven technologies, investigative their power on democratic institution has become a important area of study within political science and public admin.

Meaning and Concept of AI

AI is a dedicated meadow of computer science that focus on just commencement systems able of performing tasks that usually need human intellect. These systems rely on techniques such as algorithms, machine knowledge models, and wide data examination to be familiar with patterns, make prediction, mechanize processes, and hold up decision-making. Today, AI has become a significant constituent of governance and public management. Its application includes government service release, election management and political demonstration, social media satisfied moderation, observation and safety systems, public policy formulation, and judicial decision-support system. These developments show the increasing role of AI in modern governance and democratic institution.

Meaning of Democracy

Democracy is a system of governance in which political power eventually rests with the citizens and is exercise either in a straight line or from side to side elected legislative body. A self-governing system is continued by necessary principles, together with free and fair elections, the rule of law, liberty of appearance, active citizen contribution, lucidity, responsibility, and the fortification of elementary rights and civil liberties.

Review of Literature

James Edgar Lim and Julian Savulescu (2025), in *AI Preference Prediction and Policy Making*, examine the relevance of AI in public policy and democratic decision-making. Their study indicate that AI-based forecast models can get better policy formulation by identify public preference more precisely. Seth Lazar and Lorenzo Manuali (2026), in Using LLMs to Enhance Democracy, explored the possible of large language model to hold up democratic reflection and civic contribution. The author argued that LLMs can help governments in dispensation large volume of public advice, thereby enabling broader citizen contribution in policy. Yuval Rymon (2026), in the article Of the People, by the Algorithm: How AI Transforms the Role of Democratic legislative body, analyzed the pressure of AI on political symbol and governance.

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The revise concluded that AI is more and more determining policy decision, reinforcement executive processes, and transform the association flanked by citizens and their elected legislative body.

Scope of the Study

This study examines the role of AI in democratic system, with particular importance on its power on democratic governance, electoral processes, and citizen contribution. It as well investigates the increase of AI-driven propaganda and disinformation, the collision of digital technologies on public rendezvous, and the ethical, legal, and authoritarian challenge connected by means of the use of AI in democratic societies.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the relationship among AI and democratic governance.
2. To assess the opportunities and challenges that AI presents for the functioning of democratic institutions and processes.

Research Methodology

Nature of the Study**:** The present study adopts a evocative and systematic approach to observe the influence of AI on democratic governance. The study analyzes the responsibility of AI in reinforcement or challenging democratic institute, with exacting concentration to citizen participation, public admin, and electoral process.

Sources: The study is obtained from a diversity of consistent sources. These contain books, peer-reviewed research journals, academic articles, government publications, and reports published by international organization, as well as applicable news articles and policy travel permit.

Precincts of the Study

1. The findings of the study rely primarily on secondary sources of information and do not include primary data collection.
2. As Artificial Intelligence is an evolving field, continuous technological advancements and policy developments may influence the relevance of the study over time.
3. The scope of the research is confined to the political, governance, and democratic dimensions of Artificial Intelligence and does not examine its applications in other sectors.

Role of Artificial Intelligence in Strengthening Democracy

1. Enhanced Public Administration: AI contributes to more valuable public administration by enable governments to bring public services with better speed, accurateness, and competence. The acceptance of AI-driven digital governance system streamlines administrative actions, minimize delay, and enhance transparency in government operation. example comprise smart governance platform, AI-powered chatbots for civilian help, and digital accusation redress system.

2. Improved Citizen Contribution

AI has the possible to make stronger democratic involvement by create new opportunity for citizens to connect in public decision-making. AI-supported online consultation, digital conversation platform, and participatory policy forum allow governments to meet and analyze public opinion more powerfully. initiative such as Taiwan's digital democracy mock-up demonstrate how AI can make easy significant citizen meeting and combined governance.

3. Superior Policy-Making

AI ropes evidence-based policymaking by dispensation and analyzing large volume of data to generate precious insight for decision-makers. These logical capabilities help governments in identify trends, forecasting prospect challenges, and formulate effectual public policies. AI application is mainly precious in areas such as economic forecasting, tragedy attentiveness and retort, healthcare preparation, and urban growth.

Challenges of AI to Democracy

1. Spread of propaganda and Deep fakes: AI has made it easier to make highly sensible fake videos, images, and audio recording, normally known as deep fakes. These manipulate media can misinform the public, deform political communiqué, and pressure electoral outcomes. As a result, voters may find it ever more difficult to differentiate authentic information from made-up content, posing a grave challenge to democratic process.

2. Algorithmic Prejudice: AI systems are educated using active datasets, which may hold social, cultural, or political bias. If these biases are entrenched in AI models, the resultant decisions may unjustly drawback certain individuals or community, mainly minorities and marginalized groups. With no appropriate mistake and rule, algorithmic bias can weaken the principles of equality, impartiality, and justice that are elementary to democracy.

3. Intimidation to Privacy and Social Liberties: The growing use of AI-powered surveillance technologies by governments and personal organizations has raised important concern regarding privacy and civil liberty. Constant monitoring and widespread data collection may get in the way with human being freedoms, decrease personal solitude, and create an environment that discourages free appearance and democratic contribution.

4. Electoral Manoeuvring: AI enables political organization to use embattled promotion and micro-targeting technique to pressure voters with modified political communication. Such strategy can shape public view, exploit moving response, and have an effect on electoral choices. Researchers have spoken anxiety that the misuse of AI in election campaign may deteriorate the equality and truthfulness of democratic elections.

AI and Elections: AI has drastically reshaped electoral process and operation strategy. It is broadly use for creating modified political advertisements, analyzing voter behaviour, automating communication with citizens, and supervision social media campaign. Political parties are ever more adopting AI-based tools to attain and pressure voters more successfully. However, the mistreatment of this technology during elections poses stern risks to democratic reliability, particularly throughout the spread of propaganda, automatic propaganda, and synchronized disinformation campaign.

AI and Digital Authoritarianism: A rising body of creative writing suggest that AI may also make easy the rise of "digital totalitarianism," where state establishment employ highly developed observation technologies to observe populations and hold back political dispute. Technologies such as facial credit systems and prognostic observation tools raise significant concern regarding civil liberties, democratic freedoms, and the fortification of human rights.

Moral Concern of AI in Democracy: The incorporation of AI into democratic system raise some ethical challenges, as well as limited intelligibility in algorithmic decision-making, indistinct responsibility for AI-driven outcome, concern connected to data solitude, and the possible for prejudice and bias.

Prospect of Democracy in the AI Era: The future communication among AI and democratic system will mainly depend on the success of regulatory frameworks and governance strategy adopt by states. In progress global talks emphasize the vital require for democratic institution to acclimatize to quick technological advancement in order to defend democratic values.

Findings of the Study

- Derisory regulatory frameworks boost vulnerabilities associated to privacy security and democratic governance.
- AI acting a growing function in determining political message and influence democratic decision-making process.
- The make use of of AI in public administration enhance the efficiency and hurry of policy formulation and carrying out.
- Bias entrenched in algorithms continue to present challenges linked to disparity and bias.
- Well-built ethical strategy and regulatory mechanism are essential to protect democratic institutions.
- On the whole, AI has the possible to support democratic system if it is developed and governed in a translucent, accountable, and accountable manner.

Suggestions

- There is requiring expanding and implementing inclusive legal and authoritarian frameworks governing the use of AI.
- Transparency in the performance and decision-making process of AI systems should be promoted to build public trust.
- Cyber safety mechanisms and data guard laws should be strengthened to safeguard responsive information.
- Public consciousness initiative should be introduced to teach citizens regarding AI-generated propaganda and its possible impact.
- Ethical standards should be encouraged in Artificial Intelligence research, design, and deployment.
- Effectual democratic mistake mechanisms have to be established to ensure responsible use of AI technologies in governance and public life.

Conclusion

AI is reshaping self-governing system crosswise the globe by influence the way governance, statement, and public commitment function. It presents considerable opportunity to improve managerial competence, increase precision, and get bigger civilian involvement in executive process. However, these reimbursements are accompanied by major challenges, as well as an extend of propaganda, greater than before observation capability, algorithmic bias, and risk to the truthfulness of electoral system. The prospect of democratic governance will largely depend on how successfully AI is synchronized and morally manage. It is necessary for democratic governments to set up robust legal and policy frameworks that make sure AI technologies strengthen democratic values, keep human rights, and hold up accountable governance rather than weaken them.

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Original Article

Sustainable Wildlife Tourism in the Era of Global Conservation Challenges: A Review

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Abstract

Sustainable wildlife tourism has emerged as an important instrument for biodiversity conservation, environmental education, and socioeconomic development. Wildlife-based tourism activities such as safaris, birdwatching, whale watching, and ecotourism generate revenue that can support conservation initiatives and local livelihoods. However, the sustainability of wildlife tourism destinations is increasingly threatened by global conservation challenges, including climate change, habitat loss, biodiversity decline, pollution, invasive species, and emerging zoonotic diseases. This review examines the ecological, economic, and social dimensions of sustainable wildlife tourism and evaluates its role in addressing contemporary conservation challenges. It synthesizes current literature on the benefits and impacts of wildlife tourism and discusses management strategies needed to balance conservation objectives with tourism development. The review highlights the importance of adaptive management, stakeholder participation, technological innovation, and climate-resilient planning in ensuring the long-term sustainability of wildlife tourism. Modern technologies such as GIS, remote sensing, virtual reality, and augmented reality are increasingly being used to support conservation and tourism management in natural World Heritage sites.

Keywords: *Wildlife tourism, biodiversity conservation, ecotourism, climate change, sustainable development, protected areas.*

Introduction:

Wildlife tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors within the global tourism industry and represents a major component of nature-based tourism (Higginbottom, 2004; Newsome *et al*., 2005). It encompasses a wide range of activities, including wildlife viewing, birdwatching, photographic safaris, whale watching, and visits to protected areas. The increasing demand for authentic nature experiences has contributed significantly to the expansion of wildlife tourism across the world.Wildlife tourism is often motivated by the desire for direct encounters with rare or charismatic species. Tourists frequently pay to observe animals such as tigers or one-horned rhinoceroses and to experience natural landscapes firsthand (Curtin, 2005). Bibliometric evidence indicates that research on sustainable tourism and biodiversity has expanded considerably over the past three decades, reflecting growing academic interest in conservation-oriented tourism practices (Podili & Rao, 2024). However, scholars have long noted conceptual ambiguity around the term.Tremblay (2001) emphasized that wildlife tourism includes a broad spectrum of species, habitats, activities, and observation methods, making it difficult to define concisely. This complexity is compounded by overlap with related forms of travel. Reynolds & Braithwaite (2001) described it as an intersectional domain overlapping with nature-based tourism, ecotourism, consumptive wildlife use, rural tourism, and broader human-animal relationships, while Curtin & Wilkes (2005) argued that wildlife tourism blurs into recreation and holidaymaking. Despite these definitional challenges, standard descriptions commonly equate wildlife tourism with ecotourism or nature-based tourism in which visitors engage with animals in situ through activities such as wildlife viewing, safaris, nature walks, visits to national parks, birdwatching, and whale watching. Beyond recreation, Buckley (2012) stressed that a principal objective of wildlife tourism is to foster appreciation and learning about wildlife while supporting conservation and sustainable management. This dual recreational and conservation rationale helps explain the marked growth in wildlife tourism in recent years: improved accessibility, rising environmental awareness, and stronger demand for nature-based experiences have all contributed to expanding interest (Fennell, 2015). Wildlife tourism can contribute significantly to conservation funding, environmental education, and community development when managed sustainably. However, excessive visitor pressure and inadequate regulation may negatively affect wildlife behavior and habitat quality (Tapper, 2006).

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Therefore, scholars and practitioners increasingly emphasize environmentally responsible practices, including minimizing ecological footprints, prioritizing the wellbeing of wildlife in natural settings, engaging local communities, and using tourism as a platform for conservation education (Weaver, 2011). Taken together, these perspectives reveal a field characterized by conceptual fluidity but oriented toward conservation outcomes, suggesting that future research should refine definitions while evaluating how different forms of wildlife tourism affect both species and communities.

Wildlife tourism, when properly managed, can provide financial support for conservation programs, benefit local communities, and increase public awareness of biodiversity conservation (Ballantyne *et al.*, 2009). Sustainable wildlife tourism is grounded in the principles of sustainable development, which emphasize balancing environmental conservation, economic growth, and social equity (Buckley, 2012). It can also create economic incentives for preserving natural habitats and protecting threatened species. Despite these benefits, wildlife tourism faces numerous challenges in the contemporary era. Global biodiversity is declining at an unprecedented rate due to habitat destruction, climate change, pollution, invasive species, and unsustainable resource exploitation (SCBD, 2022). These threats affect wildlife populations and undermine the ecological foundations upon which wildlife tourism depends.

Global Conservation Challenges Affecting Wildlife Tourism

Climate Change

Climate change is widely recognized as one of the most significant threats to biodiversity and ecosystem stability. Rising temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, extreme weather events, and sea-level rise are affecting species distributions and ecosystem functioning worldwide (Kifworo & Dube, 2024). Wildlife tourism destinations are particularly vulnerable because many tourism experiences depend on predictable wildlife behavior and habitat conditions. Research indicates that climate-induced changes in migration patterns, breeding seasons, and habitat suitability may reduce wildlife viewing opportunities and affect tourism revenues (Kifworo & Dube, 2024). In African savanna ecosystems, prolonged droughts have influenced wildlife movements and altered tourist experiences in protected areas.

Habitat fragmentation and land use

Habitat fragmentation and land-use change also represent major conservation challenges. Expanding agriculture, urbanization, infrastructure development, and mining activities continue to reduce natural habitats and disrupt ecological connectivity (SCBD, 2022). Habitat fragmentation and land-use change threaten the wildlife tourism because they reduce habitat quality, isolate wildlife populations, and make animal sightings less predictable. In simple terms, when forests, grasslands, wetlands, or corridors are broken into smaller patches by agriculture, roads, settlements, mining, or tourism infrastructure, wildlife becomes harder to track, easier to disturb, and less likely to persist in the long term. Such changes threaten the survival of wildlife populations and diminish the attractiveness of tourism destinations (Manley, 2024; Xu *et al.*, 2024).

Pollution

Pollution weakens wildlife tourism by damaging the habitats, species, and visitor experience that the sector depends on. In tourism landscapes, pollution from litter, sewage, vehicle emissions, boat traffic, plastics, and noise can reduce wildlife health, disturb animal behavior, and make destinations less attractive and less sustainable. Pollution further contributes to biodiversity decline. Plastic pollution, chemical contaminants, and noise pollution negatively affect wildlife health and ecosystem integrity (Gallagher & Hammerschlag, 2017). Marine wildlife tourism destinations are particularly susceptible to the impacts of plastic waste and ocean warming.

Conservation Benefits of Wildlife Tourism

Sustainable wildlife tourism can contribute significantly to conservation efforts by generating revenue for protected-area management and biodiversity protection (Buckley, 2012). Entrance fees, tourism taxes, concession payments, and private investments often provide essential funding for conservation activities, including anti-poaching patrols, habitat restoration, and wildlife monitoring programs (Newsome *et al.*, 2005). Wildlife tourism also serves as an important educational tool. Direct encounters with wildlife can increase visitors' environmental awareness and promote pro-conservation attitudes (Ballantyne *et al.*, 2009). Interpretation programs, visitor centers, and guided tours help communicate conservation messages and encourage environmentally responsible behavior. Community-based tourism initiatives show that tourism can create economic incentives for local communities to participate in conservation efforts. When local people receive tangible benefits from tourism, support for protected areas and wildlife conservation generally increases (Buckley, 2012).

Ecological Impacts

Although wildlife tourism offers substantial conservation benefits, it may also produce negative ecological impacts when poorly managed. Disturbance caused by vehicles, boats, aircraft, and tourists may affect animal movement patterns and habitat use. Wildlife feeding practices also raise concern. Artificial feeding may alter natural behavior, increase dependence on human-provided resources, and elevate disease transmission risks (Higginbottom, 2004). Human presence can alter wildlife behavior, increase stress levels, disrupt feeding activities, and reduce reproductive success. Close interactions between humans and wildlife can facilitate pathogen spread, particularly among primates and marine mammals (Gallagher & Hammerschlag, 2017).

Social Impact

Social impacts also require attention. Tourism development may create conflicts over resource access, land use, and revenue distribution. In some cases, local communities bear conservation costs while receiving limited economic benefits from tourism activities. Equitable distribution of tourism benefits and active community participation are widely recognized as essential principles of sustainable tourism management because they enhance local support for conservation and contribute to long-term socioeconomic and environmental sustainability (Buckley, 2010).

Management Strategies

Achieving sustainability in wildlife tourism requires comprehensive planning and adaptive management. Carrying-capacity assessments are commonly used to determine acceptable visitor levels and prevent environmental degradation (Newsome *et al.*, 2005). Visitor management strategies such as zoning systems, permit regulations, and seasonal restrictions can reduce disturbance to sensitive wildlife habitats.Technological innovations have improved conservation monitoring and tourism management. Remote sensing, camera traps, geographic information systems (GIS), and artificial intelligence provide valuable data on wildlife populations,

habitat conditions, and visitor movements (Morse, 2023). These tools support evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management approaches.

Stakeholder participation is equally important. Successful wildlife tourism initiatives typically involve collaboration among government agencies, conservation organizations, tourism operators, researchers, and local communities (Morse, 2023). Participatory governance promotes transparency, accountability, and equitable benefit sharing.

Future Directions

The integration of sustainability certification schemes and environmental standards can further improve tourism practices and encourage responsible behavior among tourism operators. In addition, wildlife tourism should be aligned with international conservation frameworks, including the Global Biodiversity Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals (SCBD, 2022).

Future wildlife tourism development should emphasize climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and community empowerment. Conservation planning must incorporate climate adaptation strategies and ecosystem-based approaches to improve resilience against environmental change (Kifworo & Dube, 2024). Emerging technologies and citizen-science programs offer opportunities for improving monitoring and conservation outcomes.

Conclusion

Sustainable wildlife tourism has considerable potential to support biodiversity conservation, environmental education, and socioeconomic development. However, accelerating global conservation challenges require stronger governance, adaptive management, and science-based planning. Climate change, habitat loss, pollution, and biodiversity decline threaten both wildlife populations and tourism-dependent economies. By integrating conservation objectives with community participation and sustainable tourism practices, wildlife tourism can contribute meaningfully to global conservation efforts while providing lasting benefits for future generations.

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Original Article

Challenges And Opportunities of Sustainable Urbanization in Maharashtra: A Study of Pune and Jalgaon Districts

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Abstract

Urbanization has emerged as one of the most significant drivers of economic and social transformation in Maharashtra. While rapid urban growth creates opportunities for employment, infrastructure development, and improved access to public services, it also generates challenges related to environmental degradation, resource depletion, traffic congestion, housing shortages, and increasing socio-economic disparities. The concept of sustainable urbanization seeks to address these concerns by promoting balanced development that integrates economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. This study examines the challenges and opportunities of sustainable urbanization in Maharashtra with special reference to Pune and Jalgaon districts. Pune, as one of the state's fastest-growing metropolitan regions, represents a highly urbanized and industrialized area, whereas Jalgaon reflects the characteristics of a developing urban center with a strong agricultural base. Through a comparative analysis, the study explores patterns of population growth, urban infrastructure, environmental management, economic activities, and the provision of essential public services in both districts. The research highlights that Pune faces challenges such as traffic congestion, air pollution, pressure on water resources, and urban sprawl, despite its strong economic growth and technological advancement. In contrast, Jalgaon encounters issues related to limited urban infrastructure, uneven development, and resource constraints, while possessing significant potential for sustainable growth through planned urban expansion and improved governance. The study identifies effective urban planning, sustainable transportation systems, efficient waste management, green infrastructure, and community participation as key factors for achieving sustainable urbanization. The findings suggest that district-specific strategies, supported by state policies and local governance institutions, are essential for balancing urban growth with environmental conservation and social equity.

Keywords: *Sustainable Urbanization, Sustainable Development, Urban Planning, Pune District, Jalgaon District, Maharashtra, Environmental Sustainability, Urban Governance, Urban Growth, Infrastructure Development, Resource Management, Socio-Economic Development, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Climate Resilience, Inclusive Urbanization, Waste Management, Comparative Study.*

Introduction

Urbanization has become a defining feature of socio-economic transformation in the twenty-first century. Across the world, cities are expanding rapidly due to population growth, industrialization, technological advancement, and increased migration from rural to urban areas. Urban centers act as engines of economic development by generating employment opportunities, improving access to education and healthcare, and fostering innovation. However, the rapid pace of urban growth has also created significant challenges, including environmental degradation, pressure on natural resources, inadequate housing, traffic congestion, waste management issues, and growing social inequalities. These concerns have brought the concept of sustainable urbanization to the forefront of development planning. Sustainable urbanization refers to a process of urban development that balances economic progress, social well-being, and environmental protection. It aims to create cities that are inclusive, resilient, resource-efficient, and capable of meeting the needs of present and future generations. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 11, emphasize the importance of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Consequently, governments and policy-makers across the world are increasingly focusing on strategies that promote sustainable urban growth while minimizing negative environmental and social impacts.

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The study contributes to the broader understanding of sustainable urban development and provides policy recommendations for fostering resilient, inclusive, and environmentally responsible cities in Maharashtra. Maharashtra is one of the most urbanized and economically developed states in India. The state has experienced rapid urban expansion driven by industrialization, service-sector growth, infrastructure development, and increasing population mobility. While major urban centers have contributed significantly to economic growth, they have also faced challenges related to environmental sustainability and urban management. The experiences of different districts within the state vary considerably depending on their level of urbanization, economic structure, and availability of resources.

This study focuses on Pune and Jalgaon districts to examine the challenges and opportunities associated with sustainable urbanization in Maharashtra. Pune represents a highly urbanized district characterized by rapid industrial growth, technological advancement, and expanding urban infrastructure. In contrast, Jalgaon is an emerging urban center with a predominantly agricultural economy and a comparatively moderate pace of urban development. A comparative analysis of these two districts provides valuable insights into how different patterns of urban growth influence sustainable development outcomes.

The study seeks to understand the relationship between urbanization and sustainability by analyzing demographic trends, infrastructure development, environmental concerns, and socio-economic conditions in both districts. It also explores the opportunities for achieving sustainable urban development through effective planning, efficient resource management, environmental conservation, and inclusive governance. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to a better understanding of sustainable urbanization and support policy measures aimed at creating balanced and resilient urban communities in Maharashtra

Literature Review

Urbanization and sustainable development have attracted significant attention among researchers, policy-makers, and international organizations due to their growing importance in shaping contemporary societies. Various studies have examined the relationship between urban growth and sustainability from economic, social, and environmental perspectives. The concept of sustainable development was formally popularized by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), which defined it as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This framework emphasized the integration of economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection in development planning. Several scholars have highlighted that urbanization acts as a catalyst for economic development by creating employment opportunities, improving infrastructure, and enhancing access to public services. However, rapid and unplanned urban expansion often leads to environmental degradation, traffic congestion, inadequate housing, waste management problems, and increasing pressure on natural resources. Studies have shown that the sustainability of urban areas largely depends on effective planning, governance, and resource management. Research on Indian urbanization indicates that cities contribute significantly to national economic growth while simultaneously facing challenges related to population density, pollution, infrastructure deficits, and social inequalities. Scholars have argued that sustainable urban development requires integrated approaches that combine economic development with environmental conservation and social inclusion. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11, has further strengthened the focus on sustainable cities and communities. Studies conducted in Maharashtra reveal substantial regional variations in urban development patterns. Major urban centers such as Pune have experienced rapid industrialization, expansion of information technology industries, and large-scale infrastructure development. Researchers have observed that while these developments have generated economic opportunities, they have also increased challenges related to traffic congestion, air pollution, water scarcity, and urban sprawl. Sustainable urban planning and improved public transportation systems have been identified as important measures for addressing these concerns. On the other hand, research on emerging urban districts such as Jalgaon suggests that urban growth remains closely linked to agricultural activities and regional trade. Scholars have noted that these districts possess significant potential for sustainable development if urban expansion is guided through proper planning and efficient resource utilization. However, limitations in infrastructure, public services, and environmental management continue to pose challenges for long-term sustainability. Existing literature provides valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with urbanization. Nevertheless, comparative studies examining highly urbanized districts and emerging urban centers within Maharashtra remain relatively limited. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by comparing Pune and Jalgaon districts and analyzing how different levels of urbanization influence sustainable development outcomes. Such an analysis can contribute to a better understanding of region-specific urban challenges and support the formulation of more effective and sustainable development policies.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and comparative research design to examine the challenges and opportunities of sustainable urbanization in Maharashtra with special reference to Pune and Jalgaon districts. The study aims to understand the relationship between urbanization and sustainable development by comparing the socio-economic and environmental conditions of the two districts. Nature of the Study The research is primarily based on primary data collected directly from respondents residing in urban areas of Pune and Jalgaon districts. The study also utilizes selected secondary sources to support the analysis and interpretation of findings.

Sources of Data

Primary Data

Primary data constitute the main source of information for this study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to residents of selected urban areas in Pune and Jalgaon districts. The questionnaire included questions related to urban infrastructure, transportation, environmental conditions, waste management, water supply, housing facilities, public services, and awareness regarding sustainable development. Informal discussions and personal interactions with respondents were also conducted to gain deeper insights into local urban issues.

Secondary Data

Secondary information was collected from government reports, Census publications, Maharashtra Economic Survey, research articles, books, journals, municipal records, and other relevant documents related to urbanization and sustainable development.

Sampling Technique

The study employs a simple random sampling method for selecting respondents from the urban population of Pune and Jalgaon districts. Respondents were selected from different age groups, educational backgrounds, occupations, and income categories to ensure diverse representation.

Sample Size

A total of ___ respondents was surveyed, including ___ respondents from Pune district and ___ respondents from Jalgaon district. The sample was selected to capture perceptions and experiences related to urbanization and sustainable development.

Methods of Data Collection

The primary data were collected through:

- Structured Questionnaire
- Personal Interviews
- Direct Observation

These methods helped in obtaining reliable information regarding urban development challenges and sustainability concerns in the selected districts.

Data Analysis

The collected data were classified, tabulated, and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as percentages, tables, and charts. Comparative analysis was employed to identify similarities and differences between Pune and Jalgaon districts in terms of sustainable urbanization. Scope and Limitations of the Study The study is limited to selected urban areas of Pune and Jalgaon districts and focuses mainly on issues related to sustainable urbanization. The findings are based on the responses provided by the selected respondents during the survey period and may not represent the entire population of the two districts.

Empirical Data Analysis

For the empirical analysis, primary data were collected from 100 respondents, including 50 respondents from Pune District and 50 respondents from Jalgaon District. The respondents were asked about urban infrastructure, environmental quality, and sustainable urban development. The collected data were analyzed using percentage distribution and comparative analysis.

EMPIRICAL DATA ANALYSIS

Primary data were collected from 100 respondents (50 from Pune district and 50 from Jalgaon district) through a structured questionnaire.

Table 1: Respondents' Satisfaction with Urban Infrastructure

Level of Satisfaction	Pune District (%)	Jalgaon District (%)
Highly Satisfied	30	18
Satisfied	42	34
Neutral	16	24
Dissatisfied	8	16
Highly Dissatisfied	4	8
Total	**100**	**100**

Interpretation: The data show that a higher proportion of respondents in Pune are satisfied with urban infrastructure as compared to Jalgaon. This indicates better availability of transport, healthcare, education and other civic facilities in Pune district.

Graph 1: Satisfaction with Urban Infrastructure

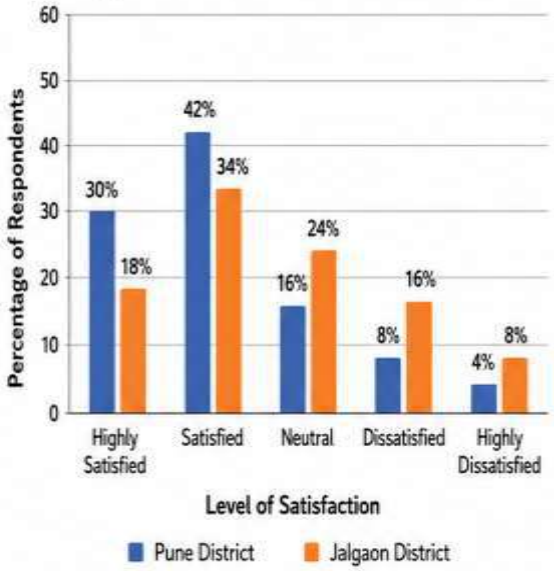
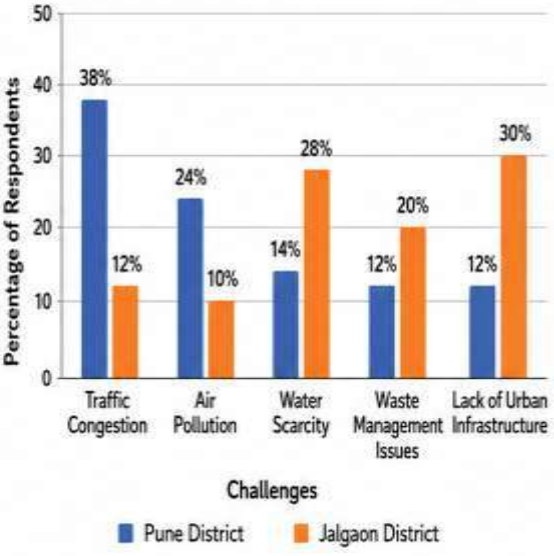


Table 2: Major Challenges of Sustainable Urbanization Identified by Respondents

Challenges	Pune District (%)	Jalgaon District (%)
Traffic Congestion	38	12
Air Pollution	24	10
Water Scarcity	14	28
Waste Management Issues	12	20
Lack of Urban Infrastructure	12	30
Total	**100**	**100**

Interpretation: Traffic congestion and air pollution are the major concerns in Pune due to rapid urbanization and increasing vehicles. In Jalgaon, lack of infrastructure and water scarcity are the main challenges affecting sustainable urban development.

Graph 2: Major Challenges of Sustainable Urbanization



Analysis Summary:

Pune district is more advanced in providing urban infrastructure and services but faces environmental problems like traffic and pollution. Jalgaon district has relatively lower urban pressure but requires focused improvement in infrastructure, water supply and waste management for sustainable urban development.

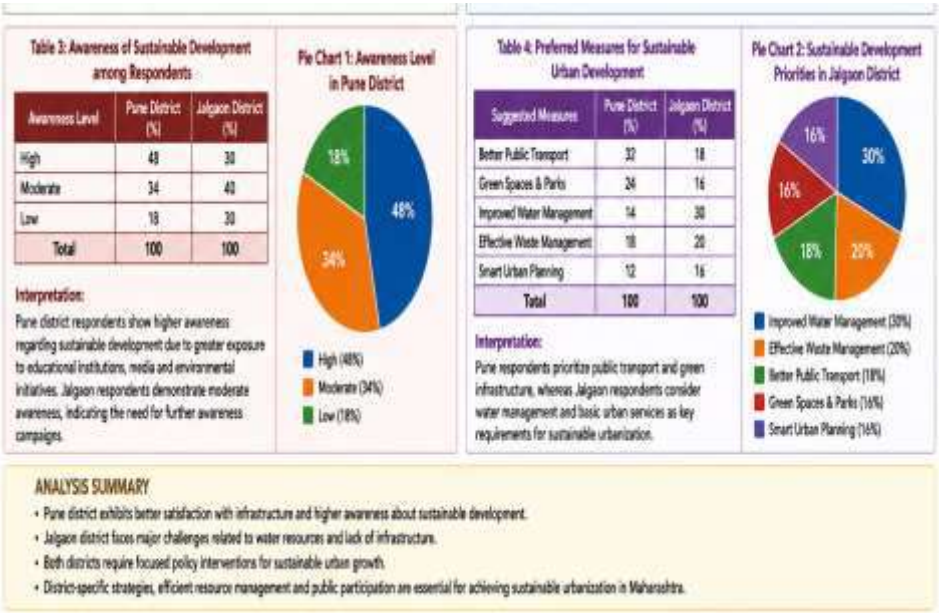
Findings of the Study

The analysis of primary data collected from respondents in Pune and Jalgaon districts reveals significant differences in the level and pattern of urbanization. Pune district demonstrates a relatively higher level of urban infrastructure development, public service availability, and awareness regarding sustainable development practices. A larger proportion of respondents from Pune expressed satisfaction with transportation facilities, educational institutions, healthcare services, and municipal amenities. The study also indicates that rapid urban growth in Pune has resulted in challenges such as traffic congestion, air pollution, and increasing pressure on natural resources. These issues have emerged as major concerns affecting the sustainability of urban development. In contrast, respondents from Jalgaon highlighted challenges related to inadequate infrastructure, water scarcity, and limited urban services. Despite these constraints, the district possesses significant opportunities for sustainable urban expansion through proper planning and efficient resource utilization. The findings further reveal that awareness regarding sustainable development is comparatively higher in Pune than in Jalgaon. However, respondents from both districts emphasized the importance of improved waste management, environmental protection, public participation, and effective urban governance.

Overall, the study confirms that sustainable urbanization requires district-specific strategies that address local challenges while promoting economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

Conclusion

Urbanization has become an important driver of economic and social transformation in Maharashtra. The comparative study of Pune and Jalgaon districts demonstrates that urbanization creates both opportunities and challenges for sustainable development. While Pune has benefited from rapid economic growth, industrial expansion, and improved infrastructure, it faces significant



environmental and urban management challenges. Jalgaon, on the other hand, continues to experience infrastructure constraints and resource-related issues but possesses considerable potential for sustainable urban growth.

The study highlights that sustainable urbanization cannot be achieved solely through economic development. Equal attention must be given to environmental conservation, social equity, efficient resource management, and participatory governance. The findings emphasize the need for localized and context-specific policy interventions that address the unique challenges faced by different urban regions.

Therefore, achieving sustainable urbanization in Maharashtra requires a balanced approach that integrates economic progress, environmental responsibility, and social well-being. Such an approach will contribute to the creation of resilient, inclusive, and sustainable urban communities capable of meeting future development needs.

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Original Article

Water Resource Tourism in Maharashtra: A Comparative Study of Major Lakes and Dams in Maharashtra

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Abstract

Maharashtra possesses a large network of reservoirs and dams that were originally developed for irrigation, hydropower generation, and water supply. Over time, several of these water bodies have evolved into important tourism destinations. This study comparatively evaluates five major water-resource destinations—Koyna Dam, Jayakwadi Dam, Ujani Reservoir, Yeldari Dam, and Bhandardara Lake—to assess their tourism potential, socio-economic contributions, and sustainability concerns. The analysis is based on secondary information obtained from government publications, tourism reports, and scholarly literature. Findings indicate that Bhandardara Lake and Koyna Dam exhibit comparatively stronger tourism potential owing to their scenic landscapes, biodiversity value, and recreational opportunities, whereas Yeldari Dam requires substantial infrastructural support to improve visitor attractiveness. The study highlights the need for integrated planning, environmental safeguards, and community participation to ensure sustainable development of reservoir-based tourism in Maharashtra.

Keywords: Water Resource Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Reservoir Tourism, Dams and Lakes, Ecotourism, Maharashtra, Koyna Dam, Jayakwadi Dam, Bhandardara Lake, Ujani Reservoir, Yeldari Dam, Regional Development, Biodiversity Conservation, Tourism Infrastructure, Community Participation.

Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy, contributing significantly to employment generation, regional development, infrastructure enhancement, and socio-cultural exchange. In recent decades, the concept of tourism has expanded beyond conventional destinations to include nature-based, ecological, and resource-oriented attractions. Among these emerging forms, water resource tourism has gained considerable prominence owing to its ability to integrate recreation, environmental conservation, and sustainable economic development. Lakes, reservoirs, wetlands, and dam sites have increasingly become important tourism assets that attract visitors seeking scenic landscapes, recreational opportunities, biodiversity experiences, and environmental education (UNWTO, 2023). Water resource tourism refers to tourism activities associated with natural and artificial water bodies, including lakes, rivers, reservoirs, dams, wetlands, and coastal ecosystems. Such destinations offer diverse recreational opportunities such as boating, angling, birdwatching, water sports, photography, nature interpretation, and ecotourism. The aesthetic appeal of water landscapes, combined with their ecological and cultural significance, has transformed many water-resource regions into important tourist destinations across the world. Countries such as Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand have successfully integrated reservoir and lake tourism into broader regional development strategies, generating substantial economic and environmental benefits (Hall & Härkönen, 2022). In the Indian context, water bodies have historically played a crucial role in shaping human settlements, agricultural systems, religious traditions, and cultural landscapes. Numerous lakes, reservoirs, and riverfronts across the country have evolved into popular tourism destinations that attract both domestic and international visitors. Water-based tourism has gained increasing policy attention as governments seek to diversify tourism products while promoting sustainable utilization of natural resources.

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The Ministry of Tourism has emphasized the development of nature-based and eco-friendly tourism circuits that incorporate lakes, reservoirs, wetlands, and other aquatic ecosystems as integral components of regional tourism planning (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2024). Maharashtra occupies a distinctive position in India's water-resource landscape owing to its extensive network of dams, reservoirs, lakes, and irrigation projects. The state possesses more than 2,300 dams, representing one of the largest concentrations of water-storage infrastructure in the country. These water bodies were primarily constructed for irrigation, hydroelectric generation, drinking water supply, flood moderation, and drought mitigation. However, many reservoirs have subsequently emerged as attractive tourism destinations because of their scenic surroundings, biodiversity richness, and recreational potential (Government of Maharashtra, Water Resources Department, 2024).

Several major reservoirs in Maharashtra have acquired regional and national tourism significance. The Koyna Dam, one of India's largest hydroelectric projects, is situated amidst the ecologically significant Western Ghats and attracts visitors due to its spectacular natural environment and proximity to wildlife habitats. Jayakwadi Dam, located in the Marathwada region, supports the internationally recognized Nath Sagar Bird Sanctuary and serves as an important destination for avian tourism and environmental education. Ujani Reservoir, Yeldari Dam, and Bhandardara Lake similarly offer opportunities for boating, nature observation, photography, recreational tourism, and local cultural experiences. These destinations demonstrate the growing potential of water resources as catalysts for tourism-led regional development (MTDC, 2024). The economic significance of water resource tourism extends beyond visitor expenditure and recreational activities. Tourism associated with lakes and dams stimulates local entrepreneurship, generates employment opportunities, enhances transportation and hospitality services, and contributes to the diversification of rural economies. Communities residing around reservoir regions increasingly benefit from tourism-related enterprises such as accommodation facilities, food services, guiding activities, handicraft sales, and recreational operations. Consequently, water resource tourism has emerged as an important instrument for promoting inclusive and sustainable regional development (WTTC, 2024). Despite its considerable potential, the development of water resource tourism is accompanied by several environmental and managerial challenges. Unregulated tourism activities can contribute to water pollution, habitat degradation, biodiversity loss, solid waste accumulation, and ecological disturbances. Seasonal fluctuations in reservoir water levels, inadequate tourism infrastructure, insufficient interpretation facilities, and weak stakeholder coordination further constrain the sustainable development of many destinations. The challenge therefore lies in balancing tourism growth with environmental conservation and responsible resource management to ensure long-term sustainability (UNEP, 2023). Against this backdrop, the present study undertakes a comparative assessment of selected major lakes and dams in Maharashtra. By examining their tourism potential, developmental contributions, infrastructure availability, and sustainability concerns, the study seeks to provide insights into the role of water resources as emerging tourism destinations. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism planning and the effective utilization of water-resource assets for regional economic development while preserving ecological integrity for future generations.

Table 1: Water Resource and Tourism Profile of Maharashtra

Indicator	Statistics	Source
Geographical Area of Maharashtra	307,713 km²	Government of Maharashtra (2024)
Number of Major, Medium and Minor Dams	More than 2,350	Water Resources Department, Maharashtra (2024)
Total Live Water Storage Capacity	Approximately 40 BCM (Billion Cubic Metres)	Central Water Commission (2024)
Number of Large Dams	More than 1,845	National Register of Large Dams (2023)
Forest Cover in Maharashtra	61,907 km² (20.13% of geographical area)	Forest Survey of India (2023)
Domestic Tourist Visits in Maharashtra	161.4 million	Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2023)
International Tourist Arrivals in Maharashtra	1.52 million	Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2023)
Important Water Tourism Destinations	Koyna, Jayakwadi, Ujani, Yeldari, Bhandardara	MTDC (2024)
Ramsar Wetland Associated with Reservoir Tourism	Nandur Madhmeshwar Wetland	Ramsar Convention Secretariat (2024)
Major Bird Species Recorded at Jayakwadi Reservoir	More than 200 Species	Bombay Natural History Society (2024)

Source: Compiled from Water Resources Department, Government of Maharashtra (2024); Central Water Commission (2024); Ministry of Tourism (2023); Forest Survey of India (2023); MTDC (2024).

1. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the tourism potential of selected major lakes and dams in Maharashtra.
2. To compare the accessibility, tourism infrastructure, and recreational opportunities available at the selected water-resource destinations.
3. To assess the socio-economic contributions of water resource tourism to regional development and local livelihoods.
4. To identify the environmental and managerial challenges affecting the sustainable development of water-based tourism destinations.
5. To suggest appropriate strategies for promoting sustainable and environmentally responsible tourism around lakes and dam reservoirs in Maharashtra.

Data and Methodology

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature and seeks to evaluate the tourism potential of selected major lakes and dams in Maharashtra. A comparative research approach has been adopted to examine the tourism characteristics, developmental contributions, and sustainability challenges associated with prominent water-resource destinations. Five major reservoirs, namely Jayakwadi Dam, Koyna Dam, Ujani Dam, Yeldari Dam, and Bhandardara Lake, have been selected as case studies owing to their geographical significance, tourism importance, ecological value, and regional representation. The study is primarily based on secondary data collected from various authenticated sources. Relevant information has been obtained from publications of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), Water Resources Department of Maharashtra, Central Water Commission (CWC), Forest Survey of India (FSI), government reports, research journals, conference proceedings, books, and official statistical databases. Recent tourism statistics, infrastructural information, environmental reports, and scholarly literature have been reviewed to ensure the reliability and relevance of the analysis.

For the purpose of comparative assessment, selected tourism indicators such as accessibility, tourism infrastructure, recreational activities, ecological significance, visitor attractiveness, and economic contribution have been examined. Qualitative and quantitative information derived from secondary sources has been systematically organized and interpreted using descriptive statistical techniques, tabular analysis, and comparative evaluation methods. The selected destinations have been compared to identify their relative strengths, tourism opportunities, and developmental constraints. The study further evaluates the environmental and managerial challenges affecting water resource tourism, including ecological degradation, waste management issues, seasonal variations in water availability, and infrastructural deficiencies. Based on the findings, suitable recommendations have been proposed for promoting sustainable tourism development around lakes and dam reservoirs. The adopted methodology facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the role of water resources as emerging tourism destinations and their contribution to sustainable regional development in Maharashtra.

Results and Discussion

4.1 Tourism potential of Major Lakes and Dams in Maharashtra

Water-resource tourism has emerged as an important component of nature-based tourism owing to its ability to combine recreation, environmental appreciation, and regional economic development. The selected water bodies—Jayakwadi Dam, Koyna Dam, Ujani Dam, Yeldari Dam, and Bhandardara Lake—demonstrate varying degrees of tourism development and attractiveness. Their tourism potential is influenced by geographical location, environmental quality, accessibility, biodiversity, recreational opportunities, and supporting infrastructure. Koyna Dam possesses exceptional tourism potential due to its location within the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats, a UNESCO World Heritage region. The reservoir is surrounded by dense forests, mountainous landscapes, and wildlife habitats that attract nature enthusiasts, researchers, and eco-tourists. The scenic beauty of the reservoir and its proximity to the Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary significantly enhance its tourism value (UNESCO, 2023).

Jayakwadi Dam, constructed across the Godavari River in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar district, is distinguished by the presence of the Nath Sagar Bird Sanctuary. The reservoir serves as an important habitat for numerous migratory and resident bird species. Birdwatching, photography, educational tours, and environmental interpretation activities constitute the primary tourism attractions of the area. The ecological significance of the reservoir provides substantial opportunities for the development of sustainable ecotourism (BNHS, 2024). Ujani Reservoir, located on the Bhima River, has emerged as an important recreational and ecological tourism destination. The reservoir supports boating activities and attracts large numbers of migratory birds during winter. The presence of wetland ecosystems enhances its ecological importance and contributes to growing tourism interest among nature lovers and environmental researchers (Central Water Commission, 2024).

Yeldari Dam, situated in the Parbhani region, possesses moderate tourism potential primarily due to its scenic reservoir landscape and religious significance. The reservoir attracts local visitors, pilgrims, and recreational tourists. However, inadequate tourism infrastructure and limited promotional initiatives restrict its capacity to attract larger tourist flows. Bhandardara Lake, located in Ahmednagar district, represents one of Maharashtra's most picturesque water-resource destinations. Surrounded by hills, waterfalls, forests, and trekking routes, the destination attracts domestic tourists throughout the year. Adventure tourism, camping, photography, and leisure activities contribute significantly to its popularity. The natural beauty of the reservoir landscape has established Bhandardara as a major tourism hub in western Maharashtra (MTDC, 2024).

Table 2: Comparative Tourism Characteristics of Selected Lakes and Dams

Destination	Accessibility (20)	Infrastructure (20)	Ecology (20)	Recreation (20)	Scenic Value (20)	Total
Bhandardara	18	16	17	19	20	90
Koyna	16	15	20	17	19	87

The comparative assessment indicates that Koyna Dam and Bhandardara Lake possess the highest tourism potential among the selected destinations, while Yeldari Dam requires substantial infrastructural improvements to enhance its tourism attractiveness.

4.2 Socio Economic Contributions of Water Resource Tourism

Water-resource tourism contributes significantly to regional economic development through employment generation, entrepreneurship promotion, infrastructure expansion, and diversification of rural livelihoods. Tourism activities associated with lakes and reservoirs create both direct and indirect economic opportunities for local communities. The hospitality sector represents one of the most visible beneficiaries of tourism development around reservoirs. Hotels, guest houses, homestays, restaurants, and recreational facilities generate employment opportunities for local residents. At destinations such as Bhandardara and Koyna, tourism has encouraged the establishment of accommodation facilities that cater to increasing visitor demand. This has resulted in additional income sources for rural households and stimulated local economic growth (WTTC, 2024). Water-resource tourism also promotes the development of transportation services. Increased tourist movement generates demand for local transport operators, vehicle rental services, and travel agencies. Improved road connectivity developed for tourism purposes simultaneously benefits local residents by enhancing access to markets, educational institutions, and healthcare facilities.

Another significant contribution of tourism is the promotion of small-scale enterprises. Local communities engage in handicraft production, food services, guiding activities, boating operations, and souvenir sales. Such enterprises support livelihood diversification and reduce dependence on traditional agricultural occupations. In drought-prone regions of Maharashtra, tourism offers supplementary income opportunities that contribute to economic resilience. The educational dimension of water-resource tourism is equally important. Reservoirs and associated ecosystems function as outdoor laboratories for environmental education and scientific research. Students, researchers, and conservation organizations frequently visit destinations such as Jayakwadi and Ujani to study wetland ecology, biodiversity conservation, and water-resource management practices. Furthermore, tourism generates government revenue through entry fees, accommodation taxes, transportation services, and commercial activities. Revenue generated from tourism can be reinvested in environmental conservation, infrastructure development, and destination management. Consequently, water-resource tourism serves as an effective mechanism for integrating environmental sustainability with economic development objectives.

4.3 Environmental and Managerial Challenges

Despite its considerable developmental potential, water-resource tourism is associated with numerous environmental and managerial challenges. If tourism activities are not properly regulated, they can adversely affect ecological integrity and compromise the sustainability of reservoir ecosystems. One of the most significant concerns is environmental pollution. Increasing tourist arrivals often result in the accumulation of plastic waste, food packaging materials, and other non-biodegradable substances. Improper waste disposal practices contribute to water pollution and negatively affect aquatic ecosystems. Reservoirs that serve as sources of drinking water require special protection from tourism-induced contamination (UNEP, 2023).

Biodiversity disturbances constitute another major challenge. Bird sanctuaries and wetland ecosystems associated with reservoirs are particularly sensitive to excessive human activity. Noise pollution, unregulated boating, and overcrowding can disrupt breeding, feeding, and migratory patterns of wildlife species. At destinations such as Jayakwadi and Ujani, ecological conservation must remain a priority in tourism planning. Seasonal fluctuations in reservoir water levels also influence tourism development. Water levels in many reservoirs vary considerably depending on monsoon conditions, irrigation requirements, and climatic variability. Reduced water availability during drought periods can diminish scenic attractiveness and limit recreational activities such as boating and water sports.

Infrastructure deficiencies represent another significant constraint. Several reservoir destinations suffer from inadequate accommodation facilities, poor sanitation infrastructure, insufficient parking areas, limited visitor information services, and weak emergency response mechanisms. Such deficiencies reduce visitor satisfaction and restrict tourism growth. Institutional and managerial challenges further complicate destination development. Tourism management often involves multiple agencies responsible for water resources, forestry, environmental conservation, and tourism promotion. Lack of coordination among these stakeholders may result in fragmented planning and inefficient resource utilization. Effective governance therefore requires integrated planning approaches that balance developmental objectives with environmental conservation requirements. Climate change introduces additional uncertainties. Increasing temperature variability, changing rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events may affect reservoir hydrology, biodiversity, and tourism attractiveness. Sustainable tourism planning must therefore incorporate climate adaptation strategies to enhance destination resilience.

4.4 Strategies for Sustainable Water Resource Tourism Development

The long-term sustainability of water-resource tourism depends upon the adoption of integrated planning approaches that simultaneously address economic, environmental, and social dimensions of development. Sustainable tourism strategies are essential for maximizing benefits while minimizing adverse ecological impacts. Environmental conservation should constitute the foundation of tourism planning. Carrying-capacity assessments should be conducted to determine the number of visitors that reservoir

ecosystems can accommodate without ecological degradation. Sensitive habitats, bird nesting areas, and wetland ecosystems should be protected through zoning regulations and controlled visitor access (IUCN, 2023).

Community participation is equally important for sustainable tourism development. Local residents should be actively involved in tourism planning, decision-making, and benefit-sharing mechanisms. Community-based tourism models can enhance local ownership while ensuring equitable distribution of economic benefits. Infrastructure development should prioritize environmental sustainability. Eco-friendly accommodation facilities, renewable energy systems, solid waste management programs, and wastewater treatment mechanisms should be integrated into destination planning. Such measures can significantly reduce the environmental footprint of tourism activities. Promotion and marketing initiatives should highlight the ecological and educational value of water-resource destinations. Digital marketing platforms, interpretive centers, nature trails, and environmental awareness programs can enhance visitor experiences while fostering conservation ethics. Strengthening institutional coordination is another critical requirement. Collaboration among tourism authorities, water-resource departments, forest agencies, local governments, and community organizations can facilitate integrated destination management. Such coordination is essential for balancing tourism promotion with environmental protection objectives.

Table 3: Overall Ranking of Selected Water-Resource Tourism Destinations

Rank	Destination	Overall Assessment
1	Bhandardara Lake	Excellent
2	Koyna Dam	Excellent
3	Jayakwadi Dam	Very Good
4	Ujani Reservoir	Good
5	Yeldari Dam	Moderate

The comparative analysis demonstrates that Maharashtra possesses substantial opportunities for expanding sustainable water-resource tourism. However, realizing this potential requires strategic investments in infrastructure, environmental conservation, stakeholder participation, and integrated destination management. The successful implementation of these measures can transform lakes and dams into important centers of recreation, ecological education, and regional economic development while ensuring the long-term sustainability of valuable water-resource ecosystems.

Conclusions

Water resource tourism has emerged as an important dimension of sustainable tourism development, offering opportunities for economic growth, environmental awareness, and regional diversification. The present study examined the tourism potential of selected major lakes and dams in Maharashtra, namely Koyna Dam, Jayakwadi Dam, Ujani Reservoir, Yeldari Dam, and Bhandardara Lake. The comparative assessment revealed that these water-resource destinations possess considerable potential for promoting nature-based tourism, ecotourism, recreational activities, environmental education, and community development. The analysis indicates that the selected destinations differ significantly in terms of tourism infrastructure, accessibility, biodiversity value, recreational opportunities, and overall visitor attractiveness. Bhandardara Lake and Koyna Dam emerged as the most promising destinations owing to their exceptional scenic beauty, ecological significance, and diverse tourism offerings. Jayakwadi Dam and Ujani Reservoir also demonstrated substantial tourism potential, particularly in relation to birdwatching, wetland tourism, and environmental interpretation. In contrast, Yeldari Dam, despite possessing attractive natural surroundings, requires infrastructural improvements and strategic promotion to enhance its tourism competitiveness.

The study further highlighted the socio-economic benefits associated with water-resource tourism. Tourism activities around reservoirs contribute to employment generation, local entrepreneurship, infrastructure development, and livelihood diversification, particularly in rural areas. These benefits reinforce the role of tourism as an effective instrument for regional development and community empowerment. However, the findings also underscore several challenges, including environmental degradation, waste management issues, biodiversity disturbances, inadequate tourism infrastructure, and fragmented institutional coordination. If left unaddressed, these challenges may undermine the long-term sustainability of tourism destinations. The future development of water resource tourism in Maharashtra should therefore be guided by principles of sustainability, environmental stewardship, and community participation. Greater emphasis must be placed on ecological conservation, responsible tourism practices, infrastructure modernization, and integrated destination management. Strengthening collaboration among government agencies, local communities, tourism stakeholders, and environmental organizations will be crucial for achieving balanced and sustainable growth.

In conclusion, Maharashtra's lakes and dams represent valuable tourism assets with significant potential to contribute to economic prosperity, environmental conservation, and regional development. Through strategic planning and sustainable management, these water-resource landscapes can evolve into resilient tourism destinations that generate long-term benefits for both present and future generations.

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Original Article

Language, Identity, Cultural Representation

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Abstract

Language, Identity, cultural representation in English language to reshape social boundaries. Navigating history, values and worldviews multi disciplinaray socio linguistic cultural studies. Discourse on linguistic and preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: *Language; Identity; Cultural Representation; Sociolinguistics; Linguistic Identity; Cultural Heritage; Multilingualism; Code-switching; Postcolonial Studies; Indigenous Languages; Globalization; Cultural Diversity; Discourse Analysis; Language Preservation; Digital Communication.*

Introduction

Language is unique, it is more than just set of words, because of its productivity and displacement. The ability to create new sentences and discuss about past, present, future that are not physically present. Language is the backbone of culture. The relationship between language and identity, first understand 'linguistic persona'. This concept posits that a speaker's personality. Linguistic choices are far-reaching, impacting not only individual self-esteem of ethnic groups. The erosion of linguistic diversity acts as a precursor to the homogenization of cultural thought patterns. This phenomenon is particularly visible in urban centers where the pressure to conform to a dominant language often leads to the 'linguistic desertion 'of heritage tongues. Furthermore, the psychological burden of navigating conflicting linguistic identities can result in a state of 'cultural vertigo', where the individual feels unmoored from any singe tradition. It is therefore imperative that educational institutions adopt a more pluralistic approach to language instruction. The role of the researcher is to act as an ally in this process, documenting the rich linguistic diversity that continues to exist in the shadows of global homogeneity. Research in this area suggests that the socio-political implications of linguistic choices are far-reaching, impacting not only individual self-esteem but also the collective resilience of entire ethnic groups.

Identity is not static but a dynamic process of 'becoming 'that is constantly negotiated through discourse. Representation, consequently, acts as the mirror through which these identities are validated or marginalized. In a world

2. Literature Review

2.1 Language and Identity

Language is a central component of identity formation. Sociolinguists argue that linguistic choices—such as dialect, accent, and code-switching—serve as markers of social belonging. For instance, individuals often adopt certain speech patterns to align with or differentiate from social groups. Bilingual and multilingual individuals may shift between languages to navigate different cultural and social contexts, reflecting a dynamic and situational understanding of identity (Norton, 2000).

2.2 Language and Cultural Representation

Language is a repository of cultural knowledge. Through idioms, proverbs, metaphors, and narratives, cultures encode values, norms, and historical experiences. Literature, media, and oral traditions serve as vehicles for cultural representation, allowing communities to assert their identity and resist cultural erasure. The representation of culture through language is particularly crucial for marginalized and minority communities, who use language as a tool for preserving heritage and challenging dominant cultural narratives.

2.3 Postcolonial and Sociopolitical Perspectives

Postcolonial studies highlight the complex relationship between language, identity, and power.

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Colonial languages often impose cultural hierarchies, marginalizing indigenous languages and identities (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986). Language choice in literature, education, and public life can thus serve as a site of resistance, where reclaiming native languages becomes an act of asserting cultural sovereignty.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, combining textual analysis with case studies. Literary texts, media representations, and sociolinguistic surveys were analyzed to explore how language functions as a marker of identity and a medium for cultural representation. The analysis focuses on both Micro level and Macro level collective cultural representation dynamics.

Discussion and Analysis

4.1 Language as a Marker of Identity

Language reflects both personal and social identity. For instance, speakers may consciously choose linguistic features to signal belonging to a particular ethnic, regional, or social group. Code-switching—a common phenomenon among bilingual speakers—demonstrates how individuals negotiate identity in different social spaces. For example, a speaker may use a regional dialect at home while employing a standardized language in professional settings, reflecting dual identity orientations.

4.2 Language in Cultural Representation

Cultural identity is preserved and expressed through linguistic practices. Folklore, literature, and oral storytelling traditions exemplify how language embodies collective memory. For example, the use of metaphors and symbolism in indigenous narratives conveys cultural values and social norms. Media and literature also play a pivotal role in representing and sometimes contesting cultural identity, particularly in postcolonial societies where language choice can signify political and cultural allegiance.

4.3 The Politics of Language

Language is inherently political. Policies regarding language education, official language recognition, and media representation often reinforce or challenge social hierarchies. Minority languages may face marginalization, while dominant languages are valorized. The struggle to preserve endangered languages illustrates the broader socio-political stakes of linguistic identity. Initiatives in revitalizing indigenous languages—through schooling, literature, and digital media—underscore the interdependence of language, identity, and cultural survival.

4.4 Globalization and Digital Communication

In the digital era, language plays an evolving role in identity construction. Social media allows individuals to perform and negotiate identities online, blending local linguistic features with global English or other dominant languages. Digital spaces also provide platforms for cultural representation, enabling marginalized communities to share narratives and assert cultural visibility in a globalized public sphere.

Case Studies

5.1 Indigenous Language Revitalization

Efforts to revitalize indigenous languages, such as Māori in New Zealand or Welsh in the UK, demonstrate how language preservation is linked to cultural identity. These programs highlight the social, educational, and political dimensions of language as a symbol of cultural resilience.

5.2 Postcolonial Literature

Writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Salman Rushdie illustrate how language choice in literature negotiates cultural identity. Achebe's use of English interwoven with Igbo proverbs exemplifies the tension between colonial language and indigenous cultural representation, reflecting the hybrid nature of postcolonial identity.

5.3 Diaspora Communities

Diaspora communities navigate complex linguistic landscapes, often maintaining heritage languages while adopting dominant languages in new environments. This linguistic duality reflects layered identities and influences cultural representation, as seen in multilingual publications, community media, and digital storytelling.

Conclusion

Language, identity, and cultural representation are deeply intertwined. Language serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a medium through which personal and collective identities are expressed and negotiated. It reflects social belonging, encodes cultural knowledge, and acts as a site of political struggle and cultural preservation. Understanding these interconnections provides insight into the ways in which individuals and communities navigate complex social, cultural, and political landscapes.

Future research could further explore the impact of emerging digital communication platforms on language, identity, and cultural representation, particularly in multilingual and diasporic contexts. In a world marked by globalization and cultural hybridity, the study of language remains central to understanding human identity and cultural continuity.

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Original Article

Role of Watershed Development Projects in Promoting Rural and Agri-Tourism Opportunities in Maharashtra: A Sustainable Development Perspective

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Abstract

Watershed development has long been regarded as an effective strategy for conserving soil and water resources, improving agricultural productivity, and enhancing climate resilience, particularly in drought-prone regions. While these programmes have been extensively studied for their environmental and agricultural benefits, their contribution to rural and agri-tourism has received comparatively less scholarly attention. This paper explores how watershed development projects can create favourable environmental, agricultural, and socio-economic conditions that support the growth of rural and agri-tourism in Maharashtra from a sustainable development perspective.The study is based on secondary data obtained from government reports, policy documents, research articles, and publications of national and international organisations concerned with watershed management, tourism, and sustainable development. A descriptive and analytical approach has been adopted to examine the relationship between natural resource conservation, climate-resilient agriculture, and tourism-oriented rural development.The analysis suggests that watershed interventions such as rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, soil conservation, afforestation, farm ponds, and crop diversification improve environmental quality and agricultural sustainability. These improvements create more attractive rural landscapes, strengthen opportunities for farm-based and nature-based tourism, and generate additional avenues for local employment, entrepreneurship, and income diversification. The study further argues that effective coordination among watershed management, agriculture, tourism, and rural development agencies can enhance the long-term socio-economic and environmental outcomes of these initiatives. The findings provide useful policy insights for promoting integrated rural development and support the broader vision of ***Viksit Bharat 2047*** *through sustainable natural resource management and community-based tourism.*

Keywords:Watershed Development; Rural Tourism; Agri-Tourism; Sustainable Development; Climate Resilience

Introduction

Tourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy and plays a significant role in economic development, employment generation, cultural exchange, and regional sustainability. In countries such as India, tourism is increasingly viewed as an important instrument for promoting inclusive growth by creating livelihood opportunities, strengthening local economies, and preserving both natural and cultural heritage. and agri-tourism have attracted growing attention because of changing tourist preferences towards authentic village life, nature-based experiences, traditional farming practices, and local culture. The vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047** further highlights the importance of sustainable and community-centred tourism that balances economic development with environmental conservation (United Nations, 2015; UN Tourism, 2023).In recent years, rural These forms of tourism provide rural communities with opportunities to supplement agricultural income while encouraging the preservation of indigenous knowledge, cultural traditions, and rural landscapes. Agri-tourism, in particular, enables farmers to diversify their livelihoods by combining agricultural activities with tourism services, thereby supporting sustainable farming and rural entrepreneurship (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2022).Maharashtra occupies a prominent position in India with respect to both watershed development initiatives and agri-tourism activities. At the same time, many parts of the state continue to face challenges such as recurrent droughts, erratic rainfall, groundwater depletion, and land degradation, all of which adversely affect agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods. To address these concerns, several programmes, including the **Watershed Development Component of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (WDC–PMKSY)**, **Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyan**, and the **Project on Climate Resilient Agriculture (PoCRA)**,

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have been implemented to improve soil and water conservation, groundwater recharge, climate resilience, and sustainable agricultural development (Government of India, 2021; Government of Maharashtra, 2024).Although these programmes primarily focus on natural resource management, their benefits extend well beyond agriculture. Improved water availability, healthier ecosystems, increased vegetation cover, diversified cropping systems, and aesthetically improved rural landscapes create favourable conditions for the development of rural and agri-tourism. Features such as farm ponds, orchards, horticultural plantations, biodiversity conservation, and community participation enhance the attractiveness of villages for visitors seeking nature-based and farm-based experiences. Consequently, watershed development can also be viewed as an important driver of rural economic diversification rather than merely an environmental intervention.Existing literature has extensively discussed watershed development, sustainable agriculture, and rural tourism as separate areas of research. However, relatively few studies have examined how watershed development initiatives can simultaneously strengthen environmental sustainability, agricultural resilience, and tourism opportunities, particularly in the context of Maharashtra. This gap highlights the need for an integrated assessment that links natural resource management with tourism-led rural development.Against this background, the present study investigates the role of watershed development projects in promoting rural and agri-tourism opportunities in Maharashtra from a sustainable development perspective. Drawing upon secondary data and published literature, the study analyses how watershed interventions influence environmental quality, agricultural sustainability, and socio-economic development, and examines their potential to support tourism-based rural livelihoods. The findings are expected to provide useful insights for policymakers, researchers, and development practitioners working towards integrated rural development in line with the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

Objectives of the Study

The present study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

1. **To examine the role of watershed development projects in promoting sustainable management of natural resources in Maharashtra.**
2. **To analyse the potential of watershed development initiatives in creating opportunities for rural and agri-tourism.**
3. **To assess the socio-economic and environmental benefits of integrating watershed development with tourism-based rural livelihoods.**
4. **To identify the major challenges affecting the promotion of rural and agri-tourism in watershed-developed areas.**
5. **To suggest policy recommendations for strengthening the linkage between watershed development and sustainable tourism in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.**

Data and Methodology

The present study is based on **secondary data** and adopts a **descriptive and analytical research design** to examine the relationship between watershed development and the promotion of rural and agri-tourism in Maharashtra. The study explores how watershed development initiatives contribute to sustainable tourism through improvements in natural resource management, agricultural productivity, environmental conservation, and rural livelihoods.Secondary information has been collected from a wide range of authentic sources, including reports and publications of the Government of India, the Government of Maharashtra, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of Tourism, Project on Climate Resilient Agriculture (PoCRA), the Watershed Development Component of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (WDC–PMKSY), research articles published in peer-reviewed journals, books, conference proceedings, and reports of national and international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Bank, and UN Tourism.The collected information was systematically reviewed, classified, and analysed to understand the direct and indirect impacts of watershed development projects on rural development and tourism opportunities. Particular emphasis was given to identifying the environmental, agricultural, and socio-economic outcomes of watershed interventions that create favourable conditions for rural and agri-tourism. The analysis focused on aspects such as water resource conservation, soil health improvement, groundwater recharge, crop diversification, biodiversity enhancement, landscape improvement, community participation, and rural entrepreneurship.The study is confined to the state of **Maharashtra**, where watershed development programmes have been widely implemented across drought-prone regions. Rather than evaluating the performance of a specific project or district, the paper provides a broader perspective on how watershed development can serve as a foundation for sustainable tourism and diversified rural livelihoods. The findings are interpreted using a qualitative approach by synthesising evidence from published literature and policy documents, thereby offering policy-oriented insights for promoting integrated rural development in the context of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

Results and Discussion

Watershed Development as a Foundation for Sustainable Rural Development

Watershed development has become an important strategy for addressing water scarcity, land degradation, and declining agricultural productivity, particularly in drought-prone regions. In Maharashtra, initiatives such as the **Watershed Development Component of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (WDC–PMKSY)**, **Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyan**, and the **Project on Climate Resilient Agriculture (PoCRA)** have promoted integrated soil and water conservation through interventions including farm ponds, contour bunding, check dams, percolation tanks, afforestation, and rainwater harvesting. Collectively, these measures have improved groundwater recharge, reduced surface runoff, and increased soil moisture, thereby strengthening the natural resource base.The positive effects of these interventions are reflected in agricultural production and rural livelihoods. Better water availability has enabled farmers to expand irrigation, diversify cropping patterns, and adopt horticulture, fodder cultivation, and integrated farming systems. These changes have reduced dependence on uncertain rainfall while improving farm productivity and resilience to climate variability. In addition, the restoration of degraded land and increased vegetation cover have supported biodiversity conservation and improved the ecological condition of rural landscapes.The benefits of watershed development are not limited to environmental improvement alone. Reliable water resources encourage livestock development, generate additional livelihood opportunities, and reduce seasonal migration by improving employment prospects within villages. Equally important is the participatory nature of watershed programmes, where local communities contribute to planning, implementation, and maintenance activities. Such participation strengthens local institutions, promotes collective responsibility for natural resource management, and creates a favourable environment for other rural development initiatives, including tourism-related enterprises.

From a sustainable development perspective, watershed interventions contribute to several **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)**, **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)**, **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**, and **SDG 15 (Life on Land)**. By improving environmental quality, agricultural stability, and community resilience, these

programmes establish a strong foundation for diversified rural development. They also create favourable conditions for expanding rural and agri-tourism through healthier ecosystems, attractive landscapes, and sustainable management of natural resources.

Role of Watershed Development in Promoting Rural and Agri-Tourism Opportunities

Watershed development is generally associated with improving water availability, conserving soil resources, and enhancing agricultural productivity. However, its long-term impact extends beyond these objectives by creating environmental and socio-economic conditions that support the growth of rural and agri-tourism. Successful tourism in rural areas depends not only on natural attractions but also on well-managed landscapes, productive agriculture, community participation, and environmental sustainability. Watershed development strengthens these essential components, making rural areas more attractive and economically viable as tourism destinations.One of the most visible outcomes of watershed interventions is the transformation of rural landscapes. Measures such as afforestation, groundwater recharge, rainwater harvesting, and soil conservation gradually restore degraded environments and improve the overall ecological balance. Increased vegetation, seasonal water bodies, orchards, and well-maintained agricultural fields enhance the visual appeal of villages and create an environment that attracts visitors seeking nature-based and countryside experiences. As demand for peaceful and environmentally rich destinations continues to grow, watershed-developed villages have considerable potential to emerge as attractive rural tourism destinations.Agricultural diversification resulting from improved irrigation further strengthens agri-tourism opportunities. Reliable water resources enable farmers to cultivate fruits, vegetables, flowers, and other high-value crops while adopting integrated and organic farming practices. Such diversified agricultural systems offer visitors opportunities to participate in farm activities, observe sustainable cultivation methods, experience seasonal harvesting, and understand traditional rural lifestyles. These experiences enrich the tourism product while providing farmers with an additional source of income beyond conventional agriculture.The economic benefits of watershed development also create favourable conditions for tourism-related entrepreneurship. Increased agricultural productivity and higher household incomes encourage investment in farm stays, visitor facilities, local food services, handicrafts, recreational activities, and other village-based enterprises. Rather than replacing agriculture, tourism complements existing farming activities by diversifying livelihood opportunities and reducing economic vulnerability in rural communities.Community participation remains another important strength of watershed development programmes. The collective planning and management practices established through watershed institutions can be effectively extended to tourism development. Village tourism committees, women's self-help groups, farmer producer organisations, and youth groups can actively participate in managing tourism activities, improving visitor experiences, and ensuring that economic benefits are distributed more equitably. Such community-based approaches also help preserve local traditions, cultural heritage, and indigenous knowledge, thereby increasing the authenticity of rural tourism experiences.Environmental sustainability has become an important consideration for modern travellers, and watershed-developed villages are well positioned to respond to this growing demand. Improved biodiversity, restored ecosystems, better water resources, and greener surroundings provide opportunities for eco-tourism, bird watching, nature trails, environmental education, and farm learning programmes. These activities not only attract visitors but also encourage greater awareness of sustainable natural resource management among both tourists and local communities.Despite these encouraging opportunities, the tourism potential of many watershed-developed villages in Maharashtra remains insufficiently explored. Most watershed programmes continue to focus primarily on agriculture and natural resource conservation, while tourism receives comparatively little attention during project planning and implementation. Inadequate infrastructure, limited accommodation, poor destination branding, weak digital promotion, and insufficient professional training continue to restrict tourism development in many rural areas.Realising the full potential of watershed-developed villages therefore requires an integrated planning approach. Closer coordination among the departments responsible for watershed development, agriculture, tourism, rural development, and local governance can help create sustainable tourism models that generate employment, encourage local entrepreneurship, reduce rural migration, and conserve natural resources. Such integration can significantly strengthen rural economies while supporting the broader objectives of sustainable development and the national vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.Socio-Economic and Environmental Benefits of Integrating Watershed Development with Rural and Agri-TourismThe integration of watershed development with rural and agri-tourism offers a comprehensive approach to sustainable rural transformation by combining environmental conservation with livelihood enhancement. While watershed programmes primarily aim to improve natural resource management and agricultural productivity, their long-term outcomes also create favourable conditions for tourism-related economic activities. This integrated approach not only strengthens rural economies but also supports environmental sustainability and community well-beingOne of the most significant socio-economic advantages of this integration is the diversification of rural income sources. Agricultural production in drought-prone regions often remains vulnerable to irregular rainfall, climate variability, and market fluctuations. Tourism provides an additional source of income that complements farming rather than replacing it. Farm stays, guided village tours, local cuisine, handicrafts, traditional art, and the sale of agricultural products enable rural households to generate supplementary earnings while reducing their dependence on agriculture alone.The growth of tourism also creates opportunities for rural entrepreneurship and employment. Improved agricultural conditions resulting from watershed interventions encourage investment in tourism-related enterprises such as eco-friendly accommodation, organic food centres, plant nurseries, recreational activities, and village-based hospitality services. As tourism expands, employment opportunities are created not only for farmers but also for local transport providers, artisans, food processors, guides, and small business owners. These linkages contribute to a stronger local economy and help reduce seasonal migration from rural areas.The social benefits of integrating watershed development with tourism are equally important. Community participation, which is a key feature of watershed programmes, provides a strong institutional foundation for managing tourism activities. Women's self-help groups, farmer producer organisations, youth associations, and village committees can actively contribute to tourism planning and service delivery. Such participation promotes inclusive development, strengthens local decision-making, and ensures that tourism benefits are distributed more equitably across the community.An equally valuable outcome is the preservation of rural culture and traditional knowledge. Tourism creates opportunities for visitors to experience local customs, agricultural practices, folk traditions, festivals, indigenous food systems, and village lifestyles. As these cultural assets acquire economic value, local communities become more motivated to preserve their heritage while presenting it to visitors in an authentic manner. In this way, tourism contributes not only to economic development but also to the protection of rural identity and cultural diversity.Environmental sustainability represents another important dimension of this integrated approach. Watershed interventions improve groundwater recharge, reduce soil erosion, increase vegetation cover, and strengthen biodiversity conservation. These ecological improvements create healthier and more attractive rural landscapes that support eco-tourism, nature trails, bird watching, environmental education, and farm learning programmes. At the same time, responsible tourism encourages greater public awareness regarding the importance of conserving natural resources, thereby reinforcing the environmental objectives of watershed development.The integration of watershed development and tourism also contributes directly to several **Sustainable**

Development Goals (SDGs), particularly **SDG 1 (No Poverty)**, **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)**, **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)**, **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)**, **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**, and **SDG 15 (Life on Land)**. By combining environmental conservation, livelihood diversification, and community participation within a single development framework, this approach supports inclusive and resilient rural development.Overall, watershed development and rural tourism complement each other in multiple ways. Healthy ecosystems enhance the attractiveness of rural destinations, while tourism creates economic incentives for conserving natural resources and preserving local culture. This mutually reinforcing relationship has the potential to improve rural livelihoods, strengthen climate resilience, and promote sustainable development across watershed-developed regions of Maharashtra.4.4 Challenges and Policy Recommendations for Sustainable Rural and Agri-Tourism Development Despite the considerable potential of watershed development to promote rural and agri-tourism, several structural, institutional, and operational constraints continue to limit its effective implementation in Maharashtra. Although watershed programmes have improved natural resource management and agricultural sustainability across many rural regions, these achievements have not yet been fully translated into tourism-led rural development. As a result, the tourism potential of many watershed-developed villages remains largely underutilised.One of the most significant challenges is the inadequate availability of tourism infrastructure in rural areas. While many villages possess attractive natural landscapes and rich agricultural resources, they often lack essential facilities such as quality road connectivity, directional signage, sanitation, safe drinking water, accommodation, parking spaces, and visitor information centres. The absence of these basic amenities adversely affects visitor satisfaction and reduces the competitiveness of rural tourism destinations.Limited awareness and technical capacity among local communities represent another important constraint. Watershed programmes generally concentrate on soil and water conservation, agricultural productivity, and climate resilience, whereas tourism planning, hospitality management, digital marketing, and visitor services receive comparatively less attention. Consequently, many farmers and rural entrepreneurs are unable to transform their environmental and agricultural assets into sustainable tourism enterprises.Institutional fragmentation also restricts the successful integration of watershed development with tourism. Activities related to watershed management, agriculture, tourism, forestry, rural development, and local governance are typically implemented by different departments with separate priorities and administrative frameworks. The absence of coordinated planning often results in duplication of efforts, inefficient utilisation of resources, and missed opportunities for integrated rural development.Another major challenge is the limited promotion and branding of rural tourism destinations. Despite possessing considerable tourism potential, many watershed-developed villages remain outside mainstream tourism circuits because of weak digital visibility, inadequate destination marketing, and limited participation in state and national tourism campaigns. In an increasingly digital tourism market, effective branding and online promotion are essential for improving destination visibility and attracting a wider range of visitors.

Environmental sustainability should remain a central consideration while expanding tourism activities. Unplanned tourism development may place additional pressure on water resources, increase waste generation, disturb local ecosystems, and gradually alter the socio-cultural character of rural communities. Therefore, tourism expansion should follow the principles of responsible tourism, environmental conservation, and active community participation to ensure that economic development does not compromise ecological sustainability.Addressing these challenges requires an integrated and forward-looking policy framework. Tourism planning should be incorporated into watershed development strategies from the initial stages of project implementation rather than being considered as a separate activity. Stronger convergence among the Departments of Agriculture, Rural Development, Tourism, Forest, and Panchayati Raj Institutions would facilitate the preparation of comprehensive village tourism plans. Capacity-building programmes focusing on hospitality, entrepreneurship, financial management, digital marketing, and sustainable tourism practices should be organised for farmers, women's self-help groups, and rural youth.In addition, financial incentives and technical assistance should be provided to encourage the establishment of farm stays, eco-friendly accommodation, interpretation centres, organic food outlets, and village-based tourism enterprises. Greater use of official tourism portals, mobile applications, and social media platforms can significantly improve destination visibility. At the same time, environmental safeguards, visitor management guidelines, and community-based monitoring mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure that tourism growth remains environmentally responsible and socially inclusive.Overall, the successful integration of watershed development with rural and agri-tourism depends on achieving an appropriate balance between environmental conservation, infrastructure development, institutional coordination, community participation, and responsible tourism management. Such an integrated approach can diversify rural livelihoods, strengthen climate resilience, promote inclusive economic growth, and contribute meaningfully to the long-term vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

Key Findings and Policy Implications

The major findings of the study indicate that watershed development has the potential to promote rural and agri-tourism by improving natural resources, strengthening agricultural sustainability, enhancing rural livelihoods, and creating opportunities for community-based tourism. The key findings and their policy implications are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Key Findings and Policy Implications of Watershed Development for Rural and Agri-Tourism

Watershed Development Outcomes	Contribution to Rural & Agri-Tourism	Socio-Economic Benefits	Policy Implications
Improved water availability through farm ponds, check dams and groundwater recharge	Creates attractive landscapes and supports year-round farm activities for visitors	Higher agricultural productivity and stable farm income	Strengthen convergence between watershed and tourism development programmes
Soil conservation and land improvement	Enhances scenic beauty and improves the quality of rural tourism destinations	Increased agricultural sustainability and reduced land degradation	Promote eco-friendly land management practices in tourism villages
Crop diversification and horticulture development	Encourages farm visits, fruit picking, organic farming demonstrations and educational tourism	Additional income through agri-tourism activities	Support diversified farming linked with tourism enterprises
Afforestation and biodiversity conservation	Promotes eco-tourism, nature trails, bird watching and environmental education	Conservation of natural resources and biodiversity	Integrate biodiversity conservation into rural tourism planning

Watershed Development Outcomes	Contribution to Rural & Agri-Tourism	Socio-Economic Benefits	Policy Implications
Community participation through watershed institutions	Encourages community-based tourism management and local decision-making	Women's empowerment, youth employment and social inclusion	Strengthen capacity building and participatory governance
Development of rural infrastructure	Improves accessibility and visitor experience	Generates employment in transport, hospitality and local services	Invest in roads, sanitation, accommodation and digital infrastructure
Promotion of local culture and traditional agriculture	Preserves cultural heritage and authentic rural experiences	Supports local artisans, traditional food producers and cultural groups	Encourage heritage conservation and community-based cultural tourism
Integrated watershed and tourism planning	Ensures long-term sustainable tourism development	Diversified rural economy and reduced migration	Develop integrated policies involving Agriculture, Tourism, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Departments

Source: Prepared by the Author based on the analysis of secondary literature and government policy documents.

Conclusion

The present study examined the role of watershed development projects in promoting rural and agri-tourism opportunities in Maharashtra from a sustainable development perspective. The analysis indicates that watershed development extends beyond its traditional role of conserving soil and water resources by creating conditions that support environmental sustainability, agricultural resilience, and diversified rural livelihoods. Improved water availability, enhanced agricultural productivity, restored landscapes, increased vegetation cover, and active community participation collectively strengthen the potential for developing sustainable rural tourism destinations.The findings further suggest that watershed-developed villages possess considerable opportunities for promoting farm tourism, eco-tourism, village tourism, and other nature-based tourism activities. These initiatives not only generate supplementary income for farming households but also encourage rural entrepreneurship, create local employment, strengthen community participation, and contribute to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. As a result, tourism can complement agriculture by providing an additional source of livelihood while improving the overall socio-economic well-being of rural communities.At the same time, the study recognises that several challenges continue to limit the effective integration of watershed development and tourism. Inadequate infrastructure, limited institutional coordination, insufficient community capacity, weak destination marketing, and the absence of integrated planning remain significant barriers to sustainable tourism development in many watershed-developed regions. Addressing these constraints requires coordinated action among the Departments of Agriculture, Rural Development, Tourism, Forest, and local self-government institutions.

Based on the findings, the study argues that watershed development should be viewed not only as a natural resource management programme but also as a strategic approach for promoting sustainable rural economic diversification. Integrating watershed management with tourism planning can strengthen climate resilience, improve rural livelihoods, and encourage environmentally responsible tourism while ensuring the long-term conservation of natural resources. Such an integrated framework can make a meaningful contribution to achieving the broader objectives of **Viksit Bharat 2047** through balanced, inclusive, and sustainable rural development.

The present study is based on secondary data and therefore provides a broad conceptual understanding of the relationship between watershed development and rural and agri-tourism. Future research may extend this work by undertaking field-based empirical investigations in watershed-developed villages to evaluate tourism potential, examine community perceptions, and measure the socio-economic and environmental impacts of tourism at the local level. Such evidence would further strengthen policy formulation and support sustainable rural development initiatives in Maharashtra and other regions with similar agro-climatic conditions.

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Legal Regulation of Ramayana and Krishna Circuits: A Sustainable Development Approach to Religious Tourism in India.

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Abstract

Religious tourism represents one of the most ancient and vital forms of travel, facilitating cultural exchange, spiritual growth, and socio-economic advancement. In India, the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits, established under the Ministry of Tourism's Swadesh Darshan Scheme, aim to enhance pilgrimage sites linked to the lives of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna while safeguarding the nation's rich cultural and spiritual legacy. Despite their considerable religious and economic importance, these circuits face a multitude of legal and regulatory obstacles, such as inadequate heritage preservation, environmental deterioration, infrastructure shortcomings, fragmented institutional governance, and a lack of community involvement. These issues jeopardize the long-term viability of pilgrimage sites and pose a threat to the conservation of their historical and ecological integrity.This paper provides a critical analysis of the legal and policy framework that governs the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits, focusing on sustainable development. It examines constitutional provisions, tourism policies at both central and state levels, laws related to heritage conservation, environmental regulations, and international legal frameworks, notably the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The research assesses the efficacy of government initiatives, including the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, the PRASHAD Scheme, and various tourism development programs, in achieving a balance between religious tourism, environmental protection, cultural preservation, and inclusive economic growth. By referencing judicial decisions, policy documents, and comparative practices from other countries, the paper highlights existing regulatory deficiencies and suggests a comprehensive legal framework that incorporates principles of sustainable tourism, participatory governance, digital management, heritage conservation, and climate resilience. The conclusion drawn is that effective legal oversight of the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits necessitates coordinated governance, enhanced statutory protections, and a focus on community-driven development to ensure that religious tourism fosters sustainable development while safeguarding India's cultural and spiritual heritage for future generations.

Keywords: *Religious Tourism; Ramayana Circuit; Krishna Circuit; Sustainable Development; Heritage Conservation.*

Introduction

Religious tourism is one of the earliest forms of organized human movement, driven by faith, spirituality, cultural identity, and historical traditions. Throughout various civilizations, pilgrimages have not only manifested as acts of religious devotion but have also acted as catalysts for cultural exchange, economic growth, and heritage preservation. In India, where religion plays a pivotal role in societal life, pilgrimage tourism has transformed into a significant contributor to national progress, creating jobs, bolstering local economies, and enhancing cultural diplomacy. Historic pilgrimage sites such as Ayodhya, Mathura, Vrindavan, Dwarka, Chitrakoot, Prayagraj, Varanasi, and Rameswaram continue to draw millions of visitors from both domestic and international backgrounds each year, showcasing India's lasting spiritual heritage.[1]Acknowledging the vast potential of religious tourism, the Government of India launched the Swadesh Darshan Scheme in 2014–15, aimed at developing thematic tourism circuits through comprehensive infrastructure enhancement. Among the key initiatives under this scheme are the Ramayana Circuit and the Krishna Circuit, which aim to link locations associated with the lives of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, thus fostering pilgrimage tourism while also conserving cultural heritage and promoting regional economic growth.[2].

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[1] Ministry of Tourism, *India Tourism Statistics 2024* (Government of India 2024).
[2] Ministry of Tourism, *Swadesh Darshan Scheme: Integrated Development of Theme-Based Tourist Circuits* (Government of India 2015).

These circuits are designed not only as tourism initiatives but also as holistic models for heritage management, infrastructure development, cultural preservation, and sustainable destination planning The Ramayana Circuit includes locations linked to the journey of Lord Rama as described in the Ramayana, such as Ayodhya, Chitrakoot, Prayagraj, Nandigram, Sitamarhi, Rameswaram, Hampi, Nashik, and other culturally significant sites. In a similar vein, the Krishna Circuit connects key pilgrimage sites like Mathura, Vrindavan, Gokul, Govardhan, Barsana, Kurukshetra, Dwarka, and Puri, each of which holds considerable religious, historical, and archaeological importance.Together, these sites embody India's intangible cultural heritage and play a crucial role in domestic pilgrimage tourism, which is one of the largest segments of the nation's tourism sector.[3]Despite significant government funding, the legal framework governing these circuits is disjointed. The areas of heritage conservation, environmental protection, tourism governance, urban planning, transportation, and management of religious institutions are governed by various legislative measures enforced by multiple authorities. As a result, overlapping jurisdictions, inconsistent policy application, and insufficient coordination frequently obstruct sustainable management of these destinations. The rising number of tourists has further exacerbated issues related to environmental degradation, waste management, water scarcity, loss of biodiversity, commercialization of sacred sites, and the strain on historical monuments.[4]Sustainable development has become the fundamental principle for tackling these issues. Following the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, tourism has gained recognition as a vital tool for fostering inclusive economic growth, developing sustainable cities, promoting responsible consumption, preserving cultural heritage, and protecting the environment. The concept of sustainable religious tourism necessitates a careful equilibrium among facilitating pilgrimages, conserving sacred landscapes, engaging local communities, and ensuring ecological sustainability. This equilibrium is particularly crucial in India, where pilgrimage sites often hold remarkable archaeological, historical, ecological, and spiritual significance.The constitutional framework of India offers a robust normative foundation for the sustainable regulation of religious tourism. Articles 25 and 26 ensure the freedom of religion, while Articles 48A and 51A(g) impose responsibilities on both the State and citizens to safeguard the environment. Concurrently, the Directive Principles of State Policy advocate for balanced socio-economic development, which includes the establishment of sustainable tourism infrastructure and the conservation of heritage. Environmental laws, such as the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, further provide legal frameworks for maintaining the ecological integrity of pilgrimage sites. Additionally, heritage conservation laws, particularly the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, support these goals by protecting monuments and archaeological sites located along the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits.International legal frameworks significantly shape India's strategy towards sustainable religious tourism. The UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development collectively urge nations to harmonize tourism development with heritage preservation, environmental sustainability, and community involvement. Comparative analyses from nations such as Japan, Italy, Israel, and Spain further illustrate that cohesive legal regulation markedly improves the sustainability of religious tourism sites.In this context, the present study investigates whether the current legal framework sufficiently governs the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits in alignment with sustainable development principles. It critically assesses constitutional provisions, statutory laws, governmental policies, judicial rulings, and international legal norms to pinpoint regulatory deficiencies and propose reforms aimed at establishing a comprehensive legal framework that fosters religious tourism, safeguards cultural heritage, preserves the environment, and guarantees inclusive socio-economic growth.

Concept of Religious Tourism and Sustainable Development

Religious tourism represents one of the earliest forms of human movement, characterized by travel that is motivated either entirely or partially by faith, spirituality, religious duties, or the aspiration to visit sites of sacred importance.In contrast to traditional tourism, religious tourism includes not only pilgrimage but also cultural, educational, and heritage experiences linked to religious locations, festivals, rituals, and customs. It plays a crucial role in economic development by generating employment, enhancing infrastructure, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting local crafts and traditional livelihoods.However, an influx of tourists can place significant strain on natural resources, historical monuments, public infrastructure, and local communities, thereby necessitating effective legal regulation.[5]The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as a form of tourism that comprehensively considers its present and future economic, social, and environmental impacts while meeting the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities.[6]Consequently, sustainable religious tourism demands a holistic approach that harmonizes the facilitation of pilgrimage with the protection of the environment, preservation of culture, social inclusion, and economic growth. This approach guarantees that sacred sites maintain their spiritual significance while also preserving their ecological and cultural integrity for future generations.The notion of sustainable development achieved worldwide acknowledgment through the World Commission on Environment and Development's report, widely referred to as the Brundtland Report. This report articulated sustainable development as the type of development that fulfils the needs of the present without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own needs.[7] This foundational principle has since become integral to international environmental law and has significantly shaped tourism governance globally.[8]The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identifies tourism as a vital element in promoting sustainable development, as reflected in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8, 11, 12, and 15. SDG 8 advocates for sustainable economic growth and productive employment through tourism; SDG 11 highlights the importance of safeguarding cultural and natural heritage; SDG 12 promotes responsible consumption and sustainable tourism practices; and SDG 15 is dedicated to the conservation of terrestrial ecosystems

[3] Ministry of Tourism, *National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism* (Government of India 2022).
[4] United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), *Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030* (UNWTO 2018).

[5] Dallen J Timothy and Daniel H Olsen, *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys* (Routledge 2006).
[6] United Nations World Tourism Organization, *Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers* (UNWTO 2005).
[7] World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford University Press 1987).
[8] United Nations, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* UNGA Res 70/1 (2015).

and biodiversity.[9] When managed sustainably, religious tourism plays a direct role in achieving these goals by protecting sacred landscapes, fostering responsible visitor behaviour, and creating economic opportunities for local communities.In India, the concept of sustainable religious tourism is supported by various constitutional provisions. Article 21 has been interpreted by the judiciary to encompass the right to a healthy environment. Articles 48A and 51A(g) place corresponding responsibilities on both the State and citizens to safeguard and enhance the environment. Furthermore, Articles 25 and 26 ensure the freedom of religion, allowing individuals to embark on pilgrimages and engage in religious activities, provided they adhere to public order, morality, and health standards. Collectively, these constitutional articles establish a legal framework that seeks to harmonize religious liberties with the imperatives of environmental conservation and the protection of cultural heritage.[10]Additionally, religious tourism functions as a tool for cultural diplomacy and national unity. Pilgrimage routes, such as the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits, link various states and communities, promoting inter-regional collaboration and safeguarding India's intangible cultural heritage. Nevertheless, the rise in commercialization, urban encroachment, waste production, traffic congestion, and the deterioration of sacred rivers and forests has sparked significant concerns about the sustainability of these sites. Therefore, it is essential that legal regulations incorporate tourism planning, environmental management, heritage conservation, disaster preparedness, and community involvement to achieve comprehensive and sustainable governance of these destinations.Consequently, modern sustainable tourism transcends mere infrastructure development. It includes assessments of carrying capacity, evaluations of environmental impact, climate resilience strategies, digital management of visitors, preservation of traditional architecture, accessibility for differently-abled pilgrims, and fair distribution of tourism benefits among local communities. An integrated legal framework of this nature is crucial for maintaining the spiritual, cultural, and ecological importance of India's prominent pilgrimage circuits.

Evolution of Ramayana and Krishna Circuits

India is home to one of the most profound pilgrimage traditions globally, with sacred journeys being a fundamental aspect of its religious and cultural narrative for thousands of years. The epic texts, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, along with the Puranas, detail numerous holy sites linked to the lives of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, many of which have transformed into significant pilgrimage locations over the centuries. These sites historically emerged through a combination of religious practices, temple patronage, royal endorsement, and community involvement, rather than through centralized governmental initiatives.[11]

After gaining independence, tourism policies predominantly aimed at highlighting India's cultural and historical legacy. Although religious tourism represents one of the largest segments of domestic travel, it received relatively little institutional focus until the early twenty-first century. The increasing acknowledgment of pilgrimage tourism as a driver for regional economic growth, infrastructure development, and job creation led the Government of India to develop targeted policies for comprehensive destination enhancement.[12]A notable achievement was the initiation of the Swadesh Darshan Scheme by the Ministry of Tourism during the fiscal year 2014–15. This Scheme aimed at the comprehensive development of theme-based tourism circuits through synchronized investments in infrastructure, visitor amenities, heritage preservation, interpretation centers, sanitation, digital connectivity, and skill enhancement. Among the fifteen identified thematic circuits, the Ramayana Circuit and the Krishna Circuit stand out as two of the most culturally significant projects.[13]The Ramayana Circuit is designed to enhance destinations linked to the life and journey of Lord Rama as depicted in the Valmiki Ramayana and various regional narratives. Key destinations include Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh), Chitrakoot (Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh), Prayagraj, Nandigram, Sitamarhi (Bihar), Buxar, Hampi (Karnataka), Nashik (Maharashtra), Rameswaram (Tamil Nadu), and numerous other sites associated with different episodes of the epic. Furthermore, the circuit extends internationally through the proposed Ramayana International Circuit, which connects locations in Nepal and Sri Lanka traditionally linked to the Ramayana story. This initiative not only enhances cultural diplomacy but also fosters cross-border religious tourism.[14]In a similar vein, the Krishna Circuit emphasizes locations linked to the birth, early years, and later life of Lord Krishna. Key pilgrimage sites encompass Mathura, Vrindavan, Gokul, Govardhan, Barsana, Nandgaon, Kurukshetra, Dwarka, Bet Dwarka, and Puri. Collectively, these locations draw millions of pilgrims annually and embody a distinctive blend of religious importance, architectural legacy, traditional arts, festivals, and vibrant cultural practices.Development initiatives under the Krishna Circuit have prioritized enhancing pilgrimage infrastructure, riverfront development, interpretation centres, parking facilities, sanitation, lighting, and improved amenities for visitors. The Government later launched the National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) to support the Swadesh Darshan Scheme by concentrating on the comprehensive development of significant pilgrimage sites. This program underscores integrated infrastructure, heritage preservation, environmental sustainability, universal accessibility, and an enhanced visitor experience. Together, the Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD initiatives constitute India's most extensive governmental endeavour to formalize religious tourism through strategic infrastructure and sustainable destination management.Recently, the Ministry of Tourism has embraced Swadesh Darshan 2.0, transitioning from a circuit-based approach to a focus on sustainable tourism development cantered around destinations. This updated strategy highlights responsible tourism, community engagement, environmental protection, digital innovations, climate resilience, and destination management plans. This shift mirrors international best practices and aligns India's tourism policy with the Sustainable Development Goals and the tenets of sustainable development.Despite these advancements, considerable challenges persist. Numerous destinations still face inadequate coordination among governmental bodies, inconsistent enforcement of environmental regulations, rampant commercialization, traffic congestion, encroachments, and a lack of effective legal frameworks to safeguard sacred landscapes and intangible cultural heritage. The lack of comprehensive legislation specifically addressing religious tourism has led to a fragmented regulatory environment, with regulations dispersed across various statutes concerning tourism, archaeology, the environment, urban planning, transportation, and local governance.Consequently, the development of the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits illustrates India's shift from traditional pilgrimage paths to legally regulated tourism sites. However,

[9] Ibid

[10] *M.C. Mehta v Union of India* (1987) 1 SCC 395; *Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum v Union of India* (1996) 5 SCC 647.

[11] Diana L Eck, *India: A Sacred Geography* (Harmony Books 2012).

[12] Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, *Swadesh Darshan Scheme: Integrated Development of Theme-Based Tourist Circuits* (2015).

[13] Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, *Annual Report 2023–24* (Government of India 2024).

[14] Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, *PRASHAD Scheme Guidelines* (Government of India 2021).

their long-term viability hinges on the creation of a cohesive legal framework that integrates constitutional principles, environmental sustainability, heritage preservation, community involvement, and responsible tourism management.

Legal Framework Governing Religious Tourism in India

The regulation of religious tourism in India is characterized by a comprehensive yet fragmented legal framework that includes constitutional provisions, central and state legislation, governmental policies, environmental laws, heritage conservation statutes, urban planning regulations, and judicial rulings.In contrast to numerous countries that have established specific legislation for religious tourism, India lacks a singular, all-encompassing statute that governs pilgrimage sites or religious tourism circuits. Governance is instead distributed among various legal instruments overseen by different ministries, such as the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), State Tourism Departments, Urban Local Bodies, and religious endowment authorities. This array of institutions frequently leads to overlapping jurisdictions, inconsistencies in policy, and challenges in implementation.The legal framework that governs the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits aims to fulfil four primary objectives: (i) the promotion of pilgrimage tourism and regional economic development; (ii) the protection and conservation of cultural and religious heritage; (iii) the conservation of the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources; and (iv) the preservation of constitutional values, including religious freedom and public welfare. These objectives are supported by constitutional principles, statutory laws, national tourism policies, and India's commitments under various international conventions related to cultural heritage and sustainable development.[15]

Constitutional Framework

The Constitution of India provides the normative foundation for regulating religious tourism by harmonising the fundamental right to freedom of religion with the State's obligation to protect cultural heritage and the environment.

Freedom of Religion

Articles 25 and 26 ensure that every individual possesses the freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practice, and propagate their religion freely, while being subject to public order, morality, health, and other stipulations outlined in Part III of the Constitution. These provisions provide legal protection for citizens wishing to undertake pilgrimages and visit sacred sites associated with the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits. Nevertheless, these rights are not without limitations. The State is permitted to impose reasonable restrictions to safeguard public safety, protect the environment, manage crowds, and preserve heritage sites.[16]

Article 27 explicitly forbids the imposition of taxes aimed at promoting any specific religion, thereby guaranteeing that governmental support for pilgrimage infrastructure is secular in nature and focused on tourism development, heritage conservation, and public welfare, rather than on religious propagation.

Protection of Cultural Heritage

Article 49 imposes a constitutional obligation upon the State to protect monuments and places of artistic or historic importance declared to be of national importance. Many pilgrimage destinations included within the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits contain ancient temples, archaeological remains, and historically significant monuments protected under this constitutional mandate. The provision serves as the constitutional basis for legislation such as the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.[17]

Environmental Protection

Environmental sustainability forms an essential component of religious tourism governance. Article 48A directs the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife, while Article 51A(g) imposes a corresponding fundamental duty upon every citizen to protect the natural environment. These provisions acquire particular significance in pilgrimage destinations located near rivers, forests, wetlands, and ecologically sensitive areas, including Chitrakoot, Govardhan, Rameswaram, and Dwarka.The Supreme Court has repeatedly interpreted Article 21 to include the right to a clean and healthy environment. Consequently, tourism development projects affecting sacred landscapes must comply with constitutional principles of sustainable development, environmental protection, and intergenerational equity.[18]

Directive Principles of State Policy

The Directive Principles encourage balanced socio-economic development, equitable distribution of resources, public health, and environmental protection. Sustainable religious tourism aligns with these constitutional objectives by promoting inclusive economic growth while preserving cultural and ecological resources for future generations.

National Tourism Policy

Tourism has progressively become a significant tool for national economic advancement, job creation, cultural preservation, and international relations. The Government of India has developed various tourism policies that acknowledge religious tourism as one of the largest segments within the country's tourism sector.The National Tourism Policy aims to establish India as a competitive global tourism destination through the development of sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, heritage preservation, effective destination management, and active community involvement. This policy highlights the importance of responsible tourism, accessibility, public-private collaborations, and environmentally sustainable practices in tourism. Special emphasis is placed on religious tourism, as pilgrimage constitutes a considerable share of domestic travel in India[19].The **National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism (2022)** further integrates the principles of sustainable development into tourism governance. The strategy identifies seven strategic pillars:

- Sustainable destination management;
- Green tourism;
- Digital tourism;

[15] Ministry of Tourism, *National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism* (Government of India 2022).

[16] Constitution of India arts 25–27.

[17] Constitution of India art 49.

[18] *M.C. Mehta v Union of India* (1987) 1 SCC 395; *Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum v Union of India* (1996) 5 SCC 647; *N.D. Jayal v Union of India* (2004) 9 SCC 362.

[19] Ministry of Tourism, *National Tourism Policy* (Draft, Government of India 2022).

- Skills and employment;
- Destination management organisations;
- Promotion of local culture and handicrafts; and
- Tourism resilience and climate adaptation.

These policy initiatives provide the administrative framework within which the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits are developed and managed.

International Legal Framework Governing Religious Tourism

The governance of religious tourism has increasingly garnered international attention due to its significant connection with the preservation of cultural heritage, environmental safeguarding, sustainable development, and the protection of human rights. While there is no universal treaty that specifically regulates religious tourism, various international legal frameworks provide guiding principles for States in formulating sustainable tourism policies. As a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations (UN), and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism, previously known as UNWTO), India has made commitments that shape the legal oversight of pilgrimage sites, including the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits.[20] These frameworks stress the importance of harmonizing tourism growth with heritage conservation, environmental sustainability, community involvement, and intergenerational fairness. International standards advocate for States to implement integrated tourism management strategies that safeguard cultural identity while fostering inclusive economic growth. Such responsibilities are particularly pertinent to India, where pilgrimage sites represent both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

UNESCO Conventions

UNESCO has played a pivotal role in promoting the preservation of cultural heritage through legally significant conventions that directly influence the governance of religious tourism.

UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 1972

The 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage serves as the primary international framework for the preservation of sites that hold Outstanding Universal Value. This Convention mandates that State Parties engage in the identification, conservation, protection, presentation, and transmission of cultural and natural heritage for the benefit of future generations.[21]Numerous Indian religious monuments and pilgrimage sites have been included in the World Heritage List, highlighting the significance of the Convention in promoting sustainable religious tourism. While many locations within the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits have yet to achieve World Heritage status, the conservation principles of authenticity, integrity, and sustainable management outlined in the Convention offer essential guidance for their safeguarding.

The Convention encourages:

- conservation before commercialization;
- scientific heritage management;
- sustainable visitor management;
- community participation; and
- international cooperation.

These principles are directly applicable to pilgrimage destinations experiencing increasing tourist pressure.

UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003

Religious tourism encompasses more than just monuments and temples. It includes rituals, festivals, devotional music, oral traditions, dance, local crafts, and pilgrimage practices, all of which form part of India's intangible cultural heritage.

The 2003 Convention mandates that States protect living traditions through means such as documentation, education, transmission, and active community involvement.[22]

The Ramayana and Krishna traditions encompass numerous intangible heritage elements, including:

- Ram Lila performances;
- Krishna Janmashtami celebrations;
- Ras Lila traditions;
- temple rituals;
- pilgrimage customs;
- devotional music (bhajans and kirtans);
- traditional handicrafts; and
- oral storytelling traditions.

Protection of these living traditions enhances the authenticity and sustainability of religious tourism.

UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011)

Numerous pilgrimage sites, including Mathura, Vrindavan, Ayodhya, Dwarka, and Rameswaram, are ancient urban centres where sacred monuments are integrated with living spaces.

These locations serve as significant religious hubs, blending historical architecture with contemporary habitation.

The Historic Urban Landscape approach advocates integrated planning that combines:

- heritage conservation;

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[20] United Nations World Tourism Organization, *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism* (UNWTO 1999).

[21] UNESCO, *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (adopted 16 November 1972, entered into force 17 December 1975) 1037 UNTS 151.

[22] UNESCO, *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (adopted 17 October 2003, entered into force 20 April 2006) 2368 UNTS 3.

- urban development;
- environmental sustainability;
- economic development; and
- local community participation.

This framework discourages indiscriminate commercialization around sacred heritage sites and encourages culturally sensitive urban planning.

D. Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (1999)

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, adopted by the UN World Tourism Organization, establishes ethical principles for responsible tourism.

It recognizes tourism as a means of promoting:

- mutual cultural understanding;
- respect for religious diversity;
- environmental conservation;
- sustainable development;
- community welfare; and
- protection of cultural heritage.[23]

Although not legally binding, the Code has significantly influenced national tourism policies worldwide, including India's sustainable tourism initiatives.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The **United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, adopted in 2015, recognizes tourism as an important contributor to sustainable economic growth, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation. Religious tourism, when properly regulated, contributes directly to several Sustainable Development Goals.

SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

Target 8.9 encourages States to promote sustainable tourism that creates employment, supports local culture, and strengthens local economies.

Pilgrimage destinations generate livelihood opportunities through:

- hospitality;
- transport;
- handicrafts;
- cultural performances;
- food services; and

local entrepreneurship.

Proper legal regulation ensures equitable distribution of these economic benefits among host communities.

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities

Target 11.4 calls upon States to strengthen efforts to protect cultural and natural heritage.

The Ramayana and Krishna Circuits encompass numerous historic temples, sacred rivers, archaeological remains, and traditional settlements requiring sustainable urban planning, heritage conservation, and responsible tourism management.

SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production

Mass pilgrimage often results in:

- excessive plastic waste;
- water pollution;
- food waste;
- overcrowding; and
- pressure on public infrastructure.

Sustainable tourism policies encourage:

- waste reduction;
- recycling;
- eco-friendly infrastructure;
- renewable energy; and
- responsible visitor behaviour.

SDG 13 – Climate Action

Climate change increasingly threatens pilgrimage destinations through flooding, heat waves, coastal erosion, and biodiversity loss.

Tourism planning should therefore incorporate:

- disaster preparedness;
- climate resilience;
- sustainable transport;
- renewable energy; and
- carbon footprint reduction.

SDG 15 – Life on Land

Several pilgrimage destinations are situated near forests, wetlands, wildlife habitats, and ecologically sensitive regions.

[23] United Nations World Tourism Organization, *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism* (UNWTO 1999).

Legal regulation should ensure:

- biodiversity conservation;
- protection of sacred groves;
- forest conservation; and
- ecological restoration.

Thus, the SDGs provide an internationally recognized framework for integrating environmental sustainability with religious tourism development.[24]

Challenges in the Legal Regulation of Ramayana and Krishna Circuits

Despite significant governmental initiatives, several legal and institutional challenges continue to impede the sustainable development of the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits.

A. Fragmented Legal Framework

India does not possess a unified legal framework specifically dedicated to religious tourism. The current regulations are dispersed among various tourism policies, environmental legislation, archaeological laws, municipal regulations, and state statutes, leading to overlapping jurisdictions and inconsistent enforcement.

Weak Institutional Coordination

Various agencies, such as the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Survey of India, State Governments, municipal authorities, pollution control boards, and temple trusts, share overlapping responsibilities, which frequently results in administrative delays and the duplication of functions.

Environmental Degradation

Rapid urbanization, plastic pollution, traffic congestion, sewage discharge, and encroachment threaten the ecological integrity of pilgrimage destinations such as Mathura, Vrindavan, Chitrakoot, and Rameswaram.

Commercialization of Sacred Spaces

Excessive commercialization around temples frequently undermines the spiritual atmosphere of pilgrimage centres and contributes to unauthorized constructions, unregulated vending, and visual pollution.

Heritage Conservation Issues

Many ancient temples, archaeological remains, and historic structures continue to suffer from inadequate maintenance, insufficient funding, and poor visitor management.

Inadequate Community Participation

Local communities often receive limited economic benefits despite being the custodians of religious traditions and cultural heritage.

Lack of Carrying Capacity Assessment

Many pilgrimage destinations experience overcrowding during festivals without scientific assessment of visitor capacity, resulting in environmental degradation and safety concerns.

Climate Change

Increasing frequency of floods, heatwaves, and coastal erosion threatens numerous pilgrimage destinations, highlighting the need for climate-resilient tourism planning.

Recommendations

To strengthen the legal regulation of the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits, the following reforms are proposed:

1. **Enact a Comprehensive Religious Tourism Act** providing a unified statutory framework for sustainable pilgrimage tourism, integrating environmental protection, heritage conservation, and tourism management.
2. **Establish a National Religious Tourism Authority** to coordinate policy implementation among the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Survey of India, State Governments, local authorities, and religious institutions.
3. **Mandate Destination Management Plans** for every major pilgrimage destination, including carrying-capacity assessments, disaster preparedness, visitor management, and climate adaptation strategies.
4. **Strengthen Heritage Conservation** through increased financial assistance, scientific restoration, digital documentation, and enhanced protection of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
5. **Promote Community Participation** by involving local residents, temple trusts, self-help groups, artisans, and civil society organizations in tourism planning and revenue-sharing mechanisms.
6. **Introduce Sustainable Infrastructure Standards**, including renewable energy, eco-friendly transport, rainwater harvesting, solid waste management, sewage treatment, and green building practices.
7. **Strengthen Environmental Compliance** by making Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) mandatory for major tourism infrastructure projects located in ecologically sensitive pilgrimage destinations.
8. **Utilize Digital Technologies** for crowd management, online pilgrimage registration, smart parking, GIS-based heritage mapping, virtual interpretation centres, and real-time environmental monitoring.
9. **Develop Cross-Border Cooperation** with Nepal and Sri Lanka for the promotion and conservation of the international Ramayana Circuit through bilateral agreements and shared heritage initiatives.
10. **Align National Tourism Policies with UNESCO Guidelines and the Sustainable Development Goals**, ensuring that tourism development promotes cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and inclusive economic growth.

Conclusion

The Ramayana and Krishna Circuits signify much more than mere thematic tourism projects; they encapsulate India's civilizational legacy, spiritual practices, and cultural essence.The effective advancement of these circuits necessitates a legal framework that aligns constitutional assurances of religious freedom with the demands of environmental preservation, heritage safeguarding, and sustainable growth. Although current constitutional provisions, environmental regulations, tourism strategies, and heritage laws offer a robust regulatory base, the lack of a specific legal framework has led to disjointed governance and inconsistent execution.International legal frameworks, especially the UNESCO Conventions and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, provide essential normative direction for merging pilgrimage tourism with sustainable development. These

[24] United Nations, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* UNGA Res 70/1 (25 September 2015).

guidelines highlight the necessity of preserving both tangible and intangible heritage, encouraging community involvement, ensuring environmental responsibility, and promoting ethical tourism practices.The establishment of a thorough legal framework governing religious tourism, bolstered by coordinated institutional structures and community-focused governance, would greatly improve the sustainability of the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits. Such a framework would not only protect India's sacred sites and cultural heritage but also guarantee that religious tourism plays a significant role in economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability. In this way, the Ramayana and Krishna Circuits can serve as exemplary instances of sustainable religious tourism, illustrating how faith, law, heritage, and development can coexist in harmony for the benefit of both current and future generations.

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Original Article

Study On Rise of Gig Economy in India - Why Freelancing Is Dominating the Employment Landscape

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Abstract

The employment structure in India has undergone a remarkable transformation over the last decade due to rapid technological advancement, globalization, and changing work preferences. One of the most significant developments in this transformation is the rise of the gig economy, which has emerged as a major alternative to traditional full-time employment. The gig economy refers to a labor market characterized by short-term contracts, freelance work, independent projects, and platform-based jobs instead of permanent employment relationships. In India, freelancing and gig work have gained substantial popularity among youth, skilled professionals, students, and even experienced employees seeking flexible work arrangements. This research paper aims to study the growth of the gig economy in India and examine the reasons why freelancing is increasingly dominating the employment landscape.The expansion of digital platforms and internet accessibility has played a major role in encouraging freelance employment across the country. Online platforms such as freelancing websites, ride-sharing applications, food delivery services, online tutoring platforms, and digital marketing networks have created numerous opportunities for individuals to work independently. Sectors such as information technology, graphic design, content writing, software development, education, consulting, transportation, and media have witnessed rapid growth in freelance participation. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this trend by changing organizational work cultures and increasing the acceptance of remote working models. As companies adapted to work-from-home systems, businesses realized the benefits of hiring freelancers and contract-based workers to reduce operational costs and improve workforce flexibility.One of the primary reasons for the rise of freelancing in India is the flexibility it provides to workers. Unlike traditional employment, gig work allows individuals to choose their working hours, select projects according to their interests and skills, and work from any location. This flexibility has become highly attractive to younger generations who prioritize work-life balance, independence, and career freedom. Additionally, freelancing enables individuals to earn income from multiple sources simultaneously, thereby increasing financial opportunities. Many professionals are also turning to freelancing as a secondary source of income due to economic uncertainties and rising living expenses.From the perspective of employers, the gig economy offers several advantages. Organizations can hire skilled workers on a project basis without the long-term obligations associated with permanent employment. This reduces recruitment costs, employee benefits expenses, office infrastructure costs, and training investments. Companies also gain access to a larger talent pool beyond geographical boundaries, allowing them to hire specialized professionals for specific tasks. Start-ups and small businesses, in particular, benefit greatly from freelance hiring as it allows them to operate efficiently with limited financial resources.Despite its rapid growth and benefits, the gig economy also presents several challenges and concerns. One of the major issues faced by gig workers is the lack of job security and employment stability. Unlike traditional employees, freelancers often do not receive fixed salaries, paid leave, health insurance, pension schemes, or other social security benefits. Income uncertainty and irregular work opportunities can create financial instability for workers. Furthermore, intense competition in online platforms sometimes leads to low wages and exploitation of labor. Many gig workers also face difficulties related to delayed payments, lack of legal protection, and absence of career growth opportunities.The research paper also examines the role of government policies and labor regulations in shaping the future of the gig economy in India. The Indian government has recognized the growing significance of gig and platform workers in the labor market. Recent labor reforms and policy discussions have focused on providing social security measures, insurance coverage, and legal recognition to gig workers. However, effective implementation remains a challenge due to the unorganized and rapidly evolving nature of freelance employment.

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Therefore, there is a strong need for comprehensive labour laws and welfare mechanisms to ensure fair treatment, income protection, and sustainable working conditions for gig workers.The study is primarily based on secondary data collected from government publications, industry reports, academic journals, surveys, and online research articles. The findings indicate that India is becoming one of the fastest-growing freelance markets in the world due to its large young population, increasing digital literacy, expanding start-up ecosystem, and growing demand for flexible work arrangements. Freelancing is no longer viewed merely as a temporary or side employment option; instead, it is gradually becoming a mainstream career choice for millions of Indians.In conclusion, the rise of the gig economy has significantly reshaped the Indian employment landscape by creating new economic opportunities and transforming conventional work patterns. Freelancing has emerged as a dominant employment model because of its flexibility, accessibility, technological support, and changing workforce preferences. However, the long-term success and sustainability of the gig economy will depend on the establishment of effective policies, worker protections, skill development initiatives, and balanced regulations that support both businesses and workers. The study highlights the importance of understanding the evolving dynamics of the gig economy and its impact on India's economic growth, labor market, and future of work.

***Key Words**: Gig Economy, Flexibility, Short-term Engagements, Platform dependency, Independence, Outcome based work, Work Life balanced, Skilled based economy*

Introduction:

Gig economy is defined by its focus on workforce participation and income generation via "gigs", single projects or tasks for which a worker is hired. Gig Workers are independent contractors, online platform workers, contract firm workers, on-call workers and temporary workers. Gig workers enter into formal agreements with on- demand companies to provide services to the company's clients. Gig workers have high levels of flexibility, autonomy, task variety and complexity. Facility Management is a professional management discipline focused on the efficient and effective delivery of logistics and other support services related to real property, it encompasses multiple disciplines to ensure functionality, comfort, safety and efficiency of the built environment by integrating people, place, process and technology. Many factors go into a desirable job, and the best employers focus on the aspects of work that are most attractive to today's increasingly competitive and fluid labor force. Traditional workers have long term employer employee relationship in which the worker is paid by the hour or year, earning a wage or salary. Outside of that arrangement, work tends to be temporary or project-based workers are hired to complete a particular task or for certain period of time. Coordination of jobs through an on-demand company reduces entry and operating costs for providers and allows workers' participation to be more transitory in gig markets.The gig economy refers to a labor market characterized by short-term, flexible, and freelance work arrangements instead of traditional full-time employment. The term "gig" originates from the music industry, where performers were hired for short-term engagements. In the modern context, it encompasses a wide range of jobs, including freelancing, contract work, part-time roles, and platform-based employment.In recent years, the gig economy has gained significant traction globally, and India has emerged as one of the fastest-growing markets for gig work. This transformation is primarily driven by technological advancements, digital platforms, and changing work preferences among individuals and organizations. The rise of the gig economy is fundamentally reshaping how work is structured, performed, and valued.Traditionally, employment in India was dominated by permanent, long-term jobs offering job security, fixed income, and social benefits such as provident fund, gratuity, and pensions. However, with the liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s and the rapid growth of the service and IT sectors, the nature of employment began to change.The 21st century has witnessed a shift toward more flexible work arrangements. Organizations are increasingly adopting cost-effective and scalable workforce models, while employees are seeking autonomy and better work-life balance. The emergence of the gig economy represents a continuation of this transition from stability-oriented employment to flexibility-oriented work structures. India's gig economy has witnessed rapid expansion in recent years due to multiple factors: Digital Transformation: Increased internet penetration and smartphone usage have enabled access to gig platforms. Platform-Based Businesses: Companies like Uber, Swiggy, Zomato, and Upwork have created vast employment opportunities. Demographic Advantage: India has a young and tech-savvy workforce willing to explore non-traditional careers. Pandemic Impact: The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated remote work and freelancing trends. The gig workforce in India is expected to grow significantly in the coming years, contributing to both employment generation and economic development. Freelancing is a key component of the gig economy, where individuals offer their skills and services independently to multiple clients without being tied to a single employer. Freelancers work across various domains such as content writing, graphic design, software development, digital marketing, consulting, and more.Unlike traditional employment, freelancing provides greater autonomy and flexibility. Freelancers can choose projects based on their interests, set their own schedules, and work from any location. This independence is one of the primary reasons for the increasing popularity of freelancing in India. Despite its benefits, the gig economy also presents several challenges: Job Insecurity: Lack of stable employment and long-term contracts. Irregular Income: Earnings are not fixed and may fluctuate. Lack of Social Security: No benefits such as insurance, pension, or paid leave. Work Stress: Pressure to continuously find new work opportunities. Regulatory Gaps: Limited legal protection for gig workers. These issues highlight the need for effective policies and frameworks to ensure fair working conditions.The rise of freelancing is gradually transforming traditional employment patterns. Many individuals are shifting from full-time jobs to freelance careers, while organizations are reducing dependency on permanent employees. This shift has both positive and negative implications: Positive Impact: Increased employment opportunities, flexibility, and innovation. Negative Impact: Reduced job security and weakening of traditional employer-employee relationships The future of work is likely to be a hybrid model, combining elements of both traditional and gig employment.

Literature Review:

The growth of the gig economy at the local and state level in India has been widely studied by researchers, policymakers, and institutions, highlighting its increasing importance in shaping regional employment patterns. This study observes the following researchers for reference, Dr. R. Bhagyalakshmi & Gowthami S. (2025) The study focuses on Chennai city (Tamil Nadu) and examines the experiences of freelance workers in urban areas. It highlights that freelancing has gained popularity due to flexibility, autonomy, and digital connectivity. Workers from sectors like IT, digital marketing, and consulting are increasingly choosing freelance work over traditional employment. J. Suresh Kumar & Dr. D. Shobana (2024) The study concludes that freelancing is dominating because it provides: Easy entry without high qualifications, Flexible working hours. Income opportunities in both rural and urban regions It also highlights that digital platforms have reduced geographical barriers, enabling workers from smaller towns to access global freelance markets. Sapna Shekhawat & Dr. Swati Saxena (2024) It finds that freelancing attracts workers due to freedom and independence, but also brings stress due to job insecurity. Zaker Ul Oman & Kanak Bhati (2025) This recent study highlights the transformation of India's labor market at both national and regional levels. It states that freelancing is dominating because of: Technological advancement (apps & platforms) Changing worker preferences (flexibility over stability) Cost-efficiency for companies. The research also notes that gig work is expanding across sectors like delivery, transport, and digital services, making it a mainstream employment option. Vedant Choudhary & Shambhulinganand S. Shireshi (2022) This study discusses the working

conditions of gig workers across Indian states and highlights that gig work has increased due to demand for flexible labor. However, it also raises concerns about lack of labor protection and worker rights. Kumar & Kumar (2021) studied about working in the informal sector or in low-paying employment is associated with less access to formal social protection measures, lower incomes overall and increased reliance on negative coping strategies in case of financial shocks. Surie, (2020), studied on how to provide an overview of the literature on platform workers finances, in terms of income from platform work, the types of savings instruments used, and the social protection measures accessed.Gad Allon, Maxime C. Cohen, Wichinpong Park Sinchaisri (2018) studied on the topic. The Impact of Behavioral and Economic Drivers on Gig Economy Workers. The study was done to find out the motivation factor that makes the gig workers to take decisions regarding the labor. Joshua Healy, Daniel Nicholson, Andreas Pekarek (2017) studied on the topic Should we take the gig economy seriously? The study focus on how gig economy has emerged rapidly as a form of service delivery that challenges existing business models, labour - management practices, and regulations. The ways in which platform companies transact with workers, in particular, has created a burgeoning public interest, but has yet to give rise to a corresponding academic literature. In this paper, further it studies whether the gig economy deserves to be a subject of employment relations scholarship, given its current dimensions and likely future. Gerald Friedman (2014) studied on Workers without employers: shadow corporations and the rise of the gig economy to find out whether the rising trend towards Gig economy workers encourages a more approach towards entrepreneurial Action on to reduce the cost of labor. Morduch & Schneider (2017) found as with other segments of the informal economy, there is a need for platform workers to have access to suitable savings instruments. The volatility and unpredictability of income from gig work may limit workers ability to plan their savings. Mark R.Gleim, Catherine M.Johnson, Stephanie J.Lawson (2019) studied about Sharers and sellers: A multi-group examination of gig economy workers' perceptions. The study was done to find out the various perceptions of Gig economy workers. Sarah Kaine, Emmanuel Josserand (2019) studied about The organization and experience of work in the gig economy. The study is done to analyze aspects such as job quality, forms of collectivity, identity development, and algorithmic management and control.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the concept and growth of the gig economy in India.
2. To identify the key factors driving the rise of freelancing among the workforce.
3. To examine the advantages of freelancing for both employees and employers.
4. To evaluate the impact of freelancing on traditional employment patterns. **Research Methodology:**

Research Design: A descriptive research design, and Convenience sampling method was used in study.
Methods of Data collection : The present study is based on Primary Data a structured Questionnaire given was given to respondents
Sample Size: 102 respondents
Sampling Frame :Online freelancing platform, social media networks, Colleges and professional contacts.
Statistical tools used: Percentage analysis, Tabulation, Graphical representation.

Data Analysis

Age Group

Table 1 Percentage of respondents in given age group

Age Group (years)	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 20 years	18	17.6%
21 to 25 years	28	27.5%
26 to 30 years	21	20.6%
31 to 40 years	26	25.5%
Above 40 years	9	8.8%
TOTAL	102	100%

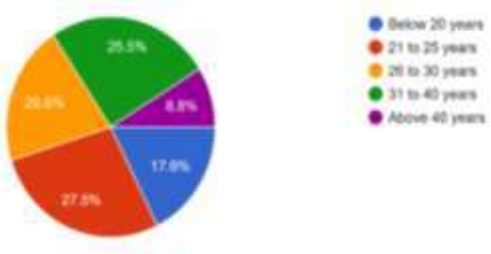


Fig 1 Percentage Distribution of respondents by age group in Gig Economy Study

Interpretation:

The above table shows the age-wise distribution of respondents regarding the rise of the gig economy in India. Out of 102 respondents, the highest percentage (27.5%) belongs to the 21–25 years age group, followed by 31–40 years (25.5%). This indicates that freelancing is more popular among young and middle-aged individuals due to flexibility and better career opportunities. The lowest percentage (8.8%) is from respondents above 40 years, showing comparatively lower participation in gig and freelance work.

Gender

Table 2 Percentage of respondents as per gender

Gender	No. of Responses	Percentage
Male	37	36.3%
Female	65	63.7%

Total	102	100%

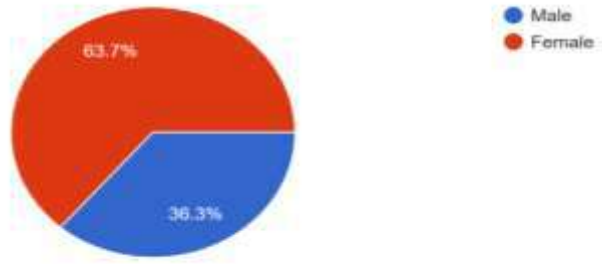


Fig 2 Percentage Distribution of respondents as per gender in Gig Economy Study

Interpretation:

The above table shows the gender-wise distribution of respondents in the study. Out of 102 respondents, 65 respondents (63.7%) are female and 37 respondents (36.3%) are male. This indicates that female participation in the study is higher compared to male respondents. The data reflects that women are actively involved and interested in freelancing and gig economy opportunities due to flexibility, work-life balance, and independent earning opportunities.

3. Occupation

Table 3 Percentage of respondents as per Occupation

Occupation	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Student	**22**	**21.6 %**
Employed	**13**	**12.7 %**
Freelancer	**29**	**28.4 %**
Self Employed	**26**	**25.5 %**
Other	**12**	**11.8 %**
TOTAL	**102**	**100%**

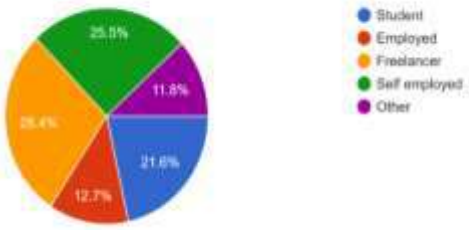


Fig 3 Percentage Distribution of respondents as per occupation in Gig Economy Study

Interpretation:

The above figure shows the occupation-wise distribution of respondents in the study. The highest percentage of respondents are freelancers (28.4%), followed by self-employed individuals (25.5%) and students (21.6%). Employed respondents account for 12.7%, while others constitute 11.8% of the total respondents. The data indicates that freelancing and self-employment are becoming popular career choices due to flexibility, independent working opportunities, and increased digital employment options in India.

Growth of Gig Economy in India

Table 4 Percentage of respondents which indicates growth of gig economy

Rating Scale	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very Low (1)	**22**	**21.6%**
Low (2)	**18**	**17.6%**
Moderate (3)	**21**	**20.6%**
High (4)	**23**	**22.5%**
Very High (5)	**18**	**17.6%**
TOTAL	**102**	**100%**

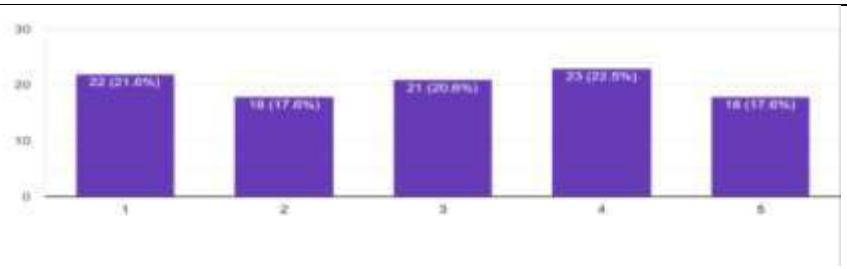


Fig 4 Respondents opinion on Growth of Freelancing in India

Interpretation:

The above table and figure show the responses of respondents based on a five-point rating scale. The highest number of respondents selected high rating with 23 respondents (22.5%), followed by very low rating option with 22 respondents (21.6%) and moderate rating with 21 respondents (20.6%). Low Rating and Very high rating options were selected by 18 respondents each (17.6%). The data indicates that respondents have varied opinions regarding the rise of freelancing and the gig economy in India, with a slightly higher inclination toward positive responses.

5. Association of different sectors with Gig Work in India

Table 5 Sectors Associated with Gig Work

Sectors	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
IT/ Software	**29**	**29%**
Delivery Services	**44**	**44%**
Ride sharing	**57**	**57%**
Content creation	**65**	**65%**
Others	**50**	**50%**

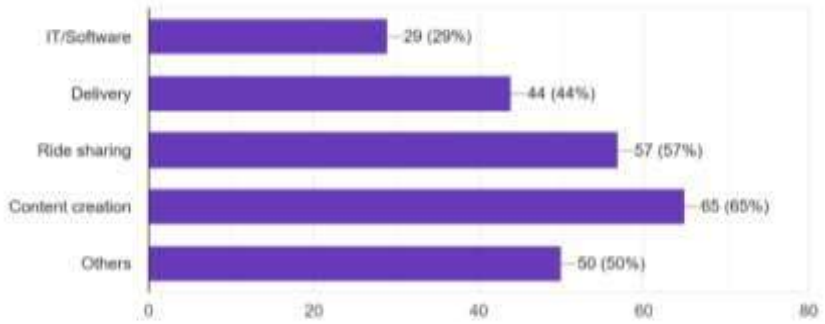


Fig 5 Respondents Association of Different Sectors with Gig Work

Interpretation

The data shows that respondents mainly associate gig work with content creation (65%) and ride-sharing services (57%), indicating that these sectors are widely recognized as important parts of the gig economy in India. Other sectors (50%) and delivery services (44%) are also strongly connected with gig work due to the increasing use of digital platforms and app-based employment. In comparison, IT and software services (29%) received a lower percentage, though they still contribute significantly to freelancing opportunities. Overall, the findings highlight that platform-based and digital service sectors are playing a major role in the rapid growth of the gig economy in India.

Motivational factors behind the rise of freelancing in India

Table 6 Factors Motivating individuals to choose freelancing in India

Factors	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Flexibility	**77**	**75.5%**
Work Life balance	**56**	**54.9%**
Higher Income	**96**	**94.1 %**
Independence	**83**	**81.4%**
Lack of Job	**59**	**57.8%**

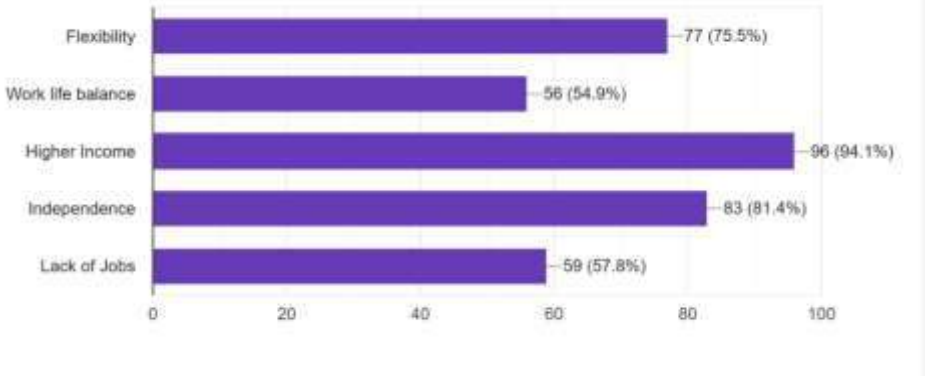


Fig 6 Factors Motivating individuals to choose freelancing in India

Interpretation

The above data highlights the major reasons behind the rapid rise of the gig economy and the growing dominance of freelancing in India. The majority of respondents (94.1%) stated that higher income is the main reason for choosing freelancing, showing that people view gig work as a better earning opportunity compared to traditional employment. Independence was selected by 81.4% respondents, indicating that many individuals prefer freedom in decision-making and working style. Flexibility was another important factor, chosen by 75.5% respondents, reflecting the increasing demand for flexible work schedules in modern employment.Further, 57.8% respondents reported lack of job opportunities as a reason for entering freelancing, suggesting that the gig economy is also becoming an alternative source of employment in India. Around 54.9% respondents preferred freelancing for better work-life balance. Overall, the findings indicate that financial benefits, flexibility, independence, and changing employment patterns are the key factors driving the expansion of freelancing and the gig economy in India

7. Preference for Freelancing Over Full Time Jobs

Table 7 Respondents Preference for Freelancing

Preference	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	47	46.1%
No	23	22.5%
Depends	32	31.4%
Total	102	100%

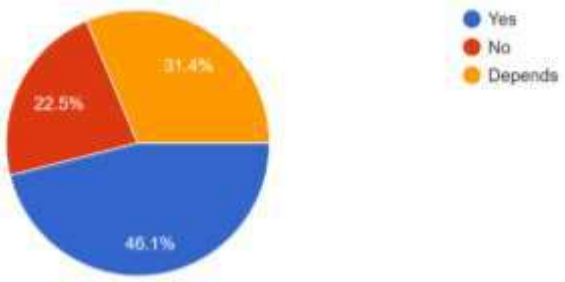


Fig 7 Preferences for freelancing over full time employment

Interpretation

The data shows that 46.1% of respondents prefer freelancing over a full-time job, indicating the growing attraction towards flexible work opportunities in India's gig economy. Around 31.4% respondents stated that their preference depends on factors such as income, job stability, and work conditions. Meanwhile, 22.5% respondents do not prefer freelancing, mainly due to concerns related to job security and irregular income. Overall, the findings suggest that freelancing is becoming a popular employment choice, contributing significantly to the rise of the gig economy in India.

8. Factors For choosing freelancing in India

Table 8 Factors for choosing freelancing in India

Factors	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Flexible Schedule	29	28.4%
Multiple Income Sources	23	22.5%
Work From Home	24	23.5 %
Skill Development	26	25.5%
TOTAL	102	100%

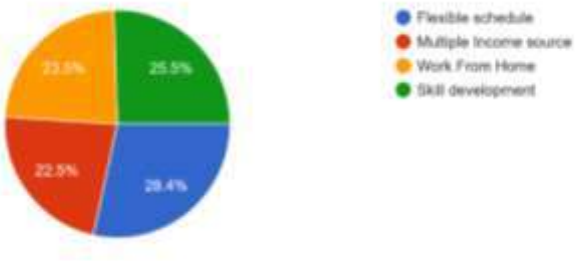


Fig 8 Factors for choosing freelancing in India

Interpretation

The data shows that flexible schedule (28.4%) is the major factor attracting individuals towards freelancing, as it allows better control over working hours. Work from home (23.5%) and multiple income sources (22.5%) also motivate people to join the gig economy due to convenience and additional earnings. Further, 25.5% respondents prefer freelancing for skill development opportunities. Overall, the findings indicate that flexibility, career growth, and earning opportunities are key reasons behind the rise of freelancing in India.

9. Organizational Benefits

Table 9 Reasons for Organizational preference towards freelancers

Factors	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Cost Reduction	29	28.7%
Access to Skilled Talent	21	20.8%
Flexibility	27	26.7%
Faster Work Completion	24	23.8%
TOTAL	102	100%

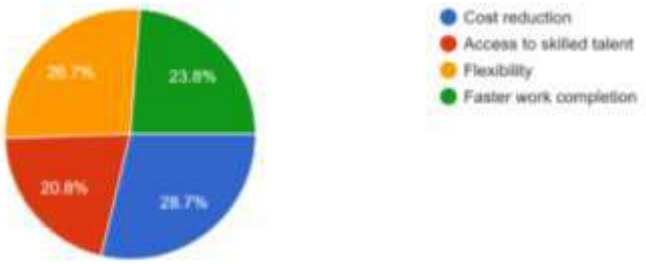


Fig 9 Organizational Reasons for adopting freelancing in India

Interpretation

The data indicates that cost reduction (28.7%) is the major reason organizations prefer freelancers, as it helps businesses reduce operational and employee-related expenses. Flexibility (26.7%) is another important factor, allowing companies to hire workers according to project needs. Faster work completion (23.8%) and access to skilled talent (20.8%) also contribute to the growing demand for freelancers. Overall, these factors show that businesses are increasingly adopting freelancing, which is driving the rapid rise of the gig economy in India.

10. Challenges faced by freelancers

Table 10 Major challenges faced by freelancers in India

Challenges	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Job Insecurity	11	10.8%
Irregular Income	33	32.4%
No Social Security	45	44.1%
Work stress	13	12.7%
TOTAL	102	100%



Fig 10 Challenges faced by freelancers in India

Interpretation

The data shows that lack of social security (44.1%) is the biggest challenge faced by freelancers in India, as they do not receive benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, or retirement security. Irregular income (32.4%) is another major issue because freelance earnings are uncertain and vary from project to project. Work stress (12.7%) also affects freelancers due to workload pressure and deadlines, while job insecurity (10.8%) reflects the absence of stable long-term employment. Overall, these challenges highlight that although freelancing is growing rapidly in India's gig economy, concerns related to financial stability and employee benefits still remain significant.

11. Job Security in Freelancing

Table 11 Level of Job Security in Freelancing

Levels	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very Low (1)	40	39.2%
Low (2)	13	12.7%
Moderate (3)	23	22.5%
High (4)	4	3.9%
Very High (5)	22	21.6%
TOTAL	102	100%

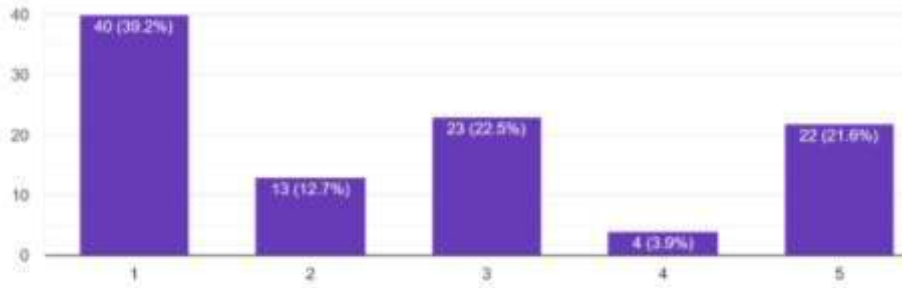


Fig 11 Respondents opinion on job security in freelancing

Interpretation

The data indicates that a large number of respondents perceive job security in freelancing as very low (39.2%), showing that many freelancers feel uncertain about stable and continuous employment. Around 22.5% respondents rated job security as moderate, while 21.6% considered it very high, reflecting mixed opinions based on individual experiences and opportunities. A smaller percentage rated job security as low (12.7%) and high (3.9%). Overall, the findings suggest that despite the rapid growth of the gig economy in India, concerns regarding job stability and long-term security remain a major challenge in freelancing.

12. Opinion on Freelancing Replacing Traditional Jobs

Table12 Respondents Opinion on Freelancing Replacing Traditional Employment

Opinion	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	32	31.4%
No	41	40.2%
Partially	29	28.4%
TOTAL	102	100%

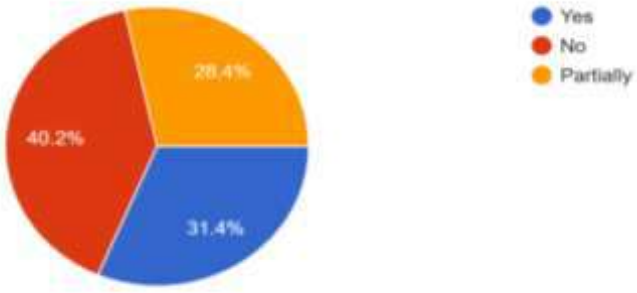


Fig. 12 Opinion on Freelancing Replacing Traditional Jobs

Interpretation

The data shows that 46.1% of respondents prefer freelancing over a full-time job, indicating the growing attraction towards flexible work opportunities in India's gig economy. Around 31.4% respondents stated that their preference depends on factors such as income, job stability, and work conditions. Meanwhile, 22.5% respondents do not prefer freelancing, mainly due to concerns related to job security and irregular income. Overall, the findings suggest that freelancing is becoming a popular employment choice, contributing significantly to the rise of the gig economy in India.

13. Impact of freelancing on traditional employment patterns

Table 13 Respondents opinion on the impact of freelancing on traditional employment

Opinion	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Positive	38	37.3%
Negative	35	34.3%
No Impact	29	28.4%
TOTAL	102	100%

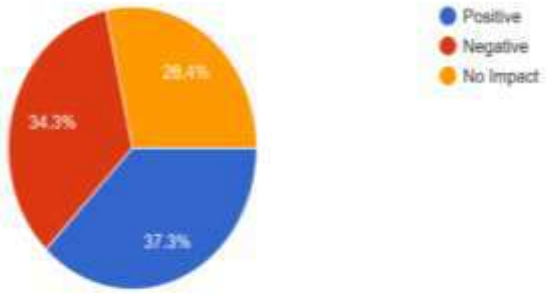


Fig. 13 Impact of freelancing on traditional employment patterns

Interpretation

The data shows that 37.3% of respondents believe freelancing has a positive impact on employment, as it creates flexible work opportunities and additional sources of income. However, 34.3% respondents feel that freelancing negatively affects employment due to job insecurity and lack of employee benefits. Around 28.4% respondents believe freelancing has no significant impact on employment patterns. Overall, the findings indicate that freelancing has both positive and negative effects on traditional employment, reflecting changing work trends in India's growing gig economy

14. Freelancing as a long term career option

Table 14 Respondents opinion on freelancing as a long term career

Opinion	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	28	27.5%
No	29	28.4%
Maybe	45	44.1%
TOTAL	102	100%

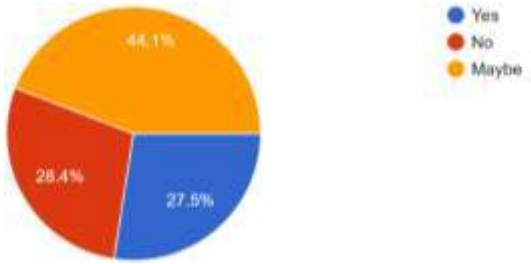


Fig.14 Opinion on Freelancing as a long term career option

Interpretation

The data shows that 44.1% of respondents are uncertain and answered "Maybe" when asked whether freelancing can be considered a long-term career option. Around 28.4% respondents do not view freelancing as a stable long-term career due to concerns such as job insecurity and irregular income. Meanwhile, 27.5% respondents consider freelancing a suitable long-term career because of flexibility and earning opportunities. Overall, the findings indicate mixed opinions regarding the long-term sustainability of freelancing in India's gig economy.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the impact of digital learning tools on students' academic performance and engagement. The findings of the research indicate that the use of digital platforms has a positive influence on learning outcomes. Students who regularly used online learning resources demonstrated better understanding of concepts, improved participation, and higher academic scores compared to students who relied only on traditional classroom methods.

One of the major findings of this study is that digital learning increases student engagement. Many students reported that interactive videos, online quizzes, and virtual discussions helped them remain interested in the subject matter. This suggests that technology-based learning environments can make education more attractive and effective for learners. The availability of educational content at any time also allowed students to study according to their own pace and convenience, which contributed to better academic performance.The findings of this research are consistent with previous studies conducted in the field of educational technology. Earlier research by Johnson (2021) and Smith (2022) also concluded that digital learning platforms improve student participation and learning efficiency. Similar to those studies, the current research found that students feel more confident and motivated when technology is integrated into classroom activities. However, unlike some previous studies, this research also identified that excessive screen time may reduce concentration levels among certain students.Another important observation from the study is that digital learning promotes independent learning skills. Students became more responsible for managing their own study schedules and completing assignments on time. Access to online resources encouraged them to explore topics beyond the classroom syllabus. This

indicates that digital education not only improves academic results but also develops self-learning abilities among students.Despite the positive outcomes, the study also identified several challenges associated with digital learning. Some students faced internet connectivity issues and lack of access to proper electronic devices. These problems created difficulties in attending online sessions and completing tasks. In addition, a few participants reported that distractions from social media and entertainment platforms affected their focus during online learning. Therefore, while digital education offers several advantages, effective monitoring and guidance are necessary to ensure productive learning.The study further revealed that teachers play a significant role in the successful implementation of digital learning tools. Students responded positively when teachers used interactive teaching methods and provided clear instructions regarding online activities. This finding suggests that teacher training and technical support are essential for improving the effectiveness of digital education systems.The results of this study have important implications for educational institutions and policymakers. Schools and colleges should invest in modern digital infrastructure and provide equal access to technological resources for students. Educational institutions should also organize workshops and training programs to help teachers and students adapt to online learning environments. By improving digital literacy and accessibility, institutions can enhance the overall quality of education.However, the study has certain limitations that should be considered. The research was conducted using a limited sample size from a specific region, which may affect the generalization of the findings to a larger population. Additionally, the study focused mainly on student perceptions and academic performance over a short period of time. Long-term effects of digital learning were not examined in detail.Future researchers can expand this study by including larger sample sizes and different educational levels. Comparative studies between urban and rural educational institutions may provide deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with digital learning. Researchers can also investigate the psychological and social effects of prolonged use of online learning platforms.In conclusion, the discussion highlights that digital learning tools have a significant positive impact on student engagement, independent learning, and academic achievement. Although certain challenges exist, proper planning, infrastructure, and teacher support can improve the effectiveness of digital education. The findings of this study support the growing importance of technology in modern education and emphasize the need for balanced and accessible digital learning systems.

Conclusion

The study on "Rise of the Gig Economy in India: Why Freelancing is Dominating the Employment Landscape" concludes that freelancing and gig work have emerged as important components of the modern Indian economy. The rapid growth of digital platforms, technological advancements, changing work preferences, and increasing internet accessibility have significantly contributed to the expansion of the gig economy in India. The findings clearly indicate that freelancing is becoming a preferred employment option for many individuals, especially among youth, skilled professionals, and digitally connected workers.One of the major conclusions drawn from the study is that higher income opportunities, flexibility, and independence are the primary reasons motivating individuals to choose freelancing over traditional employment. Respondents believe that freelancing provides greater freedom in selecting projects, managing work schedules, and maintaining work-life balance. The ability to work from home and earn through multiple income sources has further increased the popularity of freelancing in recent years. This shows that the Indian workforce is gradually shifting towards flexible and skill-based employment models.The study also concludes that organizations are increasingly adopting freelancers because it helps reduce operational costs, improve flexibility, and provide access to skilled talent for short-term projects. Businesses are now focusing more on project-based hiring practices to improve efficiency and productivity. Sectors such as content creation, ride-sharing, delivery services, and digital platforms are strongly associated with gig work, reflecting the growing influence of platform-based employment in India.At the same time, the study highlights several challenges faced by freelancers. Lack of social security, irregular income, job insecurity, and work stress remain major concerns in the gig economy. Unlike traditional employees, freelancers generally do not receive benefits such as provident fund, health insurance, paid leave, or retirement security. Many respondents also expressed uncertainty regarding freelancing as a long-term career option because of unstable earnings and lack of employment protection. These findings indicate that although freelancing offers freedom and earning opportunities, financial and career stability continue to be significant issues.Another important conclusion of the study is that freelancing has both positive and negative impacts on employment patterns in India. On one hand, it creates additional employment opportunities, promotes entrepreneurship, and supports economic growth. On the other hand, it may reduce the importance of permanent jobs and increase informal employment practices. The study suggests that freelancing is not completely replacing traditional employment but is gradually becoming an alternative and complementary form of work in the modern economy. Overall, the study concludes that the gig economy is transforming the Indian employment landscape by creating flexible, technology-driven, and skill-oriented work opportunities. Freelancing has become an important source of income and employment generation in India. However, for the sustainable growth of the gig economy, there is a need for proper government regulations, worker protection policies, social security measures, and fair working conditions. With adequate support systems and policy reforms, freelancing can contribute significantly to economic development, employment generation, and the future of work in India.

Suggestions:

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are recommended to improve the freelancing ecosystem and support the sustainable growth of the gig economy in India:

The government should introduce proper policies and regulations to protect the rights of freelancers and gig workers. Social security benefits such as health insurance, pension schemes, accident coverage, and retirement plans should be provided to freelancers.

2.Financial institutions should design suitable loan and credit facilities for freelancers because irregular income often creates difficulties in accessing financial support.

Digital platforms and companies should ensure fair payment systems, timely compensation, and transparent work policies for gig workers.

Skill development and training programs should be organized regularly to help freelancers improve their professional abilities and remain competitive in the market.

Awareness programs should be conducted to educate freelancers about taxation, financial management, legal rights, and career planning.

Organizations should maintain a balance between permanent employees and freelance workers to ensure both flexibility and employment stability.

The government and private sector should collaborate to create better opportunities for freelancing while ensuring worker welfare and protection.

Freelancers should focus on continuous learning, networking, and professional development to improve career growth and income opportunities.

Proper legal frameworks should be developed to reduce exploitation, delayed payments, and unfair working conditions in the gig economy.

Companies should recognize freelancers as an important part of the workforce and provide supportive work environments and fair treatment

Scope For Further Research :

The present study on "Rise of the Gig Economy in India: Why Freelancing is Dominating the Employment Landscape" provides valuable insights into the growth of freelancing, its benefits, challenges, and impact on employment patterns. However, the gig economy is a rapidly evolving concept, and there remains significant scope for further research in this area. Future studies can explore various dimensions of freelancing and gig work in greater depth to understand its long-term impact on the economy, workforce, and society.One important area for further research is the study of the economic contribution of the gig economy to India's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and employment generation. As freelancing continues to grow, future researchers can analyze how gig work contributes to national income, entrepreneurship, and digital economic development. Comparative studies between organized employment and gig-based employment can also provide a better understanding of the changing labor market structure in India.Further research can also focus on the social and psychological impact of freelancing on workers. Issues such as work stress, work-life balance, mental health, career satisfaction, and financial insecurity among freelancers can be examined in detail. Such studies would help understand the personal and emotional challenges faced by gig workers in the absence of stable employment conditions.Another important scope for future research is the analysis of government policies and labor regulations related to gig workers. Researchers can evaluate whether existing labor laws in India are sufficient to protect freelancers and platform workers. Studies can also suggest effective policy frameworks regarding social security, taxation, insurance, retirement benefits, and worker rights in the gig economy.Future studies may also examine the role of technology and digital platforms in shaping freelancing opportunities. The impact of artificial intelligence, automation, online marketplaces, and remote working technologies on gig employment can be explored further. Researchers can analyze how technological advancements are changing skill requirements and employment trends in India.Comparative studies between urban and rural gig workers can also be conducted to identify differences in opportunities, income levels, digital access, and working conditions. In addition, future research may focus on sector-specific gig work such as IT services, content creation, ride-sharing, education, healthcare, and e-commerce delivery services to understand the unique challenges and opportunities within each industry.Another potential area for research is the study of women participation in the gig economy. Researchers can examine how freelancing provides flexible employment opportunities for women and whether it supports financial independence, career growth, and work-life balance. At the same time, challenges faced by women freelancers regarding safety, income inequality, and social support can also be analyzed.Lastly, long term studies can be conducted to examine whether freelancing can become a sustainable long-term career option in India. Such research can help understand future employment trends, income stability, and the evolving relationship between freelancing and traditional jobs.Overall, the gig economy is a dynamic and expanding field with immense research potential. Further studies in these areas can help policymakers, organizations, and workers better understand the opportunities and challenges associated with freelancing and contribute towards the development of a more secure and sustainable gig economy in India.

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Original Article

Growth And Development of The Tourism Industry in India: An Economic Analysis

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Abstract

Tourism has been one of the fast-growing service industries which contribute in many ways to the economy of India such as increasing GDP, employment, foreign exchange earnings, regional development, etc. The current study focuses on the growth of tourism in India during 2015-2025. The data used for the analysis comes from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, World Tourism & Tourism Council (WTTC), UN Tourism, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), National Statistical Office (NSO), etc. The study makes use of Percentage Analysis, Annual Growth Rate (AGR), Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR), etc. The foreign tourist arrival was 8.03 million in 2015 and reached 9.70 million in 2025. Simultaneously, foreign exchange earnings were at Rs. 1,34,844 crore - 27 The domestic tourist visits were increased from 1,431.97 million to 4,287.00 million and during 2025, travel and tourism contributed to the GDP value of US$ 273.7 billion, which created jobs for 48 However, tourism activities declined in 2020-2 Positive CAGR values of various tourism indicators are the indication that tourism industry of India will grow. Indian researchers suggest the need for investments in tourism infrastructure, sustainable tourism, digital innovations, etc.

Keywords: COVID-19, Annual Growth Rate, Tourism Industry, GDP.

Introduction

The tourism industry has developed into one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy and has become an essential source of economic and social progress. It makes a significant contribution to national income, employment creation, foreign exchange earnings, investment, and regional development. Apart from its economic benefits, tourism encourages cultural interaction, protects historical and natural heritage, promotes environmental preservation, and enhances the living standards of local communities. Since tourism maintains close links with industries such as transport, hospitality, food services, handicrafts, entertainment, and retail trade, its expansion generates extensive economic advantages across various sectors. India is recognised as one of the world's prominent tourism destinations because of its diverse cultural traditions, historical monuments, religious centres, natural scenery, wildlife, and rich heritage. The country provides a wide range of tourism products, including heritage tourism, eco-tourism, medical tourism, adventure tourism, rural tourism, and wellness tourism, which attract domestic and international visitors throughout the year. India's distinctive tourism resources offer a strong basis for the continuous growth of the tourism industry. Recognising the significance of tourism in national development, the Government of India has introduced several programmes to reinforce the sector. Initiatives such as the Incredible India campaign, transport infrastructure improvement, digital visa service expansion, destination development projects, and investments in hospitality facilities have improved India's tourism competitiveness. The increasing adoption of digital technologies, online booking platforms, and smart tourism services has further enhanced tourist accessibility and overall travel experiences. The tourism sector also performs a vital role in promoting economic development by generating direct and indirect employment opportunities, encouraging entrepreneurship, attracting domestic and foreign investment, and increasing foreign exchange earnings. Its close association with agriculture, handicrafts, construction, transport, and other service industries creates a substantial multiplier effect on the economy. Therefore, the sustainable development of tourism is essential for achieving inclusive economic growth and strengthening India's position in the global tourism market.

Recent Review

UN-Tourism (2023) suggested that the world tourism industry has experienced a remarkable recovery post-COVID-19 pandemic, with a sharp rise in international tourist arrivals owing to relaxation of travel policies, digitization, and regaining consumer confidence. Tourism's increasing importance in employment generation, foreign exchange earning, and economic development were among the key highlights.

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World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) (2024) stressed that the tourism and travel industry would keep boosting the global economy through higher investments, employment creation, and GDP contribution. Growth in tourism demand was expected owing to digital innovations, infrastructure development, and sustainable tourism practices.**Sharma and Verma (2024)** explored the Indian tourism industry and noted that government efforts, digital marketing, improved transport infrastructure, and intelligent tourism practices have remarkably boosted the number of tourist arrivals and destination attractiveness. **Kumar and Patel (2025)** analyzed the economic impact of tourism on employment and regional development in India. Their research revealed that tourism had become an important means of livelihood in rural and heritage destinations while positively contributing to local economic development.

Statement of the Problem

The tourism industry is one of the important factors contributing to economic development of India through creation of employment, generation of foreign exchange, regional development and development of many allied industries. The industry, despite having a huge contribution, faces some issues that hinder its sustainable development. Lack of adequate tourism infrastructure, environmental degradation, uneven regional development, seasonality of tourist arrivals, inadequate investment in new destinations, as well as lack of skilled human resources, continues to be among the major concerns. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how vulnerable the tourism industry is to any external shock and has led to huge decrease in tourist arrivals, revenue and employment. Even though there has been significant improvement in performance of tourism sector in recent years, it becomes imperative for researchers to investigate whether its growth leads to sustainable economic development. An extensive economic analysis is needed to comprehend the relation between the growth of tourism industry and economic indicators like GDP, creation of employment, foreign exchange generation and regional development.

Need for the Study

The tourism industry plays a significant role in India's economic development by creating employment, earning foreign exchange, contributing to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and encouraging balanced regional development. In recent years, the sector has undergone considerable changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, technological advancements, and changing travel preferences. Although the tourism industry has demonstrated a strong recovery, there is a need to examine its growth pattern and economic contribution during the post-pandemic period. This study is undertaken to examine the trends in tourist arrivals, foreign exchange earnings, GDP contribution, employment generation, and state-wise tourism performance in India. The findings of the study will assist policymakers, researchers, and tourism stakeholders in developing effective strategies for strengthening the tourism sector and promoting sustainable economic development.

Research Gap

Although the contribution of tourism to economic growth, employment generation, and foreign exchange earnings in India has been examined by numerous studies, specific aspects of the tourism sector or the pre-pandemic period have been concentrated on by most of them. A comprehensive analysis of recent trends covering Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs), Domestic Tourist Visits (DTVs), Foreign Tourist Visits (FTVs), Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE), the contribution of travel and tourism to GDP, employment generation, and the state-wise distribution of foreign tourist arrivals during the post-pandemic period has been presented by limited research. Therefore, this gap is attempted to be filled by the present study through the provision of an updated economic analysis of the growth and development of the tourism industry in India for the period 2015–2025 using recent secondary data.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the growth and development of the tourism industry in India during the period under study.
2. To analyze the trends in the numbers of FTAs, DTVs, and FTVs in India.
3. To analyze the role played by the tourism industry in GDP, employment creation, and FEE of India.
4. To analyze the state-wise distribution of FTAs in India.
5. To analyze the economic contribution of the tourism industry and to provide measures for sustainable growth and development of the tourism industry.

Methodology of Research

The current research is descriptive as well as analytical in its nature. The current research only employs the use of secondary data that has been gathered from reliable and authentic sources. In the present study, the necessary data is gathered from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), UN Tourism (UN Tourism), Reserve Bank of India (RBI), National Statistical Office (NSO), published books, journal articles, government reports, and authentic websites. The current research is being conducted for the time period of 2015 to 2025 in order to analyze the growth and development of the tourism sector in India. The research will employ the use of certain factors such as Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs), Domestic Tourist Visits (DTVs), Foreign Tourist Visits (FTVs), Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE), Contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP, and Employment Generation. The research analyses the gathered data using percentage analysis, annual growth rate, Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR), trend analysis, and descriptive statistical methods.

Formula: Annual Growth Rate (AGR)

AGR (%) = [(Current Year Value-Previous Year Value) / Previous Year Value] × 100

Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)

CAGR (%) = {[(Ending Value / Beginning Value) ^(1/n)] − 1} × 100

Where: Ending Value = Value in the final year**, Beginning Value** = Value in the initial year,
n = Number of years

Results and Discussion

Foreign Tourist Arrivals

Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) are regarded as one of the significant factors that are taken into account while evaluating the growth of the tourism industry in India. Many international tourists visit India owing to the presence of many aspects such as rich culture, historical monuments, religious places, different kinds of landscapes, and traditional art forms in India. The increase in foreign tourist arrivals has led to substantial contributions to foreign exchange, employment, and economic development.

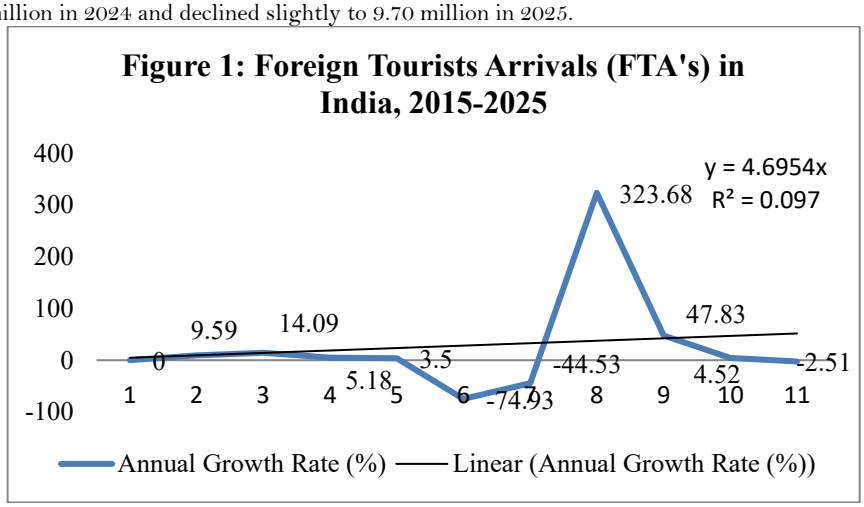
Table 1: Foreign Tourists Arrivals (FTA's) in India (2015-2025)

Year	Foreign Tourist Arrivals (Millions)	Annual Growth Rate (%)
2015	8.03	–
2016	8.8	9.59

2017	10.04	14.09
2018	10.56	5.18
2019	10.93	3.5
2020	2.74	-74.93
2021	1.52	-44.53
2022	6.44	323.68
2023	9.52	47.83
2024	9.95	4.52
2025	9.7	-2.51
CAGR (2015-2025)	**1.91%**	-

Source: Ministry of tourism, Government of India.

It can be observed from the table 1 below that the trend for foreign tourist arrivals in India from 2015-2025 FTAs showed steady growth up to 2019, where the number of tourists had increased from 8.03 million in 2015 to 10.93 million in 2019, which represents healthy growth until the pandemic hit India. The arrival of tourists fell drastically due to the pandemic, and the figures have reduced to 2.74 million in 2020 and 1.52 million in 2021. The tourism industry started recovering from 2022, and FTA stood at 9.95 million in 2024 and declined slightly to 9.70 million in 2025.



Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE)

The Foreign Exchange Earnings is the foreign currency that India earns from the foreign tourists who visit India and make payments for the various expenditures incurred in the process. The table below shows the year-wise Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE) in India for the period 2015 to 2025 and the percentage change year-over-year to study the trend and the effect of the corona virus outbreak.

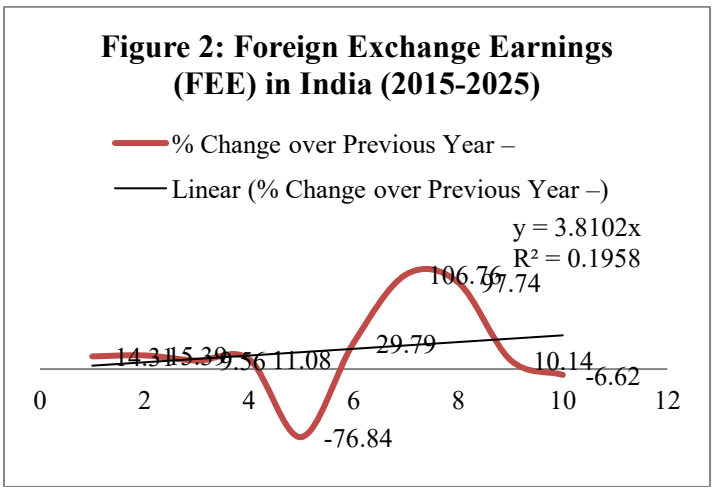


Table 2: Foreign Exchanges Earning (FEE) in India (2015-2025)

Year	Foreign Exchange Earnings (in Crore)		% Change over Previous Year
2015	1,34,844		–
2016	1,54,146		14.31
2017	1,77,874		15.39
2018	1,94,881		9.56
2019	2,16,467		11.08
2020	50,136		-76.84

2021	65,070		29.79
2022	1,34,543		106.76
2023	2,66,045		97.74
2024	2,93,033		10.14
2025	2,73,638		-6.62
CAGR (2015–2025)	**7.33%**		-

Source: Ministry of Tourism, GOI, Indian tourism statistics and Tourism Data Portal.

From the table 2, the trends of Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE) from tourism in India between 2015 to 2025 are depicted. The trend of FEE shows steady growth in foreign exchange earnings from R.s 1,34,844 crore in 2015 to R.s 2,16,467 crore in 2019, demonstrating healthy growth in tourism income prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. But the foreign exchange earnings reduced drastically to R.s 50,136 crore in 2020 because of the travel restrictions and improved in 2021. As a result of the revival of international tourism in India after the pandemic, the foreign exchange earnings have shown an upward trend starting from 2022 onwards up to R.s 2,93,033 crore in 2024, followed by slight reduction to R.s 2,73,638 crore in 2025.

Visits of Domestic and Foreign Tourists to India

Domestic Tourist Visits (DTVs) and Foreign Tourist Visits (FTVs) are vital measures of the performance of the tourism industry in India. Domestic Tourist Visits pertain to travels made by the Indian residents in India, whereas Foreign Tourist Visits pertain to those visits that the foreign tourists make to the States and Union territories of India. The below table provides information about year-wise Domestic and Foreign Tourist Visits to India from the year 2015 till 2025, along with their growth rate per annum and Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR).

Table 3: Domestic and Foreign Tourist Visits to India (2015-2025)

Year	Domestic Tourist Visits (Million)	Foreign Tourist Visits (Million)	Annual Growth Rate - Domestic (%)	Annual Growth Rate - Foreign (%)
2015	1,431.97	23.33	11.63	4.44
2016	1,615.39	24.71	12.81	5.95
2017	1,657.55	26.89	2.61	8.79
2018	1,853.79	28.85	11.84	7.31
2019	2,321.98	31.41	25.26	8.86
2020	610.22	7.17	-73.72	-77.17
2021	677.63	1.05	11.05	-85.29
2022	1,731.01	8.59	155.45	714.26
2023	2,508.82	19.24	44.93	124
2024	2,948.19	20.94	17.51	8.84
2025	4,287.00	25.27	45.55	20.68
CAGR (2015–2025)	**11.60%**	**0.81%**	-	-

Source: Ministry of Tourism, GOI, Indian tourism statistics and Tourism Data Portal.

As can be seen from Table 3, the trends in Domestic and Foreign Tourist Visits to India in the years 2015-2025 are shown below. The Domestic Tourist Visits were raised from 1,431.97 million in 2015 to 2,321.98 million in 2019 and fell drastically to 610.22 million in 2020 owing to the COVID-19 outbreak. However, domestic tourism picked up the pace later on and rose to 4,287.00 million in 2025. In a similar fashion, the Foreign Tourist Visits went up from 23.33 million in 2015 to 31.41 million in 2019, fell to 1.05 million in 2021 and then rebounded to 25.27 million in 2025.

Situation of Foreign Tourist Arrival at State Level in India

Table 4 gives the state-wise breakdown of Foreign Tourist Arrival (FTAs) in India. Here, the top ten states have been identified which receive the greatest number of foreign tourists. This is mainly due to their rich cultural legacy, historical places, religious spots, nature, and well-established tourism infrastructure. The study of tourist arrival on a state-wise basis assists in knowing the leading tourism destinations of India.

Table 4: State wise scene of foreign tourist arrivals in India (2024)

Rank	State	Foreign Tourist Visits (2024)	Percentage Share (%)
1	Maharashtra	3,705,170	18.01
2	West Bengal	3,124,462	15.19
3	Uttar Pradesh	2,269,067	11.03
4	Gujarat	2,274,907	11.06
5	Rajasthan	2,072,407	10.08
6	Delhi	1,999,410	9.72
7	Tamil Nadu	1,161,302	5.65
8	Bihar	736,720	3.58
9	Kerala	724,222	3.52
10	Goa	467,911	2.28

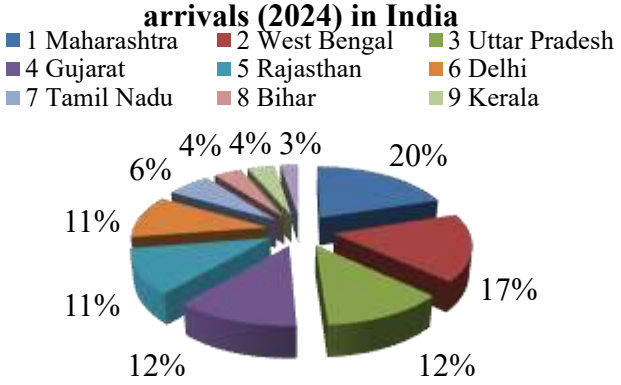
	Total of Top10	**940,524**	**89.2**
	Others	**114,118**	**10.8**
	Grand Total	**1,054,642**	**100**

Note: The Ministry of Tourism has not yet released official state-wise Foreign Tourist Visits data for 2025.

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2022), India Tourism Statistics at a Glance 2024.

According to Table 4, Maharashtra comes first in terms of FTA (Foreign Tourists Arrivals) with 3,705,170 tourists (18.01%), whereas the second position was occupied by West Bengal with 3,124,462 tourists (15.19%). The third, fourth, and fifth positions were captured by Gujarat (11.06%), Uttar Pradesh (11.03%), and Rajasthan (10.08%), respectively. It can be said that together the top 10 states comprised of 89.2% of the total number of FTAs whereas the rest 10.8% were from other states/Union Territories.

Figure 3: State wise scene of foreign tourist arrivals (2024) in India



Contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP in India

The tourism industry contributes significantly towards the gross domestic product of India by earning revenues through tourism-related activities like providing accommodation, transportation, catering, amusement, and so on. It holds significance in terms of economic development, employment creation, investments, and earning foreign exchange for the country. The below table reflects the contribution of the travel and tourism industry to India's GDP for the years from 2015 to 2025 along with the growth rates and compound annual growth rate of the sector.

Table 5: Travel and Tourism Contribution to GDP in India (2015-2025)

Year	Total Contribution to GDP (US$ Billion)	Total Growth (%)
2015	199.6	–
2016	214.3	7.36
2017	234	9.19
2018	247.4	5.73
2019	253.8	2.59
2020	178.7	-29.59
2021	178	-0.39
2022	199.6	12.13
2023	231.6	16.03
2024	256	10.54
2025	273.7	6.91
CAGR (2015–2025)	**3.21%**	-

Source: World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), Economic Impact Research 2025.

Table 5 above demonstrates that the share of travel and tourism sector to GDP grew from US$ 199.6 billion in 2015 to US$ 253.8 billion in 2019 but fell sharply to US$ 178.7 billion in 2020 due to the negative effects caused by the coronavirus outbreak. Starting from 2022, the sector experienced growth again, reaching US$ 273.7 billion in 2025. The Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 3.21% is a positive indicator for the future of the Indian travel and tourism industry.

Travel & Tourism Contribution to Employment (2015-2025)

The travel and tourism industry forms one of the most prominent sectors of employment generation in India. It not only generates employment directly but also indirectly for many industries associated with travel and tourism. These industries include accommodations, travel and transport, tour operations, hospitality, entertainment, handicrafts, and so on. The following table 6 provides the employment generation contribution of the travel and tourism industry in India for the years from 2015 to 2025, along with the annual growth rate and the CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate).

Table 6: Travel & Tourism Contribution to Employment in India (2015–2025)

Year	Total Employment (Million Jobs)	Annual Growth Rate (%)
2015	41.11	–
2016	41.69	1.41
2017	42.31	1.49
2018	42.94	1.49
2019	43.53	1.37
2020	38.64	-11.23
2021	39.31	1.73
2022	41.85	6.46
2023	45	7.53
2024	46.5	3.33
2025	48.2	3.66
CAGR (2015–2025)	**1.60%**	-

Source: World Travel and Tourism Counceil (WTTC), Economic impact Research (EIR) 2025 and Oxford Economics.

As indicated by the table 6 above, there was a growth in employment generation from 41.11 million in 2015 to 43.53 million in 2019 for the travel and tourism industry in India. However, this growth was brought to an end with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, whereby the number of employment generated fell to 38.64 million in 2020 but gradually rose to 48.20 million in 2025. The CAGR of 1.60% shows that there is growth in employment generation.

Summarized findings

1. Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India saw an increase of 8.03 million in 2015 to 10.93 million in 2019, followed by a sudden dip during the pandemic years and an eventual increase after 2022.
2. Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE) saw continuous growth till the outbreak of the pandemic year when there was a decrease in FEE in 2020 and then recovery of earnings up to Rs 2,73,638 crore in 2025.
3. Domestic Tourist Visits have seen an increase throughout the period of analysis, with more rapid recovery post pandemic in comparison to foreign tourists.
4. Foreign Tourist Visits were recovered from pandemic as well, although the recovery rate was somewhat lower than that of domestic tourism.
5. Top 10 states together accounted for 89.2% of all foreign tourists' visitations, which means that international tourism in India is quite concentrated in a few key places.
6. The Maharashtra had the most foreign tourist visits, followed by West Bengal, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan.
7. The share of the travel and tourism sector in GDP has been increasing consistently till the outbreak of the pandemic, decreased in 2020, and then recovered back to US$273.7 billion in 2025.

Recommendations and Suggestion

1. More work needs to be done by the Government in improving the tourism infrastructure with respect to the connectivity, accommodation facilities, sanitation and digital services of major and upcoming tourist destinations.
2. There is need for increased efforts towards promoting heritage tourism, eco-tourism, rural tourism, medical tourism and adventure tourism to attract the tourists from both domestic and foreign markets.
3. The Government should take more initiatives in promoting tourism through digital marketing, social media marketing and international branding to increase global competitiveness of Indian Tourism sector.
4. The Skill development and training programs need to be increased by the Government to improve the quality of tourism and hospitality services along with creating new jobs.
5. The Government should focus on sustainable tourism to protect the cultural heritage, natural resources and environment for long term tourism development.
6. The Government needs to give utmost importance to safety, security and cleanliness of the tourism destinations for increasing the satisfaction of visitors.
7. The Government should take steps to establish good public-private partnership to increase the investment in tourism sector.

Conclusion

The tourism industry has emerged as an important contributor to India's economic development through its contributions to the GDP, creation of employment opportunities, earning of foreign exchange and regional development. The results of the study indicate that the industry has experienced constant growth before the COVID-19 pandemic period, sharp drop during the pandemic and a strong bounce back post-pandemic. The rising trends in foreign tourist arrivals, domestic tourist visits, foreign exchange earnings, GDP contribution, and employment generation show the robustness of the tourism industry and its growth prospects in the long term. It has been found that foreign tourists tend to visit only a few developed states in terms of tourism infrastructure. Thus, sustained investments in tourism infrastructure, sustainable tourism practices, technology innovations, destination development, and implementation of good policies will be necessary to boost the global competitive strength of India in the tourism industry.

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Original Article

Role of Industry-Academia Collaboration in Tourism Development: NEP 2020 Perspective

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Abstract

The tourism industry is a significant contributor to employment generation, economic development, cultural preservation, and sustainable development. However, the sector continues to face challenges such as gap between curricula and industry requirements, limited industry participation, inadequate practical training, skill mismatch, and financial and infrastructure constraints. The quality of human resources available to the tourism industry largely depends on effectiveness of higher education institutions in preparing graduates with relevant knowledge and professional competencies. The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes industry partnership, multidisciplinary education, experiential learning, internships, vocational integration, innovation and stronger collaboration between higher education institutions and industry. This paper explores the significance of industry academia collaboration in promoting tourism development within the framework of NEP 2020. It recommends stronger institutional mechanisms, continuous stakeholder engagement, industry participation in curriculum design to bridge the gap between education and industry while promoting India's tourism potential. The study also highlights the importance of collaborative research, internships, faculty-industry interaction, and live projects in improving graduate employability and meet the evolving demands of tourism sector. The study concludes that effective implementation of NEP 2020 can transform tourism education by contributing to sustainable and inclusive tourism development. It recommends industry participation in curricular design, stronger institutional mechanisms, continuous stakeholder engagement, and policy support to bridge the gap between education and industry.

Keywords: *Tourism Development, Higher Education, Skill Development, NEP 2020.*

Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's fastest- growing service industries and plays a vital role in economic growth, employment generation, regional development, cultural exchange, and foreign exchange earnings. As the industry continues to evolve due to digital transformation, globalization, and changing tourist preferences, the increasing demand for quality tourism services has highlighted the need for a skilled, innovative and professionally competent workforce capable of meeting global standards and adopting to the changing need of the industry. Higher education institutions play a crucial role in developing the human capital required for sustainable growth of the tourism sector. Nevertheless, a gap often exists between academic knowledge and the practical skills required by the tourism industry.

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Bridging this gap requires strong collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders. Industry-academia collaboration has emerged as an effective approach to aligning educational outcomes with industry expectations. It enables curriculum modernization, live projects, internships, research partnerships, faculty development, entrepreneurship promotion, and enhanced employability of graduates. The introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduced transformative reforms in higher education system to establish meaningful partnership with industries to ensure that education remains relevant to the changing needs of the economy and society. Such partnerships also facilitate knowledge exchange, collaborative research, the adoption of emerging technologies in tourism education and practice, and community engagement.

Statement of the Problem:

The tourism industry is undergoing rapid transformation due to globalization, technological advancement, changing customer expectations, and the growing emphasis on sustainable development. Many graduates entering the tourism industry are not fully prepared to meet the expectation from this sector because of the gap between classroom learning and real-world industry practices. Many higher education institutions continue to follow traditional curricula that provide limited opportunities for internships, collaborative research, experiential learning, industry exposure, and live projects. However, a significant gap continues to exist between the competencies developed through higher education and the actual requirements of the tourism industry.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 highlights the importance of stronger industry-academia collaboration through multidisciplinary education, experiential learning, internships, and skill-based training. Despite these policy initiatives, collaboration between higher education institutions and the tourism industry remains inconsistent.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of industry-academia collaboration in the development of the tourism sector.
2. To analyze the provisions of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 related to industry academia collaboration in higher education.
3. To identify the benefits of industry academia partnerships in enhancing tourism education and skill development.
4. To explore the challenges in implementing effective industry-academia collaboration in tourism education.
5. To suggest measures for strengthening industry academia collaboration between HEIs and the tourism industry for sustainable tourism development in line with NEP 2020.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on a conceptual and descriptive research design. It primarily relies on secondary sources of information. The required data have been collected from the National Education Policy 2020 documents, research papers, books, scholarly journals, reports published by government agencies, websites of educational institutions, and other credible online sources. The collected secondary data were analyzed using qualitative analysis.

Limitations of the Study:

1. The present study is based on secondary data obtained from research articles, government reports, and other published sources and does not include primary data collected from students, faculty members, or tourism professionals.
2. The study examines industry academia collaboration in tourism development only from the perspective of NEP 2020 and does not cover other educational policies.
3. The analysis depends on the availability and reliability of published literature which may vary across different sources.

Concept of Industry-Academia Collaboration:

Industry-Academia collaboration refers to a structured partnership between higher education institutions and industry organizations aimed at enhancing knowledge exchange, innovation, research, and skill development. It involves the sharing of resources, knowledge, expertise, technology, and infrastructure to promote innovation, develop a skilled workforce, and to enhance research. Such partnership help educational institutions keep their curricula updated with emerging industry trends and technological advancement.

NEP 2020 and Tourism Education:

The National Education Policy 2020 provides a significant reform in India's higher education system by focusing on improving the accessibility, quality, and relevance of higher education. The policy emphasizes student-centric and skill-oriented approach enables HEIs to develop a broader understanding of the tourism industry and its emerging trends. The policy also promotes flexibility in curriculum design allowing institutions to incorporate subjects such as cultural heritage, entrepreneurship, hospitality management, environmental sustainability, and foreign languages in tourism programs.

The Role of Industry-Academia Collaboration in Tourism Development:

Industry-academia collaboration is a key factor in strengthening tourism education and supporting the sustainable growth of the tourism sector. HEIs and tourism organizations must work together to develop a skilled workforce, encourage innovation, and promote sustainable tourism practices.

1. Bridging the Gap between Education and Industry:

Industry-Academia collaboration bridges the gap between education and the workplace by aligning curricula with practical market demands, ensuring that students acquire practical skills and industry-relevant competencies.

2. Faculty Development:

Faculty members benefit from industrial exposure, consultancy projects, workshops, and training programs, allowing them to update their knowledge and teaching practices.

3. Improving Graduate Employability:

Industry collaboration improves student's employability through certifications, skill development programs, campus recruitment and placement opportunities.

4. Encouraging Research and Innovation:

Joint research projects help address industry challenges, promote sustainable tourism, improve tourism services and develop innovative tourism products and destinations.

5. Promoting Entrepreneurship and Start-up Culture:

Educational institutions and industry partners motivates students to develop innovative tourism ventures through providing mentorship, business networking, incubation support, and entrepreneurial training.

6. Facilitating Knowledge Sharing:

Seminars, workshops, guest lectures, conferences, and industry interactions promote the exchange of ideas, best practices and professional experiences among stakeholders.

7. Supporting sustainable Tourism Practices:

Collaborative efforts encourage responsible tourism by promoting environmental conservation, preservation of cultural heritage, and active involvement of local communities.

Challenges in Industry-Academia Collaboration for Tourism Development:

Although industry-academia collaboration offers numerous benefits for tourism development, several challenges hinder the establishment of effective and sustainable partnerships.

1. Gap between Academic Curriculum and Industry Needs:

Tourism Curricula in many institutions are not updated regularly to reflect current industry trends, technological advancements, and changing customer expectations. This results in a mismatch between graduates' competencies and employer requirements.

2. Limited Industry Participation:

Many tourism organizations have limited involvement in academic activities such as research projects, guest lectures, curriculum design and student mentoring, reducing opportunities for meaningful collaboration.

3. Insufficient Practical Training:

Students often receive inadequate exposure to real-world tourism operations because of limited internship opportunities, short training periods, or weak supervision during industrial placements.

4. Lack of Research Collaboration:

Collaborative research between universities and tourism organizations is relatively limited. Lack of industry-sponsored research, inadequate funding and weak knowledge transfer mechanisms reduce opportunities for inn ovation I tourism development.

5. Financial and Resource Constraints:

Many higher education institutions face financial constraints that affect the availability of smart classrooms, modern laboratories, digital technologies, simulation facilities, and training infrastructure required for quality tourism education.

6. Communication and Coordination Issues:

Lack of structured coordination mechanisms, weak communication, and unclear expectations often create misunderstanding between academic institutions and industry partners.

7. Rapid Technological Changes:

The tourism industry is rapidly adopting digital technologies such as smart tourism, artificial intelligence, big data, and online booking systems. Academic institutions often struggle to update programs and infrastructure at the same pace.

8. Inadequate Faculty-Industry Exposure:

Many faculty members have limited professional experience in the tourism industry, making it difficult to integrate practical insights into classroom teaching and research.

9. Regional Disparities:

Collaboration opportunities are often concentrated in major tourist destinations, while institutions located in rural or less developed regions have fewer industry partnerships and limited access to tourism enterprises.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

To strengthen industry-academia collaboration and promote sustainable tourism development, the following recommendations are proposed.

1. Regularly Revise the Curriculum:

HEIs should periodically update tourism programs in consultation with industry experts to incorporate digital technologies, emerging trends, changing market demands, and sustainability.

2. Build Strong Institutional Partnerships:

Universities and colleges should establish formal collaborations with tour operators, hotels, destination management organizations, travel agencies, airlines, and government tourism bodies through formal agreements.

3. Expand Experiential Learning Opportunities:

Live project, internship programs, apprenticeships, field visits, and industrial training should be expanded to provide students with meaningful hands-on experience.

4. Encourage Joint Research Activities:

Academic institutions and tourism organizations should jointly undertake research projects that address contemporary tourism challenges, develop innovative solutions, and contribute to sustainable destination development.

5. Develop Faculty Competencies:

Faculty members should provide with opportunities for professional certifications, industrial training, consultancy assignments, and collaborative projects to enhance their practical knowledge and teaching effectiveness.

6. Create Innovation and Skill Development Centres:

Institutions should create dedicated centres for tourism research, entrepreneurship, innovation and skill development in collaboration with industry stakeholders.

7. Integrate Advanced Technologies into Education:

Tourism education should integrate smart tourism applications, artificial intelligence, digital marketing, virtual reality, data analysis, and online reservation systems into training.

8. Promote Entrepreneurial Skills:

Institutions should encourage students to develop tourism-related start-ups through financial support, incubation, mentoring programs, and industry networking opportunities.

9. Strengthen Placement and Career Services:

Placement and career guidance cells should actively collaborate with tourism organizations to improve career counseling, employment opportunities, and professional networking for graduates.

Conclusion

Industry-academia collaboration has become an essential strategy for strengthening tourism education and supporting the sustainable growth of the tourism sector. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides a strong foundation for strengthening this partnership by emphasizing multidisciplinary education, experiential learning, skill development, and industry engagement. These reforms enable HEIs to produce innovative, competent, and employable graduates, capable of meeting the present and future demands of the tourism sector. In conclusion, sustained industry-academia collaboration is fundamental to building a skilled tourism workforce, improving, service standards, encouraging innovation, and promoting responsible and sustainable tourism. A coordinated approach among all stakeholders will not only enhance educational outcomes but also contribute significantly to the long-term competitiveness.

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Tourism Development in India: Problems and Prospects in the Context of Vikasit Bharat 2047

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Abstract

*Tourism has emerged as one of the most significant sectors contributing to India's socio-economic development through employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, infrastructure development, and cultural preservation. India's diverse geographical landscapes, historical monuments, spiritual destinations, biodiversity, and rich cultural heritage provide substantial opportunities for expanding domestic and international tourism. Despite this potential, the sector continues to face several structural challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, environmental degradation, regional disparities, skill shortages, safety concerns, and the uneven distribution of tourism benefits. The Government of India's vision of **Vikasit Bharat 2047** seeks to transform the country into a developed nation by the centenary of independence through sustainable economic growth, world-class infrastructure, technological innovation, and inclusive development. Tourism has been identified as one of the sectors capable of supporting these objectives by creating employment, strengthening local economies, promoting entrepreneurship, and preserving India's cultural identity.This study examines the current status of tourism development in India, analyses the principal constraints affecting the sector, and explores future opportunities within the framework of Vikasit Bharat 2047. The research adopts a descriptive and analytical approach based on secondary data obtained from government reports, policy documents, international organisations, and peer-reviewed literature. The findings indicate that while India possesses significant competitive advantages in cultural, religious, medical, rural, and eco-tourism, sustained policy interventions are necessary to improve infrastructure, digital integration, destination management, environmental sustainability, and skill development. The study concludes that a coordinated tourism strategy integrating public investment, private participation, community engagement, and sustainable resource management can substantially contribute towards achieving the long-term developmental goals envisioned under Vikasit Bharat 2047.*

***Keywords**: Tourism Development, India*

Introduction

Tourism is widely recognised as one of the world's fastest-growing economic sectors, contributing significantly to national income, employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development. Beyond its direct economic impact, tourism encourages cultural exchange, promotes heritage conservation, stimulates infrastructure development, and strengthens international relations. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism), tourism has evolved into a major driver of sustainable development by creating opportunities for inclusive growth and improving the livelihoods of local communities. India possesses exceptional tourism potential owing to its geographical diversity, historical monuments, cultural traditions, religious centres, wildlife sanctuaries, mountain ranges, coastal regions, and indigenous art forms. The country attracts millions of domestic and international visitors annually for purposes ranging from pilgrimage and heritage exploration to medical treatment, business travel, adventure tourism, wellness tourism, and ecological tourism. Destinations such as the Taj Mahal, Jaipur, Varanasi, Kerala's backwaters, Goa's beaches, the Himalayan region, and numerous UNESCO World Heritage Sites collectively contribute to India's global tourism appeal.The tourism sector also plays an important role in employment generation. It creates direct employment in hospitality, transportation, travel services, tour operations, and recreation while indirectly supporting agriculture, handicrafts, retail trade, construction, and numerous micro, small, and medium enterprises. Consequently, tourism functions as a multiplier sector capable of stimulating economic activity across diverse regions of the country.

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In recent years, the Government of India has undertaken several initiatives to strengthen tourism infrastructure and improve destination competitiveness. Programmes such as **Swadesh Darshan**, **PRASHAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive)**, **Dekho Apna Desh**, the expansion of **e-Visa facilities**, and investments in airports, highways, railway stations, and digital infrastructure have significantly enhanced accessibility and visitor experience. Simultaneously, digital technologies, online booking platforms, virtual marketing campaigns, and social media have transformed the way tourism destinations are promoted and experienced.

Despite these positive developments, India's tourism sector continues to encounter several structural and operational challenges. Inadequate last-mile connectivity, overcrowding at major destinations, environmental degradation, inconsistent service quality, safety concerns, insufficient skilled manpower, climate change, and uneven regional development continue to constrain the sector's growth. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the vulnerability of tourism-dependent economies and highlighted the necessity for resilience, diversification, and sustainable tourism planning.

The vision of **Vikasit Bharat 2047**, announced by the Government of India, seeks to transform India into a developed nation by the centenary year of its independence. The vision emphasises rapid economic growth, modern infrastructure, digital transformation, environmental sustainability, innovation, and inclusive development. Tourism has the potential to become one of the key pillars supporting this national vision by generating large-scale employment, encouraging entrepreneurship, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting balanced regional development.

Against this background, the present study examines the current status of tourism development in India, identifies the major challenges affecting the sector, and analyses future prospects in the context of Vikasit Bharat 2047. The paper also proposes policy recommendations aimed at creating a resilient, competitive, and sustainable tourism ecosystem capable of supporting India's long-term developmental aspirations.

Objectives of the Study

The present research seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the current status and significance of tourism development in India.
2. To identify the major problems and challenges affecting the growth of the tourism sector.
3. To analyse the contribution of tourism towards employment generation, economic growth, and regional development.
4. To evaluate the role of government initiatives in promoting tourism.
5. To examine the prospects of tourism in achieving the objectives of Vikasit Bharat 2047.
6. To suggest policy recommendations for sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

Research Methodology

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature and is based entirely on **secondary data**. Information has been collected from authentic and reliable sources including publications of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, NITI Aayog, Reserve Bank of India, UN Tourism, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), World Bank reports, academic journals, books, and research articles. Government policy documents relating to the Vikasit Bharat 2047 vision have also been reviewed to understand the strategic importance of tourism in India's long-term development agenda.

The collected information has been analysed through qualitative interpretation supported by descriptive statistics reported by official sources. Comparative analysis has been employed to examine existing tourism policies, identify sectoral challenges, and evaluate future opportunities for sustainable tourism development.

Literature Review

Tourism has evolved into a strategic sector that contributes significantly to economic development, employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, cultural preservation, and regional integration. Recent literature highlights a transition from conventional tourism models towards sustainable, technology-enabled, and community-centred tourism, reflecting changing global priorities and visitor expectations.

The **World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2024)** reported that India's travel and tourism sector has recovered strongly following the COVID-19 pandemic. The sector contributed over ₹19 trillion to the national economy in 2023 and supported approximately 43 million jobs, demonstrating tourism's role as a major economic driver. The report further projects continued expansion through domestic tourism, infrastructure investment, and increased international visitor spending.

According to the **Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2025)**, India has experienced sustained growth in domestic tourism due to improved road connectivity, airport expansion, digital tourism platforms, and government-supported destination development. Programmes such as Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD have enhanced tourism infrastructure while promoting heritage conservation and regional economic development. UN Tourism has consistently emphasized that sustainable tourism should balance economic growth with environmental protection and social inclusion. Contemporary tourism planning therefore extends beyond increasing visitor numbers and incorporates biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, responsible resource utilization, and local community participation. Sustainable destination management has consequently become a central principle of tourism policy worldwide.NITI Aayog has identified tourism as one of the sectors capable of accelerating India's transition towards a developed economy under the Vikasit Bharat 2047 vision. Its policy roadmap emphasizes investment-friendly regulations, digital transformation, public-private partnerships, improved connectivity, destination competitiveness, and sustainable infrastructure as essential components of long-term tourism growth. Recent research has also highlighted the growing role of digital technologies in tourism management. Artificial intelligence, smart destination management, digital payment systems, virtual reality, and data-driven visitor management are increasingly improving tourist experiences while supporting destination planning. Digital innovations enable governments and tourism operators to manage tourist flows, improve accessibility, and enhance marketing efficiency.Several researchers have observed that despite India's exceptional cultural and natural diversity, numerous structural challenges continue to restrict tourism growth. These include inadequate sanitation, poor last-mile connectivity, overcrowding at popular destinations, inconsistent service quality, environmental degradation, safety concerns, and limited availability of trained tourism professionals. Unless these issues are addressed through coordinated policy interventions, India's global tourism competitiveness may remain below its potential.Emerging literature on **Vikasit Bharat 2047** further argues that tourism should not be viewed solely as a service industry but as an integrated development sector influencing transport, urban development, digital infrastructure, culture, entrepreneurship, and employment. Achieving the long-term vision requires a holistic approach where tourism policies complement infrastructure development, environmental sustainability, and local economic participation.

Overall, existing literature demonstrates broad agreement regarding tourism's contribution to economic development. However, many studies focus either on economic indicators or destination-specific issues, while comparatively few examine tourism through the integrated policy framework of **Vikasit Bharat 2047**, combining sustainability, digital transformation, governance, infrastructure, and inclusive growth.

Table 1. Summary of Selected Literature

Author/Organisation	Year	Major Findings	Research Gap
WTTC	2024	Tourism significantly contributes to India's GDP and employment and has recovered strongly after COVID-19.	Limited discussion of long-term policy integration.
Ministry of Tourism	2025	Infrastructure and destination development programmes have strengthened domestic tourism.	Focuses primarily on implementation rather than future strategy.
UN Tourism	2024	Sustainable tourism should integrate economic, environmental, and social objectives.	Limited India-specific policy recommendations.
NITI Aayog	2026	Tourism is identified as a growth engine under Vikasit Bharat 2047 with emphasis on investment and regulatory reforms.	Requires empirical evaluation of implementation.
Recent Academic Studies	2023–2025	Digital tourism, smart destinations, and sustainability improve competitiveness.	Need for integrated analysis within India's long-term development vision.

Research Gap

The review of existing literature indicates that considerable research has been undertaken on tourism's contribution to economic growth, employment generation, destination management, and sustainable development. Government reports have also documented several initiatives aimed at strengthening tourism infrastructure and improving destination competitiveness.

Nevertheless, three significant gaps remain.First, most previous studies evaluate tourism from either an economic or environmental perspective without integrating both dimensions into a comprehensive development framework. Second, relatively limited scholarly work has examined the tourism sector within the policy framework of **Vikasit Bharat 2047**, particularly concerning its role in supporting inclusive economic growth, regional development, digital transformation, and sustainable infrastructure.

Third, existing literature often discusses individual government programmes independently, whereas there is limited research assessing how these initiatives collectively contribute towards India's long-term developmental aspirations.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to bridge these gaps by analysing tourism development through the integrated lens of **economic growth, sustainability, governance, digital transformation, and the Vikasit Bharat 2047 vision**, while offering policy recommendations that support long-term national development.

Current Status of Tourism Development in India

India is one of the world's most diverse tourism destinations, offering cultural, historical, religious, ecological, medical, adventure, wellness, and business tourism experiences. The country's tourism industry has demonstrated remarkable resilience following the COVID-19 pandemic, with domestic tourism recovering more rapidly than international tourism. Improvements in road networks, airport infrastructure, digital payment systems, and online travel platforms have enhanced accessibility and convenience for travellers.Domestic tourism continues to dominate the Indian tourism market. Pilgrimage tourism remains one of the largest contributors, with destinations such as Varanasi, Ayodhya, Tirupati, Vaishno Devi, Kedarnath, and Shirdi attracting millions of visitors annually. Similarly, heritage tourism centred around UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the Taj Mahal, Hampi, Khajuraho, Jaipur, and Ajanta-Ellora, continues to strengthen India's international tourism profile.

The Government of India has adopted several flagship initiatives to strengthen tourism infrastructure. Programmes such as **Swadesh Darshan**, **PRASHAD**, **Dekho Apna Desh**, **Incredible India 2.0**, and the expansion of **e-Visa facilities** have enhanced destination accessibility, promoted cultural heritage, and encouraged both domestic and foreign travel. Simultaneously, investments in highways, airports, railway stations, inland waterways, and digital infrastructure under national infrastructure programmes have significantly improved tourist mobility.

Medical tourism has also emerged as a rapidly expanding segment due to India's internationally recognised healthcare professionals, comparatively affordable treatment costs, and increasing availability of advanced medical facilities. Likewise, wellness tourism based on Ayurveda, Yoga, naturopathy, and holistic healthcare has attracted visitors seeking preventive and alternative healthcare experiences.

Despite these achievements, India's global tourism competitiveness remains below its full potential due to persistent infrastructural, institutional, and environmental challenges.

Problems and Challenges in Tourism Development

Although India possesses abundant tourism resources, multiple factors continue to restrict the sector's long-term development.

7.1 Inadequate Infrastructure

Many tourism destinations continue to experience inadequate road connectivity, poor sanitation, limited public transport, insufficient accommodation facilities, and weak digital infrastructure. Rural and ecotourism destinations are particularly affected by inadequate investment.

7.2 Environmental Degradation

Rapid urbanisation, unregulated tourism, plastic waste, water pollution, deforestation, and excessive visitor pressure threaten ecological sustainability. Popular hill stations, beaches, pilgrimage centres, and wildlife reserves increasingly face problems associated with carrying capacity and environmental degradation.

7.3 Regional Imbalance

Tourism development remains concentrated in a limited number of states while several regions possessing significant tourism potential continue to receive comparatively little investment. This imbalance restricts inclusive regional development and reduces opportunities for local employment generation.

7.4 Human Resource Constraints

The tourism industry requires trained professionals in hospitality, language interpretation, digital marketing, destination management, tour operations, and customer service. However, shortages of skilled personnel continue to affect service quality and visitor satisfaction.

7.5 Safety and Security

Although considerable improvements have been achieved, concerns regarding tourist safety, particularly among international travellers and women tourists, continue to influence destination selection and international perception.

7.6 Climate Change

Extreme weather events, glacier retreat, coastal erosion, biodiversity loss, and increasing temperatures have begun affecting tourism destinations across India. Climate resilience must therefore become an integral component of future tourism planning.

Table 2. Major Challenges Affecting Tourism Development

Challenge	Impact on Tourism	Suggested Policy Response
Inadequate infrastructure	Reduced accessibility and visitor satisfaction	Investment in multimodal connectivity and public amenities
Environmental degradation	Declining destination quality	Sustainable tourism practices and carrying-capacity management
Regional imbalance	Uneven economic development	Promotion of emerging destinations and rural tourism
Skill shortages	Lower service quality	Hospitality education, vocational training, and digital skills
Safety concerns	Reduced tourist confidence	Improved policing, surveillance, and emergency response systems
Climate change	Increased vulnerability of destinations	Climate-resilient infrastructure and conservation programmes

8. Tourism Development and Vikasit Bharat 2047

The vision of **Vikasit Bharat 2047** seeks to transform India into a developed nation characterised by high economic productivity, inclusive growth, technological innovation, sustainable infrastructure, environmental responsibility, and improved quality of life. Tourism possesses considerable potential to contribute towards each of these objectives.

From an economic perspective, tourism stimulates investment, creates employment opportunities across multiple sectors, generates foreign exchange earnings, and supports entrepreneurship. Unlike many capital-intensive industries, tourism provides employment opportunities across diverse educational and income groups, making it particularly significant for inclusive development.

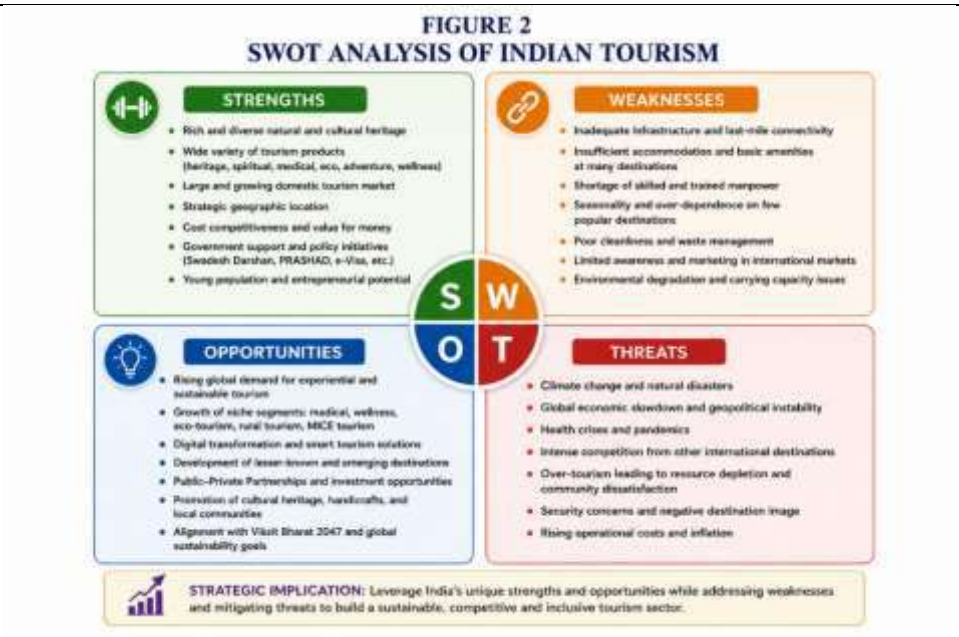
Tourism also supports balanced regional development by creating livelihood opportunities in rural, tribal, coastal, and mountainous regions where industrialisation may be limited. Community-based tourism encourages local participation while preserving indigenous traditions, crafts, cuisine, and cultural heritage.

Digital transformation represents another important dimension of Vikasit Bharat 2047. Artificial intelligence, smart tourism platforms, digital ticketing systems, multilingual mobile applications, virtual reality experiences, and integrated visitor management systems can substantially improve tourist experiences while supporting evidence-based policy making.

Sustainability will remain central to India's future tourism strategy. Responsible tourism practices, renewable energy utilisation, waste management systems, biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, and environmentally sensitive infrastructure must become integral components of destination development. Such measures ensure that tourism contributes to economic growth without compromising natural and cultural resources for future generations.



FIGURE 2
SWOT ANALYSIS OF INDIAN TOURISM



Results and Discussion

The analysis indicates that India possesses exceptional comparative advantages in tourism due to its cultural diversity, historical heritage, natural resources, religious significance, and rapidly improving infrastructure. Government initiatives implemented during the last decade have strengthened destination accessibility, digital connectivity, and tourism promotion. However, tourism growth remains constrained by infrastructure deficiencies, environmental pressures, institutional fragmentation, and uneven regional development. Existing policies have primarily focused on infrastructure creation, while comparatively less attention has been devoted to destination management, carrying-capacity assessment, climate resilience, and community participation. The findings further suggest that achieving the objectives of Vikasit Bharat 2047 requires tourism policies that integrate economic development with environmental sustainability and social inclusion. Investment in smart tourism technologies, digital governance, skill development, public-private partnerships, and sustainable destination planning can significantly enhance India's global competitiveness. Moreover, tourism should be viewed not merely as a service sector but as a catalyst for balanced regional development, employment generation, cultural preservation, and innovation. Strengthening institutional coordination between central, state, and local governments will be essential for ensuring long-term success.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the analysis of tourism development in India and the objectives of Vikasit Bharat 2047, the following policy recommendations are proposed to enhance the competitiveness, sustainability, and inclusiveness of the tourism sector.

10.1 Strengthening Tourism Infrastructure

The Government should continue investing in multimodal transport infrastructure, including highways, airports, railways, waterways, and last-mile connectivity to tourist destinations. Priority should be given to improving sanitation facilities, tourist information centres, parking infrastructure, public transport, and digital connectivity in both urban and rural destinations. Infrastructure development should also incorporate universal accessibility for elderly persons and tourists with disabilities.

10.2 Promoting Sustainable Tourism

Environmental sustainability should become a central pillar of tourism planning. Destination-specific carrying-capacity assessments, scientific waste management systems, renewable energy adoption, biodiversity conservation, and eco-friendly accommodation should be encouraged. Tourism policies should balance economic development with ecological preservation to ensure long-term sustainability.

10.3 Enhancing Digital Transformation

The adoption of digital technologies should be accelerated to improve visitor experiences and destination management. Artificial Intelligence, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), smart tourism applications, integrated ticketing platforms, multilingual information systems, virtual reality, and digital payment ecosystems can improve efficiency while strengthening India's international competitiveness.

10.4 Skill Development and Capacity Building

Hospitality education and vocational training programmes should be expanded to address shortages of skilled manpower. Greater emphasis should be placed on language proficiency, customer relationship management, digital marketing, entrepreneurship, and sustainable tourism practices. Collaboration between universities, tourism institutes, and industry stakeholders can improve workforce readiness.

10.5 Encouraging Community Participation

Community-based tourism should be promoted to ensure that local populations directly benefit from tourism development. Financial incentives, capacity-building programmes, and support for local artisans, homestays, handicrafts, and traditional cultural activities can improve rural livelihoods while preserving cultural heritage.

10.6 Strengthening Public–Private Partnerships

Collaboration between government agencies and private investors can accelerate destination development, improve tourism infrastructure, and enhance service quality. Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) should be encouraged for convention centres, eco-tourism parks, heritage conservation projects, and smart tourism initiatives.



Table 3. Policy Recommendations for Tourism Development under Vikasit Bharat 2047

Policy Area	Existing Challenge	Recommended Action	Expected Outcome
Infrastructure	Poor connectivity and inadequate facilities	Invest in roads, airports, railways, sanitation, and digital infrastructure	Improved accessibility and visitor satisfaction
Sustainability	Environmental degradation	Carrying-capacity management, waste management, renewable energy	Sustainable destination development
Digital Tourism	Limited technological integration	AI, GIS, smart tourism platforms, digital payments	Better tourist experience and efficient management
Human Resources	Skill shortages	Hospitality education and vocational training	Improved service quality
Community Participation	Limited local benefits	Promote rural tourism, homestays, local entrepreneurship	Inclusive economic growth
Governance	Fragmented institutional coordination	Strengthen inter-agency collaboration and PPPs	Efficient tourism administration

Conclusion

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors of the Indian economy, contributing significantly to employment generation, regional development, cultural preservation, and foreign exchange earnings. India's remarkable diversity of natural landscapes, historical monuments, religious destinations, traditional knowledge systems, and cultural heritage provides a strong foundation for sustained tourism growth. Government initiatives implemented over the past decade have substantially improved tourism infrastructure, destination accessibility, digital services, and promotional activities.

Nevertheless, the sector continues to face important challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, environmental degradation, climate vulnerability, regional disparities, skill shortages, and governance-related constraints. Addressing these issues requires a coordinated and evidence-based policy approach that integrates sustainability, technological innovation, community participation, and institutional collaboration.

The vision of **Vikasit Bharat 2047** presents a unique opportunity to reposition tourism as a strategic instrument for inclusive economic transformation. Investments in sustainable infrastructure, smart tourism technologies, destination management, entrepreneurship, and human resource development can significantly enhance India's global competitiveness while ensuring equitable regional development. The study concludes that tourism should not merely be viewed as a service industry but as a multidimensional development sector capable of supporting national economic growth, preserving cultural identity, promoting environmental sustainability, and improving the quality of life for local communities. If supported through comprehensive policy reforms and responsible governance, tourism can become one of the principal drivers of India's journey towards becoming a developed nation by 2047.

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