

---

## RESOURCE ECONOMICS AND ECO-TOURISM IN RAJASTHAN

**Dr. M. M. Sheikh**

Associate Professor (Geography)

Department of Geography

Government Lohia P.G. College, Churu, Rajasthan

**Abstract:** Ecotourism is a form of tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine and relatively undisturbed natural areas, intended as a low-impact and often small-scale alternative to standard commercial tourism. Its main objectives are to educate the travelers, procuring funds for ecological conservation, to directly benefit the economic development and empowerment of local communities, and to foster respect for different cultural and human rights. Rajasthan occupies the position of being the largest state of India. Geographically, it covers an area of 34.22 million hectares, of which 3.255 million hectares is recognized forest area. There are 3 National Parks and 26 Sanctuaries spread over 0.916 million hectares. In addition to the forest resources, the state has numerous forts, palaces and heritage sites adjacent to, or inside forest areas. Tourism in nature should be carefully developed by establishing critical loads on each area subject to tourism development. Rajasthan has a considerable and growing potential for ecotourism. It has good forests, villages with traditional architecture, natural ecosystem relatively preserved from human activities. Rajasthan's rich biodiversity is an important asset having economic potential. The present article highlights the processes and initiatives by which a balanced approach can be followed for sustainable ecotourism development in the state.

**Keywords:** Resource Economics, Sustainable Ecotourism, Socio-cultural and economic development, Natural resources and Biodiversity.

**Introduction:**

Rajasthan is the largest State (area wise) in India. It is in the northwestern part of the subcontinent. It is bounded on the west and northwest by Pakistan, on the north and northeast by the states of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, on the east and southeast by the States of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, and on the southwest by the State of Gujarat. The Tropic of Cancer passes through its southern tip in the Banswara district. The state has an area of 342,239 sq.km. In the west, the state is relatively dry and infertile; this area includes some portion of the Thar Desert, also known as the Great Indian Desert. In the southwestern part of the state, the land is wetter, hilly, and more fertile. The climate varies throughout Rajasthan. On an average winter temperature range from 8° to 28° C and summer temperatures range from 25° to 46° C. Average rainfall also varies; the western deserts accumulate about 100 mm annually, while the southeastern part of the state receives 650 mm annually, most of which falls from July through September during the monsoon season.

Tourism industry is now a multi-crore, multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional activity in the world. The General Assembly of the United Nations, in designating the year 1967 as 'International Tourism Year' recognized the importance of international tourism as a means of fostering understanding among people and giving them a knowledge of the rich heritage of the past

civilizations, a better appreciation of the values of different cultures, thus contributing to the strengthening of world peace. Tourism may have a positive economic impact on the balance of payments, on employment, on gross income and production. But it may also have negative effects particularly on the environment.

Eco-tourism is generally described as ‘tourism associated with protected areas; Eco-Tourism is a form of nature-based tourism, aims to be ecologically, socio-culturally, and economically sustainable while providing opportunities for understanding and appreciating the natural environment. Rajasthan is a land of geographical varieties. Rajasthan has much more to offer than we ever imagined. It offers several tourist destinations that not just distress but also rejuvenate us. In its pristine way, there are several ways to enjoy Mother Nature. Rajasthan has exuding wealth and natural bounty conserved and preserved in the hands of humankind. There are beautiful surroundings still untouched by human greed for land. The floral wealth of Rajasthan is rich and varied. The western half is desert terrain; most of the area under forest is restricted to eastern and southern parts of the state. The forest areas are Udaipur, Rajasamand, Kota, Baran, Sawai Madhopur, Chittorgarh, Sirohi, Bundi, Alwar, Jhalawar and Banswara districts, which covers about 50 per cent of the forest of the state. Dense natural forest is in protected patches mostly confined to various National Parks and wildlife sanctuaries. The state’s forest covers an area of 32.638.74 Sq. km. which is 9.54 percent of the total geographical area of the state.

### **Objectives:**

The present paper has following main objectives

- To identify potential ecotourism circuits and destinations in the State of Rajasthan
- Optimum utilization of rich tourist resources of the State to attract the maximum number of domestic and international tourists;
- Preservation of rich natural habitat and bio-diversity, historical, architectural and cultural heritage of Rajasthan; special emphasis on conservation of historical monuments in Rajasthan;
- To promote local community development in Rajasthan through tourism with special thrust on backward areas;

### **Tourism in the State:**

The huge forts, palaces, heritage hotels, cultural fairs and festivals of the State have played major role in developing this beautiful land as a Centre of attraction for national and international tourists. Rajasthan has established itself as a significant tourist destination on the domestic as well as international tourist map. The Government of Rajasthan declared tourism as industry in the year 1989. In Rajasthan, Jaipur, Udaipur, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Ranakpur are the most visited places by the foreign tourists, each site received more than one lakh foreign tourist in the year 2010. Pushkar & Bikaner are also popular amongst the foreign tourists. Recently Jantar Mantar at Jaipur has been declared as World Heritage Site of UNESCO. The state is known for its diversity in terms of natural resources, cultural

heritage, historical as well as archaeological wonders and rare wild life. The forts and palaces, heritage hotels, fairs and festivals, local art and handicrafts, etc. has been a unique selling proposition for tourists coming to the state. The desert environment in the western parts of the state is also a major attraction for visitors, particularly the foreign tourist.



been considered that can offer a sustainable value proposition to the tourists such that when tourism products are offered in those places, they can be maintained as well. Tourism industry in Rajasthan lacks information on the requirements of sustainable tourism and on how to integrate economic interests with environmental and social requirements. While the tourism industry in Rajasthan may be willing to improve their products and services, there would be an imminent conflict between the industry's pursuit of economic gains and social and environmental responsibility.

### **Sustainable Development in Rajasthan:**

The Rajasthan has been divided into nine tourist circuits. The main tourist locations are explained on circuits. The palaces of desert forts of Jodhpur, Bikaner and Jaisalmer are among the most preferred destination of desert circuit, Godawar circuit has the only hill station Mount Abu where the scenic landscape include gigantic blocks of rock in weird shapes, an array of coniferous trees, flowering shrub, and lovely lakes much in contrast to the arid environs of the state. Ajmer and Pushkar are the important pilgrim center of Mewar-Marwar circuit. The Dhundhar circuit is spread around Jaipur, Udaipur is the tourist hub for both Mear and vaged circuit. The Brij Mewat circuit nestled between clusters of small hill of the Aravalli range. The main attractions in the Brij Mewat circuit are the National Parks at Sariska, Bharatpur, and Ranthambhore. The Hadoti circuit has beautiful hills, valleys, and lakes. The main attractions in this circuit are the places at Kota and Bundi. The Shekhwati circuit is popular for its fresco-painted *havelis* spread over the entire region.

Success or tourism in state hinges critically upon the quality of tourism related infrastructure. During the last few years, there has been tremendous increase in the number of tourists to the state. Although the state has a well development network of road, rails and air that, facilitate access to the main tourist hubs from within and outside the state. However, the infrastructural facilities have not keeping pace. The systematic development of tourism in Rajasthan is also linked with the industrial revolution and with the change in the modes of travel with the introduction of railways, automobiles, and aviation. The air travel supplemented by the railways brought about a sea change in global movement and India became a tourism partner. Much has been achieved by way of increasing air seat capacity, increasing trains and railway connecting important tourist destinations, widening of roads to four lanes, connecting important tourist centers, and increasing availability of accommodation by adding heritage hotels to the hotel industry and encouraging paying guest accommodation. This small spot on the globe as a tourist destination draws millions of tourists from both domestic and international market. The growth of tourist in Rajasthan has been increasing over the years. The Rajasthan tourism has shown robust growth in terms of foreign tourist arrivals as well as domestic tourist. Rajasthan continues to be one of the most favorite tourism destinations for tourist witnessing an unprecedented growth of more than 50 percent in domestic and foreign tourist influx.

Eco-tourism initiatives across the world have caught the attraction of both academicians and practitioners. It preaches the good aspect of tourism where there is a perfect balance between the nature and traveler and destinations are planned without bringing imbalance to the nature. Importance of involving local people in eco-tourism development and resources management not only to improve the economic condition of local people but also an essential element for effective development, utilization, and management of natural resources. The local community participation is a key to sustainable eco-tourism. Any economic benefit received from eco-tourism should be

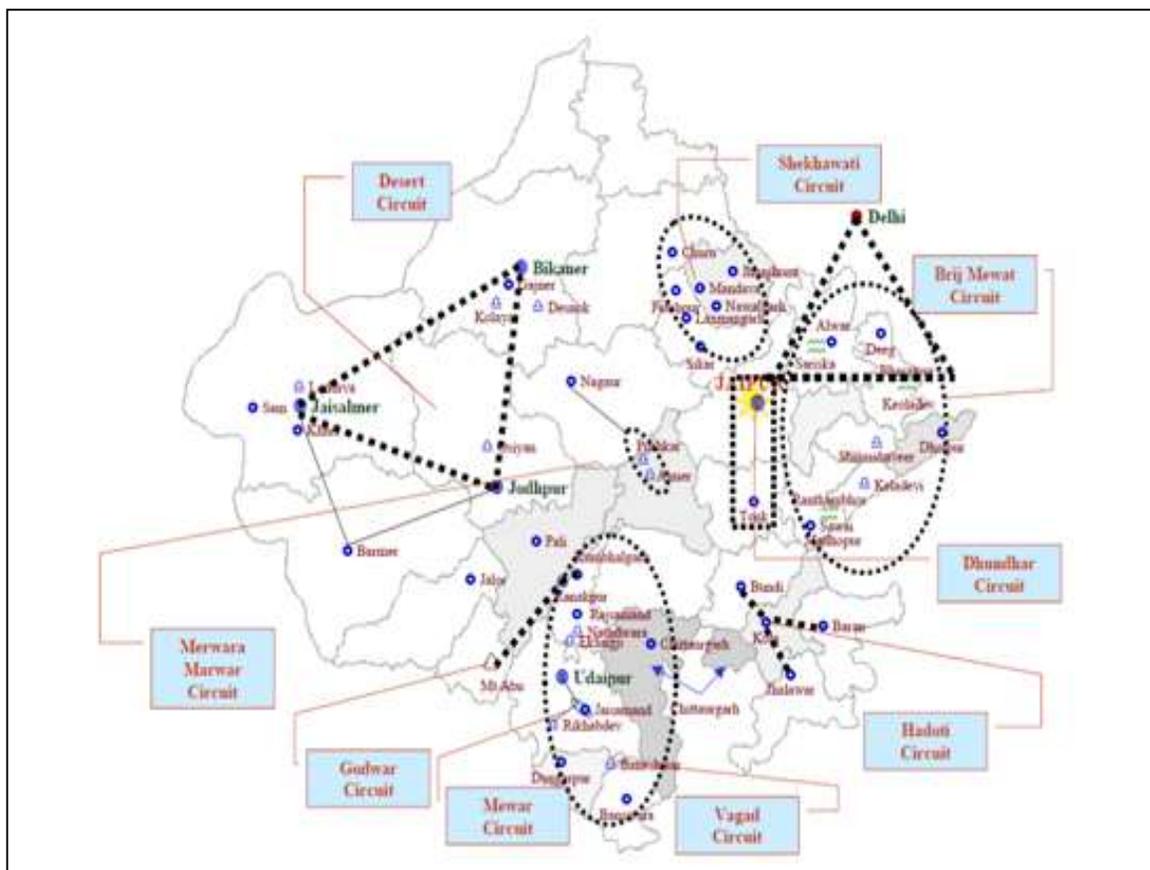
channelized back to local communities. Instead of being an irritant to sustainable development a little initiative of planners can draw tourism as the vehicle for preservation of ecology and heritage.

### Initial Screening of the Circuits:

Based on informal interaction with the local members of travel and tour industry in the state as well as State Tourism Development Corporation, following circuits were identified:

- Desert circuit: Jodhpur – Bikaner – Jaisalmer
- Jaipur-Ajmer-Pushkar
- Chittaurgarh-Udaipur-Mount Abu (Sirohi)
- Udaipur-Ranakpur-Kumbalgarh-Nathdwara
- Sariska-Alwar-Bharatpur

Figure 2: Eco Tourism Circuits



Source: Eco tourism Department, Government of India.

### **Management of Ecotourism:**

Ecotourism will be restricted to designated tourism zones prescribed under theme plan of the managing the tourism industry. These may be reviewed periodically by the Local Advisory Committee (LAC). Tourism zone may include core zone/ critical tiger habitat, buffer areas and other wildlife rich areas. Tourism zone should allow for a wider and thinner dispersal of tourist traffic to ensure no congestion. Areas earmarked for visitation may be determined by the LAC. The park management will have the liberty to make adequate provisions in the management plans for rotation of the tourism zone every year.

In conformity with FCA 1980, Wildlife Protection act 1972 and directions by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, no new tourist facilities will be established in the protected areas without prior approval of competent authority. However, the existing tourist facilities will be continued, as discontinuation will have adverse effect on the protection and management of the PA. Adequate provisions should be made for improving the conditions of these facilities, meeting to the strict ecotourism standards. Local eco-development committees can be involved in managing these facilities.

- The vehicles used for tourism in PAs will be registered and administered by the park management as per instructions/ directions/regulations issued from time to time.
- It will be mandatory to have trained nature guides registered with park administration with every tourist vehicle entering the Tiger Reserve. The park management will select, trained and manage these nature guides. 50 percent of the candidates for Nature guides will be from rural areas adjoining to the park (up to two km. from the boundary). The department will also develop separate competency standards for both rural and other nature guides and evolve a system of rankings based on the knowledge, competence and experience (expertise) of each nature guide.
- Gate receipts collected will be exclusively used for protection, management of protected areas of the state, addressing to human wildlife conflict, staff welfare measure and eco-development activities in nearby villages. Of the total revenue generated from a tiger reserve minimum 50 percent will be exclusively used for the concerned reserve for above mentioned activities.
- Local Advisory committee will have consultations with local communities for developing wildlife habitat in areas adjoining to the tiger reserves; the areas may include private lands and wildlife areas. The LAC will prescribe kind of activities, standards for tourist facilities etc., and benefit sharing mechanism for the income generated by ecotourism in such areas. LAC will also develop codes and standards for promoting ecotourism in such area.
- The infrastructure development around the protected areas will be strictly in accordance with the provisions made in the notification for eco-sensitive zone.
- Any core area in a Tiger Reserve from which relocation has been carried out will not be used for developing tourism facilities like hotels, resorts and rest houses i.e. no construction will be permitted in such areas, only visitation will be permitted.
- All facilities located within five kms. of a Protected Area must adhere to noise pollution rules under 'The Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules', 2000, and 'The Noise

Pollution (Regulation and Control) (Amendment) Rules', 2010 issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

- There will be a complete ban on burying, burning or otherwise disposing non-biodegradable or toxic waste in and around the protected area, within the limits of eco sensitive zone.
- To ensure that number of visitors/ vehicles do not lead to congestion and or overcrowding, the system of advance booking will be further streamlined and made 'people-friendly'. Adequate measure to be taken to ensure transparency in all the advance bookings.
- Trained forest staff will go a long way in delivering quality services and management of tourism in the Tiger reserve. Park management will develop a comprehensive training plan for the staff and the same will be incorporated as part of tourism management plan.
- The Government believes that for these Guidelines to remain effective, a genuine 'Government-People' partnership (Van Bhagidaari) must be cultivated over a long-term period. These Guidelines therefore aim to be inclusive.
- A wide network of stakeholders will be consulted for conservation efforts and their intellectual, material and any other resources welcomed for furthering the process of conservation. Ranthambhore currently utilizes patrol vehicles of local hoteliers to supplement patrolling activities in and around the Tiger Reserve. Such initiatives will be furthered and welcomed elsewhere as well.
- Eco-tourism can be effectively promoted in the state by identifying areas, which are quite rich in flora and fauna and providing camping sites to the visiting tourists so that they can enjoy the nature in its full glory.
- Trekking routes can be developed, and safaris organized to give a real feeling of wilderness to the visiting tourists.
- Effective publicity by way of providing folders, maps, literature to the tourists would certainly generate the desired interest in the tourists to visit these places. This will serve a twin purpose; while new tourist spots will emerge on the state map, the pressure of tourist traffic on select sanctuaries and national parks will be dispersed.

### **Monitoring of Ecotourism:**

The park management will be solely responsible for ensuring that Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and rules made there in are strictly adhered to and there is no disturbance to wild animals by the tour operators.

PA management will design mechanism to collect feedback from tourists about the PA management, tourism, guide facilities and any other appropriate information and will utilize the same for better PA management or conservation practices.

- PA management will conduct tourism impact studies at least once in three years. The study should preferably be assigned to competent institutions or persons, and the study results should be used for determining management prescriptions.
- Tourism infrastructure must conform to environment-friendly, low impact architecture; renewable including solar energy, waste recycling, water management, natural cross-ventilation, no use of asbestos, zero discharge of sewage, minimal lighting, and merging with the surrounding landscape.

- All tourist facilities falling within 10 km of a protected area must be reviewed regularly by the Local Advisory Committee viz-à-viz environmental clearance, area of coverage, ownership, type of construction, number of employees, etc., for suggesting mitigation/retrofitting measures if needed

### Conclusion:

Rajasthan possesses the attributes of a strong tourist destination renowned throughout the world for its contrasting culture and heritage. It also has a great potential in developing sustainable ecotourism. It is a unique desert land of scenic beauty and moderate climate. The tourist attractions of Rajasthan are specifically noted in the form of sand dunes, southern Rajasthan's hilly area and wildlife and hence the tourist activities in this destination region are naturally concentrated at spots of such attractions. Improvement in the tourist activities at these spots of attraction is a necessary condition for the development of the tourist industry of the region. Therefore, the present study examined the trend, pattern and factors influencing the demand and supply of tourist activity and its impact on the generation of employment at three natural attraction spots, namely, sand dunes, wildlife and hilly areas natural beauty.

Eco-conservation and development must be strongly integrated in all plans and activities for development of tourism in the state. Dovetailing tourism objectives with the overall environmental concerns requires planned co-operative efforts between the tourism industry, the local community and the Government on a sustained basis. Apart from a strong policy environment to protect and develop natural ecosystems, there is a strong need for local communities to participate in environment conservation. Similarly, the tourism industry must appreciate the fact that tourism activity and its quality is highly dependent on the quality of environment that Rajasthan would offer to domestic and foreign tourists. To sum up, the degree of involvement of local resources in the tourism facilities offered the overall development of the economy of Rajasthan state by way of ecotourism.

### References:

1. Ajims P Muhammed & Dr. Jagathyraj V P. Challenges faced by Rajasthan Tourism Industry. Conference on Tourism in India- Challenges Ahead, 15-17 May 2008, IIMK.
2. Amedeo Fossati and Giorgio Panella, Tourism and sustainable economic development (Massachusetts, USA: Kluewr Academic Publishees, 2000) p. ix.
3. Belkin, N. J. & Croft, W. B. (1992). Information filtering and information retrieval: two sides of the same coin. Communications of the ACM, 35 (12):29-38.
4. Burgess L. J Cooper & C. Alcock (2001) "The adoption of web as a marketing tool by Regional tourism associations in Australia," in The twenty-fifth Australasian conference on information systems, Coffs Harbour, Australia, 4-7 December.
5. Douglas J. Ernest, Allison V. Level and Michael Culbertson. Information-seeking behavior for recreational activities and its implications for libraries. [www.emeraldinsight.com/0090-7324.htm](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/0090-7324.htm)
6. Etzel, M.J. and Wahlers, R.G. (1985). Tourist Information Search and Acquisition: An Extended Framework The use of requested promotional material by pleasure travelers. Journal of Travel Research, 23(4), 2-6.
7. Fesenmaier, D.R. (1994). Traveler use of visitor information centers: implications for development in Illinois, Journal of Travel Research, 33(1).



8. Hamid R. Jamali and David Nicholas. Information-seeking behavior of physicists and astronomers [www.emeraldinsight.com/0001-253X.htm](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/0001-253X.htm)
9. International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism. "The AIEST, its character and aims". Retrieved 2009-12-29.
10. Kavita Chavali and Subrat Sahu. Comparative Study of Tourism Websites in India with special reference to South India Conference on Tourism in India – Challenges Ahead, 15-17 May 2008, IIMK
11. Laudon, Kenneth C., and Laudon, Jane P. (1996). Management Information Systems: Organization and Technology, 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
12. Mill R.C & Morrison, A.M (2002). 'The tourism system', 4th edition, Kendall/Hunt.
13. Perspective Plan for Sustainable Tourism in Rajasthan 20 years Report, Department of Tourism, Government of India.
14. Rathish A.G. (2005). MLISc Dissertation. Information requirements of the foreign tourists to Rajasthan. Dept. of Library & Inf. Sc. University of Rajasthan.
15. Reitz, J. M. (2004). Online dictionary of Library and Information Science. <http://lu.com/odlis/> Retrieved 2010-01-01 1.
16. Sarma, M.K. (2004). "Destination Choice Pattern and Tourist Segments". In A. Raj (Ed.), Tourist Behaviour, Kanishka, New Delhi.
17. Shannon, C. and Weaver, W. (1949). The mathematical theory of communication. Urbana: University of Illinois press.
18. Smith, S. A., & Gregory G. (2000). "Segmenting and Profiling Off Peak Market of Pleasure Travelers". In ANZMAC 2000 Visionary Marketing for the 21st Century: Facing the Challenge, Gold Coast, Australia. 1205-1209, from <http://www.ANZMAC2000/CDsite/papers/s/Smith1.pdf>
19. Wilson T D. (2000). Human Information Behavior. Informing Science, Special issue on information science research Vol 3. No. 2.