

Tourism in Mahendragarh District, Haryana – A Geographical Analysis

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ABSTRACT: Tourism is a sunrise industry with immense employment creation potential both directly and indirectly. It thus creates a profound impact on the complete geographical profile of the district viz demographics, social systems, infrastructure, well-being and standard of living of the people of the region where it abounds. The tourism potential of Mahendragarh district has not been exploited to its best in the face of various lacunae which are henceforth discussed and the solutions have been suggested. The feasibility of newer tourism concepts like Spiritual, Adventure, Rural tourism have been discussed and suggested as per the attributes of the tehsils falling in the district. Demographic profile, infrastructure availability and tourists count tehsil wise suggest scope of targeted approach necessary as per the requirements intra-district.

Keywords: *Tourism, Employment, Demographics, Potential, Standard of Living.*

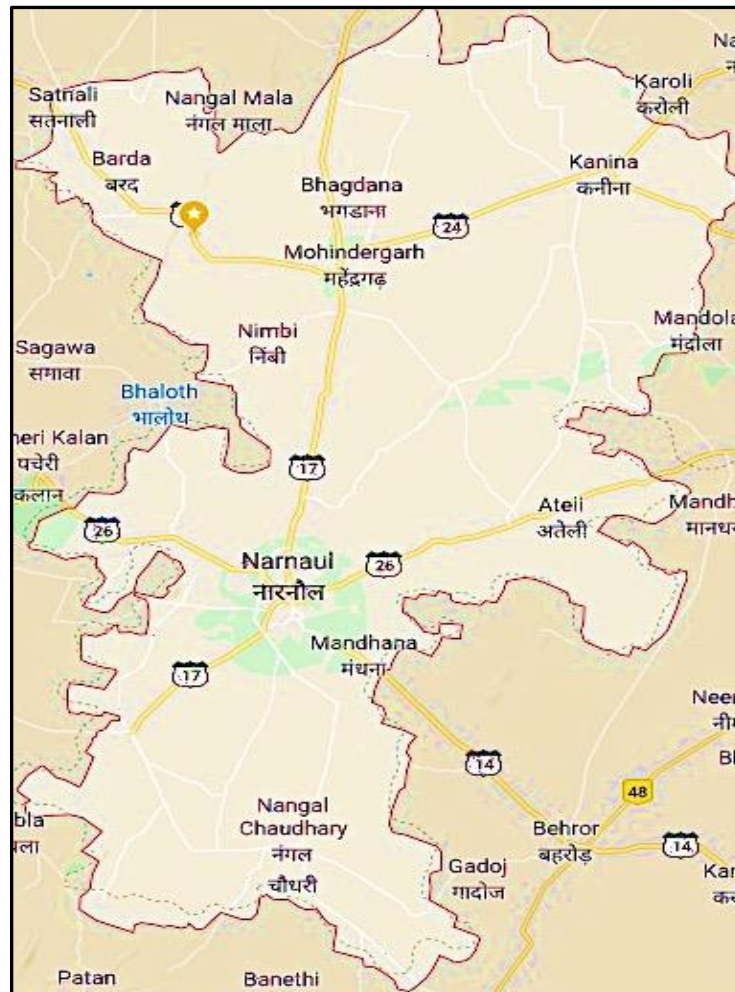
OBJECTIVE: To identify the shortcomings and reasons for below par utilisation of tourism potential of the district and thereby suggesting newer proactive tourism activities befitting the geographical scenario in the region by analyzing the demographic profile of Mahendragarh district.

STUDY AREA: Mahendragarh District is surrounded by Bhiwani District and Rohtak district on the north, by Rewari district of the Haryana state and Alwar district on the east, by Jaipur and Sikar district on the south, and by Sikar and Jhunjhunu district of the Rajasthan state on the west. The xerophytic floral vegetation dominates the district. The district is sparsely wooded and some of the parts are pragmatically devoid of trees. Mahendragarh District is inhabited by a variety of mammals, a number of birds adding beauty to the wildlife. Mahendragarh district is located between 27°47' and 28°26' north latitudes and between 75°56' and 76°51' east longitudes with an average land surface elevation of 262 metres above

mean sea level.



28.4°N 75.9°E



27.8°N 76.3°E

(R.F. = 1 : 500,000)

Map - Mahendragarh District with tehsils

INTRODUCTION: Tourism is amongst the world's largest industries evolving as a specific sub-discipline of geography. This field has grown tremendously since the 1980s and consists of a variety of approaches namely regional, behavioural and spatial geography and more recently concerns regarding issues of identity, globalization and in relation with space. Major issues include some negative social and environmental impacts that have arisen with quick but unplanned tourism development in some locations. Although the overall impacts on economy and employment are often considered positive. Travel and Tourism in India today accounts for nearly 10% of the net value added to the GDP of the country and it is expected to go up continuously in the near future. This industry is primarily domestic in India which accounts for almost 88% of the total contribution of tourism to the GDP for the country. However, tourism differs spatially, tourists vary in numbers, and thus their prospective impacts are also not evenly distributed. Substantial differentiation occurs at a variety of regional and local scales. The UNWTO¹ recommended that an *international tourist be defined as "a visitor who travels to a country other than that in which he/she has his/her usual residence for at least one night but not more than one year, and whose main purpose of visit is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the country visited"*. Similar definitions were also developed for domestic tourists, with domestic tourists having a time limit of "not more than six months." Such definitions are important as they serve to distinguish tourism activity from other forms of temporary mobility such as migration. With respect to geography, tourism ensures diversified development for the local area and the region as a whole. It impacts positively the demographics, economics and sociological profile of the region amending the lacunae in the geography of the region. It helps in putting up infrastructure, employment and skill development for the inhabitants.

HYPOTHESIS:

1. Tourism has an inherent positive impact on the employment, education, health, infrastructure and economic profile of the local geographical area.
2. The supply chain for tourism industry ensures brisk economic activity in the local as well as nearby areas.

3. Exposure to newer ideas and exchange of goodwill between local host population and

GEOGRAPHICAL ATTRIBUTES	Mahendragarh Tehsil	Narnaul Tehsil	Kanina Tehsil	Ateli Tehsil	Nangal Chowdhury Tehsil	Mahendragarh District	(Source of data)
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tourists enables greater understanding amongst different cultures.

METHODOLOGY: Spatial as well as temporal data is used for the study. Secondary data is used to realise the purpose of the study, taken from official sources like published data of Haryana Tourism Development Corporation, from the office of Economic and Statistical Advisor, Government of Haryana and District Statistical Abstracts of various years. Spatial data concerned with the tourist sites, transport infrastructure, other corresponding necessary amenities is taken from standard sources like various academic literature, Census of India, Handbook of Haryana, magazines, journals and other relevant official documentation like State Government scheme handouts and official State ministries and department websites.

OBSERVATIONS & FINDINGS: The data collected, information assimilated and analysed shows the relationship and relevance of tourism and its impact, primarily constructive, albeit negative too, although negligible, on the geographical profile of the region. Based on the knowledge assimilated during the course of this study, *Ecotourism, Rural tourism, Heritage tourism, Spiritual tourism, Adventure tourism* were found to be fit and constructively feasible for the region. The problems that abide include lack of infrastructure, law and order issues, social logical issues, boarding and lodging issues, transportation and connectivity related issues amongst other issues.

Table1: Various geographical data parameters for the Mahendragarh district (tehsil-wise)

Literacy	81.2	82.5	78.4	76.9	74.6	78.9%	(Census 2011) ³
Sex- Ratio	761	767	788	792	796	778	(Census 2011)
Population	2,79,495	2,66,493	1,68,949	1,29,503	77,240	9,21,680	(Census 2011)
Population density (per sq.km)	514	528	458	433	429	485	(Census 2011)
Employed population (% of total population)	44	41	42	32	28	38%	(NSSO 2011-68 th round) ⁴
Urbanisation %	15.6%	17.8%	16.5%	11.8%	10.7%	13.49%	(Census 2011)
Working age population %	62.7%	64.1%	59.9%	55.5%	52.3%	58.3%	(Census 2011)
Road length (in km)	348	244	149	210	79	1030	(Haryana PWD) ⁵
No. of villages	103	94	77	76	83	433	(Census 2011)

Tehsil wise description of the tourist spots in Mahendragarh district, their tourism potential and the corresponding demographic profile of the regions have been assimilated in a tabular form and the explanation follows for all of the tehsils in the Mahendragarh district.

Table2: Various tourism parameters for the Mahendragarh district (tehsil-wise)

TOURISM ATTRIBUTES	Mahendr agarh Tehsil	Narnaul Tehsil	Kanina Tehsil	Ateli Tehsil	Nangal Chowdh ury Tehsil	Mahendr agarh District	(Source of data)
Tourist visited (in numbers)	44,934	39,392	19,402	8,020	6809	1,18,557	(Deptment of Economic &Statistical Analysis) ⁶
Major Tourism spots (in numbers)	2	5	2	1	1	11	(Haryana Tourism Deptt.) ⁷
Major Tourist Spots	Madhog arh Fort, Bagot Baoli	Dhosi Hill, Birbal ka Chhatta, Chor Gumbad, Jal Mahal, Tripolia Gateway	Tomb of Shah Wilayat, Fortress of Islampur	Rural haats	Eco-tourist spots		Haryana Tourism website
Minor Tourism spots (in numbers)	11	14	8	9	9	51	(Haryana Tourism Deptt.)

Various tourist spots in Mahendragarh tehsil of Mahendragarh district include *Madhogarh Fort, Bagot Baoli*. The fort complex is also being developed as a Heritage Tourism Resort by the Government of Haryana creating employment opportunities for the local unskilled labour and skilled employment for the service class associated with the tourism sector. A high literacy rate of 81.2 and with a high population density of 514, it provides a good service class base to the

tourism industry in the region. Both the major and minor tourism spots in this tehsil have been attracting both international and domestic tourists (about 44,934- figures from department of economic and statistical analysis, Haryana government, tourism report, 2016). Employment population percentage of 44% depicts scope of further employment creation for the population. Total number of villages in this tehsil area is 103, providing large scope of skill development and employment creation potential.

Narnaul being the headquarters of the district Mahendragarh, abounds with a large population base. Along with a favourable literacy rate the unfavourable sex ratio which is below the district average indicates the presence of a large migrant working population. Urbanization percentage of 17.8% is an exhibit of infrastructural availability in the region that can be utilised for tourism potential exploitation. The number of tourists that visited in this tehsil, both domestic and international is 39,392 in 2016. The major tourism spots in this tehsil include the likes of *Dhosi Hill* with igneous rocks and an extinct volcano, *Birbal ka Chhatta*, *Chor Gumbad*, *Jal Mahal*, *Tripolia Gateway*. Along with these, the minor tourism spots together have immense potential of creating employment and skill development opportunities for the 94 villages that exist in this tehsil (data census 2011). High population of the area ensure local tourist supply to the cultural activities and local fairs that thrive at multiple tourist spots in the region. High literacy also helps in better law and order management in the area thereby both directly and indirectly helping in the development of tourism on the whole.

Kanina tehsil in the Mahendragarh district comprises a population of 1,68,949. With a population density of 458 and an average literacy rate of 78.4, major tourist spots that exist in this tehsil include *Fortress of Islampur*, *Tomb of Shah Nizam*, *Tomb of Shah Wilayat* amongst others. The 77 villages provide large working age population and immense scope of skill development and large employment creation thus abounds in this region, which can ensure that tourism potential exploitation shall considerably enhance the geographical profile of this region. Total road length of 149 kilometres in this tehsil provide good transportation for tourism to thrive. An above average urbanisation percentage of 16.5% ensures an availability of market and better logistics infrastructure for tourism to avail in its potential exploitation. Along

with the major tourism spots in this region, minor tourism spots include multiple cultural fairs, markets, cultural haats, temples and many other tourist spots of importance and above average working age population percentage of 59.9 percent providing a large service class for this sector.

In the Ateli tehsil of Mahendragarh district, literacy and population density are below average but the rural profile of this area provides immense opportunities for rural tourism, spiritual tourism and ecotourism to thrive in the area. Along with the multiple major tourist spots there are many minor tourist spots in this tehsil. The urbanization percentage is low but a large enough working age population percentage along with a large base that is not yet skilled and employed can be demographically utilised in the act of tourism becoming popular in this region. Total road length of 210 kilometres provides good connectivity to this tehsil vis a vis other regions in the district. According to department of economic and statistical analysis, Haryana government, report 2016, 8020 domestic and international tourists visited the major tourist spots here. It is conspicuous here that these numbers indicate only the organised and institutionalized tourism numbers, whereas a large informal and local tourist population might not be depicted in these numbers. A large population base of 1,29,503 people in this tehsil with a favourable sex ratio above average as compared to the number for the whole district provides immense employment creation opportunities especially for the females.

Nangal Chaudhari is another tehsil in the Mahendragarh district with population density of 429 much below the average for the whole district. It has a literacy of 74.6 and the sex ratio of 796 with a population base and total road length of 79 kilometres depicting the rural agrarian landscape of the tehsil. Official figures suggest an urbanization of 10.7% and an average working age population percent of 52.3%. Numerous villages in the tehsil provide a good employment base which can be utilised in developing tourism in the region. *Rural tourism, theme based eco-tourism* can thrive well if regulated in this tehsil area. Together with the minor tourism spots, development of tourism in this tehsil can prove to be a catalyst for overall development of the demographic profile of the whole region.

Some ongoing projects in this area include the likes of South Haryana heritage circuit which is to be developed as global tourist destination.⁸ The *Madhagarh-Mahendragarh-Narnaul-Rewari heritage circuit* in south Haryana would soon be developed as a global tourism destination under the central government's *Swadesh Darshan Scheme*. A sum of Rs 100 crore is being spent on developing the circuit. The Union Tourism Ministry launched the Swadesh Darshan Scheme in 2014-15 for integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits in India.

The prospective and progressive impacts on various attributes like literacy improvement to serve as skilled labour supply to the tourism sector, favourable sex-ratio, medical infrastructure enhancement to project the area as a safe tourist destination amongst other efforts, cultural profile exposure, Transport & connectivity infrastructure improvement, jobs creation and skill development, entrepreneurial promotion, archaeological preservation, overall development, strict and constant law & order situation monitoring can be seen with full tourism development in the district. But the opportunity costs, excessive dependence on tourism, inflationary pressures, seasonal fluctuations, foreign labour force demand, and increases in imports tendency have to be kept in check in the due course of this tourism exploitation.

Thus it becomes abundantly evident that there abounds tremendous untapped tourism potential in the district whose full utilisation and development can have wonderful trickle down effects on the overall geographical profile of the district and the region.

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