

The Study of Himachal Pradesh's Tourism Potential from a Geographic Perspective: A Case Study of Mandi District

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Abstract- Himachal Pradesh is renowned for its tranquil and captivating tourism destinations. This study focuses on analysing the tourism potential of Mandi District. It is one of the central districts of Himachal Pradesh and is surrounded by many popular tourist districts of Kangra, Kullu, Shimla and Bilaspur. Mandi area is an attractive tourist destination because it is surrounded by stunning mountains, valleys, and lakes. Here, I have attempted to locate, categorize and map major tourist attractions in the Mandi district. The study region is a must-see destination for travellers looking for stunning landscapes, local customs, cultural history, a serene atmosphere, and lifelong memories. It has basic required tourist infrastructure which could be enhanced further by promoting more homestays and campsites instead of loading up fragile topography with construction of more grand hotels.

Keywords: Tourism Potential, Tourist destination, Eco tourism, Cultural landscape.

Introduction:

Himachal Pradesh is one of the most popular tourism destination of India. Popular destinations include Shimla, Manali, Dharamshala, and Kullu. Visitors can enjoy trekking, skiing, and paragliding, while exploring ancient temples and monasteries. The state's pleasant climate and vibrant festivals add to its allure, making it a year-round destination for nature lovers and adventure enthusiasts. I have attempted to highlight the tourism potential of the Mandi District in the present study (Bhardwaj, et. al, 2021).

Study area:

Mandi district is one of the central districts of Himachal Pradesh state in northern India. Mandi district extents from 31°72'N latitude to 76° 92'E longitude and has a total area of 3950 Sq km. The total population of Mandi is 9,99,777 according to the Census of India, 2011. Mandi has an average elevation of 764 meters (2,507 ft). It is situated in the middle of the Himalayan range. Mandi Town is built on the banks of the Beas River, at the confluence of the *Suketi Khad* stream.

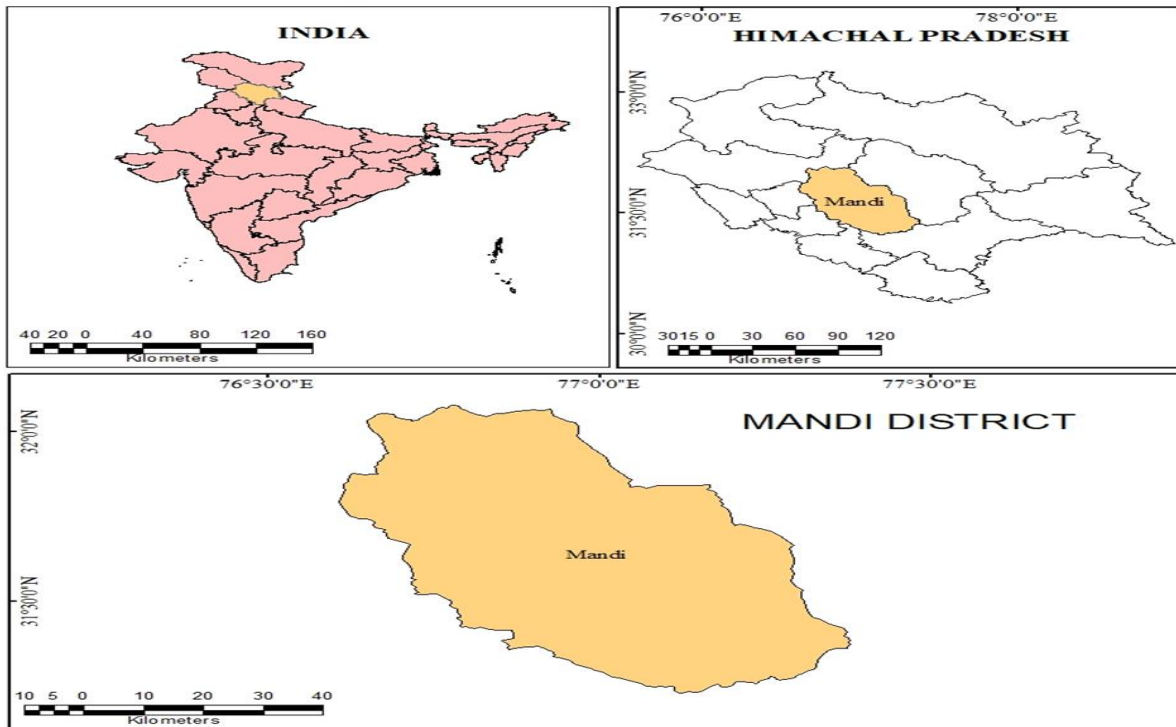
Objectives:

- The major objective of this study is to map tourism potential of the Mandi district
- To categories the important tourist places according to type of tourist activity.

Research Methodology:

This study is mainly based on secondary data sources. The ArcGIS 10.8 software has been used to make maps, and Google Earth Pro was used to mark tourist places of the Mandi district.

Map 1.1 & 1.2 Location of Mandi district



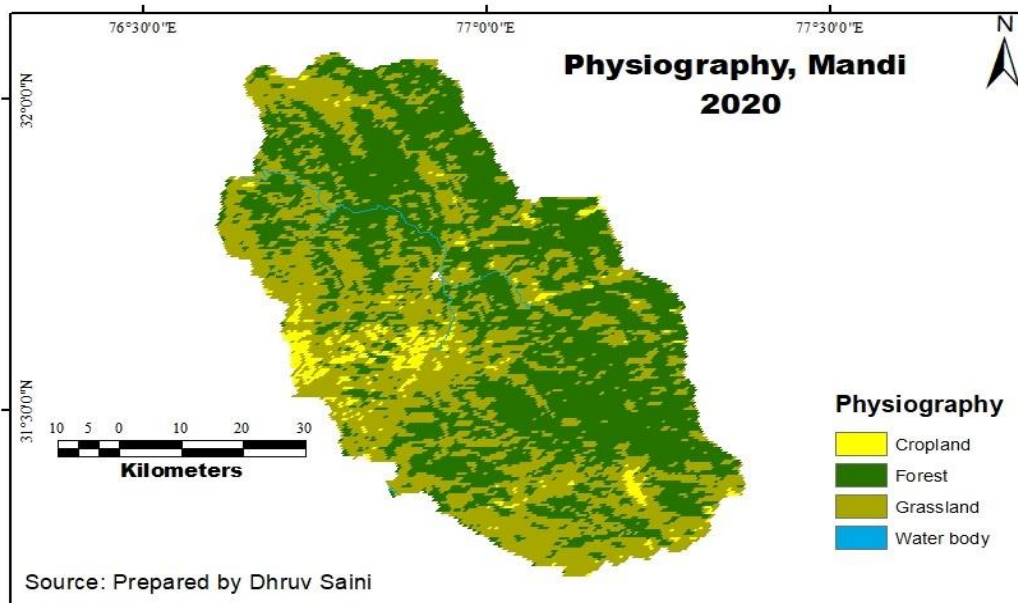
Map 1.3 Map of study area

Source: Prepared by Researcher

Physiography:

Mandi district is characterized by diverse physiography. The region features a mix of hills, valleys and rivers. The Beas River flows through the district, creating fertile valleys. The landscape is dominated by the Shiwalik range in the south and the lesser Himalayas in the north, offering a picturesque terrain with lush greenery. Dhauladhar, Sikandar Dhar, Ghogar Dhar, and Dhar Kot are some of the major hills.

Map 1.4 Physiography



Source: Prepared by Dhruv Saini

Cultural Landscape of Mandi District:

Mandi is the cultural capital of Himachal Pradesh. The people of Mandi are informally called Mandyalis. The Mandalay language is commonly used locally for communication. Sepu Wadi is the official dish of Mandi. Dham (lunch) is usually held at local weddings, celebrations, and parties. Banthara is the main folk dance performed in theatrical programs in Mandi and it is the state folk dance of the district. The Mandi Shivratri Fair is an international fair held every year in February/March for seven days at Mandi.

Tourism Potential:

Tourism potential refers to the **ability of a site to attract and receive tourists** with concerns about accessibility, resource quality, interpretation of resources, and so on (Anderson, 2007). Mandi district in Himachal Pradesh offers unique tourism experiences. We have identified and mapped the location of following tourist sites on the basis of physiographic and cultural characteristics like presence of water body, valley location and important religious places. Known as the “Varanasi of the Hills” for its numerous temples, it’s a religious and cultural hub with annual events like Shivratri fair. The scenic beauty, coupled with historic sites like Bhoothnath Temple, Kamrung Temple, and Shikari Devi Temple, make Mandi a compelling destination for those seeking a blend of spirituality, adventure and natural beauty.

The district offers opportunities for trekking, fishing, and water sports at the scenic Rewalsar Lake. Barot Valley, nestled in Mandi, attracts nature lovers with its lush landscapes and trekking trails. There is need to develop eco-friendly resorts and development of sustainable tourist activities for the visitors. Karsog valley is known for its scenic landscapes and agricultural practices, provides a unique agro-tourism experience. Visitors can engage in farm activities, learn traditional farming methods and enjoy organic produce. Mandi town has around 81 temples and or also known as Choti Kashi of Himachal Pradesh Mandi has an Indira market, and Bhuthnath temple, and Bhima Kali temple are very famous.

Plate 1 Prashar Lake



Source: Clicked by Researcher

Plate 1.1 Mandi Town



Source: Clicked by Researcher

Language spoken: People involved in the tourism business in Mandi generally use the local dialect Mandiyali for daily communication. They are also fluent in Hindi, Punjabi, and English (Department of Tourism 2023).

Plate 1.3 Rewalsar Lake



Source: Clicked by Researcher

Plate 1.4 Kamrunag lake



Source: Clicked by Researcher

Plate 1.5 Saroa, Jalpa Mata Temple



Source: Clicked by Researcher

Plate 1.6 Shikari Devi Temple



Source: Clicked by Researcher

Map 1.5 Tourist Potential

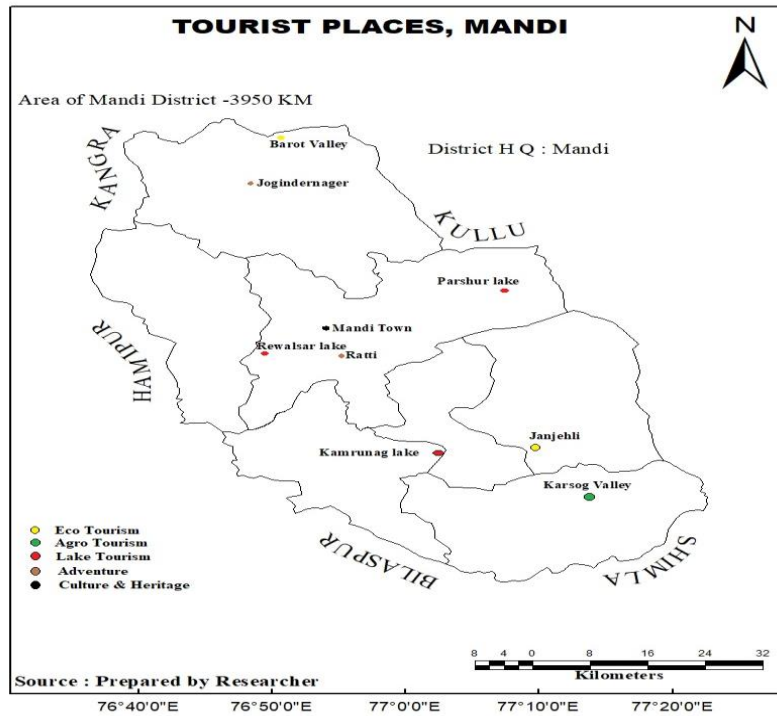


Table 1 Categorisation of Tourist Potential

S.No	Theme	Potential Places
1	Eco Tourism	Janjehli, Barot Valley
2	Agro Tourism	Karsog Valley
3	Lake Tourism	Rewalsar lake, Prashar lake, Kamrunag lake
4	Adventure	Joginder Nagar, Ratti
5.	Religious Tourism	Baba Bhoonthnath Mandir, Baba Dev Kamrung Temple, Janjheli Shikari Devi
6.	Cultural & Heritage	Mandi town

Thus, Mandi district boasts diverse tourism potential with its scenic landscapes, adventure activities, and rich cultural heritage.

Conclusion

Mandi district is surrounded by beautiful mountain, valley and lakes, so it is an ideal tourism destination. Mandi district has a rich and diverse of culture. Several fairs and festivals are celebrated there. Tourists can experience this rich cultural diversity. Mandi district cater to different types of tourists. It has options like, eco-tourism, agro-tourism, adventure tourism, etc. Thus, the tourism potential mapping shows that Mandi district is a unique and culturally vibrant destination.

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