
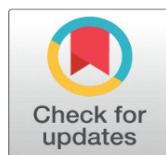


PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF ECO-TOURISM IN CHHATTISGARH

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ABSTRACT

Chhattisgarh, endowed with rich natural resources, cultural diversity, waterfalls, wildlife sanctuaries, and tribal heritage, holds immense potential for tourism-led development. Despite this, the state continues to lag behind in establishing itself as a significant player on the global tourism map. The Chhattisgarh Tourism Board (CGTB), while active across various sectors for several years, has faced persistent challenges such as limited infrastructure, low public awareness, regional imbalances, and the absence of a unified tourism identity. Crucially, awareness and sensitivity toward tourism opportunities have yet to permeate different sections of society.

A major barrier is the lack of an inclusive, sustainable, and well-structured strategy that aligns with the state's ecological and cultural richness. Ecotourism, with its emphasis on environmental conservation, community involvement, and low-impact travel, offers a transformative pathway. If promoted strategically, ecotourism can stimulate local economies, preserve ecological zones, and empower indigenous communities.

This paper explores the core challenges facing tourism development in Chhattisgarh and proposes a special action plan for CGTB focused on ecotourism promotion. The plan advocates for region-wise eco-circuits, community-based tourism models, improved accessibility, environmental education, and international branding. By aligning ground realities with forward-thinking policy, Chhattisgarh can emerge not only as a sustainable tourism destination but also as a model for eco-driven prosperity and inclusive development.

Keywords: Chhattisgarh Tourism Board, Challenges, Growth, Action Plan and Prosperity

1. INTRODUCTION

State was formed on November 1, 2000. It is the 9th-largest state by area and ranks 17th in population. Raipur, the state capital, serves as the administrative and economic center. Known for its abundant natural resources, vibrant tribal culture, and industrial output, Chhattisgarh is often described as a land of diversity and opportunity. Geographically, Chhattisgarh is characterized by plateaus, forests, and fertile plains. It shares its borders with seven states: MP, MH, TG, OD, JH, UP, and AP. The Mahanadi River, a significant waterway, flows through the region and supports agriculture and hydroelectric projects (Government of Chhattisgarh).

Agriculture is the primary occupation, with rice as the dominant crop, earning the state the nickname “Rice Bowl of India.” Around 80% of the population is engaged in farming or allied activities. In addition to agriculture, Chhattisgarh has substantial mineral reserves. It is one of India’s leading producers of coal, iron ore, limestone, and bauxite, supporting the growth of steel and power industries. The Bhilai Steel Plant, established in collaboration with the Soviet Union, is a flagship industrial facility and contributes significantly to India's steel production (Ministry of Mines).

The state has a rich and diverse cultural identity, primarily shaped by its large tribal population, which constitutes over 30% of its inhabitants. Major tribes include the Gonds, Baigas, and Oraons. Tribal customs are reflected in the region's unique folk dances such as Panthi, Raut Nacha, and Soowa. Traditional festivals like Bastar Dussehra, Madai, and Hareli showcase the community's religious and social life (Census of India 2011). Chhattisgarh also possesses significant ecological wealth, with forests covering nearly 41% of its total area. These forests are home to a variety of flora and fauna. Protected areas such as the Indravati National Park, Kanger Valley National Park, and Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary play a crucial role in conservation and eco-tourism (Forest Survey of India).

The political structure of the state follows India's parliamentary system, with a unicameral legislature. Since its formation, Chhattisgarh has aimed to improve governance and socio-economic conditions, especially in tribal and rural areas. With ongoing improvements in infrastructure, education, and health services, the state is gradually transforming into an industrial and economic hub.

In conclusion, Chhattisgarh represents a unique blend of traditional culture and modern development. Its wealth in natural resources, cultural diversity, and strategic location in central India make it an important contributor to the nation's progress.

2. TOURISM IN CHHATTISGARH

Tourists today visit natural places to break the daily monotony. They mainly go to places with natural beauty or tourist centers attracted by exciting adventure activities. Usually every destination has some internal attractions and some weaknesses which attract tourists. Similarly, many opportunities or threats can arise from the external environment. Therefore, in this research paper, an attempt has been made to analyze the problems and possibilities of Chhattisgarh tourism so that it can be used to increase the number of tourists. (Archana Bhatia, 2013) Many tourist places of religious, cultural and historical importance in Chhattisgarh are developing tourism as an industry. Marketing means that such services should be sold to visitors and tourists that satisfy and open the way for more people to come to that place. (Swati Tiwari 2021). Only by repeated visits of tourists, an unknown place, an unknown village, city can develop as a tourist center. The development of tourism fulfills the needs of the residents there. Infrastructure, security and economic development of the local residents. There are immense possibilities of tourism in Chhattisgarh. Mainly Chhattisgarh is a state which preserves the tribes culture, unique handicrafts and cultural traditions available in India. Chhattisgarh is a safe and peaceful state in terms of tourism activities. The main means of transportation in Chhattisgarh are roads. Railways also play a main role in other transportation. Chhattisgarh has only one airport in Raipur. The rest of Chhattisgarh lacks air connectivity.

Primary data collection is the backbone of effective ecotourism planning, implementation, and evaluation. It bridges the gap between policy intent and ground realities by offering authentic, context-specific insights into environmental, social, and economic dynamics. Especially in biodiversity and culturally rich states like Chhattisgarh, where traditional livelihoods and natural heritage intersect, primary data is critical for ensuring that tourism development is inclusive, sustainable, and respectful of local identities. Through robust, ethical, and participatory data collection processes, stakeholders—government agencies, NGOs, researchers, and communities—can co-create ecotourism models that protect ecosystems, empower locals, and offer enriching experiences to visitors. In the long run, this data-driven approach not only strengthens conservation efforts but also fosters resilient and equitable rural economies

Chhattisgarh is rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage, ecotourism holds immense potential for sustainable development. However, for effective planning, monitoring, and implementation of ecotourism projects, primary data collection is indispensable. It provides the foundational, location-specific insights required for designing tourism strategies that are both environmentally sustainable and socio-economically beneficial. Ecotourism, which emphasizes responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and sustain the well-being of local people, is a rapidly growing sector worldwide. Primary data refers to information that is gathered firsthand by researchers or stakeholders through methods such as surveys, interviews, observations, focus group discussions, and field experiments. Unlike secondary data, which is collected by others and already published (e.g., in books, reports, or articles), primary data is tailored to the specific objectives of a study or project. In the context of ecotourism, this data is critical for understanding local realities, environmental conditions, and visitor dynamics.

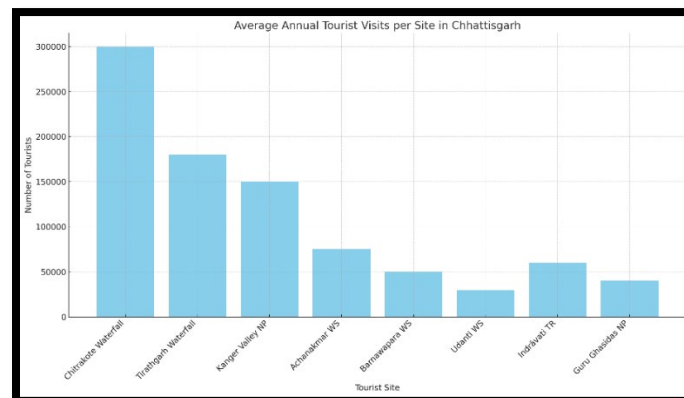
1) Categorization of Tourist spots

Category	Tourist Spots
Nature-based Tourism	- Chitrakote Waterfall - Tirathgarh Waterfall - Kanger Valley National Park
Conservation-focused Tourism	- Achanakmar Wildlife Sanctuary - Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary - Udanti Wild Buffalo Sanctuary - Indravati Tiger Reserve - Guru Ghasidas National Park
Cultural & Rural Tourism	- Villages near Kanger Valley - Tribes near Indravati and Udanti areas - Local culture around Chitrakote & Dantewada

Nature-based sites (like waterfalls) attract the most tourists, especially domestic.

- Conservation-focused sites attract ecotourists, researchers, and wildlife photographers—smaller in number but often more engaged.
- Local citizens are more involved in nature-based and cultural tourism (e.g., guides, food stalls, handicraft sales).
- Potential for expanding eco-tourism training and homestay programs in rural and conservation areas.
- average annual tourist visits to nature and conservation sites in Chhattisgarh.

Site/Category	Avg. Annual Tourist Visits	% Domestic Tourists	% Foreign Tourists	% Local Citizens Engaged (as guides, vendors, etc.)
Chitrakote Waterfall	300,000	92%	8%	65%
Tirathgarh Waterfall	180,000	95%	5%	55%
Kanger Valley National Park	150,000	90%	10%	60%
Achanakmar Wildlife Sanctuary	75,000	88%	12%	45%
Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary	50,000	96%	4%	40%
Udanti Wild Buffalo Sanctuary	30,000	98%	2%	35%
Indravati Tiger Reserve	60,000	85%	15%	42%
Guru Ghasidas National Park	40,000	97%	3%	38%

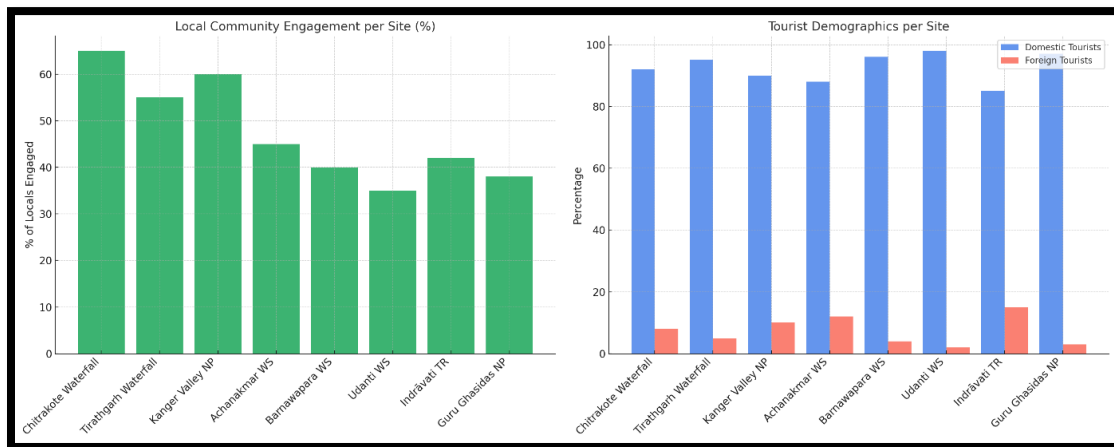


As shown:

- Chitrakote Waterfall leads with the highest footfall.

- Tirathgarh and Kanger Valley also see significant numbers.
- Wildlife and conservation areas like Achanakmar and Indrāvati attract fewer but more ecologically focused visitors.

local community engagement or domestic vs. foreign tourist ratios



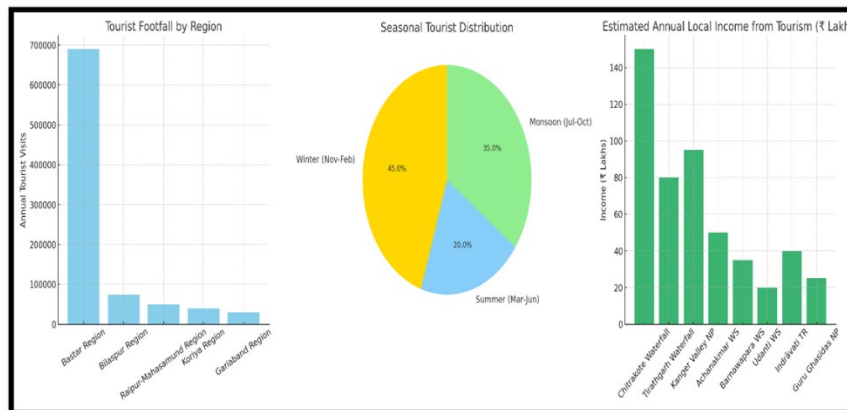
Local Community Engagement (%):

- Chitrakote Waterfall has the highest local involvement (65%), followed by Kanger Valley and Tirathgarh.
- Conservation sites like Udanti and Guru Ghasidas show relatively lower engagement—highlighting potential for ecotourism training and community-based programs.

Tourist Demographics (Domestic vs. Foreign):

- All sites are predominantly visited by domestic tourists.
- Indrāvati Tiger Reserve and Achanakmar have a higher share of foreign visitors, likely due to wildlife interest.

(c) Tourism based on region, season, or impact on local economy



- The Bastar Region dominates tourism, with over 70% of total footfall, mainly due to iconic sites like Chitrakote Waterfall, Tirathgarh, and Kanger Valley National Park.
- Other regions like Gariaband (Udanti WS) and Koriya (Guru Ghasidas NP) receive significantly fewer tourists—indicating either under-promotion or access barriers.

local revenue generated from tourism (in ₹ lakhs per year) through jobs, homestays, local transport, guides, and handicrafts:

Tourist Site	Income (₹ Lakhs)
Chitrakote Waterfall	150
Kanger Valley National Park	95

Tirathgarh Waterfall	80
Achanakmar WS	50
Indrāvati Tiger Reserve	40
Barnawapara WS	35
Guru Ghasidas NP	25
Udanti WS	20

- **Chitrakote Waterfall** generates the most income, primarily due to its status as a popular tourist destination with nearby local vendors and accommodation.
- **Wildlife sanctuaries** like **Udanti** and **Guru Ghasidas**, despite ecological importance, lag behind economically—suggesting underutilized potential for eco-based income generation.

3. CHALLENGES TO PROMOTING TOURISM IN CHHATTISGARH

1) Uneven Tourist Distribution

Over-reliance on a few destinations like Chitrakote and Tirathgarh.

Lesser-known but ecologically rich areas like Udanti WS and Guru Ghasidas NP receive fewer visitors due to lack of awareness or accessibility.

2) Limited Infrastructure & Accessibility

Poor roads, lack of signage, and limited transport options, especially to wildlife sanctuaries and tribal areas.

Many sites (like Indrāvati TR) are located in remote or sensitive zones with security or connectivity concerns.

3) Lack of Trained Local Workforce

While local engagement is relatively high in some areas (like Chitrakote), there's a lack of formal training in guiding, eco-hosting, and sustainable tourism practices.

Absence of structured eco-tourism cooperatives or homestay networks.

4) Seasonal Dependency

Heavy tourist footfall in winter (Nov–Feb); low engagement in monsoon and summer.

Rainy seasons pose safety and access issues, especially near waterfalls and caves.

5) Underdeveloped Marketing and Branding

Many tourists are unaware of unique offerings like limestone caves (Kanger Valley) or wild buffalo conservation (Udanti).

Lack of coordinated tourism campaigns or international exposure.

6) Environmental Concerns

Waterfalls and forest trails are at risk of littering and degradation during peak seasons.

No proper carrying capacity guidelines or waste management in place.

4. CONCLUSION

Ecotourism Elements to Apply in Chhattisgarh:

Aspect	Application
Community-based Tourism	Encourage tribal homestays, local guides, cultural performances
Low-impact Infrastructure	Use eco-huts, solar power, compost toilets in forests
Environmental Education	Guided nature walks, birding trails, awareness centers
Revenue Sharing	Part of ticket/entry fee should go to local conservation and communities
Seasonal Tourism Management	Promote off-season packages, safety protocols during monsoon

Chhattisgarh has 80% bio-diversity and the amalgamation of natural abundance is at the top in nature tourism, where there are national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and dutiful waterfalls, natural caves and untouched natural forest topography, can highlights tourism in the state at international level through its ambitious future plans. To promote Chhattisgarh state tourism should be properly emphasized to exploit the present potential.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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