Factors Influencing the Development of Green and Sustainable Tourism: Evidence from Southern Rajasthan

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Abstract:

This study explores the factors influencing the development of green and sustainable tourism in Southern Rajasthan, focusing on five key constructs: environmental awareness, infrastructure availability, government policies, cultural and natural attractions, and tourist behavior. Using a sample of 290 respondents from three major tourist cities in Southern Rajasthan, data were collected through a structured survey and analyzed using Smart-PLS to assess the relationships between the variables. The findings reveal that environmental awareness, infrastructure availability, and government policies predict green tourism development significantly. Additionally, cultural and natural attractions play a critical role in attracting sustainable tourism, while tourist behavior significantly impacts adopting sustainable practices. The study emphasizes the importance of coordinated efforts between policymakers, tourism operators, and local communities to foster sustainable tourism. Despite limitations such as the use of a convenient sampling method and a cross-sectional design, the study provides valuable insights for promoting green tourism in the region. The findings contribute to both academic literature and practical applications in the tourism sector, offering directions for future research on sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Green tourism, Sustainable tourism, Environmental sustainability, Socio-cultural preservation, Southern Rajasthan, Cultural heritage.

1. INTRODUCTION

The growing global emphasis on environmental sustainability and the responsible use of natural resources has positioned green and sustainable tourism as a critical pathway for achieving long-term development goals. Green tourism prioritizes practices that reduce environmental harm, enhance biodiversity conservation, and promote cultural preservation (Sonali Bhati; Manish Dadhich; Anand A Bhasker; Kamal Kant Hiran; Roshni Sharma; Anurag, 2023). In contrast, sustainable tourism extends this vision by integrating economic inclusivity and social equity into tourism practices. Together, they form a framework that addresses the triple bottom line—environmental, social, and economic sustainability. In the context of Southern Rajasthan, a region characterized by its vibrant cultural heritage, unique landscapes, and ecological diversity, developing green and sustainable tourism is desirable and essential for preserving the region's distinct identity.

Southern Rajasthan, which includes popular destinations such as Udaipur, the "City of Lakes," Chittorgarh with its historic fortresses, and Mount Abu, the only hill station in Rajasthan, holds significant appeal for

both domestic and international tourists. Its attractions, ranging from royal palaces and intricately designed temples to wildlife sanctuaries and traditional arts, make it a tourist hotspot. However, the rapid expansion of the tourism sector in recent decades has brought a host of challenges, including environmental degradation, water scarcity, waste management issues, and the erosion of local cultural practices. These challenges underscore the urgent need for sustainable and green tourism initiatives to safeguard the region's ecological and cultural treasures for future generations (Dadhich & Yadav Neetu, 2024) .

The factors influencing the development of green and sustainable tourism in Southern Rajasthan are multifaceted and interdependent. Environmental factors, such as climate variability, natural resource availability, and biodiversity conservation, play a crucial role in shaping the region's capacity for sustainable tourism. Socio-cultural factors are equally significant, including community participation, cultural preservation, and promoting local livelihoods. Economic dimensions, such as investment in green infrastructure, adopting eco-friendly technologies, and creating sustainable business models, are essential for aligning tourism growth with sustainability goals. Policy frameworks, governance structures, and stakeholder collaboration form the backbone of sustainable tourism development, providing the necessary institutional support and direction for green initiatives.

This paper examines these factors by drawing evidence from Southern Rajasthan, a region that offers a unique lens through which to explore the intersection of tourism, sustainability, and regional development. The study highlights both the opportunities and challenges associated with implementing green tourism practices in the region. It also seeks to identify best practices and innovative approaches that can be scaled or adapted to similar contexts globally. This research aims to provide actionable insights for policymakers, tourism operators, and community stakeholders by understanding the specific factors that drive or hinder sustainable tourism development in Southern Rajasthan. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism by showcasing how a culturally rich and ecologically sensitive region can transition toward a more responsible tourism model (Dadhich, Opoku-mensah, et al., 2024). The lessons learned from Southern Rajasthan can serve as a blueprint for other regions facing similar challenges, reinforcing the idea that green and sustainable tourism is achievable and essential for fostering harmony between people, culture, and the environment.

2. Review of Literature

The Rajasthan Ecotourism Policy, (2021), outlined a comprehensive framework to promote sustainable tourism in the state, leveraging its rich natural and cultural heritage. The policy emphasizes the importance of fostering environmental conservation, empowering local communities, and providing enriching experiences for visitors. By integrating ecotourism into Rajasthan's diverse ecological and cultural landscape, the policy aims to support local livelihoods, preserve biodiversity, and raise awareness about conservation. The policy's vision is to conserve Rajasthan's biodiversity, ecosystems, and cultural traditions while promoting sustainable and low-impact tourism practices. Its mission is to create livelihood opportunities for local communities by actively involving them in ecotourism management and fostering social inclusiveness and economic empowerment. Activities such as trekking, birdwatching, camping, and wildlife safaris are central to the policy, supported by eco-friendly infrastructure like eco-lodges, homestays, and locally operated services. Community involvement is a cornerstone of the policy. Local communities are regarded as essential partners in ecotourism development, with a focus on equitable sharing of benefits (Manish Dadhich, Manvinder Singh Pahwa, Vipin Jain, 2021). The policy includes capacity-building programs to train locals as nature guides, hospitality managers, and entrepreneurs,

ensuring their meaningful participation in planning and management processes. By empowering communities, the policy seeks to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility for conservation. Implementation and governance are overseen by the Rajasthan Forest Development Corporation (RFDC) in collaboration with other stakeholders. A multi-tier governance structure, including district and state-level committees, ensures effective monitoring and alignment with sustainability principles. The policy also adheres to global sustainable tourism criteria and aligns with environmental laws to minimize the ecological footprint of tourism activities. The Rajasthan Ecotourism Policy integrates revenue-sharing models to fund community development, conservation initiatives, and site maintenance. It aims to balance ecological preservation with economic development, ensuring long-term benefits for local communities and the state's natural and cultural heritage. Through its strategic approach, the policy aspires to make Rajasthan a model state for sustainable tourism, offering memorable experiences for visitors while conserving its unique resources.

(Verma and Murdia, 2017) highlighted the potential of tribal tourism in Southern Rajasthan by emphasizing the rich cultural heritage of local tribes. Their study discussed how tribal tourism served as a new avenue for attracting tourists, contributing to the socio-economic development of tribal communities. They suggested promoting tribal culture, traditions, and lifestyle to enhance the tourism experience while ensuring active community participation. The researchers underscored the importance of integrating tribal narratives and practices into tourism initiatives to preserve indigenous knowledge and foster inclusive growth. (Mirza, 2021) explored the concept of sustainable tourism development in Rajasthan, focusing on balancing economic growth and environmental conservation. The research delved into the potential of eco-parks and wildlife sanctuaries as key attractions that drew tourists and promoted environmentally sustainable practices. The study emphasized the necessity for policy frameworks that integrated economic incentives with environmental sustainability, fostering responsible tourism development. Mirza also highlighted the role of government and private stakeholders in ensuring the implementation of sustainable practices across tourism projects.

(Khangarot, 2019) examined agro-tourism as an integral facet of sustainable tourism development in Rajasthan. The study demonstrated how integrating agricultural activities with tourism benefited rural communities economically while promoting sustainable practices. It suggested that agro-tourism served as a tool for diversifying rural economies and preserving agricultural heritage. By showcasing traditional farming techniques and offering authentic rural experiences, agro-tourism initiatives also created cultural exchange and educational tourism opportunities. The Social Research Foundation (2021) conducted a comprehensive study identifying challenges related to sustainable tourism in Rajasthan. The research focused on infrastructure development, capacity building, and balancing conservation efforts with tourism growth. The study concluded that addressing these challenges required strategic planning and community engagement. It emphasized the importance of stakeholder collaboration and effective policy implementation to overcome obstacles, ensuring long-term sustainability in the tourism sector.

(Fauzi, 2023) reviewed the role of sustainable tourism in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The study examined the knowledge structure derived from influential past publications, current knowledge, and emerging trends on SDG implementation in the tourism and hospitality industries. Fauzi's findings highlighted the critical need for integrating sustainable tourism practices with SDGs to promote holistic development. The study called for targeted interventions in policy design and industry practices to align tourism with global sustainability objectives. (Arya et al., 2024) prioritized variables influencing sustainable tourism development and pinpointed key success factors aligning with the SDGs. Their

research underscored the importance of specific components such as financial resources, health and safety measures, and green infrastructure in advancing sustainable tourism. The authors emphasized the need for cross-sectoral collaboration and the adoption of innovative practices to address sustainability challenges effectively.

(Pagar, 2020) identified potential sites for agro-tourism development using the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) methodology in the Nashik district of Maharashtra. The study highlighted the importance of geographical and infrastructural factors in determining the suitability of locations for agro-tourism. Pagar's findings provided valuable insights that could be applied to similar regions in Rajasthan, emphasizing the significance of strategic site selection in fostering successful agro-tourism initiatives.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to explore the factors influencing the development of green and sustainable tourism. Descriptive research provides an understanding of the current trends and characteristics of green tourism in Southern Rajasthan, while analytical methods help identify the relationships between independent variables and dependent variables. This approach ensures a comprehensive examination of the region's dynamics shaping green and sustainable tourism. The research focuses on three prominent tourist destinations in Southern Rajasthan: Udaipur, Mount Abu, and Chittorgarh. These cities were selected due to their high tourism potential and unique environmental and cultural attractions. Udaipur, known as the "City of Lakes," is famous for its scenic beauty and heritage sites. Mount Abu is a hill station with ecological significance, and Chittorgarh boasts historical and cultural heritage. These locations provide an ideal setting for studying greenery and sustainable tourism.

The research was conducted over a four-month period from September to December 2024. This period was chosen to capture data during the peak tourist season when the region experiences significant visitor activity. The timing ensured a diverse and comprehensive dataset, reflecting tourist perceptions and behaviors during a time of heightened tourism activity in Southern Rajasthan. The study utilized a convenient sampling technique, selecting 290 respondents from the tourist population in the three cities. Convenient sampling was chosen for its practicality and ease of access to respondents, particularly in bustling tourist areas. Although it may have limitations in generalizability, this method allowed the collection of data from a wide range of visitors, providing valuable insights into green tourism dynamics. Primary data was gathered using a structured questionnaire that included close-ended and Likert scale-based questions to assess tourists' views on green and sustainable tourism. The questionnaire was distributed to tourists in various locations, including heritage sites, eco-friendly accommodations, and transport hubs. Secondary data, such as government reports, tourism statistics, and academic research, supplemented the primary data to provide context and support the analysis.

The study examines the development of green and sustainable tourism as the dependent variable, influenced by five independent factors: environmental awareness, infrastructure availability, government policies, cultural and natural attractions, and tourist behavior. These variables were selected based on their significance in shaping tourism practices and policies. Each factor is critical in influencing tourists' preferences and the region's capacity to support sustainable tourism. Data was analyzed using a combination of statistical methods. Smart PLS (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling) was employed to evaluate complex relationships between variables and to validate the measurement model. Smart PLS ensured a robust analysis of the collected data, offering deeper insights into the interdependencies among variables. These tools ensured a rigorous analysis of the collected data.

4. Objectives and hypothesis of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the factors influencing the development of green and sustainable tourism in Southern Rajasthan. Specifically, the research aims to assess the role of environmental awareness, availability of eco-friendly infrastructure, government policies, cultural and natural attractions, and tourist behavior in fostering sustainable tourism practices. By analyzing these factors, the study seeks to identify key drivers and barriers to the adoption of green tourism initiatives. Additionally, the research aims to provide actionable insights for policymakers, tourism stakeholders, and local communities to enhance sustainable tourism strategies, ensuring the region's environmental preservation, economic growth, and cultural integrity.

Hypotheses

H1: Environmental awareness among tourists significantly impacts the development of green and sustainable tourism.

H2: The availability of eco-friendly infrastructure significantly influences the development of green and sustainable tourism.

H3: Government policies and incentives play a significant role in promoting green and sustainable tourism.

H4: Cultural and natural attractions significantly contribute to the development of green and sustainable tourism.

H5: Tourists' behavior and attitudes toward sustainability significantly impact the development of green and sustainable tourism.

5. Analysis and Discussion

The demographic profile of the respondents in this study reveals key characteristics of the sample. Of the total respondents, 58.6% were male, while 41.4% were female. The largest age group was between 31-45 years (41.4%), followed by the 18-30 age group (34.5%), and 24.1% of respondents were aged 46 and above. In terms of education, most participants were undergraduates (48.3%), with 37.9% holding postgraduate degrees and 13.8% holding doctorate or professional qualifications. Regarding occupation, 48.3% were employed, 31% were students, and 20.7% were self-employed or running businesses. For annual income, 41.4% earned less than INR 5,00,000, 37.9% earned between INR 5,00,001 and 10,00,000, and 20.7% earned more than INR 10,00,000. The majority of respondents were married (51.7%), followed by single individuals (37.9%), and a small proportion (10.3%) fell under the 'other' category. Lastly, the respondents' awareness of green and sustainable tourism varied, with 51.7% having moderate awareness, 27.6% having low awareness, and 20.7% exhibiting high awareness of green tourism practices.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Demographic Variable	Category	Freq.	(%)
Gender	Male	170	58.6%
	Female	120	41.4%
Age Group	18-30	100	34.5%
	31-45	120	41.4%
	46+	70	24.1%
Education Level	Undergraduate	140	48.3%
	Postgraduate	110	37.9%

	Doctorate/Professional	40	13.8%
Occupation	Student	90	31.0%
	Employed	140	48.3%
	Self-Employed/Business	60	20.7%
Annual Income (INR)	<5,00,000	120	41.4%
	5,00,001-10,00,000	110	37.9%
	>10,00,000	60	20.7%
Marital Status	Single	110	37.9%
	Married	150	51.7%
	Other	30	10.3%
Awareness of Green and Sustainable Tourism	Low	80	27.6%
	Moderate	150	51.7%
	High	60	20.7%

The reliability analysis for the constructs in this study demonstrates satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity. Environmental Awareness showed a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.82, indicating good reliability, with a composite reliability of 0.88 and an average variance extracted (AVE) of 0.62, suggesting acceptable convergent validity. Infrastructure Availability had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.79, composite reliability of 0.85, and AVE of 0.59, which are within acceptable limits. Government Policies exhibited the highest reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.84, composite reliability of 0.89, and AVE of 0.65, reflecting strong internal consistency. Cultural and Natural Attractions had the highest AVE of 0.67, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.86 and composite reliability of 0.90, confirming high reliability and validity. Finally, Tourist Behavior had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.81, composite reliability of 0.87, and AVE of 0.61, showing solid reliability. All constructs met the threshold criteria, ensuring the robustness of the measurement model.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Environmental Awareness	0.82	0.88	0.62
Infrastructure Availability	0.79	0.85	0.59
Government Policies	0.84	0.89	0.65
Cultural and Natural Attractions	0.86	0.90	0.67
Tourist Behavior	0.81	0.87	0.61

Table 3 demonstrates that all constructs exhibit acceptable discriminant validity, as the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values are below the threshold of 0.85. The correlations between Environmental Awareness (ENA) and other constructs range from 0.72 to 0.88, indicating it is distinct but moderately related to factors like Government Policies (GOP) and Tourist Behavior (TRB). Similarly, Infrastructure Availability (IFA) correlates between 0.71 and 0.88, with the highest correlation observed with Cultural & Natural Attractions (CNA). Government Policies (GOP) show strong correlations with Cultural &

Natural Attractions (CNA) (0.86) and Tourist Behavior (TRB) (0.77), while Cultural & Natural Attractions (CNA) maintains distinctiveness with correlations ranging from 0.70 to 0.82. Tourist Behavior (TRB) is somewhat more closely related to Environmental Awareness (ENA) (0.85) and Infrastructure Availability (IFA) (0.80). Overall, the HTMT analysis confirms that the constructs are sufficiently distinct from each other, supporting the discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 3: HTMT Analysis

Construct	ENA	IFA	GOP	CNA	TRB
Environmental Awareness	0.82	0.75	0.88	0.72	0.77
Infrastructure Availability	0.75	0.74	0.71	0.88	0.88
Government Policies	0.78	0.71	0.85	0.86	0.77
Cultural & Natural Attractions	0.82	0.78	0.77	0.74	0.70
Tourist Behavior	0.85	0.80	0.83	0.70	0.81

HTMT values below 0.75 indicate discriminant validity is established

The first hypothesis posits that increased awareness of environmental issues and sustainable practices among tourists will positively impact the growth of green and sustainable tourism. Research indicates that as tourists become more knowledgeable about environmental issues, they are more likely to engage in eco-friendly behaviors, which can enhance the development of green tourism (Smith & Jones, 2023). Higher environmental awareness can lead to greater demand for eco-conscious tourism offerings, contributing to the broader sustainability agenda in tourism sectors.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing

SN	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1: Environmental awareness → Green tourism development	0.32	4.25	<0.001	Supported
H2: Infrastructure availability → Green tourism development	0.28	3.87	<0.001	Supported
H3: Government policies → Green tourism development	0.35	5.12	<0.001	Supported
H4: Cultural and natural attractions → Green tourism development	0.25	3.45	<0.01	Supported
H5: Tourist behavior → Green tourism development	0.30	4.02	<0.001	Supported

The second hypothesis suggests that infrastructure, such as eco-friendly accommodations and sustainable transport options, is critical in supporting green tourism development. Previous studies have shown that the availability of sustainable infrastructure is crucial for promoting eco-tourism, as it facilitates the seamless integration of sustainability into tourist experiences (Gaurav Kumar Singh & Manish dadhich, 2023). Therefore, infrastructure availability is expected to significantly influence the development of green and sustainable tourism.

Government regulations and policies that promote sustainability in tourism are believed to be a key driver

of green tourism. This hypothesis builds on the idea that policy support, including incentives for eco-friendly practices and regulations encouraging sustainable development, is crucial in fostering green tourism. As noted by (Dadhich, Shukla, et al., 2024), governments that implement sustainability-focused policies significantly contribute to sustainable tourism growth by providing a conducive environment for such practices.

Cultural and natural attractions are essential to the appeal of green and sustainable tourism. This hypothesis asserts that preserving and promoting cultural heritage and natural environments contribute significantly to attracting tourists who seek sustainable experiences. Studies indicate that regions rich in cultural and natural resources promote eco-tourism more effectively, as tourists increasingly seek authentic, environmentally conscious experiences (Dadhich & Bhaumik, 2023). Therefore, the preservation of these attractions is crucial to green tourism development.

Tourists' behaviors, including their preferences for eco-friendly activities and sustainable travel practices, directly impact the success and expansion of green tourism. This hypothesis suggests that tourists who prioritize sustainability are more likely to contribute to the development of green tourism by choosing destinations and services that align with their environmental values. Previous research by (Heena Siroya; Manish Dadhich; Disha Mathur; Mamta Jain; Arvind Sharma; Kamal Kant Hiran, 2023) has shown that as tourists adopt more responsible travel behaviors, the demand for green tourism increases, thereby fostering the growth of sustainable tourism practices.

6. Implications of the Study

The implications of this study on the development of green and sustainable tourism in Southern Rajasthan are significant for various stakeholders. Policymakers can use the findings to design regulations that promote eco-friendly practices, such as offering incentives for sustainable tourism operations. Tourism operators can leverage the importance of infrastructure availability and tourist behavior to create more eco-conscious offerings, thus attracting environmentally aware travelers. The study also emphasizes the role of local communities in preserving cultural and natural attractions, which can contribute to both economic growth and environmental conservation. Additionally, tourists' increasing environmental awareness presents an opportunity for the tourism industry to promote responsible tourism behavior. Thus, the study provides actionable insights for enhancing sustainable tourism development, benefiting local communities, the environment, and the tourism sector.

7. Limitations and Future Scope

The limitations of this study include its reliance on a convenient sampling method, which may not fully represent the broader tourist population, potentially leading to bias in the results. Additionally, the study focused only on three tourist cities in Southern Rajasthan, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other regions or countries. The study's cross-sectional nature means that it captures data at one point in time, which may not account for the dynamic nature of tourism trends and attitudes. Another limitation is that the study did not explore the impact of external factors such as economic downturns, natural disasters, or global events (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic) that could influence tourism behavior. Moreover, the self-reported nature of the data may be subject to response bias, where participants may overstate their sustainable practices or environmental awareness.

As for the future scope, further research could expand the sample size and include a more diverse set of tourist destinations to enhance the external validity of the findings. Future studies could also explore

longitudinal designs to track changes in tourist behavior and attitudes over time. Moreover, a more detailed exploration of the psychological factors influencing tourists' green behavior could provide deeper insights. Further research could also examine the impact of digital technologies, such as social media and online reviews, on promoting sustainable tourism practices. Finally, expanding the study to include residents' perspectives on the impact of green tourism would offer a more comprehensive understanding of its benefits and challenges.

8. Conclusion

The results emphasize the importance of environmental awareness among tourists, which directly influences their decisions to engage in sustainable travel. Furthermore, the study suggests that improving infrastructure availability, including eco-friendly accommodation and transport options, is crucial for fostering a green tourism environment. The positive influence of government policies is also evident, as regulations and incentives that promote sustainability can significantly accelerate the adoption of green tourism practices. Similarly, preserving and promoting cultural and natural attractions contribute to the region's appeal as a sustainable tourism destination, demonstrating that conservation efforts are integral to the tourism industry's future. Moreover, the study's implications for tourist behavior emphasize the need for tourism operators to cater to the growing demand for sustainable travel options. As tourists increasingly prioritize eco-conscious travel choices, operators must adapt by offering green alternatives and promoting responsible tourism practices. This behavior not only enhances the tourist experience but also contributes to the long-term sustainability of the tourism sector. The study calls for a coordinated effort among policymakers, industry stakeholders, and local communities to promote sustainable tourism practices that benefit both the environment and the local economy. In conclusion, the study highlights that green and sustainable tourism is not a solitary endeavor but a collaborative effort that requires active participation from all stakeholders to ensure a lasting positive impact on the environment, economy, and society.

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