

Ecotourism Potential in Western Rajasthan. A Case Study of Jaisalmer District

Rajeev Singh Chandel

Research Scholar, Center for Climate Change and Water Research

*E-mail: rajeevchandelsingh@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

In these days' ecotourism is most favored term in present day today life because it contains sustainability for tourism. It is totally new approach to the world. Ecotourism has always something to offer for everyone in respect of cultural, traditional and scenic beauty. This is basic for any country to develop its tourism using sustainability with good inflow of tourists all-round the year. India is highly filled with natural resources ranging from snow-capped mountains, precious mountains, desert, dense forest, sea resorts, blossoming valleys, rivers, holy places etc., which may be considered as places to visit tourists from all over world. Well ecotourism promotes travelers to travel nature based areas to appreciate and encourage the cultural and natural history of the environment by revenue, and taking care not to disturb the integrity of the ecosystem, while creating economic opportunities that make conservation and protection of natural resources advantages to the local people. So by this we can say that it is a key to sustainable ecological development. The present paper attempt to assess the ecotourism potential in Jaisalmer district which is situated in Rajasthan. There are various tourist spot identified. The people living in and around Jaisalmer can attain the economic as well as social benefits by the development.

Key Words: Ecotourism, Sustainability, Environment, Culture, Heritage and Tourists.

INTRODUCTION:

Jaisalmer is one of the most favored tourist destinations it is also nicknamed "The Golden City" because of its heritage sites. Jaisalmer is very old city which has facts to declare, tales to impress, uniqueness to

wonder and spirit to live. It offers facts about the courageous rulers and dweller of the bygone time, tales of unequalled valor, uniqueness in its beauty and undaunted spirit to keep us alive and kicking (Kanga

et al., 2011; Kanga et al., 2014). And due to this it is considered as a most favored tourism site. Jaisalmer town lies just beneath the heart of the Thar Desert. Heritage site also creates opportunities to the local people to earn for their basic necessities (Dorobantu, M. R., & Nistoreanu, P., 2012). Hence it also become important locations for generating

economic benefits for the locals (Gunn, Clare and Var, T., 2002). The activity of tourism touches the geographical aspects of a region and also has deep rooted effects on norms, moral values and economic structure (Jamal, T., & Stronza, A. 2009). Tourism is the major industry for local people in Jaisalmer.

Location Map:

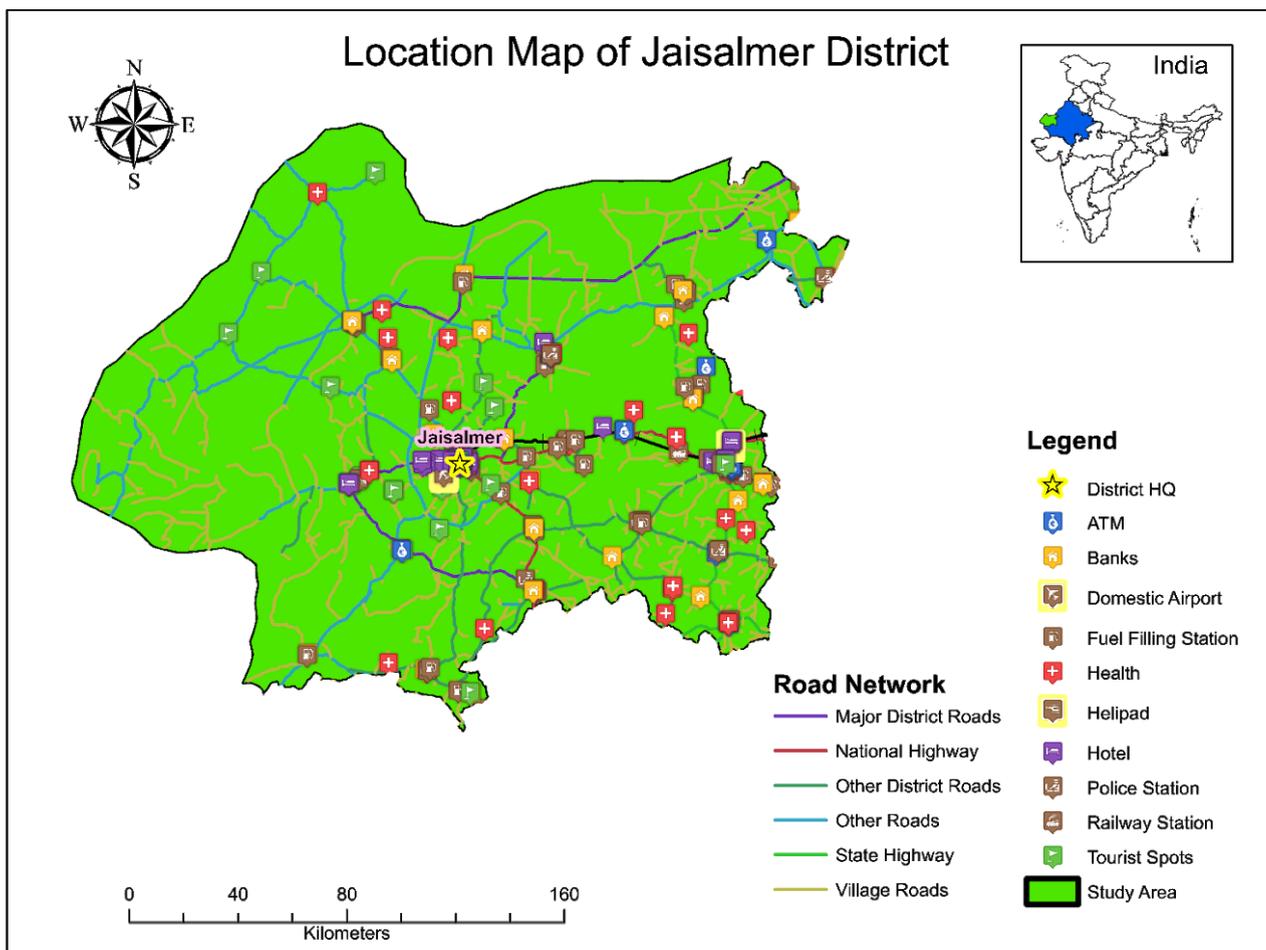


Fig. 1. Showing Location Map of Jaisalmer District

IDENTIFIED TOURIST SPOTS IN JAISALMER:

Jaisalmer Fort:

Jaisalmer Fort is one of the major attraction for the tourist. Jaisalmer Fort is splendidly called Golden Fort of Rajasthan. The Construction of Jaisalmer Fort was done by Raja Jaisal, Rajput ruler in the year 1156 AD. It ranks amongst the largest forts in the world. The Jaisalmer fort is totally based on golden and yellow mixed sandstone which provides magical look. Rising from the desert sands like a mirage, the fort is a real sight with its 99 turrets during night. The Fort stands very tall and proud displaying the magic of Rajasthani design and architecture.

Bada Bagh:

Bada Bagh means 'Huge Garden. Bada Bagh was constructed by Maharawal Jait Singh's in the beginning of 16th Century. His son Lunakaran completed the construction after the death of his father. The garden served as a memorial where the nobles and their families were cremated. The garden offers a stunning view. The place is isolated. For capturing best view of this garden tourist must visit it during sunrise and sunset.

Patwon-Ki-Haveli:

Patwon-Ki-Haveli is located in the main city. It was made by a famous trader named Guman Chand and his son. The large corridors and the decorated walls are excellent presentations of the art form that prevailed. The entire construction is made up of yellow sandstone. The grandeur and the architecture of the monument add immense value to the cultural heritage of the Jaisalmer city. One haveli is converted into a museum out of five havelis. The third haveli house is the works of local craftsmen of the bygone era which indicates pride and affection of Rajasthan.

The Desert Safari Sam Sand Dunes:

Sam Sand Dunes is famous for its desert camping, paragliding, adventure sports and camel rides. If tourist want to have a feel of the desert, there is need to undertake Desert Safari. Sam Sand Dunes is the idealistic location to set off for the Desert Safari. Tourist will love the safari on camelback that would take them along crests and troughs and could watch the picturesque sunset on the desert. Most off the tourist will prefer jeep safaris which help them to understand the nature very close. Most awaited desert festival is organized in the months of February and March. There tourist will see one of the most famous folk dance of Rajasthan,

camel races and other cultural events as well.

Thar Heritage Museum:

This Heritage is located at the main market of the city. This museum is founded by Laxmi Narayan Khatri. The museum contains history, culture, art and architecture of the famous Thar Desert. On the other hand, sea fossils aging over million years let us in on how the sea eventually became the Thar Desert. The museum houses are filled with unique ornaments of the ship of the desert and horses. Historical Documents and coins of Jaisalmer, ancient manuscripts and weapons are some of the collections found in this museum.

Gadisar Lake:

The Location of Gadisar Lake is near to the fort. It was constructed by the first ruler of the land, Raja Rawal Jaisal and later reconstructed by Maharawal Garsi in the year 1367 AD. Peoples of the city is totally depends on this lake for their basic needs of daily water. There are temples, Holy shrines and Chattris around the banks of this Gadisar Lake. The architecturally and artistically carved the main entrance is totally made up of yellow sandstone which looks very beautiful.

Nathmal Ki Haveli:

Nathmal Ki Haveli was built by two Muslim jeweler brothers not stone carvers on the order prime minister. Both the brothers started working on the opposite sides of the building which lead to a similar but non identical right and left side. Apart from its extraordinary outer carvings, this haveli is known for its beautiful and architectural interiors filled with paintings and equipped with modern facilities. An amalgamation of Islamic and Rajputana architecture, Nathmal Ki Haveli is well justified both religion as being one of the most beautiful haveli in Jaisalmer.

Jain temples:

This Jain Temple is located inside Jaisalmer Fort, Jain temple are a series of temples dedicated to Jain Tirthankaras and can be traced back to the 12th century. The temples are are known for their beautiful architectural style modelled after the Dilwara temple of situated in Mt. Abu sirohi district. This Jain temple is beautifully carved and well interconnected; these temples are a vision to behold and are completely made up of yellow sandstone.

Salim Singh Ki Haveli:

Among all the havelis in Jaisalmer, Salim Singh Ki Haveli is well known haveli for its distinctive and eye catching architecture view. It was built by the minister, Salim

Singh who wanted to make as high as the fort of Jaisalmer but was prohibited by the king at that time. It has 38 balconies with their own distinctive style of architecture and a well-known peacock shaped roof at the top. This haveli provides a good glimpse in the past and the photographs taken here would be very inspiring.

Kuldhara:

A well-known abandoned ghost town, Kuldhara was once a prosperous town occupied by Paliwal Brahmins. The reasons for why a whole city was abandoned within a night which is not clear but the popular belief holds the then state minister Salim Singh responsible for the same. The minister wanted to marry the village chief's daughter and therefore

delivered an ultimatum to the village chief to accept his demands or let the whole community face the consequences. Rather than accepting the minister's demands, the whole village decided to move away from the village. Before leaving, they cursed this place to never have any kind of human settlement and this has been proven true to this date. Visiting Kuldhara to get a glimpse of the past and get spooked by its tales.

Other attractions include Desert National Park, Badal Mahal, Akal Wood Fossil Park, Raja ka Mahal and Sanctuary, Silk Route Art Gallery and a very old Jaisalmer War Museum.

Tourist Arrival Trends in Jaisalmer Rajasthan:

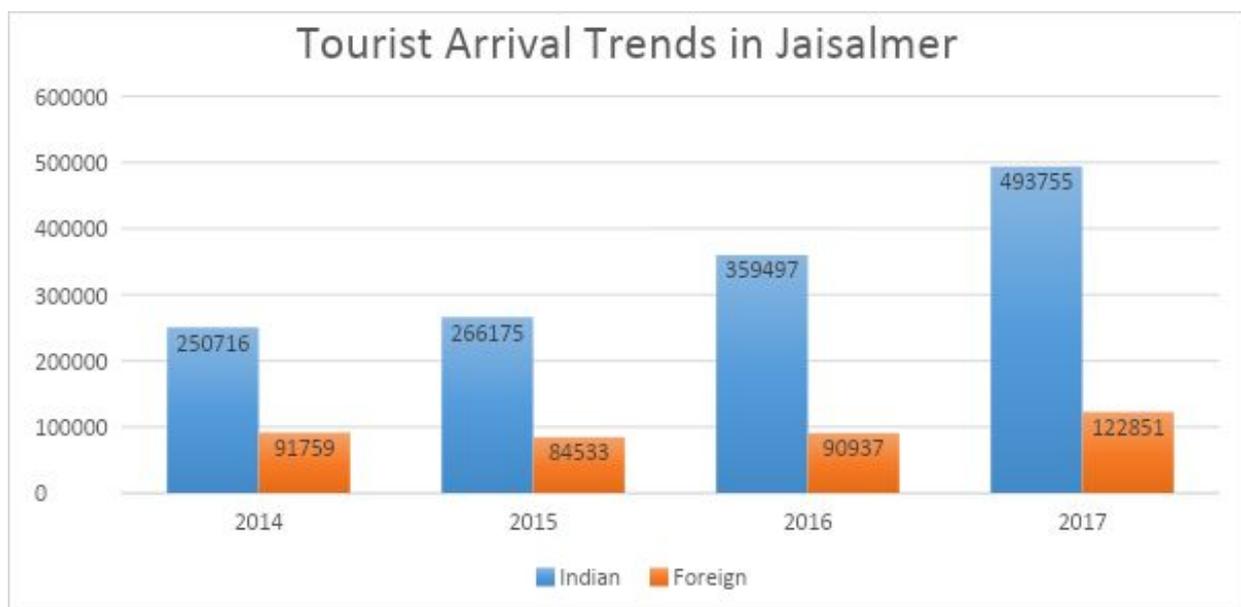


Fig: 2. Showing tourist arrival trends in Jaisalmer district.

(Data Source: Tourism Department Annual Progress Report 2017 - 18)

The above chart shows that tourism industry increasing day by day. But due to some issues it can varies.

THE VARIATION IN TOURISM IS CAUSED DUE TO THESE FACTORS:

Environment at Destination: It can be defined as the tourism is in its best form when the destination boasts of conducive climate. In contrast, any undesired changes in the environment such as high winds, flash floods, drought, and extreme climate can affect tourism adversely. For example, during a very high temperature summer month in India, people prefer to travel to colder climate regions like hill stations.

Economy of the Country: When any country is undergoing economic turbulence and when people are facing unemployment issues, tourism is affected adversely in this stage. On the other hand, when a country's economy is doing well and people can afford to spend money on leisure, tourism progresses.

Historical or Cultural Importance of Destination:

The place or destination of travel affects the tourism business of any country to a great extent. If the destination is of great

historical or cultural value then tourists will certainly like to visit the place for seeing monuments, castles, forts, ancient architecture, sculptures, caves, antic paintings and utensils, clothes, weapons, ornaments, and other allied heritage sites.

Religious Importance of Destination: In India the places of religious importance or worship of god are always flooded with tourists. At these religious places, tourism is at its peak at particular time periods in a year. The tourists often go on pilgrimage to find inner peace and invoke blessings of the deities they worship god and to cleanse their sins before death.

Technology:

Internet is found everywhere in the world. Tourists are also enjoying the benefits of Internet. While planning a tour, the tourists try to get the idea about the places they are going to visit, like the quality of amenities and services, and the attractions at the destination. Internet is the major source of sharing the views too, most of the tourist tell their experience regarding the visit on various platform. It creates positive and negative thought about the destination.



Fig: 3. Shows the Factor Affecting Tourism

(Source: Tourism - Sustained Development and Management by *S. Das et. al 2012*)

Research Importance of Destination

There are many tourists who visit places with the objective to studies and exploration the future possibilities. And there is a need for research to promotes tourism to generate revenue for the country. There are various sectors like as Archaeologists, Oceanographers, Geologists, Biologists and Zoologists, Architects and People researching Arts and Cultures seek places that have great value and significance in the field of research

Conclusion:

Although Jaisalmer is most favored ecotourism destination. The central and state government must do something about how to increase the foreign as well as local travelers. Various policies have already been sanctioned but due to lack of implementation and ignorance may adversely affect growth of the sector. So proper implementation is required. The main factors that have helped to change in governments' approach include: The awareness of the importance of tourism as a global, national and regional socioeconomic engine; the potential for tourism to contribute to environmental

management and enhancement; the profile of tourism as a tool for international development of the country; need to increase lobbying by industry. Governments must be motivated to play a collaborative and integral role in proper tourism management and planning and the private sector requires government assistance to ensure the sustainability of tourism.

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