



**FEASIBILITY OF DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN PALGHAR
DISTRICT: MAHARASHTRA**

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Abstract

Rural tourism is a latest spinoff of tourism sector that has grown up to be a potential business in its own space. Rural tourism is a form of nature based tourism that open up the rural life, culture, art and heritage at rural locations, thereby favoring the local communities socially and economically. Such form of tourism has created tremendous impact on the local economy and socio-cultural scenario of the concern area on one hand and carries a potential scope for the rural residents on the other hand. Maharashtra abounds in numerous tourist attractions ranging from ancient cave temples, unspoiled beaches, ancient historical forts and monuments, forests and wildlife, unique hill stations, pilgrimage centers, and a rich tradition of fairs and festival, art and culture. which act as an incentive to promote local, socio-economic and cultural changes and lifestyle of the people residing in and around this tourist location and also to find out various constraints and possibilities of tourism development in the study area.

Keywords: *Rural Tourism, Impacts, Challenges, Opportunities, Historic Tourism, Leisure Tourism, Spiritual Tourism.*



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INTRODUCTION

Tourism growth potential can be harnessed as a strategy for Rural Development. The development of a strong platform around the concept of Rural Tourism is definitely useful for a

country like India, where almost 74% of the population resides in its 7 million villages. Across the world the trends of industrialization and development have had an urban centric approach. Alongside, the stresses of Urban lifestyles have led to a “counter urbanization” syndrome. This has led to growing interest in the rural areas. At the same time this trend of urbanization has led to falling income levels, lesser job opportunities in the total areas leading to an urbanization syndrome in the rural areas. Rural Tourism is one of the few activities which can provide a solution to these problems. Besides, there are other factors which are shifting the trend towards rural tourism like increasing levels of awareness, growing interest in heritage and culture and improved accessibility, and environmental consciousness. In the developed countries, this has resulted in a new style of tourism of visiting village settings to experience and live a relaxed and healthy lifestyle. This concept has taken the shape of a formal kind of Rural Tourism.

Rural tourism brings people of different culture, faiths, languages and life style, close to one another and it provide a broader outlook of life. It not only generates employment for the people but it also develops social, cultural and educational values. Rural tourism is an opportunity for rural development. Rural tourism is one of the opportunities that rural communities might consider to improve productivity and incomes. Sustainable rural tourism can generate long term benefits for villagers.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the potentialities of rural tourism in the study area.
- To examine the factors which are responsible for the development of tourism in the study area.
- To find out the impact of rural tourism upon the socio-economic conditions of the villagers.
- To identify various challenges of rural tourism.
- To identify the essential elements for development of rural tourism.

METHODOLOGY

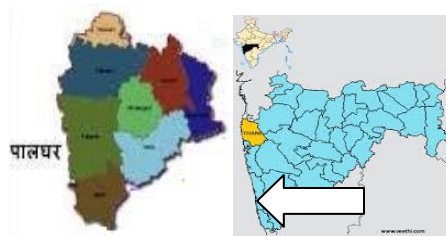
The required information's are collected from secondary data sources. Primary data and information's are collected through field survey and participant observation. Secondary data are collected from various relevant books, journals etc.

STUDY AREA

Palghar District is a district in northern Maharashtra State in western India. On 1 August 2014, the Maharashtra State government announced the formation of the 36th district of Maharashtra, when a new Palghar District was carved out of the old Thane district; it comprised the talukas of

Palghar, Vada, Vikramgad, Jawhar, Mokhada, Dahanu, Talasari and Vasai-Virar. At the 2011 Census, the talukas now comprising the district had a population of 2,990,116. District lies between 19.697029° North latitudes and 72.771249 ° East longitudes. It covers an area about 5344 sq. kms.

The district is bounded by Thane and Nashik Districts on the east and northeast, and by Valsad District of Gujarat state and Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli on the north. The Arabian Sea forms the western boundary, while Vasai-Virar is part of Mumbai Metropolitan Region.



FINDINGS

Tourism in the study area

Palghar is the 36th District of state of Maharashtra, located on the western coast of India with a 85 km long coastline along the lush green Konkan region. The main river flowing through the district is the Vaitarna. The river has many tributaries; two important of them (within the boundaries of this district) are Barvi and Bhatsa. Vaitarna, the largest of Konkan Rivers rises in the Tryambak hills in Nashik district, opposite to the source of Godavari, The river flows across Shahapur, Vada and Palghar talukas and enter the Arabian Sea through a wide estuary off Arnala. Vaitarna River is 154 km long and has a drainage area that practically covers the entire northern part of the district. It has a number of tributaries; the most important of them are Pinjal, Surya, Daherja and Tansa. Ulhas river which flows to Arabian see is Vasai creek, district's southern border. Arnala Island is located in Vasai taluka, at the entrance to the Vaitarna estuary. Palghar abounds in numerous tourist attractions ranging from ancient cave temples, unspoiled beaches, ancient historical forts and monuments, forests and wildlife, unique hill stations, pilgrimage centers, and a rich tradition of fairs and festival, art and culture. So, the campaign slogan for Maharashtra Tourism is “**MAHARASHTRA UNLIMITED!**”

Cultural tourism

It is concerned with the culture, religion, history and archeology of local area and people. *Ganeshotsava, Shimga (Holi), Diwali, Ramnavami, Dasara, Narali Pourmina, Hanuman Jayanti, Muharram, Shiv Jayanti, Ambedkar Jayanti* etc are the important religious festivals celebrated in Palghar region. Vasai festival is celebrated in the Palghar district. These festivals often form the source of tourists attraction.

Village based tourism

It is a type of tourism in which tourists share in village life and villagers gain economic and other benefits from tourist activities. Tourists often come to witness the simple rural life. The traditional way of life right from their attire to their food, forms a delightful destination for tourists.

Konkan is endowed with four major economic resources viz. agriculture, maritime fishery, abundance of mineral deposits and tourism activity. Konkan is famous for paddy and large areas of land have been brought under paddy cultivation. In addition to that, there are attractive plantations of Coconut, Taad , Areca nut which are attractive destinations for the tourists. Fishing is the main activity of Koli community, and the coast of district is rich in fish and other marine organisms e.g. Prawns Pomfret, Jitada , Mandeli , Karli, Bombil, Bangda, which are available in large number near the coast.

Adventure Tourism

Maharashtra is blessed with the western ghat and Sahyadri mountain ranges are heaven for trekkers. Tandulwadi near Safale, Kaldurg Near Palghar, Vikramgad, Kohoj, etc places are the heaven for trekkers. Tungreshwar, Jawhar, where tourist can enjoy wild life. These places are mostly visited by tourist during monsoon.

Historic Tourism

There are nearly 350 forts in Maharashtra, so it is said that forts are the glory of Maharashtra. Most of these forts are associated with the great Maratha ruler, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. It is believed that he developed as many as thirteen forts. Apart from these there are several small forts where local people provide basic facilities to tourist in study area. Such places having great potential of Rural tourism like Vasai Fort, Arnala Fort, Kelava Pankot fort, Shirgaoun Fort, Tarapur Fort, Dahanu Fort, etc.

Leisure Tourism

Maharashtra is also a global hot spot for those who just want to party or relax. The State has some of the loveliest beaches in India. Well-known beaches are Kalamb, Rajodi, Navapur, Arnala, Kelva, Shirgaon, Alevadi, Uchcheli, Tarapur, Dahanu Narpad, Gholvad, Bordi etc are the best beaches on the western coast of Arabian Sea. The local people built shacks and economy resorts on the beach side. Which can lead Rural Tourism beach side.

Great potential to be a hill station in the Thane District is Suryamal Village. These places having great potential of Rural Tourism

Spiritual Tourism

The birthplace of Buddhism and Hinduism and home to hundreds of monasteries and ancient temples, India may be the top destination in the world for spiritual tourism. Tungareshwar, Jivdhani, Mahalaxmi at Dahanu, Shitaladevi at Kelave, Ashapuri near Usarani, Nagesari near Vangav, etc. places which don't having facilities for tourist but having great potential of Rural Tourism

Ganeshpuri, Vajreshwari and Sativali we can find Natural Hot Spring Water But not developed as tourist place which is having great potential of Rural Tourism.

BARRIERS

Language Problem: Language problem in the locality have been found to be one of the barriers in the promotion of the tourism potential. People are found to be lacking proper fluency in Hindi, English or even Marathi language, for interaction with the tourists.

Insufficient Financial Support: Proper financial support can enhance the tourism potential of the region, which would help the folks to preserve the local culture, traditions, heritage, art forms etc, because according to mass thinking, maintaining culture is not commercially viable. Tourism can showcase the uniqueness of the place in the proper manner. The region is remotely located and even lacking any definite medium for transportation.

Lack of Trained tourist guide: The whole tourism concept is very indigenous in the region. Though initiative attempt have been taken by the local youths, yet the professionalism is lacking. They are lacking proper training to project in the manner from tourism perspective.

Lack of business planning skill: The region has great potential as an upcoming tourist spot. But, in order to bring it to a greater platform, sound business planning has to be made. The region needs proper enhancement of its beauty and resources skillfully to bring itself to light.

Lack of hygiene and Sanitation : The study area has lack of hygiene and sanitation facility. The Public Toilets are so unclean and odorous.

IMPACTS

Economic Impact : It will create employment for the rural people and generate income for them. The villagers will able to provide better food and education for their children.

Environment Impact : The rural people can learn to develop the healthy environment with proper sanitation, roads, electricity, telecommunication etc for better living on one side on other side the tourist can exploit natural resources and have a heavy impact on the environment. The rural people learn from the visitors how to lead a healthy and hygienic life.

Socio-Cultural Impact : The rural people will learn the modern culture. They will learn to come out of their traditional values and beliefs. They will adopt different practice of modern society

PROSPECTS

There is a scope of rural tourism in the study area. Rural tourism as supplemental income can contribute to the increase of well being of the rural inhabitants, the reduced out migration and to the development of the rural area. Tourism is increasing the life quality of the inhabitants of the study area and it reduces the differences between the rural and urban region. It seems important to know that the tourism cannot be a dominant sector of the region itself, however it may be a driving force with the other branches of the regional economy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Governments should recognize importance of rural tourism at priority and help in creating healthy competitive business environment. Government should try to generate data for decision-making bodies investing for developing the human resources, create adequate facilities and suitable infrastructure like accommodation, roads, airport facilities, rail facilities, local transport, communication links and other essential amenities become essential for development of rural tourism.

CONCLUSION

Rural tourism will emerged as an important instrument for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation, employment generation, environmental regeneration and development of remote areas and advancement of women and other disadvantaged groups in the country apart from promoting social integration and international understanding. It can help inflow to resources from urban to the rural economy. It can prevent migration of rural people to

urban. Both short-term and long-term planning, implementing and monitoring are vital in avoiding damage to rural areas. Environmental management, local involvement, sound legislation, sustainable marketing, and realistic planning are crucial for development of rural tourism. The government should promote rural tourism to ensure sustainable economic development and positive social change

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