



A STUDY OF NATURE BASED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN BUNDELKHAND REGION OF UTTAR PRADESH

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Abstract

Nature has always been an integral part of Tourism development. Sustainable tourism which has become a buzzword of present century suggests for development of alternative forms of tourism like Nature based tourism, Ecotourism, Soft tourism, Alternative tourism. Nature based tourism has emerged as one of important component of sustainable tourism. Nature based tourism tries to establish a relation between Tourist, Nature and local population of ecotourism destination. When we stand at crossroads between providing employment opportunities and better standard of living to local population through usage of natural resources and promotion of tourism and conservation of resources, Nature based tourism becomes viable option.

Bundelkhand plateau includes seven districts of Uttar Pradesh which are known for the tourism destination holding potential for historical-cultural-adventure tourism. The promotion of Ecotourism is viewed as an approach to provide better socioeconomic development to the local population on one hand and conservation of natural resources on the other. The Uttar Pradesh government had formulated the tourism policy in 2018 for five years following which the forest department has identified nine ecotourism circuits including 35 ecotourism destinations in the state.

This paper will make use of descriptive approach to develop an understanding of Nature based tourist spots in the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh. The study shows the temporal and spatial trends of tourism development in the Bundelkhand region. The paper finds out that the tourism policy holds the tourism potential but it could not be realized due to global lockdown to contain spread of covid-19. The Ecotourism spots need the extension of policy support along with additional availability of basic eco-friendly infrastructure for creating interest among visitors and local population.

Keywords: *Ecotourism, Bundelkhand, Deogarh, Kalinjar, Vijaysagar Bird Sanctuary, Chitrakoot, Mahavir swami Wildlife sanctuary.*

Introduction

Tourism is an economic activity belonging to the tertiary sector of economy. As countries are focused on path of economic growth led by tertiary sector, the tourism industry has a bright future ahead.

Tourism has been defined as study of man travelling to places other than his or her usual habitat. Tourism maybe related to employment, education, health, leisure etc. With introduction of new concepts in today's World, Tourism has adopted and integrative approach in its methods. Tourism has a focused approach towards environment rural development and sustainability of resources.

From the scope of tourism development, ecotourism as carved out some space for itself. Ecotourism emerged in 1980's has been referred as niche segment of tourism in natural areas. Ecotourism has been defined as sustainable tourism which have its focus on natural areas for providing benefits to the environment as well as local communities, sustains the environment and develops cultural



understanding and awareness about local resources among people. According to UNWTO, ecotourism involves features like nature based tourism generally in partnership with local people, minimum negative impact on natural and socio-cultural environment, supports natural area by generating economic benefits to local communities and managing natural areas with conservation purpose. These features could be labelled as principles of ecotourism.

In 2018 the department of tourism of Uttar Pradesh has formulated a tourism policy for the promotion of tourism in the state. The policies have following aims to achieve

1. To become most preferred tourist destination in the country by 2023
2. To attract investments with target of 5000 crore rupees per year
3. To provide employment for approx 5 lakh people per year
4. To attract 10 lakh tourist to natural parks and wildlife sanctuaries each year
5. To improve regional connectivity of all religious and cultural attraction destinations by road rail and air routes
6. To elevate the standard of public utility services to improve tourist experience
7. To improve local entrepreneurship avenues through tourism events
8. Promotion of theme-based tourism in state

For the development of theme-based tourism and promotion of tourism policy, the department of tourism has partner with UP forest corporation to provide civic and tourist amenities in National Park and wildlife sanctuary to ensure better tourist satisfaction. The MoU has been signed between UP forest corporation and UP state tourism development corporation to promote ecotourism in state. UP forest department has identified 38 eco-tourism destinations which can be grouped into 9 eco-tourism circuits. Under the theme-based tourism, Bundelkhand circuit or Southern circuit has been identified which includes 5 ecotourism destinations in Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh.

Objectives of study

- To study the spatial distribution of Ecotourism destination of Bundelkhand circuit.
- To make analysis of temporal trends to tourist profile of these ecotourism spots.

Description of Ecotourism destination

Deogarh (Lalitpur): The literal meaning of Deogarh is fort of Gods. It is located in Lalitpur hills on the bank of Betwa River. The place is well known for the Gupta period Dashavatar temple which is first temple based on panchayatan style in North India. Both, the quality of rock temples and their sheer numbers amaze the visitors. The site is protected by ASI as it is well known for its sculpture. The place has a UP tourism bungalow for the residential facility for tourist. As per 2011 census total population of Deoghar village is 783 with total of 152 household. The literacy rate was 41% and the population speaks Hindi and Bundeli language. The beauty of Deoghar along with its obscurity, the place has lethal combination for tourist attractions but the tourist are few due to poor infrastructure and communication facilities.

Mahavir swami WLS: This wildlife sanctuary was established in 1977 adjacent to river Betwa and comprises parts of Vindhyas mountains as well. It has an area of 5.4 km square located at 33 km distance from district Headquarter Deogarh. The wildlife sanctuary has longitudinal extent from 78°14' - 78°17'E and latitudinal extent from 24°29" - 24°32' N. The wildlife sanctuary has flora that includes teak Arjun, Tendu, Saigon, Goonj and fauna in form of Birds, Leopards, Nilgai, Wild boar, Bear, Jaickal, Langur monkey etc. The destination also includes places of cultural importance like Jain temple, Muchkund gufa, Ranchordham temple etc.



Vijayanagar Bird sanctuary:The sanctuary has geographical area of 262.20 hectares and lies in Mahoba district. The area is located on rugged hills of kaimur range which also provide scenic beauty and location for development of forts in the area. It is developed on shore of Vijay Sagar Lake built by Vijay pal Chandel in 11th century. Vijay Sagar lake is ideal for water sports and migratory birds flock here in winters from Tibet, China, Europe and Siberia. Tourist can have the view of birds, black naked crane, hornbills, painted stark, Coots, Darters, Brahmi duck. In flora one can witness bamboo, Palas, Khair etc.

Kalinjar (Banda):It is located at height of 700 feet on Vindhyan ranges. The Kalinjar fort is a treasure of monuments and idols. Fort is abode of Hindu God Shiva and has unique temple of Neelkanth Mahadev built by Chandel ruler Paramaditya dev. The fort has been ruled by Guptas, Vardhan, Chandela, Solanki, Mugalsarai, Maratha. The fort is accessible from seven gateways and has several places of importance including Raja Mahal, Rani Mahal, Sita sej, Patal ganga, Pandukund, Bhairon ki jharia, Mrigdhara etc. Historian Radha Krishna bundeli and Beedi Gupta tell that here Shiva drunk the poison that came out after churning the sea. The speciality of shivling is that water keeps leaking from it.

Ranipur WLS:This sanctuary was established in 1977 has an area of 263 sq. km and located in Chitrakoot district. This sanctuary is located in Vindhyan range of whose Northern part of sanctuary is covered by dense deciduous forest bordering Ooshan river that provides variety of vegetation which includes tendu, mahua, gooseberry, wood Apple whereas water drains Arjun, Jamun tree that are prominent in the sanctuary. The Chauri forest area, Lakhampur forest area, Rujhawa forest area are well known for wide expanse of grassland. The sanctuary also has 4th tiger reserve of Uttar Pradesh in 2022. Tourist can see here blackbuck, chinkara, sambar, chital, bear, leopard, wild dog, blue bull.

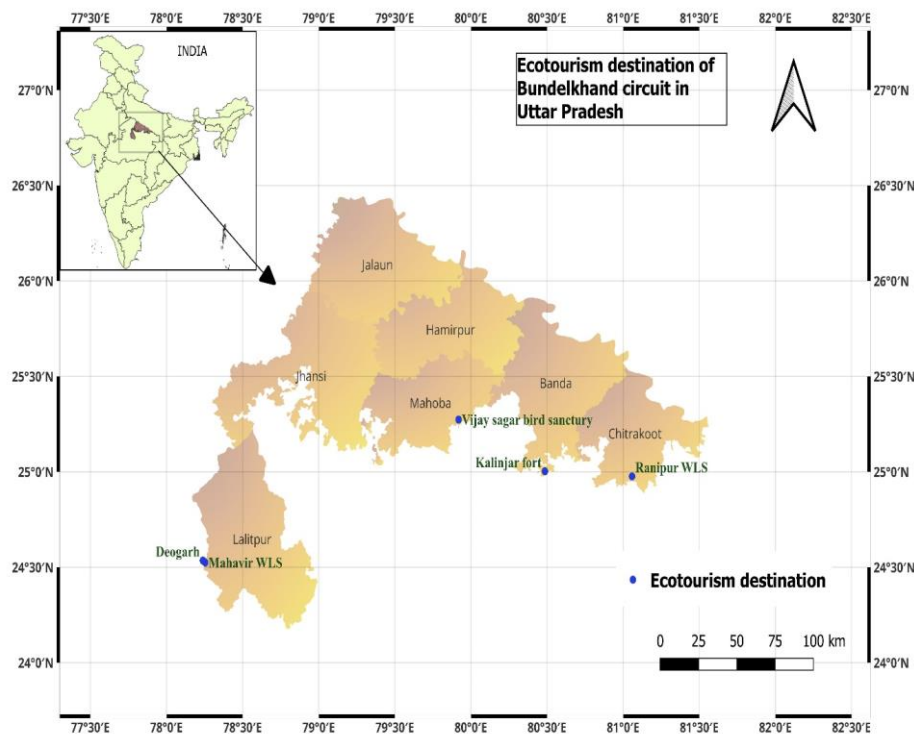


Fig. Spatial distribution of Ecotourism destinations of Bundelkhand circuit.



Analysis of data and major findings

The tourism policy of Uttar Pradesh formulated in 2018 is a good step of government to promote tourism in general and ecotourism in particular. The identification of ecotourism spots under theme-based tourism is the significant step which holds the potential of ecotourism development in the state. The study of spatial distribution of ecotourism destinations of Bundelkhand circuit shows that the policy provides a platform for tourism promotion, development of basic infrastructure and alternative economic opportunities for local population.

There are seven districts in Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh and forest department has identified 5 ecotourism spots lying in four districts to form the Bundelkhand circuit. This could be due to non-availability of green spaces in Bundelkhand region which is a drought prone area. The ecotourism spots in the Bundelkhand circuit also experience discontinuity as the transport network is not so developed due to its rugged relief and poor development of region. There is scope for identification of more tourist destination in the region and integration of ecotourism with tourism destination of cultural and social significance. Jhansi has an age old dam on Betwa river and number of Forts and which holds prominent place in history. Mahoba is well known for the lakes and Chitrakoot has a lot of spiritual and cultural significance. The potential of tourism in remaining districts could also be explored and the development of transport and basic infrastructure will enable to hold the tourist and publicise the ecotourism spots as well.

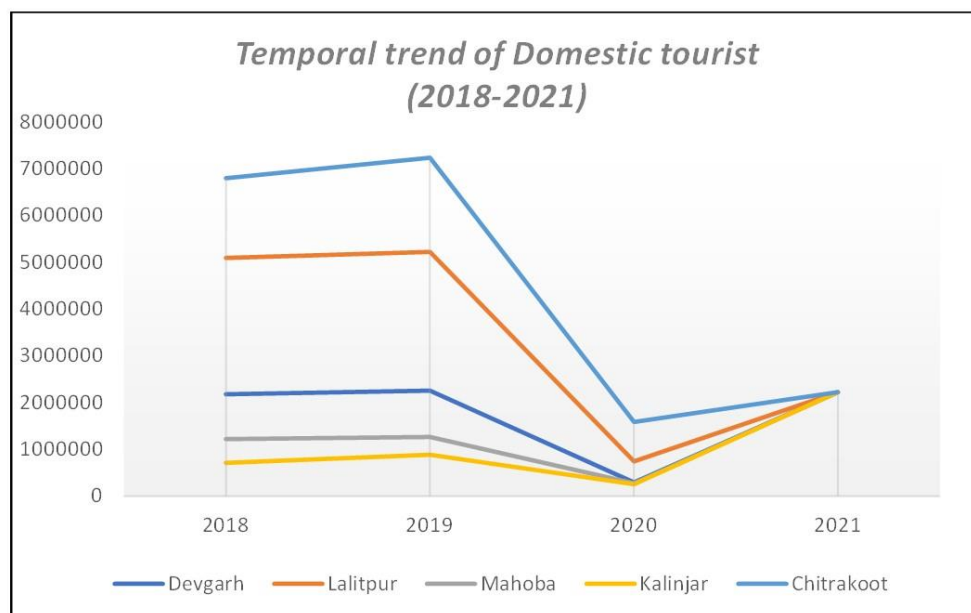


Fig. Temporal trends of Tourists in Ecotourism destination.

The study of temporal trends of domestic tourism in ecotourism destinations for the period 2018 to 2021 shows that the tourism was showing uptrend during the period of 2018 to 2019 and the drastic down fall is experienced in period of 2019- 2020 and again uptrend in 2020 to 2021. The sudden downfall of tourism during 2019 to 2020 could be subjected to lockdown policy imposed by the Indian government to prevent its citizen from the covid-19. However, after the lockdown was over the



uptrend shows that tourism can find its way to achieve previous level but the economic slowdown could act as breakers in its trajectory. From the graph, it could be established that Chitrakoot is having largest number of tourist among all tourism destinations and Kalinjar has the lowest number of tourist. It is also established that Chitrakoot has experienced steep slope of downfall as it has largest number of tourist but the most steep upslope in the period of 2020 to 2021 has been experienced by the Kalinjar which had lowest number of tourist during 2019 period.

Conclusion and recommendations

The ecotourism destinations identified under the tourism policy 2018 could be pathfinder for developing the underdeveloped region of Uttar Pradesh and reduce regional disparities in terms of employment, poverty and basic infrastructure availability. The development of transport network for the promotion of tourism will also contribute to the growth trajectory of local population. The focus of ecotourism development will impact on building community participation and conservation and management of natural resources as well. In totality, the potential of ecotourism could be explored in the coming years and the tourism policy should be continued for the promotion of ecotourism. The cooperation between tourism department and forest department will be the key for the development of the nature based tourism in the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh.

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