EXPLORING ODISHA'S UNCONVENTIONAL TOURISM: A TAPESTRY OF HIDDEN TREASURES

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This article looks into the world of unconventional tourism in Odisha, India, putting light on lesser-explored sites that provide one-of-a-kind and enlightening experiences for travellers who are looking for something a little bit different. This research emphasises the abundance of unusual possibilities that are accessible to the adventurous traveller by drawing on a varied array of attractions. These attractions range from the unspoiled wilderness of Simlipal National Park to the culturally active towns of Raghurajpur and Pipili. The mysterious Chandipur Beach, with its disappearing tides, as well as the daring terrains of Daringbadi and Deomali, are other examples of Odisha's potential as an offbeat tourist destination. In addition, the study emphasises the state's commitment to sustainable and community-driven tourism activities. This dedication ensures that these out-of-the-ordinary experiences are not only memorable but also make a beneficial contribution to the communities in which they are hosted as well as the efforts to preserve the environment. This study intends to provide a comprehensive understanding of the unconventional tourism landscape in Odisha through in-depth analysis and firsthand accounts. It hopes to encourage tourists to venture off the beaten path and uncover the hidden treasures that are awaiting them in this culturally vibrant and naturally diverse region of India.

INTRODUCTION

People go to nations or locations outside of their typical surroundings for the objectives of personal, professional, or business tourism. Tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomena that involves the migration of people to new environments. Additionally, it refers to the movement of individuals from one location to another for the purpose of amusement, recreation, or the pursuit of a personal interest. The revenue of the economy is boosted by tourism, which also generates thousands of new employment, contributes to the development of infrastructure, and fosters a sense of

cultural interchange. There is international tourism as well as national tourism and regional tourist.

In recent years, tourism, a fundamental activity for the dissemination of culture and expansion of the economy, has been the subject of profound upheavals. The tourism industry is a significant economic force in a number of countries. It does so via operating lodging facilities, transportation and dining establishments, as well as a variety of tourist attractions. It is the major source of revenue and employment in some areas, which helps to strengthen local economies and provides assistance to small enterprises. Significant amounts of both Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and jobs have been created as a direct result of the tourist sector. It is absolutely necessary for us to have a solid understanding of the most recent tendencies and points of view in the tourist business as we make our way through the complexity of a world that is undergoing fast change.

Travellers are becoming increasingly interested in eco-friendly and socially responsible activities, which has led to the emergence of sustainable tourism as an important trend. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) emphasizes the relevance of environmentally responsible business practices in order to achieve a more inclusive and environmentally sustainable sector. Virtual reality (VR) tourism has been possible because to developments in technology, which have made it possible for tourists to visit locations without leaving the convenience of their own homes. The COVID-19 epidemic has hastened the implementation of such technologies, which have proven to be a vital lifeline for the business in the face of travel limitations. According to Gretzel and Fesenmaier (2013), businesses like as Google Earth VR and Oculus are providing customers with immersive experiences that allow them to virtually travel the world.

The tourism business throughout the world is confronted with a constantly shifting environment of issues, some of which include natural disasters, health crises, and geopolitical conflicts. The handling of crises and the ability to bounce back quickly have become crucial focus points. According to Ritchie and Jiang (2019), robust solutions, including the diversity of destinations and the development of preparation plans, are vital to the process of protecting the sector against unanticipated shocks.

Travellers are increasingly interested in deeper relationships with the communities they visit, making authentic experiences and cultural immersion more popular than ever. Locals are given more agencies through community-based tourism programmer, which also helps to bridge cultural gaps. Travellers now have more possibilities than ever to have meaningful interactions with the hosts of the places they visit, thanks to initiatives such as Airbnb's "Experiences" and platforms such as With Locals (Sigala, 2017).

The field of tourism, which is comprised of the ever-evolving fabric of human connection and discovery, is on the cusp of brand-new and fascinating possibilities. The adoption of sustainable practices, the promotion of cross-cultural communication, the utilization of technical advances, and the strengthening of resilience are all essential next steps. The tourist industry may continue to prosper and contribute to a more connected and richer global society if it recognizes and responds appropriately to the changes that are occurring in the sector.

INDIA IN THE CURRENT WORLD TOURISM SECTOR

The global tourist industry is currently being held back by the epidemic of Covid-19, which also causes a great deal of destruction to both the physical and financial aspects of the world of tourism. Even to this day, there has been no indication that the industry should be allowed to thrive. According to the findings of a variety of statistical studies, out of a total of 140 countries, the top 10 nations in terms of the number of tourists they welcomed in 2019 were as follows: France, Spain, the United States of America, China, Italy, Turkey, Mexico, Thailand, Germany, and the United Kingdom. In a similar vein, the United States, Spain, France, Thailand, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, Australia, Germany, and China were among the top 10 nations in terms of the money they earned from tourism. In 2019, there were 1.45 billion arrivals of tourists from other countries all around the world. According to the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report for 2019, India came in at position number 34 out of a total of 140 nations. When compared to the report from 2017, India's standing is now six places higher. The industry was responsible for bringing in 16.91 lakh crore rupees, which is equivalent to 220 billion dollars, and contributing to the establishment of 42.673 million jobs, which accounts for 8.1

percent of the country's total employment. The industry anticipates a return of more than 1.32 trillion rupees by the year 2028, which is equivalent to almost 10 percent of our GDP. These days, India is also establishing itself as a significant player in the field of medical tourism. Regarding this matter, 1,84,298 people from other countries went to India to receive medical care. It appears to be heading in the right direction. India welcomed close to 11 million visitors from other countries in the year 2019, according to estimates. In comparison to the previous year, this represents a rise of 3.5 percent. When it comes to providing visitors with infrastructure transit services, India is ranked 13th, but when it comes to offering air transport facilities, India is ranked 33rd, and when it comes to giving sea transport facilities, India is positioned at the 28th level. With regard to the accessibility of really stunning natural tourism destinations India was placed 14th, and when it comes to the facilities it offers for cultural and business travel, the country moves up to the eighth position in the globe. However, as compared to other countries, the country does a terrible job of supplying travellers with star-rated accommodations. India maintains its position as the sixteenth most lucrative country in the world for the tourist

industry, but it ranks seventh among Asian nations. As a redressed action, travel visas and passports have been made more readily available, and the power to issue them has been delegated to the embassies of the visitors' home countries (Garg & Sharma, 2021). This was done in an effort to attract more tourists from other nations to visit India.

ODISHA AND TOURISM SECTOR

The Indian state of Odisha may be found on the country's eastern coast, right next to the Bay of Bengal. To the north-east, it is bounded by West Bengal. To the north, it is bounded by Jharkhand. To the west, it is bounded by Chhattisgarh. To the south, it is bounded by Andhra Pradesh. The state of Odisha possesses an extensive cultural history that goes back thousands of years. It is famous for its old temples, its traditional dance styles (like Odissi), and its traditional arts and crafts (like Pattachitra paintings). The state is home to a number of historically significant structures, like as the Sun Temple at Konark, which is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Jagannath Temple in Puri, which is considered to be one of the four most important pilgrimage destinations for Hindus. Odisha is blessed with a wide

variety of scenic landscapes. It has a lengthy coastline, and several of its beaches, such as Puri Beach and Chandipur Beach, are untouched and undeveloped. The state is also home to a number of verdant forests, national parks, and waterfalls, some of the most impressive of which are the Simlipal National Park and the Duduma Waterfalls. Agriculture, mining, and manufacturing are some of the most important contributors to Odisha's varied and diversified economy. The state contributes a substantial amount to India's overall mineral production due to its abundant mineral resources and the fact that it is one of India's most populous states. Odisha has a diverse range of cultural, historical, and natural attractions, which has contributed to the state's rising reliance on the tourism sector. The administration of the state has been making concerted efforts to promote tourism, including the launch of ecotourism programmes and the improvement of infrastructure. As of the year 2021, several development initiatives in the fields of healthcare, education, and infrastructure have been completed in the state of Odisha. In addition, the state has taken an active role in the management of natural disasters and the development of climate-resilient infrastructure (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2021).

The tourist industry in Odisha has a significant potential to generate job opportunities, new sources of revenue, earnings in foreign currency, and value adds to the economy. With the same investment of one million rupees, the industry is currently able to generate 89 employment, compared to 45 jobs in the primary sector and 13 jobs in the secondary sector. Nearly three times as many people are employed indirectly in the tourist industry than are employed directly. It is a field that relies heavily on human labour. In compared to the national average of just 418 trips per day, the state of Odisha has a much higher level of domestic tourist activity with an average of 541 journeys per day. Roughly speaking, Odisha is home to 357 different tourist spots that are spread out over the state's 30 different districts. There are a total of 28 places, the most of any district, and they are all held by Cuttack. In a similar manner, the districts of Balasore and Ganjam each have 22 major destinations, while Puri has 21 and both Mayurbhanj and Khurda have 19. In addition to this, the state is home to a number of distinct tourism attractions centres, such as the Golden Buddhist site and wild life tringles, amongst other things (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2021).

UNCONVENTIONAL TOURISM

Over the past several years, there has been a shift in people's tastes about travel, which has led to an increase in interest towards alternative tourism. Travellers are increasingly interested in going beyond the traditional experiences offered by tourist destinations. They are journeying into less well-known regions in order to unearth hidden treasures and immerse themselves in distinctive cultural traditions.

Dark Tourism:

Travelling to locations connected with sorrow, murder, or historical crimes is an example of an uncommon kind of tourism known as "dark tourism." This type of vacation gives travellers the opportunity to obtain a more in-depth comprehension of key historical events and the effects those events had on the places they visited.

Culinary Tourism:

The skill of cooking and the significant part that food plays in culture and society are being celebrated via the rising field of culinary tourism. More and more tourists are looking for places to visit not just because of their visual beauty but also for the gastronomic pleasures that can be found there.

Urban Exploration:

Urbex, short for urban exploration, is the act of exploring urban areas that are closed off to the public or that have been abandoned. This unorthodox kind of tourism appeals to explorers as well as history aficionados since it gives visitors the opportunity to learn about long-lost stories and experience the haunting beauty of deteriorating architecture (Bradley, 2013).

Voluntourism:

Combining travel and volunteer work is what constitutes "voluntourism," which enables tourists to give back to the communities and causes they visit. This type of tourism encourages the sharing of different cultures and gives travellers a sense of mission while they are away from home.

Adventure Tourism:

People who are addicted to adrenaline and are looking for high-energy encounters in unusual surroundings are the target market for adventure tourism.

Intrepid travellers have access to a world of one-of-a-kind experiences because to the

rise of unconventional tourism. No matter if a person is inclined to the somber reflections of gloomy tourism, the sensual joys of culinary excursions, or the adrenaline rush of adventure tourism, there is a niche out there ready to be discovered. These off-the-beaten-path travels encounters not only help travellers create memories that will last a lifetime but also contribute to a more profound awareness of the wider world.

ODISHA'S UNCONVENTIONAL TOURISM

The state of Odisha, which can be found on the eastern coast of India, is frequently praised for its extensive cultural history, numerous old temples, and dazzlingly clean beaches. However, beyond these well-known sites, Odisha conceals a treasure trove of unusual and less-explored places that offer travellers an experience unlike any other on their travels. This section explores some of the alternative forms of tourism that are available in Odisha, illuminating some of the undiscovered gems that are waiting for adventurers to discover them.

Eco-Tourism in Simlipal National Park:

In spite of Odisha's widespread notoriety for the richness of its woods and the variety of its native animals, Simlipal National Park remains somewhat of a secret treasure for those interested in ecotourism. This biodiversity hotspot is home to a remarkable variety of flora and animals, some of the most well-known of which are the regal Bengal tiger and the elusive melanistic leopard. Visitors have the opportunity to learn about the park's many distinct ecosystems by participating in guided hikes, off-road vehicle safaris, and nature walks (Dandapat, 2020).

The Artisan Villages of Raghurajpur and Pipili:

Two villages close to Puri that provide a look into Odisha's rich creative heritage are Raghurajpur and Pipili. Both of these villages are located in Pipili. While Raghurajpur is famed for its Pattachitra paintings, which are an old style of scroll painting, Pipili is known for its colourful appliqué work. Both of these towns are in the state of Bihar. Visitors get the opportunity to see craftspeople at work, ask questions about the process, and even take part in workshops (Das, 2006).

Chandipur Beach:

Chandipur is a remarkable example of a natural phenomena that has earned it the nickname "the vanishing beach." At low

tide, the sea can withdraw up to 5 km, revealing an expansive length of sand that has not been disturbed. (Sahoo, 2010) Beachgoers can have an unreal experience due to the surreal scenery that is created as a result of the drastic variations in topography that occur between high and low tides.

Daringbadi:

Daringbadi, which is tucked away in the Eastern Ghats, is frequently referred to as the "Kashmir of Odisha" due to the cold climate and scenic vistas that can be seen there. This hill station provides relief from the oppressive heat of summer and is a paradise for anyone who adore the natural world. There are several options for hiking and birding thanks to the landscape's abundance of coffee plantations, pine woods, and waterfalls (Rout, 2021).

Deomali:

The highest point in the state of Odisha is called Deomali, and it is 1,672 metres above sea level. This mountain can be found in the Koraput district, and it provides stunning vistas of the hills and valleys that are located in the surrounding area. It is the perfect location for hikers and other adventure seekers who are looking for a mountain

experience that is different from the norm (Behera, 2021).

Tribal Tourism:

The Indian state of Odisha is home to a large number of indigenous tribes, each of which has its own unique history, customs, and way of life. This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance for cultural immersion and comprehension, and it is provided through engaging with these communities through responsible tourism programmes.

Community-Based Eco-Tourism:

Various initiatives across the state empower local communities to actively participate in and benefit from the tourism industry. These endeavors not only preserve cultural heritage but also contribute to sustainable economic development.

Spiritual and Wellness Tourism:

Opportunities for meditation, yoga, and inward contemplation may be found in Odisha's placid and spiritually significant locations, such as the Dhauli Shanti Stupa and the many ashrams located around the state.

Odisha's off-the-beaten-path tourism possibilities provide for an interesting

excursion away from the typical tourist destinations. The untamed grandeur of Simlipal National Park and the artistic villages of Raghurajpur and Pipili promise to provide an enlightening vacation experience. These hidden treasures may be found across the region. The unique tourist environment in Odisha is, in its most basic form, a mosaic of experiences that showcase the state's cultural richness, natural splendour, and dynamic traditions. It encourages tourists to go beyond the apparent and promises experiences that are genuine, enlightening, and leave an unforgettable stamp on the soul.

ANALYSIS OF ODISHA'S UNCONVENTIONAL TOURISM

In recent years, Odisha's unconventional tourism products have become increasingly popular. These services provide a one-of-a-kind and varied assortment of experiences for tourists who are looking for something other than the standard tourist locations. This investigation delves into the fundamentals of unconventional tourism in Odisha and examines its relevance:

Cultural Richness:

- **Strength:** The rich cultural legacy of Odisha serves as a tremendous magnet for unusual types of travellers. Ancient temples, indigenous tribal tribes, and traditional art forms all contribute to the diverse array of cultural experiences that may be had in this state.

- **Significance:** Unusual tourism contributes to the protection and dissemination of Odisha's cultural heritage while also generating business possibilities for the state's handicrafters and resident populations.

Natural Beauty:

- **Strength:** The waterfalls, thick woods, and untouched beaches of this state provide a welcome reprieve from the hustle and bustle of city life. These pristine environments are a haven of peace and tranquilly for outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers.

- **Significance:** Unusual tourism helps to spread environmentally responsible behaviours and encourages the preservation of natural areas. It makes a contribution towards the maintenance of Odisha's one-of-a-kind ecosystems.

Sustainability:

- **Strength:** Community-based initiatives and ecotourism programmes in Odisha are excellent examples of the state's dedication to environmentally responsible tourist practices. Visitors and host towns alike may reap the long-term advantages of tourism when it is practiced responsibly.

- **Significance:** These off-the-beaten-path tourist places are more likely to retain their allure for future generations if they adhere to the principles of sustainability, which are essential for minimising adverse effects on the local culture and environment.

Economic Impact:

- **Strength:** The state's economy is diversified via the use of unconventional tourism since it creates money in areas that may not have traditionally profited from tourism.

- **Significance:** It lessens the region's reliance on a select few well-known tourist destinations and encourages a more balanced distribution of the economic advantages of tourism.

Authentic Experiences:

- **Strength:** Odisha's off-the-beaten-path places are less commercialised and more immersive, which attracts tourists looking for real experiences.

- **Significance:** Authentic experiences create a stronger connection between visitors and the locations they visit, which leaves a lasting impression and encourages tourists to return to those locations.

Challenges:

- **Infrastructure:** It's possible that certain off-the-beaten-path places don't have the necessary infrastructure, which might put off potential visitors.

- **Awareness:** For the purpose of promoting alternative forms of tourism, it is necessary to make significant efforts to increase awareness and educate travellers about less well-known locations.

Future Growth:

- **Opportunities:** Odisha possesses a massive amount of untapped potential for the expansion of alternative forms of tourism. The potential of this industry may be unlocked by investments in infrastructure, marketing, and ethical tourist practices.

- **Diversification:** Exploring opportunities in adventure tourism, cultural events, and wellness retreats are some of the ways in which the state might further diversify its tourist offers.

CONCLUSION

Because of its rich cultural history, gorgeous scenery, and significant sites, India has become a popular travel destination for people from all over the world. The travel and tourism business in India is one that is alive and thriving, and it makes a considerable contribution to the economy of the country. Odisha is a location that makes an everlasting imprint on every traveller because it combines the cultural wealth of the state with the natural splendour of the state's landscape. The untraditional tourist attractions that Odisha has to offer offer an enticing and unique alternative to the well-trodden routes that are typical of most vacations. Those who are looking for one-of-a-kind and life-changing experiences will find that Odisha's hidden treasures include everything from the untamed wildness of Simlipal National Park to the aesthetic masterpieces of Raghurajpur and Pipili, as well as the mysterious Chandipur Beach. These experiences will not only be memorable, but they will also have a significant influence not just on the environment, but also on the communities in which they are located thanks to the dedication of the state to community-based and environmentally conscious tourist programmes. Odisha encourages visitors to develop stronger ties with the state's natural environment, cultural traditions, and historical landmarks via the use of these nontraditional forms of tourism. It allows one to enter a realm of discovery, one in which the commonplace may be elevated to the spectacular. When tourists venture off the beaten path, they are rewarded with a rich tapestry of experiences that leave an unforgettable impact on both their hearts and minds. Unconventional tourism in Odisha is not just a departure from the ordinary; rather, it is an invitation to discover, learn about, and appreciate the beauties that lie beyond the well-trodden road.

In conclusion, unconventional tourism in Odisha is a tremendous asset for the state, giving a broad variety of cultural, ecological, and environmentally conscious experiences to visitors. It has the ability to not only stimulate the local economy, but also encourage responsible tourism, and conserve the state's cultural and environmental assets for future generations. As it continues to acquire recognition and support, it has the capacity to do all of these things.

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