



Tourism Infrastructure In Bihar

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Abstract : Tourism is the fastest growing sector of world economy and contributes significantly to its growth. One of the crucial factors which aid or determine the growth of tourism sector in an area is the presence of good infrastructure as it creates a positive impression in the minds of the tourists and further promotes the flow of tourists in an area because of the ambiance created by it. Bihar is an Indian state with a glorious historical past, mesmerising natural beauty and diverse religious and cultural attributes. However, with the passage of time its glory was shadowed and the state somewhat lagged in development. Tourism is a sector in which the state shows a vast potential for development. During the past two decades the state has witnessed an increase in the footfall of tourists and simultaneously the tourism infrastructure has also shown an increase but the potential of this sector is still under utilised in the state owing to a not so developed infrastructure facilities. The state Government has made a lot of effort and plans to develop the supporting infrastructural facilities for tourism. The present chapter makes an attempt to assess the state of major components of tourism infrastructure in Bihar and to highlight the efforts of the Government in this direction. It will also suggest suggestions to improve the situation. This is an exploratory study and is based on secondary data and information obtained from different Government and non-governmental sources and through electronic media and e-resources.

Key Words - Infrastructure, Hospitality, Accessibility, Circuit tourism, Stakeholder.

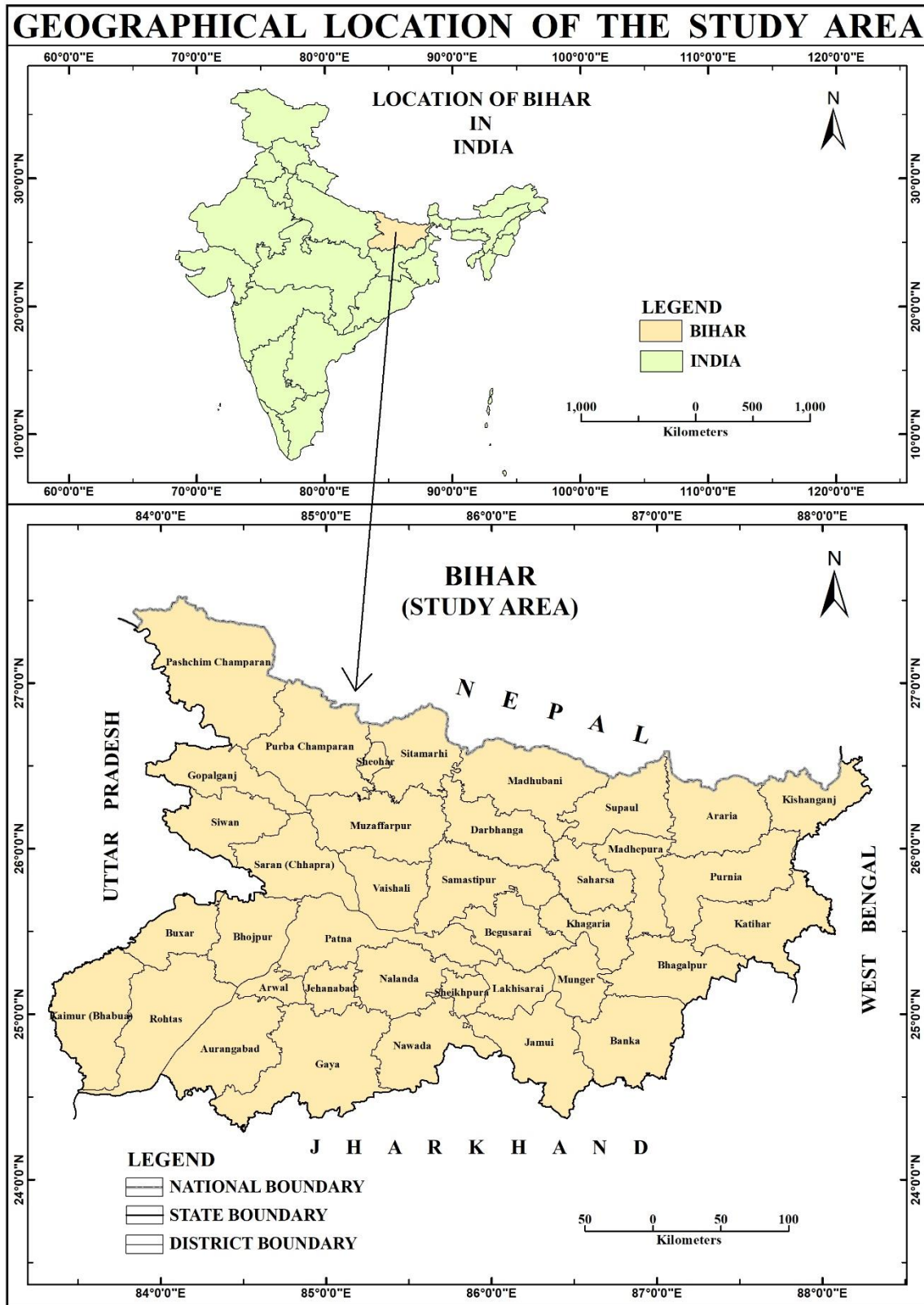
1.INTRODUCTION

Tourism may be defined as the act of movement of people from their native environment to other places for personal purposes such as recreation, pleasure and or for professional purposes. It is the fastest growing industry in the world. "Improvement in transport systems and infrastructure, new information technology and logistics, increase in wealth and disposable income in large parts of the world, new lifestyles and more leisure time and international openness and globalisation have led to an unprecedented growth in tourism" [1]. As per the latest annual research of the Travel and Tourism Council, the travel and tourism sector contributed 7.6% to global GDP. Before the pandemic, between 2014-2019, one in five new jobs in the world were created in the travel and tourism sector directly or indirectly. This sector was hit hard by the pandemic but showed a quick recovery after it and in 2022 there were 22 million new jobs in this sector [2]. Thus, boost of tourism can significantly contribute in the development of an area. In fact, travel and tourism sector is a major driver of economic development and the need for its development has never been greater [3]

2. NEED OF THE STUDY.

Bihar is a state with a vast tourism potential. Situated in the middle Ganga plain, it is blessed with a picturesque natural beauty. The monotony of the plain is broken by the Someshwar doons in the north-west and the outliers

of the Chotanagpur Plateau along the southern margins of the state. Home to a variety of wildlife, the state is also a destination of migratory birds during the winter season. The state has a glorious history depicted by the ruins of Nalanda, different forts and palaces spread across it. It is one of the holiest destinations for Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs. The unique culture and cuisine and art and craft are a big crowd puller. The state is an agrarian state and lacks in mineral due to which it has witnessed limited industrial development. It is still in its developing stage. If the vast potential of tourism in Bihar could be fully developed and utilised, it will play an important role in its overall development.



Map 1

2.1 Review of Literature:

Literature suggests that there is a relationship between infrastructure and tourism and infrastructure plays a vital role in the development of tourism. Tourism infrastructure is the basis of tourism development and utilisation of existing destination resources and it can contribute in increasing the efficiency of production and distribution of tourism services [4]. Mandic, et.al [5] have explored the interconnectedness between tourism

infrastructure, recreational facilities and tourism development in Croatia and have also explored the role of private sector in the development of infrastructure in destination. Areas that need infrastructural improvement are stated to be difficult areas for tourism development [7]. Kinash, et.al. [6] through their study of Ukraine have shown that low infrastructure level of the industry hinders the development of tourism. Question arises as to what encompasses tourism infrastructure and the literature provides suggestions to this as well. Imikan & Ekpo [8] considered water, electricity, transport, communication and accommodation as the component of infrastructure and analysed the relationship between these components and tourism development using multiple correlation and stepwise regression analysis for Rivers State, Nigeria. They concluded that massive infrastructure development anchored on transportation would provide the enabling environment for tourism to thrive in Nigeria and Rivers state in particular. Khadaroo & Seetanah [9] investigated the significance of transport infrastructure as a factor in destination development with reference to Mauritius island and found the tourists from Europe, America and Asia to be particularly sensitive to the island's transport infrastructure. Transport is an important factor in the development of a destination by intending tourists [10]. Water supply, waste disposal, communication and electricity supply are necessary elements for comfortable functioning of tourists at a selected destination [11]. Raina [12] has classified tourism infrastructure into four categories, viz, physical infrastructure comprising of hotel, motels, restaurants, transportation, communication, water and electricity; social infrastructure comprising of culture, heritage, fairs and festivals, local art and music, dress, dance and language; services such as banking facilities, travel agencies, insurance agencies, tourist guides and Governance which comprises of law and order machinery, customs and immigration. The Government is an important stakeholder in the growth and development of infrastructure facilities for tourism in an area. A long term tourism strategy by the state can decide the success of a country in the world market of tourism. Thus, it becomes necessary for the state to highlight the resource potential of the country or its region and to maintain the infrastructure required for its development through its policy [13]. "The Government sector owns and manages much of the infrastructure upon which tourism depends. From community to the national level, this often includes water supply, sewerage disposal, police and fire protection, streets and lighting as well as electrical power and communication" [14]. Underperformance by State Tourism agencies and private sector providers may result in a lack of infrastructure which may in turn limit the opportunities of a host community to participate in tourism development and business [15]. According to Jovanovia & Ivana [16] intensive investment in infrastructure development and its modernisation is an important factor in the development of tourism sector.

2.2 Objective of the Study:

The present study makes an attempt

- To explore the avenues of tourism in Bihar
- to assess the state of major components of tourism infrastructure in Bihar
- to suggest suggestions to increase the flow of tourists (both domestic and foreign) in the state of Bihar

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We are making an exploratory study using a systematic literature review of both published and grey literature. In order to place our work in the purview of relevant prior work on tourism, the first part of this systematic literature review, consists of purposively selected set of the published literature that focuses on the importance of infrastructure in the development of tourism and the role of the government as the key facilitator of the progress of this infrastructure. To focus on the main objective of this work, we use grey literature from governmental and non-governmental sources. This helps us understand the key advantages, lacunae and scope of development of tourism in Bihar.

4. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

4.1 Avenues of Tourism in Bihar:

Bihar is a state with magnificent tourist destinations and has a vast potential of attracting a large number of tourists every year. The State Government has identified different circuits for the promotion of tourism in the state. (Table 1)

Table 1: Tourist Circuits in Bihar

Name of the Circuit	Important Tourist Destinations
Buddhist Circuit	Rajgir – Nalanda – Patna – Vaishali – Lauriya Nandangarh – Lauriya Areraj – Kesaria – Vikramshila
Tirthankar Circuit	Vaishali – Patna – Rajgir – Pawapuri – Nathnagar – Mandar Hill – Bisram – Masadh – Champanagar – Nalanda
Ramayan Circuit	Valmikinagar – Pretshila Hill – Ahilya Asthan – Sitamarhi – Kako – Sitakund – Tar – Singheshwar – Chankigarh – Buxar
Islam / Sufi Circuit	Maner Sharif – Phulwari Sharif – Khankah Emadia – Dargah sharif – Bihar sharif – Hazrat Jandah – Hajipur – Serukahi – Kanti – Saran Khas – Hasanpura – Lakri Dargah – Goraul Sharif – Masurhi – Tomb of Pir Shah Nufa – Pir Pahar – Siris – Tomb of Chandan Shahid – Tomb of Hasan Khan Sur
Sikh Circuit	Takht Sri Harmandir Sahab – Gurudwara Guru ka Bagh – Gurudwara Gai Ghat – Gurudwara Handi Sahab
Shiv-Shakti Circuit	Mundeshwari Dham – Bba Koteshwar Dham – Ashok Dham – Ajgaibnath temple – Shyama Mai Temple – Singheshwar Asthan – Ami – Thawe – Mahendranath Temple – Shitala Mata Temple – Chandi Asthan – Mahishi Tara Temple – Siddheshwar Nath
Nature & Wildlife Circuit	Rajgir sanctuary – Bhimbandh sanctuary – Vikramsila sanctuary – Udaipur sanctuary – Kaimur sanctuary – Gautam Buddha sanctuary – Nakti Dam sanctuary – Gogabill sanctuary – Valmiki National Park & Sancuary – Kanwar Jheel Sanctuary
Gandhi Circuit	Motihari – Betia – Bhitharwa – Brindawan – Sadaqat Ashram

Source : 1. www.tourism.bihar.gov.in

2. Final Report on 20 Years Perspective Tourism Plan for the State of Bihar, Government of India, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Department of Tourism,, Market Research Division, March 2023

Besides the above mentioned circuits there are several new prospects of tourism that are being explored or can be being explored in the state –

4.1.1 River Tourism - The mighty river Ganga passes through the middle of the state and it offers potential for the development of different kinds of religious and cultural activities and water based sports and activities along its stretch. Ganga Arti is being organised by the State Tourism Development Corporation at NIT Ghat, Patna on every Saturday and Sunday since 2011 and a floating restaurant has already been started at Patna. Occasional Ganga Arti's have been organised at Munger along the Ganga river front as well. Every year the ghats are prepped for Chhath Puja and attract thousands of devotees and visitors.

4.1.2 Health tourism – Bihar has several hot springs sites, such as Satdhara kund, Surya kund, Brahma kund, Nanak kund and Makhdum kund in Rajgir and Sita kund, Lakshman kund, Gaumukh kund, Rish kund in Munger. These places have the potential for the development of therapeutic / health tourism as these hot springs are rich in sulphur and other minerals which is especially good for skin related diseases. Health resorts

can be developed at suitable sites. The world is going crazy over yoga now. In 1963 itself Swami Satyanand Saraswati had founded the Bihar School of Yoga at Munger within the Ganga Darshan Complex and in 1994 with the blessings of his predecessor, Swami Niranjananda Saraswati founded Bihar Yoga Bharati. This ashram based institute is the first of its kind in the world to impart a comprehensive yoga education. The place can be promoted to both foreign as well as Indian tourists.

4.1.3 Fairs & Festivals – Fairs and festivals are an intrinsic part of the rich cultural heritage of Bihar and reflect its cultural diversity. The most important festival is Chhath which has now gained a worldwide recognition. The largest cattle fair of Asia is held at Sonapur every year from Kartik Purnima. It is also known for its display of handicraft items and local dance and music. Makar Sankranti mela is held in January every year at Rajgir and Mandar hills of Banka district. Pitrapaksha mela is held at Gaya in September during which hindus from all over India and abroad come to perform the shraddha of their ancestors. The ten day festival of sama-chakeva is celebrated in the Mithila region in the month of November. Bihula is celebrated in Bhagalpur district in August and this festival celebrates the Manjusha art form. Besides these the Department of Tourism of Bihar Government organises a three day Rajgir Mahotsav in the last week of November every year at Rajgir and Buddha Jayanti Mahotsav ay Bodh Gaya. Among the mentioned festivals and fair only Chhath puja, Sonapur mela, Pitrapaksha mela and Rajgir Mahotsav and Bodh Mahotsav are popularly known. The others need to be popularised and developed as a new avenue of tourism.

4.1.4 Art & Craft – The art and crafts of Bihar are known for their intrinsic beauty and creativeness. The Madhubani painting of Mithilia region in which scenes from Ramayan are depicted has gained worldwide recognition. Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and Madhubani are famous for lacquer work especially for the production of lac bangles. Madhubani district is also famous for sikki work. Other art and craft of the state include Patna kalam (Patna district), Tikuli art (Patna district), Block printing (Nalanda district), Bawan Buty (Nalanda district), bamboo and cane craft (Samastipur district), stone craft (Gaya district), papier mache (Patna district), sujani craft (Muzaffarpur district), jute craft (Patna and Katihar district), pottery and ceramics (Darbhanga district), leather craft (Muzaffarpur district) and wooden toy making and wood carving (Patna district). Bhagalpur is famous for tussar silk manufacturing. Art and craft villages may be developed at these places as a form of rural tourism to expose the foreign and domestic tourists to the Bihari culture. The model of Chokhi Dhani can be imitated. Urban haats like the Delhi haat can be developed in urban centres like Patna, Madhubani, Bhagalpur, Gaya to showcase the same.

4.1.5 Sun Temple Circuit – As mentioned earlier Bihar is noted for ‘Chhath’ festival which has made its mark both nationally and internationally. The Sun is worshipped during this festival. Some historians claim that the Chhath puja started from the Magadh region of Bihar. Nine out of the twelve ancient Sun temples of India are located in the state. These are the Devark temple and Umgark temple in Aurangabad, Balark temple and Ongark temple in Nalanda, Awalark temple and Punyark temple in the countryside of Patna, Handark temple in Nawada and Tandwark temple and Dakshinark temple in Gaya. There is potential of developing a sun temple circuit in the state to cater to the domestic tourists.

4.1.6 Adventure Tourism – The state has the potentiality for adventure tourism as well. At Gangajal in Patna paramotoring, hot air ballooning, go karting and paintball facilities have been developed. Kayaking along the Gandhi setu in river Ganga and rafting in river Gandak at Valmikinagar is done. Jeep safari and elephant safari at Valmikinagar and jungle safari at Udaypur wildlife sanctuary (Bettiah) are enjoyed by the tourists. Rajgir is famous for its zoo safari. The ropeways at Rajgir and Mandar hills (Banka district) offer a thrilling ride to the visitors. Six new ropeways are proposed to be built at Rohtasgarh fort; Mundeshwari hills in Kaimur; Vanabar hills in Jehanabad district and at Durgeshwari hills, Brahmayoni and Pretshila (in and around Gaya town). Trekking in Rajgir along the cyclopean wall is being promoted. There are a few waterfalls in the state as well, such as the Kakolat falls (Nawada district), Telhar fall (Kaimur district), Tutla Bhawani fall (Rohtas district) and Manjhar and Dhuakund Waterfall (Sasaram). Though popular among locals these sites need to be developed for domestic and foreign tourists.

4.1.7 Heritage Tourism – Bihar has had a glorious historical past. There are two UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the state, viz. the Mahabodhi vihara and the Nalanda mahavihara. Archaeological Survey of India has identified 72 Monuments of National Importance in Bihar which includes the ancient site of Vikramshila Monastery (Bhagalpur district), Rock temple and rock sculptures in Bhagalpur district, Ashokan column in East Champaran, Sujatarah, Sobhnath and Hasra Kol in Gaya district, Ashokan inscription and Rohtasgarh fort in Rohtas district, etc. Besides, thirty additional places have been identified as State Protected

Monuments. The state is dotted with ancient forts like Someshwar fort, Shergarh fort, Jalagarh fort, Munger fort, Darbhanga fort, Deo fort, Buxar fort, Navlakha fort, Ajatshatru fort, Nargona palace, etc. There are archaeological museums at Nalanda, Bodh Gaya, Vaishali and Vikramshila and several history museums like the Bihar museum, Patna museum, Rajendra Smriti Sangrahalaya, Gandhi Sangrahalaya, Buddha Samyak Darsham museum. The full potential of heritage tourism is yet to be explored.

4.2 Flow of Tourist's in Bihar: The arrival of tourists in Bihar has witnessed a fluctuating trend (Table 2). If we see the arrival of domestic tourists, there was an increasing trend from 2009 to 2012 and the year 2012 saw a +16.58% increase in the domestic tourists as compared to the previous year of 2011. However, in 2013 the increase became a meagre +0.66% as compared to the previous year. The number of domestic tourists have kept on increasing since then but their growth rate was significant only in 2015 (+24.33% as compared to the last year). After this, the annual growth rate in their arrival has continuously decreased since 2017.

Table 2: Number of Tourist's Visiting Bihar (2009-2019)

Year	Tourists			% Growth		
	Domestic	Foreign	Total	Domestic	Foreign	Total
2009	15784679	423042	16207721	-	-	-
2010	16042725	540686	16583411	+1.61	+27.81	+2.32
2011	18397490	972487	19369977	+14.68	+79.86	+16.80
2012	21447099	1096933	22544032	+16.58	+12.80	+16.39
2013	21588306	765835	22354141	+0.66	-30.18	-0.84
2014	22544377	829508	23373885	+4.43	+8.31	+4.56
2015	28029118	923737	28952855	+24.33	+11.36	+23.87
2016	28516127	1010531	29526658	+1.74	+9.40	+1.98
2017	32414063	1082705	33496768	+13.67	+7.14	+13.45
2018	33621613	1087971	34709584	+3.73	+0.49	+3.62
2019	33990039	1093141	35083179	+1.10	+0.48	+1.08

Source: www.tourism.gov.in retrieved in July 2023

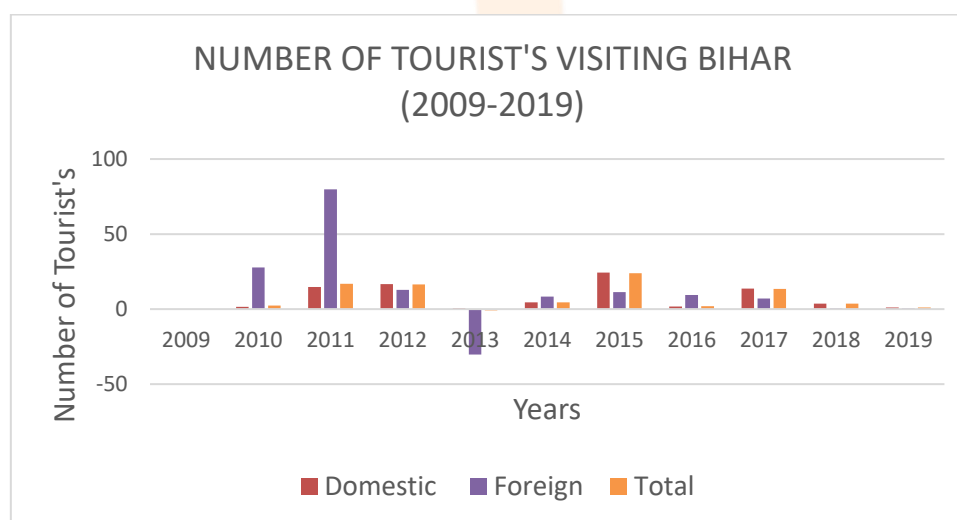


Figure 1

In case of foreign tourists, the maximum growth in their arrival to the state was seen in 2011 when it was +79.86% as compared to +27.81% of the previous year. But, there was a sharp decline in the absolute numbers as well as the growth rate of foreign tourists arrival in Bihar in 2013. This year the annual growth rate was registered as -30.18%. Two incidences may be taken as the causal factor for this trend. In 2010, the unfortunate incident of the rape of a Japanese female tourist occurred in Bodh Gaya after which the footfall of Japanese tourists decreased significantly to Bihar as government backed travel agencies in Japan started advising the travellers from visiting Bihar and secondly on July 7, 2013 bomb blasts occurred near the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya. These two incidences not only scared and deterred the foreign tourists but domestic tourists as well. After this the growth rate of foreign tourist arrival recovered slightly in 2014 and 2015. But since then till 2019 though the absolute number of foreign tourist kept on increasing, its growth rate kept decreasing and

in 2019 it was recorded just as +0.48%. (Figure 2) In 2019, Bihar ranked 15th in the country in terms of domestic tourist arrival and 9th in terms of foreign tourists arrival.

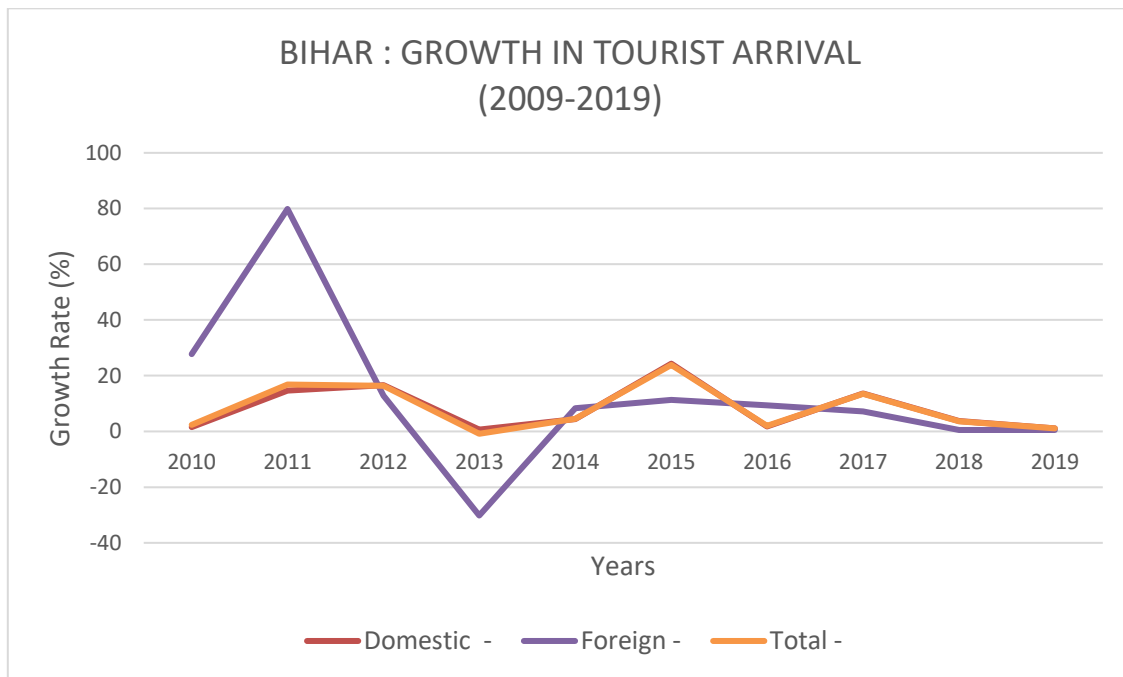


Figure 2

What is making the growth rate of tourist inflow so slow? The answer perhaps lies in the state of tourism infrastructure present in Bihar.

4.3 Tourism Infrastructure: In the following sub-headings we are going to see the status of some of the selected tourism infrastructure in Bihar and the steps taken by the government as a stakeholder in their development.

4.3.1 Accomodation – A comfortable stay is one of the prerequisites for attracting tourists to an area. Accomodation may include hotels, motels, rest houses, youth hostels, dak bungalows dharmshalas, monasteries, etc. According to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of Bihar (Department of Tourism) BSTDC, in 2000-2001, there were 14 star hotels, 72 unclassified hotels, 5 motels, 1 rest house, 1 youth hostel and 10 tourist complexes in Bihar. The total number of beds available in Bihar were 2165 which accounted 0.35 average beds for 1000 tourists. It has been thirteen years since then but if we the data provided by the website of Bihar tourism in 2023 the situation has not seen any change as in July 2023 the site shows a list of only 78 approved hotels (www.tourism.bihar.gov.in). The distribution of these approved hotels can be seen in Table 3. Most of the hotels are in Patna (24 hotels), followed by Gaya & Bodh Gaya (together accounting for 20 hotels), Muzaffarpur (10 hotels) and Rajgir (8 hotels). It is a big question as to how the tourists will find a place for comfortable stay in other tourist destinations of the state. As per the same sources in 2001 approximately 61 lakh tourists (both domestic and foreign) arrived in India while in 2019 the number became 3.4 crores and in 2020 it was recorded as 3.08 crores. The availability of beds however will show no improvement since 2001 if the data of approved hotels in 2023 is believed.

Table 3: List of Approved Hotels in Bihar (2023)

Place	Number of Approved Hotels	Place	Number of Approved Hotels
Patna	24	Bhabhua	1
Gaya	9	Kaimur	1
Bodh Gaya	11	Begusarai	3
Muzaffarpur	10	Aurangabad	1
Rajgir	8	Katihar	1
Vaishali	1	Nalanda	1
Ara	2	Purnea	1
Bettiah	1	Darbhanga	1

Saharsa	1	Bhagalpur	1
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Source : www.tourism.bihar.gov.in

This data appears to be inadequate. The data available on the portal of NIDHI (National Integrated Data Base for Hospitality, July 2023) presents a better picture according to which there are 729 hotels having a minimum of 10 rooms in the state. There are three classified hotels amongst them; hotel Oaks in Bodh Gaya (3 star), Hotel Lemon Tree in Patna (5 star) and Hotel Pataliputra Continental in Patna (5 star). The remaining are unclassified. A distribution of these hotels across the major tourist destinations in Bihar is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Number of Hotels at Major Tourist Centres in Bihar according to NIDHI (July, 2023)

Tourist Centre	Number of hotels (having a minimum of 10 rooms)
Patna	274
Gaya & Bodh Gaya	215
Rajgir & Nalanda	41
Vaishali	1
Bhagalpur	29
Begusarai	7
Darbhangha	2
Muzaffarpur	50

Source : Compiled & Computed from www.nidhi.tourism.gov.in (July, 2023)

Most of the hotels are concentrated at Patna, Gaya, Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, Rajgir and Muzaffarpur. Lack of accommodation facility can be an obstacle for successful tourism development [17].

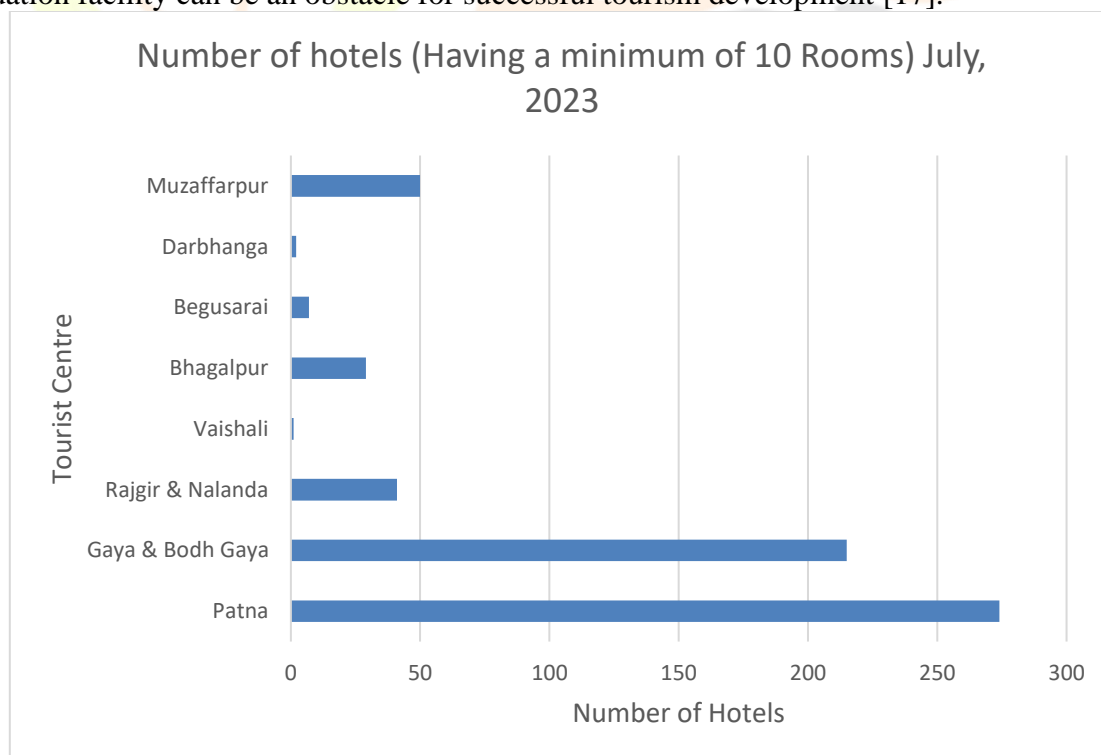


Figure 3

The Bihar Government is making efforts in this direction. During the 'Prakash Parv' celebrated on the 350th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh (30 December 2016 – 8 January, 2017), the Government had erected a tent city in Patna in an area of 70 acres to accommodate 35 thousand visitors. Every year makeshift cottages are constructed for the visitors of Sonepur mela. In 2022, during the 'Pitrapaksha' a tent city was constructed at Gandhi Maidan in Gaya and it is planned to be erected in 2023 as well.

4.3.2 Accessibility – Accessibility and ease in travel is a major factor that attracts tourists to a particular destination. The means of transport include roadways, railways, airways and waterways. Out of these roadways are extremely important as they provide door to door connectivity and can help in accessing remote areas as well. They also provide intra destination transport within a tourist centre. Bihar has a decent

connectivity of roadways but compared to other states it needs more development. In the financial year 2022 the total length of National Highways across Bihar was 5940 kms while in the financial year 2019 the total length of State Highways in the state was recorded as 4006 kms [18]. Bihar State Road Transport Corporation operates buses for all the major routes in the state, plus there are private buses and taxi services also plying on the roads. The maintenance of roads present a concern. Also, there is a lack of Transport Information System for tourists at prominent sites which discourages them from exploring the remote areas. They depend on privately run transport services which takes them to selective tourist destinations. Often these transport services are shared and are overcrowded. According to a February 25, 2023 news in Financial Express [19] the Central Government is likely to spend Rs. 44950 crores for the development of road infrastructure in Bihar under the 'Bharatmala Pariyojana'. Apart from this, the Government has also allotted a fund of Rs. 23,175 crores for the construction of 13 bridges in several districts. So, road connectivity may improve in near future. Bihar enjoys a good network of railways which provides internal connectivity to most of the cities in the state as well as links with other major cities of the country. The state comes under the East-Central Railway Division of Indian Railways with its zonal Headquarters at Hajipur. Patna railway station is the major rail head which has good connectivity with metropolitan cities like Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai.

Table 5: Railway Connectivity of Important Tourist Destinations in Bihar

Tourist Destination	Railway Connectivity
Patna	Patna Railway Station – Linked with Ranchi, Mumbai, Varanasi, Kolkata, Delhi, Guwahati, Bangalore, Chennai
Vaishali	Nearest Rail Heads at Hajipur and Muzaffarpur
Gaya	Gaya Railway Station
Pawapuri	Patna Railway Station at a distance of 90 km
Nalanda	Nearest Rail Head at Bakhtiyarpur at a distance of 38 km from Nalanda (situated on Delhi-Howrah main line)
Bodh Gaya	Gaya Railway Station at a distance of 12 km
Rajgir	Rajgir Railway Station which is linked to Gaya Railway Station

Source: www.mapsofindia.com

A special mention needs to be made of the 'Mahaparinirvana Express' which is a special Buddhist Circuit train being run by IRCTC and which touches Bodh Gaya, Nalanda and Rajgir in Bihar during its 8 day long journey across the major Buddhist Tourism Sites of the country. The train started running in 2007 and since its inception it has won the hearts of both Buddhist pilgrims and Non-Buddhist tourists through its facilities and brilliantly planned itinerary. There are two international airports in Bihar, viz Gaya airport (Gaya) and Jay Prakash Narayan Airport (Patna). The Patna airport is connected to all the major Indian cities. To meet the increasing demand for air travel, the Patna airport is currently undergoing an ambitious expansion project that includes a new two-level passenger terminal which will be completed by December 2023. The Gaya airport is mainly seasonal and primarily caters to foreign Buddhist tourists coming from South-East Asian countries of Thailand, Bhutan and Myanmar at present. Besides there are six regional / domestic airports which are located at Darbhanga, Jogbani, Munger, Muzaffarpur, Purnea and Raxaul. Out of these regional airports only Darbhanga airport is open commercially from where flights operate to Hyderabad, Kolkata, Bangalore, Delhi and Mumbai (www.indiaairport.com). A proposal to upgrade the Raxaul airport for civilian use has been drafted. Other airports should also be opened for commercial flights as it will offer better connectivity to the state.

4.3.3 Availability of Power – Availability of power is a key cause of concern for the development in tourism sector. The tourist experience of mass tourists largely depends on the quality of services provided to them and these services are directly dependent on the availability of power. Bihar doesn't present a rosy picture in terms of power supply. There has been a quantum increase in the power demand in the state on account of new connections, target of universal electrification, increase in agricultural connections, wider use of electrical appliances and increase in the quality and hours of power supply. The supply is yet to cope up with this demand. According to a statement made by Sanjeev Hans, Secretary of Energy Department (Bihar) and quoted in Business Today, May 02, 2022, [20] Bihar is facing a daily power deficit of 200-300 MW per day because of this rapid increase in demand. This leads to frequent power cuts both in urban and rural areas. Capital Patna is an exception but most small cities, District Headquarters and villages are badly affected by power shortages.

This is hampering the tourism sector as the service providers have to resort to alternate sources like power generators which has a higher running cost and directly affects the cost of goods and services. Disruptive power supply may even lead to an accident at the tourist site or at a cultural or religious event as it had happened in November, 2012 at the Adalatganj Ghat of Patna during the Sandhya Argh of Chhath Puja where reportedly 17 people died in a stampede and subsequent collapse of a 'chechri pul' (makeshift bridge of bamboo) [21]. According to the then city SP the stampede was caused by a power cut which threw the area into darkness and caused panic among the people. The Government of Bihar is constantly trying to improve the power scenario in the state. According to Economic Survey Report (2021-2022) the power availability in the state has been increased from 3500 MW in 2014-15 to 5995 MW in 2020-21, with the growth being 71%. The top six districts in terms of power consumption are Patna (5211 MU), Gaya (2031 MU), Muzaffarpur (1444 MU), Rohtas (1360 MU), Nalanda (1295 MU, and Bhagalpur (1079 MU). At present the most visited tourist destinations are located within these districts. The Economic Survey Report , 2021-22 (quoted in an article of Times of India) has also noted that the annual energy requirement of the state is expected to be 29,835 MU in 2022-23 and 32,587 MU in 2023-24 [22]. In 2022-23, the major sources from which the state is to get energy for distribution among the consumers are 54 MW from State's own generating system, 6761 MW from Central generating stations and 1618 MW from non-conventional energy sources like solar energy. According to a statement made by Sanjeev Hans, Secretary of Energy Department (Bihar) at a discussion held on 'Jal Jeevan Hariyali Diwas' observed at Vidyut Bhawan, Patna on March 7, 2023 and quoted in Times of India (09 March 2023), "Solar plants have been set up at Kajra and Pirpainty in Bhagalpur with the capacity to generate 400-450 MW power respectively, besides the Kajnar unit has battery storage facility which can store 25% energy produced during the day time. Work is being done to make important tourist spots like Bodh Gaya, Rajgir and Vaishali as solar cities. The requirement of the three towns and Government offices in Patna is 210 MW. By next year work will begin to fulfil the energy requirement through solar units". The condition of power supply shows a strong promise of improvement and it will facilitate the tourism sector [23].

4.3.4 Availability of Tourist Facilitators and Tourist Facilitating Services – Bihar is the most densely populated state in India (census, 2011) and apparently there is no shortage of people to work in the tourism industry here. But the problem is that majority of the workers engaged in the tourism sector do not have any formal training. This effects the quality of services offered to the tourists. According to the data available on the website of Bihar tourism, as in July, 2023 there are only 101 trained and registered tourist facilitators (guides) in the state out of which 54 i.e, 54% are working in Bodh Gaya and 19 i.e, 19% in Nalanda. A few of them are in Bhagalpur, Jehanabad, Patna, Rohtas, Vaishali and West Champaran (Table 5). These numbers are highly inadequate. Moreover, it is often reported that the guides ignore the domestic tourists in favour of foreigners as they pay them more.

Table 4: Trained Tourist Guides in Bihar (July, 2023)

Place	Number
Gaya	54
Nalanda	19
Vaishali	9
Bhagalpur	5
Patna	5
Jehanabad	5
Rohtas	2
West Champaran	2
Total	101

Source: Compiled from www.tourism.bihar.gov.in

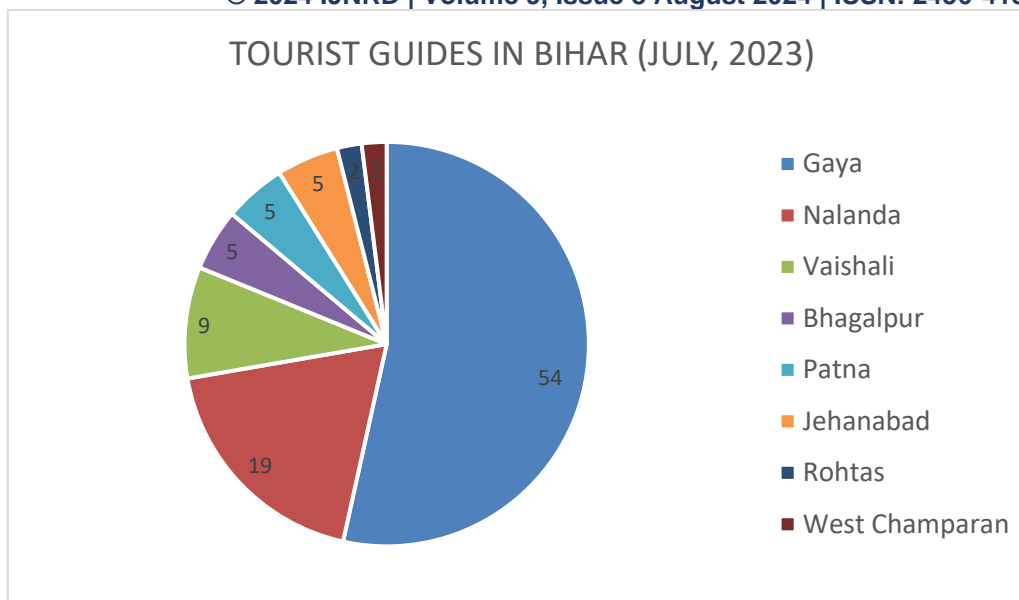


Figure 4

The tourist facilitating services such as Travel and Tour agencies and Tourist Information Centres also appear to be inadequate. According to the website of Bihar Tourism, as in July 2023 there are only 38 Approved Travel and Tour Agencies in the state. Out of these, 21 are located in Patna, 14 in Bodh Gaya, and one each in Nalanda, Rajgir and Raxaul [24]. Tourist Information Centres play an important role in facilitating the tourists. As till July, 2023 there are 16 Tourist Information Centres that are working in Bihar out of which 5 are located in the Capital city of Patna, 2 each in Bodh Gaya and Rajgir and one each in Gaya, Nalanda, Vaishali, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur, Munger and Raxaul (Table 5). There are only 4 Tourist Information Centres that are outside Bihar which are located at New Delhi (Barakhambha Road), Kolkata (Camac Street), Varanasi (English Lane) and Mumbai (Kurla). There are no international centres although tourist destinations like Bodh Gaya, Patna Sahib Gurudwara, Pawapuri and Gaya have international recognition.

Table 5: Tourist Information Centres (July,2023)

Within Bihar		
Place	Number of Centres	Location
Patna	5	Patna Railway Station, Rajendra Nagar Railway Station, Patna Airport, Patna Sahib Railway Station, Patna Sahib Gurudwara
Bodh Gaya	2	Gaya Airport & Tourist Complex Bodh Gaya
Gaya	1	Gaya Railway Station
Nalanda	1	-
Rajgir	2	Hotel Gargi Gautam Parisar & Kund Kshetra
Vaishali	1	-
Muzaffarpur	1	Railway Station / Hotel Lichchvi Vihar
Bhagalpur	1	Combined Building
Munger	1	Hotel Karn Vihar
Raxaul	1	Raxaul Railway Station
Outside Bihar		
New Delhi	1	Barakhambha Road
Kolkata	1	Camac Street
Varanasi	1	English Lane
Mumbai	1	Kurla

Source: Compiled from www.tourism.bihar.gov.in

The lack of the above mentioned services adversely effect the tourism sector in Bihar. In December 2022, in a bid to promote tourism and tourist sites the state tourism department had decided to impart a one week training to tourist guides followed by 'Bihar Darshan' and a dress code of a blue blazer with a logo of Bihar Tourism printed on it and white shirt was also decided for them. The department also decided to grant free

entry to the registered tourist guides at prominent tourist sites and to make a list of their name and contact number available to hotels and travel agencies and at tourist information centres and sites across the state [25]

4.3.5 Security – Since the last two decades tourism in Bihar has been badly affected by the negative image created regarding safety and security of tourists. Up till 2006, 30 out of the 38 districts in the state were reported to be affected by maoist activities out of which nine districts namely Patna, Gaya, Aurangabad, Jehanabad, Arwal, Kaimur, Rohtas, Nawada and Jamui were designated as ‘hyper sensitive’, while further nine districts including Bhojpur, Muzaffarpur, Sitamarhi, Motihari, Darbhanga, Saharsa, Banka and Sheohar were designated in the ‘sensitive’ category. The highest number of tourist destinations of the state coincidentally were located in the districts that were classified as ‘hyper sensitive’. This raised red flags for the visitors to the state. Since then, the situation has improved due to government interventions such as ‘Aapki Sarkar Aapke Dwar’ scheme, increased connectivity of roads, medical facilities, opening up of schools in maoist areas and development through special central assistance schemes. According to an article by Vijay Swaroop published in the online edition of Hindustan Times dated May 02, 2022, in December 2021, Muzaffarpur, Vaishali, Arwal, Jehanabad, Nalanda and East Champaran districts of Bihar were declared as left-wing extremism free districts. Prior to this, Patna, Sitamarhi, Bhojpur, Begusarai, Khagaria and Sheohar were already removed from the list of left-wing extremism affected districts. The maoist insurgency is now limited to only ten districts of Bihar namely Rohtas, Kaimur, Gaya, Nawada, Jamui, Lakhisarai, Aurangabad, Banka, Munger and West Champaran [26]. In the past a few unfortunate incidents have happened which also affected the reputation of the state in terms of security to the foreign tourists such as the rape of a Japanese tourist in Bodh Gaya in 2010 and the looting and manhandling of a Scottish couple at Pandarak diara in Patna rural in November, 2017. The Government has taken heed to this problem and has made efforts to improve the situation. The rape accused of the Bodh Gaya case were given life term by speedy trial within a month. In September 2017, an empowered committee headed by the then Chief Secretary gave the approval to the State Police Headquarters proposal to set up the first Tourist Police Station in Bihar at Mandar Hills in Banka. According to a report published in Travel World section of Economic Times (July 20, 2022) the Bihar Government has decided to set up tourist police stations in Rajgir (Nalanda district) and Bodh Gaya (Gaya District) for the safety of national and international tourists and pilgrims visiting these places. But still the state has a lot of ground to cover [27].

4.4 Suggestions for Future Prospects – Considering the different avenues of tourism and presence of a large number of tourist destinations, both explored and unexplored, there is tremendous potential for the development of tourism sector in Bihar which can contribute significantly to the economy of the state. However, for this there is an urgent need to build tourism infrastructure in the areas which lack in it and develop it and strengthen it where it already exists. Following are some suggestions which may help in doing so –

- Strengthening of BSTDC (Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation)
- Developing an efficient transport system
- Reducing dependency on traditional sources of energy and increasing the use of non-conventional sources of energy such as solar energy
- Upgradation of security at not only at the prominent tourist destinations but at the lesser known tourist destinations as well
- Highlighting of the new tourism avenues
- Increasing accommodation facilities through private-public partnership
- Proper training of tourist facilitators
- Promotion of the tourist destinations of the state through better marketing and publicity by the Government.

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