



A GEOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF EVALUATING INFRASTRUCTURAL GAPS AND TOURISM POTENTIAL IN KOLHAPUR DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA STATE, INDIA

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Abstract:

Tourism is a broad field that encompasses a variety of factors, primarily considering the geographical location of different places, the local environment, cultural factors, and the preferences of tourists. Tourism is one of the rapidly growing sectors contributing to regional development, employment generation. Kolhapur district of Maharashtra possesses a rich combination of natural, religious, cultural, and historical resources, many of tourist places are neglected. This study aims to assess the potential tourist places of Kolhapur district, highlighting their current status, infrastructural facilities, and future prospects. The study is based on primary and secondary data. The study identifies key opportunities and challenges in transforming Kolhapur district into a diversified tourism destination. The findings indicate that while Kolhapur district has a well-developed core tourism circuit, significant potential exists in the district, if adequate infrastructure, promotion, and sustainable management strategies are implemented.

Key Word: *Potential, Resources. Infrastructure, circuit*

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Introduction:

Many tourism centers in India have been developed, while some are deprived of tourism development. Similarly, diversity is seen in tourism in the state of Maharashtra. The most important factor behind this is the natural structure, cultural, historical diversity of this country and state. Due to all these factors, some tourism has been developed while some tourism has not been developed. In short, there are some tourism centers that have the potential for development, but due to lack of various facilities and information, they are deprived of development. For the development of any tourism, it is considered important to know the characteristics of that tourist center. At the same time, it is necessary to study how a tourism center has been

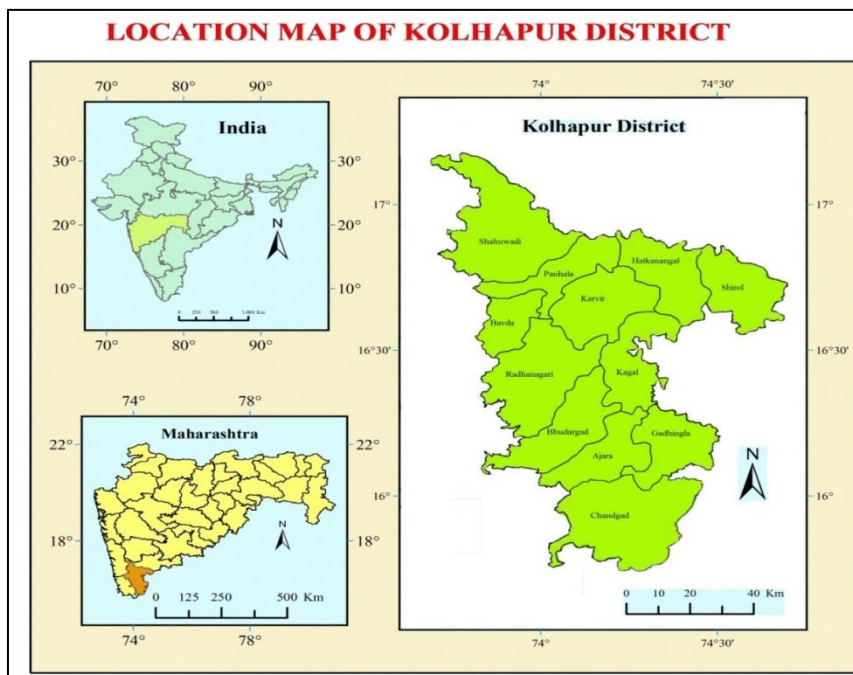
deprived of development. For this, it is necessary to find out the reasons behind it and if there are any problems or reasons, they need to be resolved. Tourism potential refers to the latent or undeveloped capability of an area to attract tourists based on its natural, cultural, or historical resources. It includes both qualitative and quantitative attributes that determine the scope for future tourism development.

Study Region:

The Kolhapur district is situated on the south-west part of Maharashtra State. It lies between 15°43' to 17°17' North latitude and 73°40' to 74°42' East longitude. It spreads across the Deccan Plateau in the rain shadow region of the Sahyadri mountain ranges. It is bounded by Sangli district to the north, Belgaum district to the

east and south, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg district to the west. To the west, of it are the Sahyadri ranges and the River Warna is to the north which forms the natural boundaries of the district to west and north

respectively. The total Geographical area of the district is 7746 sq. kms which is about 2.5 percent of the total area of the state. The average height of the district is 545.6 meters from the mean sea level.



Map: 1.1 Location Map of Kolhapur District

Aims and Objectives:

The main objective of this research is to assess the deficiencies in basic facilities of the tourist centers in Kolhapur district and the potential of those tourist centers. To achieve this aim, the following objectives have been undertaken to understand. The main objectives of this paper are as follows

1. To identify and classify potential tourist places in Kolhapur district.
2. To assess the present infrastructural facilities available at these destinations.
3. To suggest strategies for sustainable tourism development in the region.

Data base and Methodology:

Primary and secondary data sources have been used to achieve the main aims and objectives of this research. Primary data were collected through field visits, local interviews, and observation of facilities such as

accessibility, accommodation, and amenities. Secondary data were collected from the Kolhapur District Gazetteers, Tourism Plan (2012), e-Panchayat reports, and published research works. Tourist places were classified into four categories based on their resource base; these are the Religious, Historical, Natural, and Cultural. Each site was evaluated using criteria such as accessibility, amenities, tourist facilities, and environmental appeal.

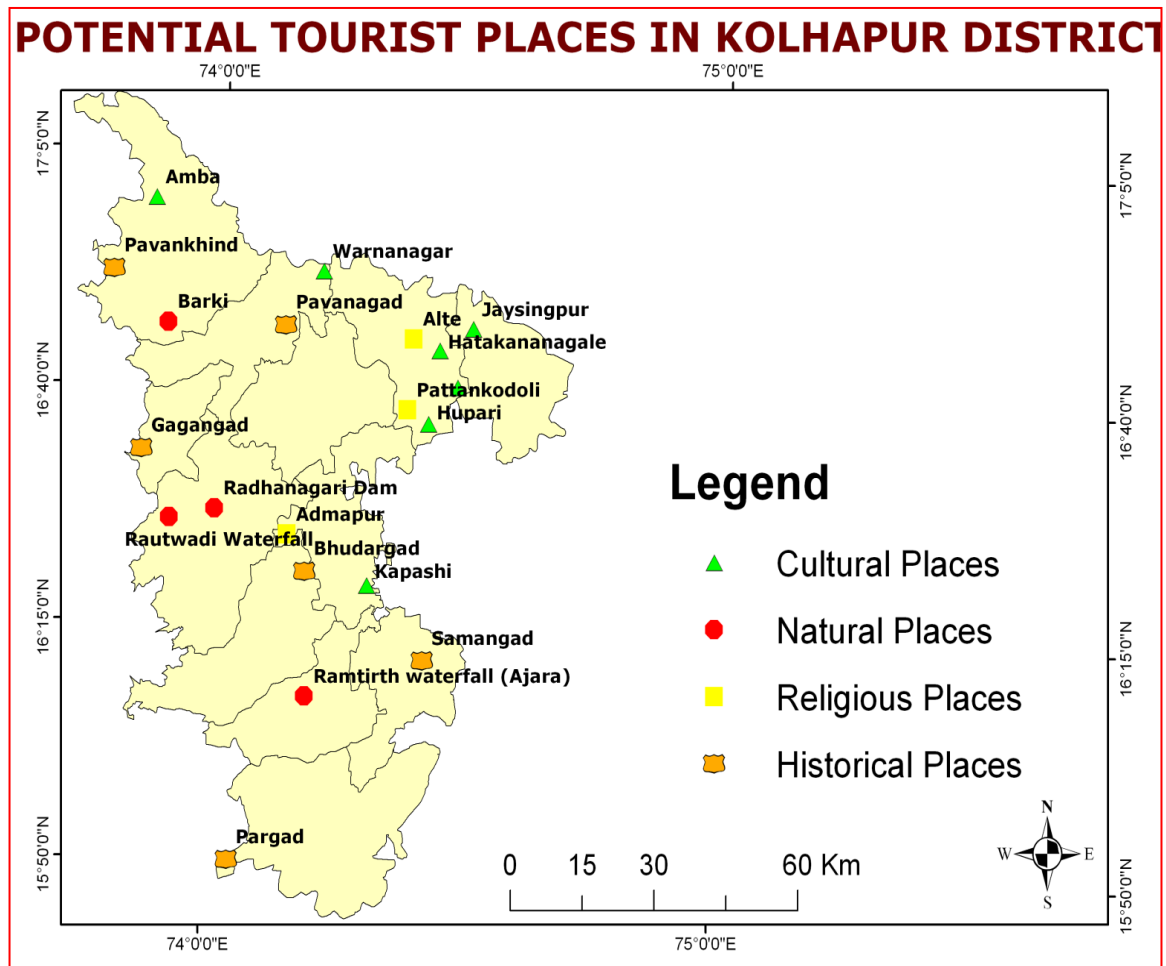
Discussion:

Kolhapur district has the potential for an ideal tourism destination. The potential tourist places have been divided into four categories namely religious, historical, natural and cultural. The different potential tourist places are in Kolhapur district. These places have their major characteristics. They have basic tourism resources like religious, cultural, historical and natural.

Table: 1. Classifications of the Potential Tourist Places

Sr. No.	Type of tourist places	Name of the potential tourist places
1	Religious	Alte, Admapur, Pattankodoli, Terwad Hatkanangale, Prayag Chikali.
2	Historical	Panchaganga Ghat, Gagangad, Samangad, Masai Pathar, Pavankhind, Pavangad.
3	Natural	Barki waterfall, Rautwadi Waterfall, Ramtirth waterfall.
4	Cultural	Hupari, Kapasi, Ichalkaranji, Warnanagar and Jaysingpur, Jayaprabha Studio.

(Source: Compiled by the Researcher)





Religious Potential Tourist Places:

Kolhapur district is the land of religious places. The religious places are Alte, Admapur, Pattankodoli, Hatkanangale, Terwad and Prayag etc.

Alte: The village Alte lies in the Warna basin of Hatkanangale tahsil. There are temples of Ramling, Dhuloba, Alamprabhu, Ramzan Darga, Birudev, Renuka Devi and Sidoba. The annual fairs are held in different months.

Hatkanangale: Hatkanangale is a tahsil in Kolhapur district of Maharashtra. It is located on the Sangli-Kolhapur road and 23 kms in the east of Kolhapur. There are various tourists' attractions; out of these the famous is Gorisaheb Darga, Vithoba temple, Datta temple, Ganapati temple, Maruti temple and Jain Basti etc.

Admapur: Admapur is a one of the religious places of Saint Balumama in Kolhapur district. Balumama was born in 1892, at Akkol in Chikkodi taluka of Belgaum district in Karnataka. His father was Mayappa and mother was Satyavva.

Terwad: It is also an important potential religious place. There is the tomb of Mukteshwar the grandson of the famous Saint Ekanath Maharaj. The death anniversary of Mukteshwar is celebrated every year and at that time many devotees visit Terwad.

Pattankodoli: It is situated 18 kms away from Hatkanangale tahsil. Vitthal Birudev is important place of spiritual. The devotees throw coconuts, wool, turmeric powder and dried date on and in front of palanquin of the Saint Vithal Birudev. A number of devotees visit the annual fair to see-Hedam played by many devotees. This festival is celebrated for 8 days and near about one lakh pilgrims visit Pattankodoli.

Prayag Chikhali: Prayag Sangam is a holy place. It is located about 7 kms in the north-west of Kolhapur. It is also known as Prayag or Triveni. A number of local devotees always visit the place.

Historical Potential tourist places

Masai Pathar: It is located about 8 kms away in the west of Panhala. There are several table lands one after another consisting area of 913 acres. The width of plateau is 300 to 800 feet, and about 500 to 600 feet deep valley is nearby plateau. It is called 'Masai' in name of the goddess Masai. Every year the annual fair is held at the time of Vijayadashami. After escaping from Siddhi Jouhar's siege, Shivaji Maharaj prayed her and went to Vishalgad.

Gagangad: It is situated about 62 kms in the south west of Kolhapur in Gaganbavada tahsil. It is a religious, historical and natural tourist place. The Gagangad fort was built by Bhoj II. There are temples of Rama and Dattatraya. The annual fair is celebrated in the month of Chaitra (march-April) at Ramnavami. Another temple is of Gagangiri Maharaj and it is constructed in marble stones. In addition to Hindu temples there is Gaibisaheb Darga. Therefore, most of the devotees and other tourists visit this place from the religious point of view.

Pargad: It is located in Chandgad tahsil and 165 kms away from Kolhapur. The natural landscape of the fort is important for the tourists. There more than 73% area is under the natural vegetation. The different species of the plants are Khair, Shisam, Ain, Nim, Mango, Jambhul, Apta, Dhamahn, Anjan, Hirda, Kindal etc.

Bhudargad: This fort is located in the Bhudargad tahsil and about 57 kms away from Kolhapur. The tahsil is named after the Bhudargad fort. Bhudargad is a fort of Bhudargad Kapasi range of Sahyadri. This fort is also built by Bhoj. Shivaji Maharaj had won it. Bhudargad fort is not only a historical place but also a religious and natural place. There are many temples on the forts viz. Kedarling temple, Bhairavnath temple, Mahadev temple, Jotiba temple, Jakrubai temple and Bhavani temple.

Samangad: The fort Samangad is situated in Gadhinglaj tahsil. It is 75 kms in the south-east of



Kolhapur, and 5.60 kms to the south of Gadhinglaj. The height of Samangad is about 792 meters above the MSL. In 1676 Samangad was repaired by Shivaji Maharaj. This place is important for religious and historical tourism.

Natural Tourist Places

Barki Waterfall: It is also an important natural tourism potential place. It is situated in Shahuwadi tahsil. It is located 45 kms towards the west from the District headquarters of Kolhapur. Barki waterfall is a seasonal attraction for the tourists in rainy season

Radhanagari Dam: It is gravity dam on the Bhogawati River at Phejiwade near Radhanagari in Maharashtra. It is constructed on 18 February 1907 by Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj. The construction of the dam was started in February, 1907 and completed in 1954. It is about 2 kms in the west of Radhanagari town. The dam is used for irrigation and hydroelectricity. The height of the dam is 42.68 m (140.00ft.) and length is 1143 m (3,750 ft.). The total reservoir capacity of the dam is 220,000,000 m³ (7.8×10⁹ cu ft.) Its Surface area is 18,218 km² (7,034 sq. m.). The total catchment area of the dam is 110.7 sq. km. The Radhanagari hydroelectric power station is the first hydroelectric power station in Maharashtra. About 4.8 megawatt electricity is generated since 1952. Now a days its Capacity is 10 TMC. The number of tourists visit Radhanagari dam and hydroelectricity power station.

Cultural Potential Tourist Places

Jaysingpur: It is located on the Sangli- Kolhapur road and Miraj - Kolhapur railway line. It is administered by municipal council. Jaysingpur is a one of the planned cities in Maharashtra. It is developed as a commercial center. It is famous for the tobacco market which is one of the biggest in Maharashtra. There are interesting places like God Siddheshwar temple, Digambar Jain temple, Shri Sidhvinayak temple and Shahu Udyan.

Hupari: Hupari is a famous place for the silver ornamental industry. It lies about 16 kms in the south-east of Kolhapur. In 1904 silver ornament industry was started by Krishnaji Ramchandra Potdar. Even now people visit Hupari with commercial purpose. There are famous ornaments like Kolhapur saj, Mohanmal, Neckless, Bangles, plaited cord, finger ring, Jodavi in legs and also various idols of goddesses etc

Kapasi: Kapasi is a small village. It is located in Kagal tahsil and about 38 kms in the south of Kolhapur. There is a temple dedicated to Aiesahab, in the memory of the pious Dwarkabai Saheb, the wife of the well-known Santajirao Ghorpade, the Commander in Chief of the Marathas. The places is famous for the Kapashi Chappal not only in Maharashtra but also in India

Ichalkaranji: It is located in Hatkanangale tahsil. Ichalkaranji is the Manchester of Maharashtra. The first power-loom was used in 1928 in Ichalkaranji. There are so many hand-loom, power-loom and also printing, colour cloth processing industries. Most of the people from Mumbai, Pune and Solapur, and also from Karnataka, Gujarat and Rajasthan visit this place. Therefore, it should be developed as a tourist place in the Kolhapur district.

Infrastructure and Accessibility

The brief analyses of the infrastructural facilities are as follows:

Accommodation: When the tourists come from distant places or out of state, they need a comfortable place to stay or to rest for time. Therefore, there must be accommodation at every tourist place. Alte, Kapasi and Barki do not provide accommodation for the tourists. Kolhapur, Vishalgad, Admapur, Pattankodoli, Ichalkaranji, Jaysingpur, Hupari and Radhanagari provide accommodation to the tourists.

Drinking Water: Drinking water is essential for all human beings. As per the researcher's survey, at Masai Pathar drinking water is not available but Alte,



Vishalgad, Admapur, Pattankodoli, Kolhapur, Ichalkaranji and Jaysingpur have good drinking water facilities.

Hotel/Restaurant: Kolhapur is a well-developed destination for the variety of fast foods and restaurants but surrounding places are not developed for this facility e.g. Alte, Masai Pathar and Barki. These places don't have these facilities for the tourists. But Vishalgad, Admapur, Pattankodoli, Kolhapur, Bhudargad, Ichalkaranji, Jaysingpur and Radhanagari have such facilities.

Accessibility: Accessibility is the important factor for the development of tourism. The Road, Railway, Waterway and Air facility are essential for the development of tourism. Kolhapur district has a good road network. Most of the places are connected with Tar roads and rough roads. Barki and Masai Pathar have rough roads. And Alte, Vishalgad, Admapur, Pattankodoli, Panchaganga Ghat, Rankala tank (Kolhapur), Bhudargad, Ichalkaranji, Jaysingpur and Radhanagari have Tar roads.

Transportation: The road transportation is well developed in Kolhapur district and most of the tourists places are connected with buses and private vehicles. The MSRTC service is available in Alte, Vishalgad, Admapur, Pattankodoli, Panchaganga Ghat and Rankala tank (Kolhapur), Ichalkaranji, Jaysingpur and Radhanagari. Bhudargad Fort, Masai Pathar and Barki are not connected with buses. There are private vehicle services for the tourists. The communication facilities like telephone, post and mobile etc. are also important for the development of tourism. The communication facilities are very good at Kolhapur, Nrusinhwadi and Panhala. But such facilities are very poor at Barki, Alte and Masai Pathar.

Health Facility: There is no health facility at Vishalgad, Masai Pathar and Barki. But Alte, Admapur, Bhudargad, Pattankodoli, Ichalkaranji,

Jaysingpur and Radhanagari have good health facility for the local people and tourists.

Shopping Facility: There is shopping facility at Kolhapur, Vishalgad, Bhudargad, Admapur, Ichalkaranji and Jaysingpur. And Alte, Pattankodoli, Masai Pathar and Barki do not have such shopping facility.

Bank/Co-operative Bank: Kolhapur district is well known for Bank facilities and co-operative credit societies. In Vishalgad, Masai Pathar and Barki, there is the absence of banking facility. But Kolhapur, Alte, Admapur, Bhudargad, Ichalkaranji, Radhanagari and Jaysingpur have bank facilities. There are 418 bank branches all over the district i.e. KDCC-191, nationalized banks 22 and the commercial banks have 220 branches.

Suggestions for Development:

Infrastructure Improvement: Roads, sanitation, accommodation, and signages must be upgraded at lesser-known destinations.

Community Participation: Encourage local self-help groups and youth clubs to manage eco-tourism and guide services.

Marketing and Promotion: Use digital platforms and regional tourism fairs to promote hidden destinations.

Conservation and Heritage Management: Proper maintenance of forts and temples under ASI or district heritage committees.

Skill Development: Train local artisans and guides in hospitality and communication to improve visitor experience

Conclusion:

Kolhapur district is endowed with diverse tourism resources encompassing religion, history, nature, and culture. Despite this wealth, many potential tourist places remain unrecognized due to inadequate infrastructure and promotion. With strategic planning, community involvement, and sustainable resource management, Kolhapur can emerge as a model district



for integrated tourism development in Maharashtra. Enhancing accessibility, preserving heritage, and diversifying attractions will not only boost tourism but also contribute to the socio-economic development of the region.

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Cite This Article:

Dr. Gade D.A. (2025). A Geographical study of Evaluating Infrastructural Gaps and Tourism Potential in Kolhapur District, Maharashtra state, India. In **Electronic International Interdisciplinary Research Journal: Vol. XIV** (Number VI, pp. 98–104). Doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18088138>