

Sustainable Coastal Tourism Development in Ratnagiri District

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing global industry with much of the growing market focused around pristine natural and cultural environment. These include marine areas, forts, temples, forests, wildlife sanctuaries, waterfalls, beaches and different cultures. Ratnagiri district is an important district on the Konkan coast of Maharashtra. The district has potential for natural and cultural tourism. In recent times, increasing tourism along the Konkan coast has been the main reason for the development of the coastal area and it is also responsible for many of the current coastal problems. For this, it is necessary to develop sustainable tourism on the coast of Ratnagiri district. Sustainable tourism is consciously planned to benefit local residents, respect local culture, conserve natural resources and educate both tourists and local residents about the importance of conservation. So, the present research paper focuses on the sustainable tourism development in Ratnagiri district (coastal area). The present research work has based on both primary and secondary data.

Keywords: Natural & cultural environment, Sustainable tourism, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Tourism is playing an important role in the economic development of a developing country like India. Employment opportunities are created in the service industries related to transportation, hospitality and entertainment. Tourism provides employment to the locals and can also benefit the government. However, tourism can pose a threat to habitats, wildlife, water quality, congestion and disruption of local culture. As a result, the resources on which tourism depends can be destroyed. In contrast, sustainable tourism benefits local residents, respects local culture, conserves natural resources, maximizes profits for the local community, and educates tourists and locals about the importance of conservation.

Ratnagiri district is located on the Arabian coast in the south-western part of Maharashtra, India. It is a part of the Konkan region of Maharashtra. Ratnagiri attracts many historical temples, monuments and vast beaches. In addition, the beauty of the waves, tides, sandy beaches as well as the sunset and sunrise with a healthy and comfortable climate also attracts tourists. Konkani culture and festivals are another reason to attract tourists. This feature of the ethnicity of the Ratnagiri people invites tourists for a rich and varied experience. This is the reason for developing the region as a tourist destination.

As per the District Tourism Plan 2013, detailed information about the current state of tourism in Ratnagiri district and recommendations for improvement has been made. Ratnagiri district has potential opportunities for natural beauty, historical sites and temples, beautiful beaches, creeks, forts etc. to promote tourism domestically and internationally. Many of these places are especially suitable for beach tourism. But there is an opportunity to develop sustainable tourism that will not harm the conservation of marine habitats and natural beauty while creating tourism for employment generation or as a source of income for the local people.

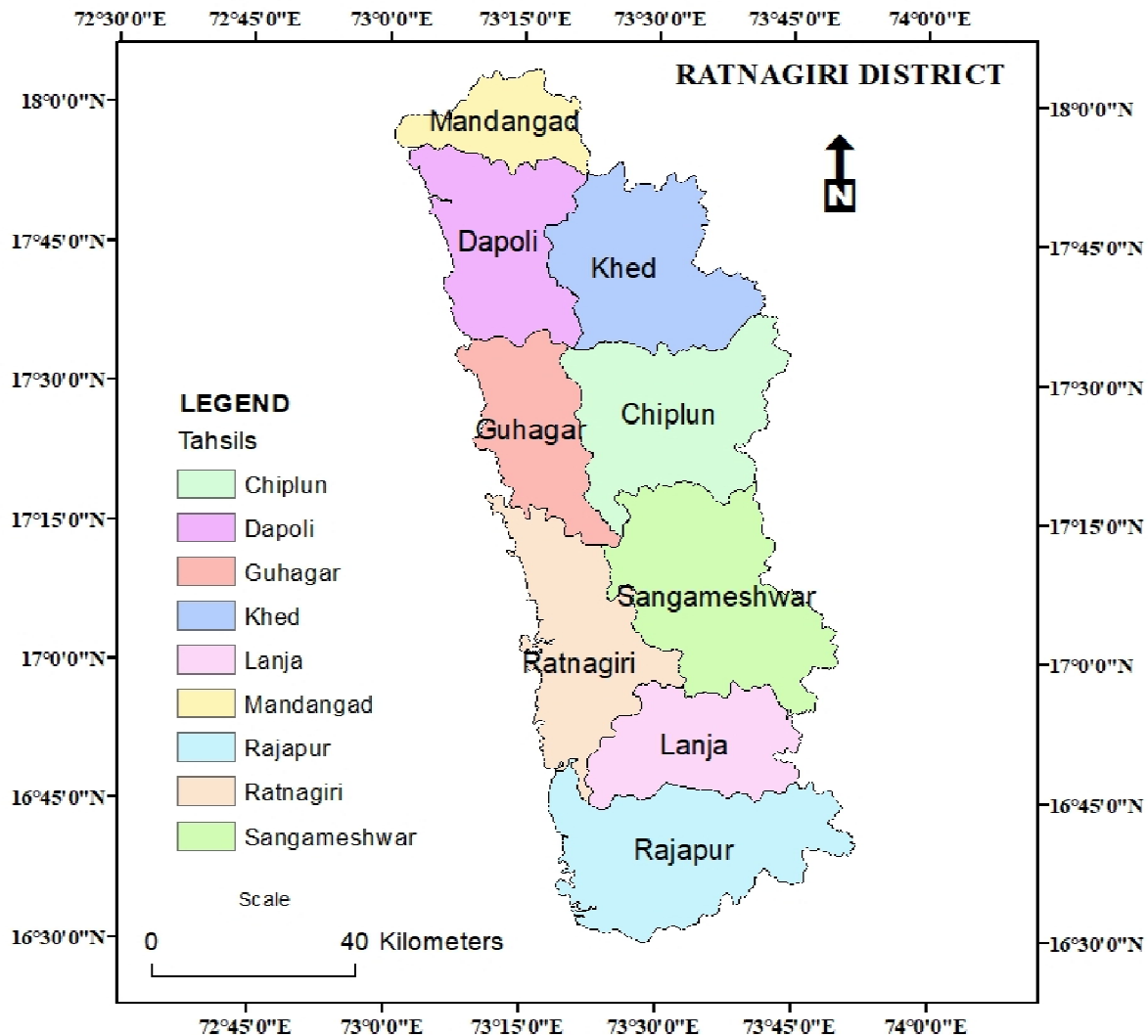
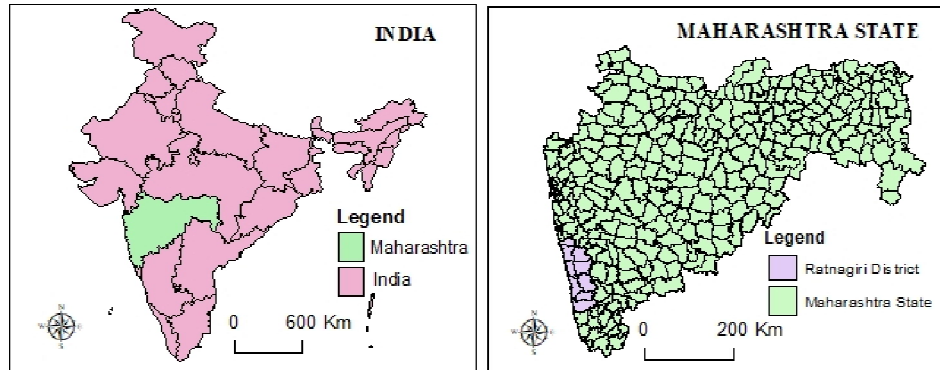
Meaning of Tourism

The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people "travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" (World Tourism Organization). Tourism, in general, is travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes.

Meaning of Sustainable tourism

Sustainable development means "the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Sustainable tourism is an approach that has recently gained much popularity in the academic and business world. The concept of sustainable tourism is a system that balances tourism with its partner relationships, taking advantage of the strengths and opportunities of the consequences of globalization. Countries with culture and nature like India have adopted the path of sustainable tourism. E.g. Turkey, China, Thailand and Malaysia etc.

LOCATION MAP OF STUDY AREA



Objectives

The present study has concentrated on to the sustainable tourism development of the Ratnagiri district. Therefore, the objectives of the current study are given below.

- 1) To take review the major challenges in the development of tourism in Ratnagiri district
- 2) To do SWOT analysis of the tourism of the Ratnagiri district
- 3) To suggest measures for Sustainable Tourism Development in Ratnagiri district

Study Area

For the present research paper, Ratnagiri district is selected as a study region. Ratnagiri district is well-known due to its geography, culture, history, etc. Ratnagiri district is located in the konkan region of Maharashtra. Ratnagiri district lies between 15° 36' north to 18° 5' north latitude and between 73° 5' east to 74° 36' east longitude. It is located in konkan region and Mumbai administrative area. The total area of Ratnagiri district is 8208 km². To the west of the district is Arabian Sea to the east is Satara, Sangali and Kolhapur to the south lies Sindhudurg and to the north lies Raigad district. In the eastern part of sahyadri mountain ranges are present which about 180 km is and it possesses coastline of about 167 km. There are nine tehsils places in the distractive Ratnagiri, Chiplun, Khed, Sangmeshwar, Dapoli, Mandangad, Guhagar, Rajapur and Lanja.

Research Methodology

The present research work is based on both primary and secondary data. This work is mainly based on field observation. It consists mainly of tourists and local peoples, and informal discussions with those who provide support facilities to tourists. Most of the research work was based on secondary information. That is, district census booklets, statistical abstract and other reliable publications, SOI topographical articles, news reports, prints, maps, journals, several websites etc.

Potential Tourist Destination in Ratnagiri District

The potential tourist destinations in Ratnagiri district are classified into three sections namely Religious, Historical and Natural Tourist. Natural tourist destinations are subdivided into four categories: waterfalls, beaches and hot springs and hill stations. These places have been categorized according to the priority capacity of some of the potential tourist destinations in the district.

Table No. 1

Sr. No.	Types of Tourism Potential	Name of the Potential Tourist Places
1	Religious	Anjarle, Dabhol, Asud, Adivare, Velneshwar, Kasheli, Hatis, Chinchkhari, Tikleshwar, Kasba, Ambav, Burband, Gondhale, Turambav, Bharane
2	Historical	Harnei, Panhalekazi, Govalkot-Govindgad, Sumargad, Gopalgad, Palshet, Bankot Jaigad, Ambolgad, Purnagad, Malgund, Kasba, Mahipatgad, , Rasalgad, , Mahipatgad, Ambdav
3	Naturals	
	1) Hill Stations	Machal, Ambet
	2) Beaches	Ganeshgule, Ladghar, Kolthare, Rohile , Tawsal, Madban, Ade, Karde, Undi, Malgund, Ambolgad, , Ambolgad, Bhandarpule, Ambet, Warwade, Karambavane
	3) Waterfalls	Nivali, Adare, Chuna-kolvan, Sawat Sada, Tivare
	4) Hot Springs	Unhavare, Rajewadi, Aravali,

Major Challenges of Tourism in Ratnagiri District

Being close to Goa, Ratnagiri could have capitalized on its natural capital but the potential remains locked due to the following factors:

1) Lack of proper marketing: with little promotion of tourist circuits, cultivation of good tourism sector operators within and outside the district to attract foreign and domestic tourists, the value from tourism has not been materialized for the districts beyond ad hoc tourist arrivals that remain unplanned and unregulated.

2) Poor Transportation linkages: current tourism is based on tourists having their own vehicles as public transportation is not oriented toward promoting tourism. Rail linkages are not adequate to serve tourism needs, and the nearest airports are at some distance.

3) Lack of Infrastructure, particularly in tourist areas: the absence of adequate services like a good range of hotels and eating houses, besides related water and sanitation, public transport and reliable electricity services have constrained the tourism industry. Tourists are also deprived of good banking services, poor signage's and tourist information, and a lack of tourist operators.

4) Existing tourism products are underutilized: even though there are good locations naturally, and some that have been developed to some extent, their potential has not been systematically harnessed. On the other hand, there may be a rush of tourists to some locations, but the parking and local traffic and hygiene management is wanting.

5) Limited Integration of Local Communities: leading to opportunities lost for realizing the benefits of tourism for local people. The exposure and training to local people on how to promote and manage tourism has been limited and larger operators seek to maximize the potential in areas like Goa and Karnataka. Local biodiversity conservation committees can be constituted and operationalized to regulate specific locations and promote local stakes in tourism.

6) Tourism has been inadequately resourced and funded: despite declaring this as a Tourism district, govt. funding made available to provide infrastructure and promote tourism has been vastly unequal to that required to harness the district's potential. Even when plans were drawn up, these were not funded well or prioritized for implementation.

SWOT Analysis

Tourism is an important industry in Ratnagiri district. The industry can develop based on local resources. This development can be seen as beneficial in terms of sustainable economic development but there are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks in relying on tourism for sustainable economic development. However, an attempt is made to the SWOT analysis of the Ratnagiri district tourism for its sustainable development.

Strengths

- 1) Availability of various tourist attractions such as beaches, waterfalls, natural beauty, religious places, forts, creeks, adventure sites, heritage monuments.
- 2) Alfonso is a region famous for mango and cashew production.
- 3) Good railway and road connectivity with major cities in India.
- 4) GI for Alfonso Mango

Weaknesses

- 1) Lack of awareness among stakeholders about the potential of tourism in Ratnagiri district.

- 2) Failure to convey tourism products and experience to tourists.
- 3) Major problem of road facilities and public transport connectivity in the district.
- 4) Lack of marketing in tourism sector
- 5) Hotel accommodation facilities for tourists are not properly developed
- 6) Lack of wayside facilities for tourists in the district.
- 7) Psychology of the local people is the weakness for the sustainable tourism development in the locality.

Opportunities

- 1) The coastline of Ratnagiri district could emerge as a great 'Geotourism' destination. 'Geotourism' can definitely be enhanced by identifying such various places on the coast and giving them the status of Geosites and converting them into Geoparks.
- 2) Existing beaches and creeks can be utilized for promotion of water based tourism, adventure sports and related recreational facilities.
- 3) Tourists going to Goa from Mumbai and Pune via Ratnagiri can stop at Ratnagiri.
- 4) A large number of tourists visiting Ganapatipule and Marleshwar can be encouraged to visit other places in the district.
- 5) Biodiversity can be conserved by developing 'nature tourism' in collaboration with the local community.
- 6) Integrated circuit of various tourist destinations can be advertised to provide complete tourism experience.

Threats

- 1) The beaches in Sindhudurg and Goa are more scenic and developed so tourists have options.
- 2) Loss of beauty through the developmental projects in the locality, e.g. Thermal Energy Plants, Atomic Power Plants, etc.
- 3) Environmental degradation due to conventional tourism development is also a threat that may affect on sustainability of the tourism in the locality.

Measures for promotion and improvement of sustainable tourism development in Ratnagiri district

From the SWOT analysis, it is evident that the Ratnagiri district has the great potentiality and opportunities for the development of tourism as a base of economic development. The Ratnagiri district can take advantage of its strengths for its opportunities for the sustainable

development of tourism by using sustainable tourism development approach. The following are the major measures for the sustainable tourism development that take advantage of its strengths and opportunities while reducing its threats and weaknesses.

1) Tourism in Ratnagiri district can be multi-faceted - regional culture, natural beauty, religious and historical resources as well as new health facilities, weekend tourism and nature tourism can provide new sources of employment to the local people and provide a source of entertainment to tourists.

2) Development of infrastructure in Ratnagiri district is a basic requirement for the development of tourism industry. The roads are in very bad condition which acts as a deterrent for many tourists. E.g. Improvement of travel routes - Roads / Railways / Airways are the basic requirements for the development of the tourism industry. It is also important to have better availability of banking, ATM and forex facilities.

3) In order to attract foreign tourists in Ratnagiri district, it is necessary to prepare information about tourist places and experiences on the international tourist map.

4) It is necessary to improve the quality of tourist infrastructure and services. The government needs to speed up the process of setting up more hotels with a decision at the policy level. E.g. Number and variety of living facilities, dining houses, roadside facilities and overall variety

5) Communication facilities need to be improved with easy access. E.g. Telephone / Fax / Internet etc. And there is a need for availability of communication guides with English and foreign languages as well as good provision of signs and information leaflets.

7) Security and safety system needs to be improved. Good parking facilities, side cleanliness and management of pilgrimage sites etc.

8) Development of environmentally sensitive tourism is necessary which will create employment opportunities for the local people and will not create human-animal conflict.

9) Passenger cruise ship service can be important for tourist attraction. This service has already started from Mumbai to Goa. There is also an opportunity to develop such services in Ratnagiri.

10) Some stakeholders suggest that the State Department is not capable of promoting and regulating tourism services at the local level. Therefore, planning and service regulation at the local level can be better if management is entrusted to local and private sector agencies to attract the private sector.

- 11) Co-benefits can be obtained by converting tourism with mangoes, cashews and related economic activities. There is potential for training and food-processing to develop Konkani products and markets.
- 12) Although the beaches are very beautiful, they are not kept clean. The culture of cleanliness should be implemented by the district administration.
- 13) The Ratnagiri district has the lack of trained qualitative human resources and it is harmful for the sustainable tourism development. Guide, language training courses should be taken for the local youth at the village level and professors should be appointed for these courses from reputed hospitality institutes. These courses should be started in all the tahsils of the district.
- 14) NGOs, private owners and local governments should encourage investment in the tourism industry. This can increase the potential of the tourism industry in the area. This way we can also get hospitality in group tours which are not available in most places at present.
- 15) Urgent need of Konkani Food Processing Training and tourism may create easy market to the Konkani food products and beverages.
- 16) The tourism information system will be useful for the planning and development of the tourism industry in Ratnagiri district and will lead to sustainable tourism development.
- 17) Publicity is essential for the development of tourism. This requires creating your own website. Local governments should create such websites and, if not affordable, use open sources of publicity like Facebook.
- 18) Given the need for sustainable tourism development, various stakeholders should focus on the use of environment friendly products. For this, strict laws must be enacted and enforced; otherwise sustainable tourism development will only be a dream.
- 19) MTDC is currently issuing licenses for tourist facilities (tourist resorts, tourist destinations and transportation). However, preference should be given only to trained persons who can provide quality services to tourists at the time of issuance of licenses.
- 20) Considering the environmental and cultural sustainability, we should focus on the conservation of our natural and cultural resources which is essential for the economic sustainability of the region.
- 21) For the sustainable development of tourism in the district, researchers should undertake projects such as tourism information systems, market profiling and analysis, sustainable tourism

policies and facts, economic impact assessment, environmental impact assessment, importance of micro-level tourism awareness programs, etc.

22) Public awareness is an important factor for the sustainable development of the tourism industry.

Conclusion

The study has shown that Ratnagiri district has more potential for tourism development and there is no doubt about it. There are some problems and obstacles in tourism development but, if tourism is properly planned, it will help increase income and create employment opportunities for the youth of Ratnagiri district which will reduce their migration to nearby cities.

From the above discussion, it is clear that Ratnagiri district has strengths and opportunities for sustainable tourism development and this will remove the weaknesses and threats in the region. If we consider the above recommendations, the sustainable development of the tourism industry in the district can be achieved with economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, social sustainability and cultural sustainability.

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