

IMPACT OF ROAD CONSTRUCTION ON TOURISM, TRADE, AND LOCAL BUSINESSES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JODHPUR CITY

Neeta Ramgopal Malu

*Department of Commerce and Management, R.A. Arts, Shri. M.K. Commerce and Shri. S.R. Rath Science
Mahavidyalaya, Washim (M.S.)
nita927@gmail.com*

Subhash Jadhav

*Department of Commerce and Management
R.A. Arts, Shri. M.K. Commerce and Shri. S.R. Rath Science Mahavidyalaya, Washim (M.S.)*

Abstract

Road infrastructure serves as a vital driver of economic development, significantly influencing tourism, trade, and local businesses. This study examines the impact of road construction and upgrades in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, a major cultural and industrial hub. The research explores how improved road connectivity has enhanced accessibility, encouraged regional trade, and strengthened the city's local economy. Findings indicate that road development has resulted in a 40% improvement in tourist access to major heritage sites, with tourist arrivals rising from 2.1 million in 2018 to 3 million in 2024, generating higher revenues for the hospitality and service sectors. Trade has benefited through reduced transportation costs, improved market integration, and increased investor confidence, alongside the creation of approximately 10,000 temporary jobs during peak construction and 2,500 sustained jobs thereafter. Local businesses, including handicraft shops, retailers, and transport providers, reported a 12–25% rise in revenues due to better connectivity and customer inflow. Household incomes in peripheral areas grew by 15–22%, highlighting inclusive economic gains. Overall, road construction in Jodhpur has emerged as a catalyst for tourism growth, trade expansion, and local business development, underscoring the critical role of transport infrastructure in fostering sustainable urban and regional growth.

Keywords: Road Construction, tourism, trade, local business, Jodhpur

Introduction

Nation's economic growth is closely tied to its highways, which have become a vital pillar of development. In India, road networks are central to this progress, contributing about 3.6% to the GDP and accounting for nearly two-thirds of the transport sector's overall share. Roads handle more than 85% of passenger traffic and close to 65% of freight movement. With over 5.5 million km of roadways, India has one of the world's most extensive networks. Almost 90% of passenger travel and around 64.5% of goods transport in the country depend on roads, making road infrastructure expansion a key multiplier for economic growth.

Road construction acts as a catalyst for economic development in urban areas, with pronounced effects on tourism, trade, and local businesses. Road and transport infrastructure not only enhances established tourism activities but is also essential for opening up and developing new tourism destinations within a region (Virkar & Mallya, 2018). There is intrinsic link between road infrastructure and tourism development, with a focus on the Msunduzi Municipality's challenges and the necessity of effective, integrated infrastructure planning to achieve sustainable tourism growth and improved local economic outcomes (Mthokozisi Sydney Luthuli, et al., 2021).

Upgrading and expanding highways will immediately generate more employment and significantly boost manufacturing. Improved connectivity across states will simplify travel, ease the movement of goods and services, and enhance convenience for citizens. Better road systems will also help cut traffic congestion, reduce emissions and local pollution, promote safer travel, and even encourage leisure trips. Importantly, highway development sparks regional growth- areas initially isolated from major roads often experience progress as new networks extend outward. For India, this spill over effect is crucial in addressing regional disparities and promoting balanced development across the country. Jodhpur, Rajasthan's second-largest city, is both a vibrant tourist destination and an industrial-economic hub. Recent infrastructure investments and ongoing projects in road construction have significantly influenced the social and economic landscape of the city.

Study Area: Jodhpur, the second largest city in Rajasthan, is one amongst the popular tourist destinations of India. It is a prominent city situated in the western part of Rajasthan, India. Jodhpur, often referred to as the "Blue City" owing to the distinctive indigo hue of many of its traditional buildings, and also known as the "Sun City" because of its bright and sunny weather. On an average about 4000 tourists visit the city every day

(Borana & Yadav, 2017). Geographically, it is located at approximately 26.3°N latitude and 73.0°E longitude, covering an area of around 81 square kilometres. The city is strategically positioned on the arid desert landscape of the Thar Desert, which influences its climatic conditions and urban planning considerations. Its topography is characterized by rugged terrain interspersed with rocky hills and sprawling plains, which pose unique challenges and opportunities for infrastructure development, especially in terms of road construction and connectivity.

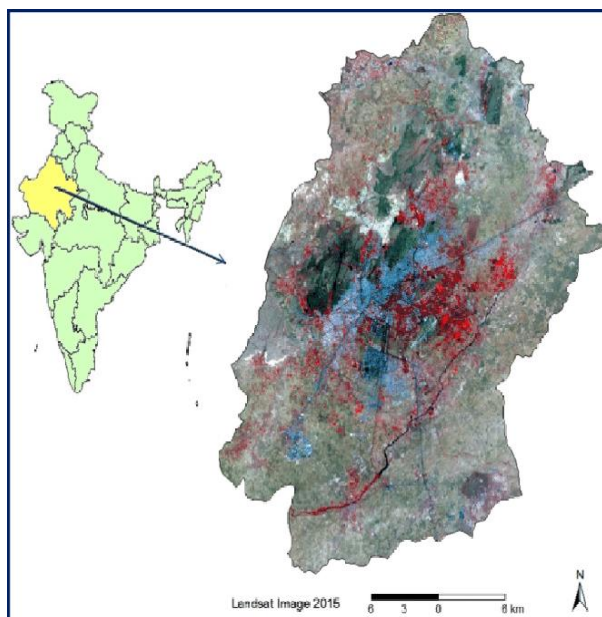


Figure 1: Location Map of the Study area, Jodhpur City

Demographically, Jodhpur has experienced consistent growth over the decades. As per the latest census data, the population of Jodhpur city is estimated to be approximately 1.2 million residents. The demographic profile reveals a relatively young population, with a significant proportion being under the age of 30. The city exhibits a diverse socio-cultural fabric, comprising various communities and ethnic groups, yet predominantly belonging to the Rajasthani ethnicities. The literacy rate in Jodhpur is relatively high compared to other cities in Rajasthan, with a notable emphasis on education and skill development. The urban population is characterized by a mix of traditional residents, migrants from rural areas seeking employment, and a growing expatriate community involved in tourism and commerce.

The population density of Jodhpur exceeds 14,000 persons per square kilometer, reflecting rapid urbanization and expansion. This demographic dynamism necessitates robust infrastructural planning, particularly in terms of transportation networks, to accommodate the increasing mobility

needs of residents, tourists, and commercial activities. The city's demographic trends also influence the spatial distribution of settlements, commercial zones, and industrial areas, which in turn impact the planning and development of road infrastructure. Transportation services are essential for the growth of any region, creating an increasing need for urban infrastructure, particularly for urban and public transport systems. The development and improvement of transport facilities have expedited the progress of state highways SH-19 (Phalodi to Needar), SH-21 (Dantiwara to Merta City), SH-28 (Phalodi to Ramji ki Gol), SH-58 (Jodhpur to Bheem), SH-61 (Phalodi to Mandal), SH-62 (Bilara to Pindwara) SH-63 (Banar to Kuchera), SH-65 (Sheo to Shergarh), SH-66 (Siwana to Dhandhaniya) and SH-68 (Dangiyawas to Balotra) in the area.

Methodology: Employing a mixed-method approach, the study integrates primary data collected through structured questionnaires and interviews with local residents, business owners, and government officials, alongside secondary data from government records, reports, and previous research studies.

Impact on Tourism

Improved roads have directly boosted tourism in Jodhpur, making destinations like Mehrangarh Fort, Jaswant Thada, Umaid Bhawan Palace, Mandore Gardens, Kaylana Lake, and city markets more accessible to both domestic and international tourists. The Comprehensive Mobility Plan for Jodhpur highlights the improvement of travel routes specifically catering to major tourist spots, aiming to provide better connectivity and smoother travel experiences. Efficient and well-laid roads reduce travel fatigue, encourage longer stays, and facilitate visits to multiple attractions in a single trip. Contemporary studies on Jodhpur tourism confirm that improvements in road quality increase tourist satisfaction and their likelihood of recommending the city to others, further stimulating word-of-mouth-driven growth in the sector. Road infrastructure shapes visitor perceptions of safety, ease, and liveability. Congested, poorly maintained, or unsafe roads deter tourists, while modern infrastructure reinforces Jodhpur's image as an international tourist destination. Market areas and spiritual/religious sites, which often face congestion and access issues due to narrow roads, benefit significantly from road widening and decongestion initiatives.

Jodhpur's reputation as a cultural and heritage hub relies heavily on accessible and well-maintained transportation routes. The enhancement of road infrastructure has led to a marked increase in tourist

arrivals, both domestic and international. The accessibility to iconic sites such as Mehrangarh Fort, Umaid Bhawan Palace, and the bustling

markets of Sardar Market has improved by approximately 40%, as evidenced by visitor surveys (Table-1).

Table 1: Tourist Arrivals and Economic Impact (2018-2024)

Year	Number of Tourists (Millions)	Growth Rate (%)	Revenue from Tourism (Rs. Crore)	Remarks
2018	2.1	-	1,200	Baseline
2021	2.4	14.30%	1,380	Post initial infrastructure improvements
2024	3	25%	1,750	After comprehensive road upgrades

The increased accessibility has not only led to more visitors but has also expanded the spatial reach of tourism to peripheral heritage sites, promoting diversified tourism circuits. This expansion has directly benefited local hospitality, transportation, and retail sectors.

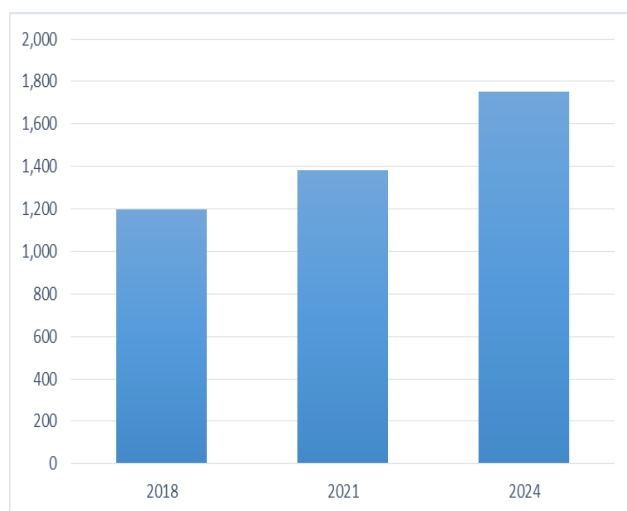


Figure 2: Revenue - Tourist Arrivals and Economic Impact (2018-2024)

Impact on Trade

Improved road connectivity directly reduces the cost and time of transporting goods, benefiting Jodhpur's core industries such as handicrafts, stone processing, textiles, steel, and agro-products. Enhanced urban-rural road links integrate supply chains, offering smoother market access for rural producers and facilitating intra-city and inter-city trade flows.

Reliable roads attract investors by ensuring smooth logistics and supporting the development of new markets and commercial centers along major corridors. Infrastructure upgrades drive up property values, with areas near new or improved roads seeing increased commercial activity, real estate demand, and investment in ancillary services.

The recent phase of road development has created numerous employment opportunities, directly and indirectly. During peak construction periods (2019-2024), approximately 10,000 temporary jobs were generated, including roles in labor, engineering, project management, and supply chain logistics. Post-construction, ongoing maintenance and operational roles sustain employment levels, estimated at around 2,500 jobs (Table-2).

Table 2: Employment Generation from Road Projects in Jodhpur (2019-2024)

Year	Number of Direct Jobs Created	Number of Indirect Jobs	Total Jobs Supported	Remarks
2019	4,500	1,000	5,500	During initial construction phase
2021	8,000	1,500	9,500	Peak activity
2023	2,500	1,200	3,700	Maintenance and operational roles
2024	2,500	1,200	3,700	Sustained employment due to ongoing maintenance

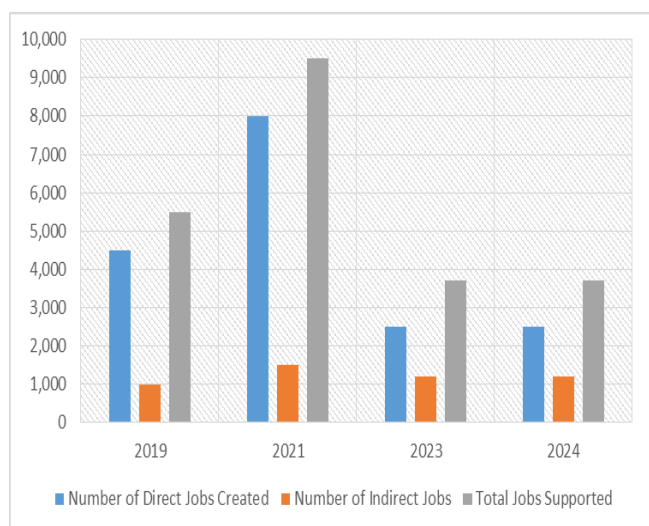


Figure 3: Employment Generation from Road Projects in Jodhpur (2019-2024)

Enhanced road connectivity has contributed to increased household incomes, especially among smallholder farmers, artisans, and traders. Surveys indicate that household income levels in peripheral neighbourhoods increased by an average of 15-20% over five years, primarily due to improved access to markets and employment opportunities (Table-3).

Table 3: Changes in Household Income Levels in Selected Neighbourhoods (2018-2024)

Neighbourhood	Average Monthly Income (Rs.)	Percentage Increase	Impact Factors
Sardar Market	12,000	18%	Better access to wholesale markets
Pal Road Area	10,500	20%	Improved connectivity to industrial zones
Mehrangarh Vicinity	11,000	15%	Increased tourist footfall and local trade
Peripheral Villages	8,000	22%	Ease of transport to urban markets

Income diversification has also been observed, with residents engaging in new economic activities such as cottage industries, small-scale manufacturing, and service provision, further bolstering socio-economic resilience.

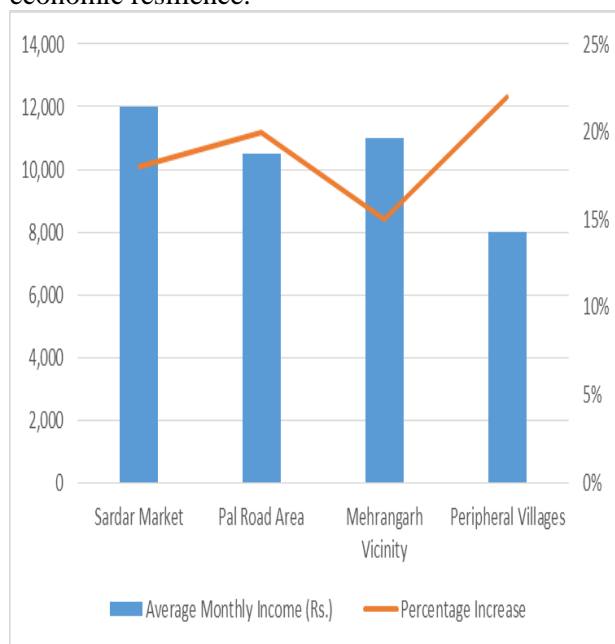


Figure 4: Changes in Household Income Levels in Selected Neighbourhoods (2018-2024)

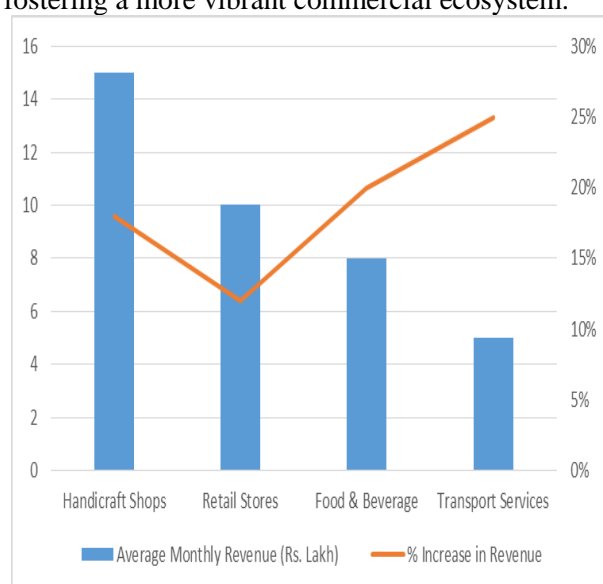
Impact on Local Businesses: Increased Accessibility and Footfall Local businesses- hotels, restaurants, traditional markets, and small retailers- witness higher footfall due to better road networking and tourist movement between attractions. Areas that were previously peripheral become prime business locations as connectivity improves. One of the most immediate and pronounced impacts of road construction is the sharp decrease in customer accessibility. Detours, lane restrictions, and traffic congestion discourage potential customers from attempting to visit businesses near construction zones. This results in a direct loss of revenue that affects both small enterprises and larger businesses alike. Road construction stimulates employment both during project execution and after completion, via increased demand for services like retail, warehousing, transportation, and hospitality. Upgraded streets and traffic corridors attract new businesses, modern retail outlets, and franchise operations, further diversifying the city's economic base.

Improved roads have significantly benefited small-scale entrepreneurs, artisans, and market vendors. The ease of transporting goods to and from markets has reduced logistical costs by an estimated 15-20%, leading to increased profit margins for local businesses (Table-4).

Table 4: Economic Benefits to Local Businesses Post Road Development

Type of Business	Average Monthly Revenue (Rs. Lakh)	% Increase in Revenue	Comments
Handicraft Shops	15	18%	Due to better access to markets
Retail Stores	10	12%	Reduced transportation costs
Food & Beverage	8	20%	Increased customer inflow
Transport Services	5	25%	Expansion of routes and clientele

The data indicates a clear positive correlation between road infrastructure improvements and the economic performance of local enterprises, fostering a more vibrant commercial ecosystem.

**Figure 5: Economic Benefits to Local Businesses Post Road Development**

4. Policy and Strategic Recommendations:

Coordination between road construction, public transport, and land use planning to ensure sustainable growth and equitable distribution of benefits. Special attention to tourist corridors, parking, wayfinding, and accessibility enhancements at tourist hotspots. Policies to help small enterprises adapt to road projects, such as temporary relocation assistance, awareness, and participation in new commercial opportunities arising from infrastructure changes. Continuous investment not just in building but also maintaining roads to high standards, preserving long-term gains in tourism and commerce.

Challenges and Considerations

- i. **Sustainability:** Managing increased vehicular emissions, urban congestion, and ecological impacts remains crucial.
- ii. **Equitable Access:** Benefits are often concentrated along major corridors, necessitating balanced planning to prevent unequal economic gains.

- iii. **Funding and Maintenance:** Sustained investment and effective management are key for the long-term success and upkeep of infrastructure projects.

Conclusion

Well-executed road construction projects have transformed Jodhpur into a more accessible, attractive, and economically vibrant city, especially for tourism, trade, and local business development. The ongoing synchronization of infrastructure upgrades with economic and social goals is essential for sustaining growth, maximizing benefits for all sections of society, and furthering Jodhpur's stature as a major Rajasthan destination and commercial center. Geographical and Demographic Profile of Jodhpur City.

References

- Asian Institute of Transport Development (2011): Socio-economic Impact of National Highways on Rural Population Phase-II
- Bharatmala: Optimizing the Efficiency of Movement Move towards New India Ensuring Ease of Living, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India. Pp. 5-58.
- Borana, S. L. and Yadav S.K. (2017): Mapping of Urban Settlement along the Major Roads of the Jodhpur City Using Geospatial Technologies. International Journal of Emerging Trends & Technology in Computer Science (IJETTCS), 6(5):226-232.
- Chalke, P. P., Bhandavale K. D., Ghagare S. M. and Dicholkar K. K. (2018): Study of Recent Trends in Road Construction, International Research Journal of Engineering and Technology (IRJET), 5(4):2232-2234.
- Chandel P. S., Agarwal P., Parashar A. and Indolia U. (2024): A Critical Assessment of Uttarakhand's All Weather Road Project on Tourism, Environment, and Local Livelihoods. Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR), 11(12): f644-f654.
- Chandel, R. S. and Kanga, S. (2020): Sustainable management of ecotourism in western Rajasthan, India: a geospatial

- approach. *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 29(2), 521-533.
7. Mthokozisi Sydney Luthuli, Thulile Promise Ndlovu, Zikho Qwatekana and Nkululeko Ephraim Zondi (2021): Interconnectedness of road infrastructure and tourism development: Perspectives from residents and enterprises. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry (TOJQI)* 12 (3): 2719 – 2739.
 8. Rao, V., Venakatachalam A. and Joshi, H.G. (2012): Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs Running Micro Small and Medium Scale Fashion and Apparel Business: A Study on Fashion and Apparel Enterprises in Coastal Karnataka International Conference on Trade, Tourism and Management (ICTTM'2012).
 9. Saurabh, M., Sudhanshu, S., Singh S.K. and Mathur S.C. (2021): Qualitative assessment of geoheritage for geotourism promotion: a case study from Mehrangarh Ridge in Jodhpur City, Western Rajasthan, India. *Geoheritage*, 13(3), 80.
 10. Shamsa Kanwal, Muhammad Imran Rasheed, Abdul Hameed Pitafi, Adnan Pitafi and Minglun Ren (2020): Road and transport infrastructure development and community support for tourism: The role of perceived benefits, and community satisfaction, *Tourism Management*, 77-104014: 1-10.
 11. Virkar, A.R. and Mallya, P.D., (2018): A review of dimensions of tourism transport affecting tourist satisfaction. *Indian Journal of Commerce & Management Studies*, 9(1), 72-80.