

# Infrastructural Issues in the development of Rural Tourism in Agra and Surroundings

**Dr D S Yadav**

*Associate Professor*

*RBS Management Technical Campus, Agra*

*Email-dsrbscollege@gmail.com*

## **Abstract:**

*Rural area of Agra and surroundings has a great potential for developing as a rural tourism destination specially Holipura, Korai Village, Kachhpura, Barara, Bateswar, Soorkuti, Kailash Temple (Two shiv Ling in same temple), Soron, Patna Vihar Bird Sanctuary, Chambal Safari etc having potential to attract tourists. Tourism is a key sector earning foreign exchange for Indian economy and contributing significantly to GDP. It can have positive and negative impacts on rural as well as urban communities. The government should encourage private enterprises to promote tourism in rural areas. The study is based on the both primary (questionnaire and interview) and secondary data available in books, journals, various websites. This paper describes the context and framework for assessing destination attractiveness in rural area of Agra and surroundings. The analysis highlights the importance of specific destination attraction elements as core appeals of the destination. In addition, this paper gives a glance into the development and prospects of rural tourism in the Agra and highlights various initiatives taken by the government for promoting tourism.*

**Keywords:** *Rural Tourism, Foreign Exchange, Private enterprises and Destination attractiveness*

## **Introduction:**

Rural Tourism is concept that includes all tourism activities taking place in rural area. The activities related to rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations and in villages, which have core competence in art & craft, handloom, and textiles as also an asset base in the natural environment. The intention is to benefit the local community economically and socially as well as enable interaction between tourists and local population for a mutually enriching experience.

The Tourist buys a 'holiday experience', not just accommodation or a few hours trip to a local visitor attraction. Research shows that for some people, if the activities are interesting and sufficiently absorbing, simple accommodation such as hostelling, camping or staying in a hut may be sufficient. While for others their choice of activity may be peaceful and tranquil and involve the opportunity to read and relax in a comfortable cottage. But simplicity does not mean poor quality.

Rural areas around the world are offering opportunities ranging from traditional countryside activities, walking, mountaineering, cycling, horse riding, fishing, bird watching, water sports.

## Basic Elements and Importance of Tourism Infrastructure:

Tourism infrastructure can be regarded as the physical elements that are designed and erected to cater for visitors. The strong relationship between tourism development and infrastructure has been theoretically established by a number of authors (Adebayo, Iweka, 2014).

Tourism infrastructure is the basis of tourism development, as well as a base for utilization of destination resources. The importance of tourism infrastructure is reflected in the fact that it can contribute to increasing the efficiency of production and distribution of tourism services, and, in some cases, such as remote/rural destinations, even increase the supply of tourism services.

According to Tourism & Transport Forum (Tourism & Transport Forum, 2012), tourism infrastructure is the supply chain of transport, social and environmental infrastructure collaborating at a regional level to create an attractive tourism destination.

**Transport infrastructure** in this chain provides destination access to tourists from the international and domestic markets, and includes roads, airports, and railways.

**Social infrastructure** relates to accommodation facilities in the form of rooms to accommodate tourists and other supporting physical structures for various kinds of activities and services that attract tourists. This infrastructure includes hotels, convention centers, stadiums, galleries, and other necessary facilities.

**Environmental infrastructure** is a natural value, and refers to national parks, natural sites, marine parks, and reserves which visitors can tour.

### Objectives of study:

1. To understand the need and Significance of Rural Tourism in Agra and surroundings.
2. To highlight the scopes of tourism in rural area
3. To study the effective Strategy for promoting Rural Tourism to attract tourists.
4. To find out the infrastructural Challenges to Rural Tourism in Agra and its surroundings.

**Method of Research:** The present paper is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data has been collected through structured questionnaires and on the spot interviews; efforts has made to get a specific number of responses.

The questionnaire was planned in four sections: First section of questionnaire is related to the Respondents profile incorporating the usual questions related to tourist demographics, i.e. name, gender, age, education, income, occupation and country/place of origin etc. Section two is aimed at understanding the attitude/aptitude/ interests/ priorities/preferences of the tourists, i.e. their preferred vacation time period, length of stay at Agra specially foreign and domestic tourist visiting to Tajmahal, Agra fort, Fatehpur Sikri Holipura, Korai Village, Kachhpura, Barara, Bateswar, Soorkuti, Kailash Temple (Two shiv Ling in same temple), Soron, Patna Vihar Bird Sanctuary, Chambal Safari etc to ind out their interest with regard to the various attractions and activities of this region and criteria used in selection of accommodation, transportation and other facilities and the sources of information for this region to visit here.

The third section specifically aims at getting the feedback of the tourists with regard to their interests, expectations and satisfaction levels, intended and actual stay at various places and the rating given by them to the various services available for them in this region.

The last section has open ended questions facilitating the respondents to express their views and suggestions on the core perspectives to make this region more attractive and impressive for tourists.

Sample size is 400 (Both Domestic and Foreigners).

The secondary data have been derived from various literature sources which include various research papers, news articles, books and websites. The findings (effective marketing strategies, benefits and challenges) and statement of the paper carries the effect of personal visit to different rural tourism spots and discussions with entrepreneurs, villagers, tourists, officials and other stakeholders.

### Tourist Arrivals:

Interestingly, foreign tourists have increased in Agra but there has been a dip in domestic visitors. In 2016, a total of 62 lakh tourists went to see the Taj Mahal and 22 lakh to the adjoining Agra Fort -- down from 65.13 lakh and 23.44 lakh respectively in 2017 (Economic Times, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2017).

According to Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department around 1.61 million foreign tourists visited Agra in 2017, up almost by 19% from the previous year.

Sources in the department quoted in news reports said the Taj has significantly boosted the foreign tourist arrivals in Uttar Pradesh by almost 13% in 2017. A detail tourist arrivals in Agra region given below (Table-1)-

**Table-1: Tourist arrivals in Agra**

REGIONAL OFFICE	TOURIST PLACE	2015			2016			2017		
		INDIAN	FOREIGN	TOTAL	INDIAN	FOREIGN	TOTAL	INDIAN	FOREIGN	TOTAL
		AGRA	1-BATESHWAR	875000	1800	876800	895000	2000	897000	896000
	2-AGRA	9466670	1345765	10812435	8970126	1362791	10332917	8654418	1614588	10269006
	3-MATHURA	6626000	25000	6651000	6630000	25100	6655100	7226700	26605	7253305
	4-VRINDAVAN	12600000	47890	12647890	12650000	48000	12698000	13788500	50880	13839380
	5-GOVARDHAN	12050000	8500	12058500	12090000	8600	12098600	13178100	9115	13187215

	6-KUSUM SAROVAR	2375000	1500	2376500	2378000	1550	2379550	2592020	1645	2593665
	7-BARSANA	3310500	1900	3312400	3316000	1950	3317950	3614440	2070	3616510
	8-NANDGAON	1890000	1400	1891400	1894000	1420	1895420	2064460	1505	2065965
	9-GOKUL	1030000	1100	1031100	1032000	1120	1033120	1124880	1185	1126065
	10-RADHAKUN D	4560000	1950	4561950	4570000	2000	4572000	4981300	2120	4983420
	11-MAHAVAN	440000	480	440480	445000	500	445500	485050	530	485580
	12-FATEHPUR SIKRI	615502	199279	814781	505195	146340	651535	498581	180336	678917
	13-SORAUN (ETAH)	5200000	10000	5210000	5250000	12580	5262580	5040000	13500	5053500
	14-BALDEV	NA	NA		1500000	1150	1501150	1642500	1220	1643720
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		61038672	1646564	62685236	62125321	1615101	63740422	65786949	1907399	67694348

Source: <http://uptourism.gov.in/site/writereaddata/siteContent/Tourist Arriva 2013 to2017.pdf>

### Foreign tourist spends their Money in Agra:

Tourists spent their money i.e. 34 %: Accommodation, 31 %: Food & Snacks, 5 %: Activities, 16 % in Shopping, 11 % in Travel and 3 % in Other heads.

### Identified Area Location for Rural Tourism in Agra and Surrounds:

Rural area of Agra and surroundings has a great potential for developing as a rural tourism destination specially Holipura, Korai Village (a tribal village), Kachhpura, Barara, Bateswar, Soorkuti, Kailash Temple (Two shiv Ling in same temple), Soron, Patna Vihar Bird Sanctuary, Chambal Safari etc having potential to attract tourists .

**Activities that Attracts Rural Tourism:** Rural tourism activities focus the participation in rural lifestyle. Villages of the Agra facilitate tourism because many villagers are hospitable and eager to welcome (and sometime even host) visitors who are visting to Agra region. Rich agriculture heritage in Agra also attract the tourists. Enhancement of rural tourism requires introducing activities in rural areas as given below-

- Attending local festivals or events
- Local foods, cuisine and/or drink
- Agricultural experiences
- Experiencing local culture and lifestyles

Visiting farmers markets  
 Playing golf  
 Participating in water sports  
 Hiking or trekking in a nature area  
 Horse riding  
 Viewing beautiful scenery  
 Visiting national/provincial/state parks  
 Observing wildlife (including bird watching)  
 Shopping for local crafts or souvenirs  
 Visiting historical and cultural attractions  
 Experiencing adventure activities  
 Camping  
 Staying at a Farm  
 Walking 'tops the poll'  
 Scientific interest  
 Attributes of a society

### **Central Government Schemes for Promotion of Rural Tourism:**

1. Rural Tourism Infrastructure Development Component under PIDDC scheme
2. Swadesh Darshan
3. Scheme for Organizing Fair, Festival and Tourism related events
4. Hunar Se Rozgar Tak (HSRT)
5. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

### **Challenges:**

**Protection:** Some adventure activities (for example bike riding) are, by their nature, dangerous and can cause injury and even loss of tourist life to persons and damage to property. Health and safety requirements should also be insured.

**Training to service providers :** The first line of protection is to ensure that service providers Specially Tour operators, Transport Operators, Hospitals, Hospitality Industry, Employees, Travel Agencies, Travel Managers, Web services Providers, Government officials, Tourism support service providers, Tourism Suppliers (Carrier Suppliers, Accommodation, Food& Drink Suppliers, Event Management), Local Community (Citizens, Local Industry, Farmers, Local Interest Group), Non-Government Organization (Business Associations, Environmental activists) and Research and educational Institutes are should be properly trained and equipped to provide supervision and guidance to participants in the activities, ensuring that equipment is in excellent condition at all times

**Legal Requirements/Regulations:** Before launching any activity, find out what specific legal requirements if any, pertain to the activity being pursued. This can be obtained from the relevant sport or activity coordinating body.

**Land use zoning:** Become familiar with all laws applicable to locating an office, licensing and registration, road transportation permits, public driving permits, regulations and by-laws. Need to Consult the relevant Local Authority and also a consultants.

**Grants:** There are several avenues that may help with funding. Specially ministry of tourism

**Marketing:** Marketing is everything you do to place your product or service in the hands of potential customers. It is about finding the right people to persuade. Marketing doesn't begin

with a great idea or a unique product, it begins with customers - those people who want or need your product and will actually buy it.

**Issues of basic infrastructure:** Transportation, social and environmental infrastructure in rural areas.

### Conclusion:

Rural tourism is still a relatively new area of business, and, therefore, much basic research is needed. Government *Initiatives are very important to create rural tourism resorts/ projects/ attractions in rural base bases.*

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