

Tourism Development in Dholpur District, Rajasthan: Challenges and Prospects

^{*1}Vijay Kumar Singh and ²Hameed Ahmad

^{*1} Research Scholar, University of Kota, Kota, Rajasthan, India.

²Professor, HOD, Department of Geography Govt. PG College Jhalawar, Rajasthan, India.

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Abstract

Tourism plays a significant role in regional economic development, especially in culturally rich but underdeveloped regions. Dholpur district of Rajasthan, known as the “Land of Red Stone,” possesses immense tourism potential due to its historical monuments, riverine landscapes, and wildlife resources. However, despite these assets, tourism in Dholpur remains underdeveloped compared to other regions of Rajasthan. This study examines the geographical, cultural, and economic aspects of tourism in Dholpur, identifies key challenges, and explores future prospects for sustainable tourism development.

*Corresponding Author

Vijay Kumar Singh

Research Scholar, University of Kota,
Kota, Rajasthan, India.

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Introduction

Tourism industry is a vital part of our country's economy. It has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors contributing significantly to regional economic development, cultural exchange, and environmental awareness. It also plays a major role in showcasing our country's rich heritage and culture. India is a young nation. The potential and power of its demographic dividend can be harnessed to promote responsible and sustainable tourism in the country. In India, tourism plays a vital role in generating employment, enhancing infrastructure, and promoting cultural heritage. Tourism industry has globally emerged as a major catalyst of socio-economic development. Presently the travel and tourism industry has a share of 10.4% in the global GDP and supports one in ten jobs worldwide as per the 2018 World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) report. Economic Impact Research report of WTTC in 2018 has forecast India to be among the world's fastest-growing tourism economies in coming years and travel trade is likely to add 10 million jobs to the economy by year 2028. Rajasthan, known for its rich historical legacy, attracts a large number of domestic and

international tourists every year. However, not all regions of the state have benefited equally from tourism development. Dholpur district, located in the eastern part of Rajasthan, is one such region that possesses immense tourism potential but remains relatively underdeveloped in comparison to major tourist destinations such as Jaipur, Udaipur, and Jodhpur. The present study focuses on analyzing the tourism potential of Dholpur district, examining its major attractions, identifying the challenges in tourism development, and exploring future prospects for sustainable tourism growth.

Study Area: Dholpur

Dholpur district was established in 1982 after being separated from Bharatpur district. It is located in the easternmost side of the state of Rajasthan and is situated within 26°21'19" and 26°57'33" North latitudes and 77°13'06" and 78°16'45" East longitudes. The District has six subdivisions Dholpur, Bari, Baseri, Rajakhhera, Saipau & Sarmathura and seven Tehsils Dholpur, Bari, Baseri, Rajakhhera, Saipau, Sarmathura & Maniya.



Fig 1: Study Area Map

Geographically, the district holds a strategic position as it shares its boundaries with Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, and lies close to major tourist centers such as Agra and Gwalior. This advantageous location provides Dholpur with an opportunity to be integrated into the broader tourism circuit of northern India. The district is often referred to as the “Land of Red Stone” due to its rich deposits of red sandstone, which have been used in the construction of several iconic monuments in India, including the Red Fort in Delhi. The historical evolution of Dholpur dated back to ancient times, with evidence suggesting its association with early civilizations and various ruling dynasties, including the Mauryas, Rajputs, and Mughals. These historical influences have contributed to the development of a rich cultural and architectural heritage in the region (Rajasthan Tourism, 2026).

Tourist Spot

The tourism resources of Dholpur can be broadly categorized into historical, cultural, religious, ecological, and water-based attractions. The district is home to several historical monuments that reflect its royal past and architectural excellence.

The City Palace, also known as the Dholpur Palace, it is an opulent structures that seamlessly blends ancient heritage and elegant architecture. One’s home to the royal family, this palace was built from red sand stone which illustrates the history, splendour and grandeur of the city.

Shergarh Fort, Located to the south of Dholpur, the Shergarh Fort was built by Raja Maldeo of Jodhpur. It was reconstructed in 1540 by Sher Shah Suri and named after the Sultan of Delhi. This fort was initially built in defense against the rulers of Mewar. It show strategic importance of the region in historical times. This historic monument is considered to be the epitome of rich, delicately-styled architecture from the past. Adorned with carved images, statues of Hindu gods and Jain motifs, the Shergarh Fort was once protected by water and is considered to be the charm of Dholpur. Other notable structures such as Nihal Tower (clock tower) and the Royal Step well further highlight the architectural richness of Dholpur and attract visitors interested in heritage tourism. These monuments not only serve as tourist attractions but also play an important role in preserving the cultural identity of the region.

Religious tourism is another significant component of Dholpur’s tourism sector. The district is known for its ancient temples and sacred sites, which attract a large number of pilgrims, particularly during festivals and religious occasions. Machkund-Tirtha is located at a distance of about 2 km from the Gwalior-Agra road near Dholpur. The Machkund temple and Ponds associated with mythological significance, is one of the important religious tourist destinations. This Pond and temple name was named after Raja Muchkund Dholpur. A holy festival of Dev chhat is celebrated in the form of fair at Teerthraj Machkund in Dholpur. The city witnesses huge turnout of devotees from nearby states during this phase of time.

Sher Shikhar Gurudwara is an important religious and historical site located near the famous Machkund area in Dholpur. It holds special significance in Sikh religious history as it is associated with the visit of Guru Hargobind Sahib, the sixth Guru of Sikhism. This connection makes the Gurudwara an important pilgrimage destination for Sikh devotees from different parts of India.

Saipau Mahadev Temple The historic Mahadev Temple of the town is not only the center of public faith, but is also a wonderful specimen of grandeur and carvings across the country. The influx of pilgrims during festivals such as Mahashivratri contributes to seasonal tourism and provides economic opportunities for local communities.

Religious tourism thus plays a crucial role in sustaining the tourism economy of Dholpur, especially in rural areas.

In addition to its historical and religious attractions, Dholpur possesses considerable potential for eco-tourism and wildlife tourism. The district is characterized by unique geographical features such as the Chambal River and its associated ravine landscapes, which provide a distinct ecological setting.

The National Chambal Sanctuary was set up in 1979 as a riverine sanctuary along an approximately 425 km length of the Chambal River and its ravines stretching over 2-6 km wide along the river. This extends across Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, is one of the important wildlife attractions in the region. This Safari is on the river Chambal which is probably one of the cleanest rivers you can see in India. It is home to several endangered species, including the gharial, Gangetic dolphin, and various species of turtles and migratory birds. This sanctuary offers opportunities for activities such as river safaris, bird watching, and nature photography, making it an ideal destination for eco-tourists.

Van Vihar Sanctuary one of the oldest wildlife reserves of the rulers of Dholpur, Van Vihar Sanctuary is spread over an area of about 25 sq. km over the Vindhyan Plateau. The sanctuary is characterized by a wide range of fascinating flora and fauna that grabs the tourists' attention.

The Ramsagar wildlife sanctuary Dholpur, is situated in the neighborhood of the famous Van Vihar wildlife sanctuary. The distance between the two is approximately 18 kilometers. These contribute to the biodiversity of the region and enhance its tourism appeal. These natural resources, if managed properly, can play a significant role in promoting sustainable tourism in Dholpur.

Water-based tourism is another important aspect of the district's tourism potential.

Talab-e-Shahi in Dholpur is a Mughal-era lake and hunting lodge built in 1617 A.D. by Shah Jahan. It is known for its scenic beauty, red sandstone palace, and importance as a bird-watching site. Located near Bari, it attracts tourists during winter due to migratory birds. It has strong potential for eco-tourism and heritage tourism but requires better infrastructure and conservation efforts.

Damoh, a beautiful waterfall in Sarmathura, is one of the major tourist attractions in the district. The streams in this waterfall are known to remain dry throughout the year, except

from July to September when embellish their surroundings with greenery and a variety of fauna.

The Chambal River also offers opportunities for boating and eco-tourism activities. These water bodies not only enhance the aesthetic value of the region but also contribute to its ecological diversity. The integration of water-based tourism with eco-tourism can further strengthen the tourism sector in Dholpur and attract a wider range of visitors.

Tourism Trends: Rajasthan & Dholpur

Tourism plays a major role in the economic development of Rajasthan, attracting a large number of domestic and international visitors every year. However, the distribution of tourism within the state is highly uneven. While major destinations experience rapid growth, regions like Dholpur district continue to receive comparatively low tourist inflow. This contrast highlights the gap between developed and underdeveloped tourist regions. Understanding such disparities is essential for regional planning and sustainable tourism development. Therefore, a comparative analysis of tourism trends between Rajasthan and Dholpur becomes important for identifying challenges and opportunities.

Here is a government-based comparative analysis of last 5 years between Rajasthan tourism and Dholpur, using Economic Review, Statistical Abstract, and newspaper-supported data.

Rajasthan Total Tourist Arrivals

Table 1: Tourist Arrival in Rajasthan

Year	Domestic Tourists	Foreign Tourists	Total
2020	~5-6 crore (COVID drop)	~3-4 lakh	~5.5-6 crore
2021	~10-12 crore	~3.5 lakh	~10-12 crore
2022	~18 crore	~16 lakh	~18.16 crore
2023	~23 crore	~17 lakh	~23.17 crore
2024	~23-24 crore	20.72 lakh	~23.2+ crore

Dholpur Tourist Arrivals

Table 2: Tourist Arrival in Dholpur

Year	Total Tourists (Approx.)
2020	~0.9 lakh
2021	~1.2 lakh
2022	~1.9 lakh
2023	~2.2 lakh
2024	~1.95 lakh

Direct Comparison

Table 3: Tourist Volume Comparison

Tourist Volume Comparison		
Year	Rajasthan (Crore)	Dholpur (Lakh)
2020	~6 crore	~0.9 lakh
2021	~11 crore	~1.2 lakh
2022	~18 crore	~1.9 lakh
2023	~23 crore	~2.2 lakh
2024	~23+ crore	~1.95 lakh

Graph Interpretation

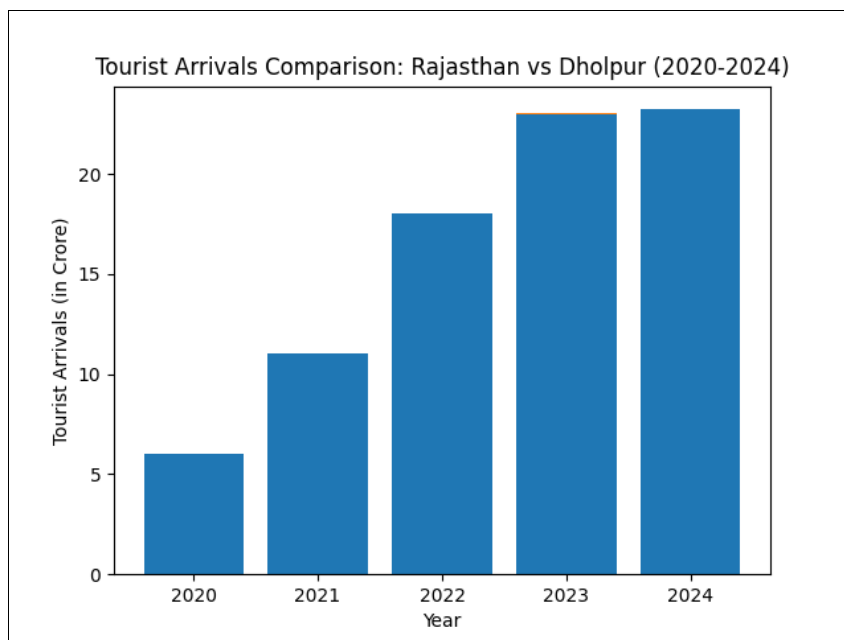


Fig 1: Tourist arrivals comparison between Rajasthan and Dholpur district (2020–2024)

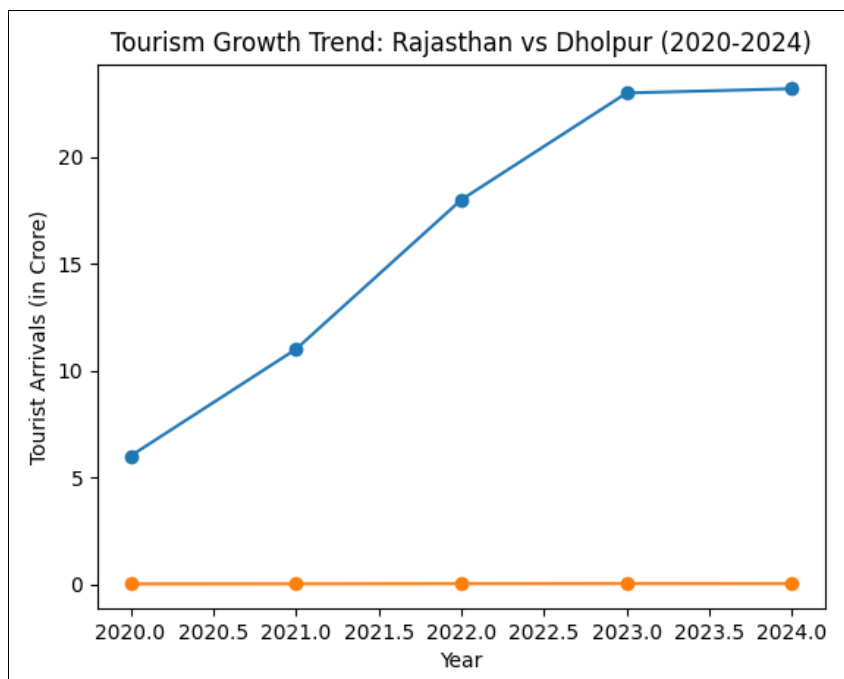


Fig 2: Trend of tourist growth in Rajasthan and Dholpur district (2020–2024)

Structural Difference

Table 4: Structural Differences

Factor	Rajasthan	Dholpur
Tourism Type	Mass + International	Local + Regional
Infrastructure	Developed	Limited
Promotion	High	Low
Tourist Circuit	Golden Triangle	Peripheral

A comparative analysis of tourism trends reveals a significant disparity between Rajasthan and Dholpur district. While Rajasthan recorded approximately 23.2 crore tourist visits in 2024, Dholpur accounted for only about 1.95 lakh visitors. The proportion of Dholpur’s contribution to total state tourism remains negligible, at less than 0.1 per cent. This disparity highlights the spatial concentration of tourism in major

districts such as Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Ajmer, and others, while peripheral districts like Dholpur remain underdeveloped despite possessing considerable tourism potential. Furthermore, post-COVID recovery trends indicate rapid growth at the state level, whereas Dholpur has experienced only marginal increases in tourist inflow.

Challenges

Despite the availability of diverse tourism resources, the development of tourism in Dholpur faces several challenges. One of the important issues is the lack of adequate infrastructure. Many tourist sites in the district are not well connected by roads, and transportation facilities are limited, particularly in rural and remote areas. The availability of quality accommodation facilities is also insufficient, which discourages tourists from staying for longer durations. Basic

amenities such as sanitation, drinking water, and information centers are often lacking at tourist sites, affecting the overall tourist experience. Infrastructure development is therefore essential for enhancing the attractiveness and accessibility of Dholpur as a tourist destination.

Another major challenge is the lack of effective promotion and marketing of Dholpur as a tourism destination. While Rajasthan as a whole is widely recognized for its tourism potential, lesser-known regions like Dholpur receive limited attention in tourism campaigns and promotional activities. As a result, many potential tourists remain unaware of the attractions offered by the district. The absence of a strong digital presence and inadequate use of modern marketing tools further contribute to this problem. Effective branding and promotion strategies are required to position Dholpur as a unique and attractive destination within the state's tourism framework.

Environmental issues also pose a significant challenge to tourism development in the district. The ravine landscapes along the Chambal River are prone to soil erosion and sand mining, which affects both the natural environment and human settlements. Unregulated tourism activities can lead to environmental degradation, including pollution of water bodies and disturbance to wildlife habitats. The conservation of natural resources is therefore crucial for ensuring the sustainability of tourism in the region. Eco-friendly tourism practices and strict environmental regulations must be implemented to minimize the negative impacts of tourism.

The lack of integrated planning and coordination among various stakeholders is another factor hindering tourism development in Dholpur. Tourism development requires the involvement of multiple agencies, including government departments, local authorities, private investors, and local communities. However, the absence of a coordinated approach often leads to inefficiencies and delays in the implementation of tourism projects. A comprehensive tourism development plan, based on scientific analysis and stakeholder participation, is necessary to address these issues and promote sustainable growth.

Prospects

Despite these challenges, Dholpur has significant prospects for tourism development. One of the key opportunities lies in the promotion of eco-tourism, particularly in the Chambal River region. With proper planning and conservation measures, the area can be developed as a major eco-tourism destination, attracting both domestic and international tourists. The development of eco-tourism can also contribute to environmental conservation and provide livelihood opportunities for local communities. Similarly, heritage tourism can be promoted through the restoration and conservation of historical monuments. The adaptive reuse of heritage buildings for tourism purposes, such as heritage hotels and cultural centers, can enhance the tourism experience and generate revenue.

Another important prospect is the integration of Dholpur into the Golden Triangle tourism circuit, which includes Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur. Given its proximity to Agra and Gwalior, Dholpur can serve as an additional destination for tourists visiting the region. The development of tourist circuits and improved connectivity can facilitate the flow of tourists and increase the visibility of Dholpur. The promotion of cultural festivals, fairs, and events can also attract tourists and showcase the rich cultural heritage of the district.

Community participation is essential for the sustainable development of tourism in Dholpur. The involvement of local communities in tourism activities can enhance their economic well-being and ensure the preservation of cultural traditions. Training programs and capacity-building initiatives can help local residents develop skills in hospitality, guiding, and handicrafts. The promotion of homestays and rural tourism can provide authentic experiences to tourists while benefiting local communities. Public-private partnerships can also play a crucial role in mobilizing resources and expertise for tourism development.

In order to achieve sustainable tourism development in Dholpur, several measures need to be implemented. These include the improvement of infrastructure and connectivity, the development of eco-friendly tourism policies, and the promotion of digital marketing strategies. The use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and other modern technologies can aid in the planning and management of tourism resources. Policy interventions should focus on balancing economic development with environmental conservation and cultural preservation. The establishment of tourist information centers, signage, and interpretation facilities can enhance the overall tourist experience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Dholpur district possesses a rich combination of historical, cultural, and natural resources that provide a strong foundation for tourism development. However, the full potential of tourism in the district has not yet been realized due to various challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of promotion, environmental issues, and poor planning. With strategic interventions, effective policies, and active participation of stakeholders, Dholpur can emerge as a significant tourism destination in Rajasthan. The adoption of sustainable tourism practices will not only enhance the economic development of the region but also ensure the conservation of its unique heritage and environment for future generations.

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