

Rural Tourism- A Catalyst for Rural Economic Growth

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ABSTRACT : *Tourism is one of the world's largest industries. Tourism which can be sustained over the long term because it results in a net benefit for the social, economic, natural and cultural environments of the area in which it takes place. For developing countries like India, it is also one of the prime income generators. But the huge infrastructural and resource demands of tourism (e.g. water consumption, waste generation and energy use) can have severe impacts upon local communities and the environment if it is not properly managed. The spirit of India resides in her villages and those living in cities and towns have their roots in rural life, which has pastoral beauty and touching simplicity, offer fresh comforting breezes and lavish openness. Tourism growth potential can be bind as a strategy for Rural Development in specific and rural tourism in general which definitely useful for a country like India, where almost 74 per cent of the population resides in rural areas. The tourism sector provides employment to about 50 million people. Even a modest 10 per cent growth in tourism sector would generate 5 million jobs every year and major beneficiary are weaker sections of society women and rural artisans. Rural tourism stands for showcasing the ethnic arts, crafts, culture and lifestyle in its traditional approach. The present study was conducted with an objective to identify the various forms of rural tourism, role of government and private sector in enhancing the efficient tourism prerequisite, to study the problems in rural tourism and to construct the suggestions and recommendations for rural tourism. The present study is based on the secondary data published in various journals, articles, books and others sources of information The study reveals that endorsement of village tourism is a competent device for socio-economic benefits to rural people. It is a multi-sectoral activity and the industry is affected by many other sectors of the nation's economy. Therefore, government and private sectors should ensure healthier linkages and co-ordination. It also has to play a pivotal role in tourism management and promotion. Further, the study also discloses that rural tourism has the potential to increase public appreciation of the environment and to spread awareness of environmental problems when it brings people into closer contact with nature and the environment. This confrontation may heighten awareness of the value of nature and lead to environmentally conscious behaviour and activities to preserve the environment.*

Key words: *Rural tourism, Economic Growth and Role of Tourism.*

I. Introduction

Tourism is an important service and entertainment linked economic activity. The promotion of any place as a tourist destination leads to the economic development of the area and opens various kinds of employment avenues for the local people as well. For a developing country like India which is on the path of modern economic growth through structural transformation of the economy, tourism is the right vehicle. As Butler et al. (1998) note economic and social forces operating at the global level are determining both the nature and form of the rural landscape and how we value and use it. These changes, coupled with new ideas and approaches to leisure and recreation time are encouraging tourism development in rural areas at an ever increasing pace (Williams 1998:5).

Rural tourism Provide a major thrust to domestic tourism which will act as a spring board for growth and expansion of international tourism. The development of tourism in a rural area is not simply a matter of matching tourist demands with local product supply but a matter of evaluating local suitability and acceptability. India's tourism industry has witnessed upsurge in recent years, paying rich dividends to both consumers and producers. The Travel and tourism in India are expected to generate Rs.1564 billion, making India one of the largest tourism markets in the world. The magnitude of the tourism industry can be clearly seen from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) statistics. The WTTC estimates that in the year 2002, travel, tourism and related activities will contribute to approximately 10% of the world's GDP, growing to 10.6% by 2012. The industry is currently estimated to help generate 1 in every 12.8 jobs, 7.8% of total employment. This will rise to 8.6% by 2012 (WTTC 2002).

Apart from substantial contributions to the foreign exchange earning of the country, India's tourism is also a major source of employment, as a labour-intensive activity in a labour-surplus economy. With its forward and backward linkages with a host of sectors like transport, hospitality, education, health, banking etc. India is all set

to reap full potential of this vibrant sector. Therefore, supply efforts are made by the government under the five-year plans by promoting infrastructure and other policy measures for environmental conservation in rural areas. However, the pressure of major problems in the Indian economy is mainly transport bottlenecks. Hence, there is a need to identify the scope of rural tourism which is vast, where 74 per cent of the total population lives in its more than half million villages. It not only to strengthen the tourism sector but also boost the tertiary sector, in general. In the present situations, trends of industrialization and development focused mainly urban centric approach; rural tourism is one of the few activities which can provide an economic growth in rural areas of India. The present study is based on secondary data published in various journals, articles, books and others sources of information were collected to study the below mentioned objectives.

In the background, the objectives of the present paper are

1. To identify the various forms of rural tourism
2. To study the Role of the Government and Private sector in rural tourism.
3. To study the Problems in rural tourism
4. To construct Suggestions and Recommendations in rural tourism

II. Results and Discussion

Rural tourism stands for showcasing the ethnic arts, crafts, culture and lifestyle in its traditional setting, and providing a platform for tourist to experience this. It also signifies promoting the concept of home-stay in the host community. Rural tourism has various forms of tourism such as farm tourism, nature tourism, heritage tourism, pilgrim tourism, adventure tourism, culture tourism etc.

Farm Tourism, Some important farm tourism are explained as below:

- 1.) **Banni Khera Farm**, it is spread over 10 acres of land, located in samar Gopalpur in Rohtak, in Haryana. It is designed on the lines of Vaastu Shastra. Farming is year round occupation with variety of activities occurring throughout the year. This farm has a tranquil location.
- 2.) **Kalki Mystic Farm House** is designed on the lines of Vastu Shastra. It spreads over 10 acres of land in Gari Hasru village near Sultanpur lake tourist complex in Gurgaon district, Haryana. Farming is year round occupation with variety of activities occurring throughout the year. The exclusive setting makes it an ideal place for people seeking an experience of true ethnic and cultural ethos and exposure of modern day farming.
- 3.) **Surjivan Farm** is located very close to New Delhi. It is lush green undulation sprinkled with the most breathtaking variety of colourful plants, then the mud house for a heady taste of village and rustic life. The adjoining village is famous for making handmade shoes and coloured baskets woven out of thatch. The tourist can be taken to these villages where they can purchase these if they like.

Heritage Tourism

India has glorious past which represents the rich heritage. The splendid architecture, minutely carved motifs, embellished facades of the heritage monuments narrates the immense skill of the craftsmen of the yore which have been fascinating the world for many centuries.

The exquisite marble inlay work of Taj Mahal or the excellent fusion of science and art in Konarak Sun temple, all these depicts the story of golden past of the country. The number of important monuments and sites is so great that a single tour to discover the multifarious facets of its wonderful heritage is not enough. Nevertheless, it will give you an admirable glimpse into Indian history and heritage. At the end of your trip, you will surely develop a huge respect for the Indian heritage while craving for more such tours in near future.

Pilgrim Tourism

It is widely accepted view that India has been a country of spirituality from time immemorial. People seeking eternal quest and peace of mind used to come here to gain religious knowledge. Max Muller, Grearson, including Chinese travellers all came to India to seek knowledge.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and *Sikhism* have originated on the Indian soil. The unity in diversity is the keyword for the grand country. The great pilgrim destination for the Hindus is *Haridwar*. The *Chardhams yatra* is a major attraction for tourism in India. As far as the Buddhist pilgrimage is concerned, here too we have several pilgrim spots in the country that are associated with the birth and teaching places of Buddha. The city of *Sarnath* is popular among Buddha's first sermon, which revealed the eight fold path after his enlightenment.

For Sikhs one of the most revered shrines is the *Hemkund Sahib*. This Pilgrims starts at the base camp of *Govind Dham*, The shrine trek to a height of 4329 metres to pray at the world's highest *Gurudwara*.

Adventure Tourism

As most rural tourism trips would be in the lap of nature, fishing, hunting, trekking, and bird watching could go with it. India has an endless scope of adventure rural tourism because of it's diverse topography and climate.

The mountains regions offer umpteen scope for mountaineering, rock climbing, trekking, skating and safaris while the rushing rivers from these mountains are just perfect for river rafting, canoeing and kayaking. The oceans are not behind in any manner as well. The forest and the desert regions have their own distinct place in providing scope for adventure rural tourism.

Nature Tourism

India has varied topographical features that range from the snow capped mountains to exquisite back-water. Everything related to nature can be found in villages of this country. The nature tours in India also include the scenic hill destinations that are some of the most sought after tourist spots in the country. Visitors can explore the paradisiacal destinations like Kodai-kanal, shimla, Munnar, Darjeeling and many more.

Nature has played a key role in enticing the people to travel from one part to another in search of natural treasures and also to explore its hidden mysteries. Kerala is known as God's own country. It is undoubtedly the most captivating destination of south India. Its tropical setting is bestowed with greenery and breathtaking back-waters. Peep into village life of people here and observe their routine while enjoying the exquisite surroundings. The whispering palm groves and swaying paddy fields combine to enrich the charm of the place.

Role of Government and private Sectors in Rural Tourism

Falling income levels, lesser job opportunities in the rural areas lead to poverty in the rural areas. The rural tourism can provide a solution to all these problems. In order to promote village tourism for socio-economic benefits to rural and its new geographic regions, the government of India have indentified some areas under Endogenous Tourism Project (ETP) of United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) across the country as a tourist spots in rural areas. The project promoted people's institutions, developed skills for hospitality and marketing in 31 sites of the 139 rural tourism destinations. These 31 villages are spread across the 20 states.

The Government should aim to achieve necessary linkages and synergies in the policies and programs of all concerned Departments/agencies by establishing effective co-ordination mechanisms at Central, State and District levels. The focus of national policy, therefore, will also be to develop tourism as a common endeavour of all the agencies vitally concerned with it at the Central and State levels, public sector undertakings and the private sector.

The policy of government to encourage rural people's participation in tourism development including Panchayati Raj institutions, local bodies, Co-operatives, non-governmental organisations and enterprising local youth to create public awareness and to achieve a wider spread of tourist facilities. However, focused attention will be given for the integrated development of identified centres with well directed public participation.

Role of the Government: Tourism is a multi-sectoral activity and the industry is affected by many other sectors of the national economy. The State has to, therefore, ensure intergovernmental linkages and co-ordination. It also has to play a pivotal role in tourism management and promotion.

The specific role of the Government should be to :

- ✓ Provide basic infrastructural facilities including local planning and zoning arrangements.
- ✓ Plan tourism development as a part of the overall area development strategy.
- ✓ Create nucleus infrastructure in the initial stages of development to demonstrate the potential of the area.
- ✓ Provide the required support facilities and incentives to both domestic and foreign investors to encourage private investment in the tourism sector.
- ✓ Rationalise taxation and land policies in the tourism sector in all the States and Union Territories and in respect of land owned by Government agencies like Railways.
- ✓ Introduce regulatory measures to ensure social, cultural and environmental sustainability as well as safety and security of tourists.
- ✓ Ensure that the type and scale of tourism development is compatible with the environment and socio-cultural milieu of the area.
- ✓ Ensure that the local community is fully involved and the benefits of tourism accrue to them.
- ✓ Facilitate availability of trained manpower particularly from amongst the local population jointly with the industry.
- ✓ Undertake research, prepare master plans, and facilitate formulation of marketing strategies.
- ✓ Organise overseas promotion and marketing jointly with the industry.
- ✓ Initiate specific measures to ensure safety and security of tourists and efficient facilitation services.

Role of Private Sector

Tourism has emerged as the largest export industry globally and all over the globe private sector has played the lead role in this growth. The private sector has to consider investment in tourism from a long term perspective and create the required facilities including accommodation, time share, restaurants, entertainment facilities, shopping complexes, etc. in areas identified for rural tourism development. Non-core activities in all airports, major stations and interstate bus terminus such as cleanliness and maintenance, luggage transportation, vehicles parking facilities, etc. should be opened up to private operators to increase efficiency and profitability.

A constructive and mutually beneficial partnership between the government and the private sectors through all feasible means is an absolute necessity for the sustained growth of tourism. It is, therefore, the policy of the Government to encourage emergence of such a partnership. This will be achieved by creating a Tourism Development Authority consisting of senior officials of the Government and tourism experts and professionals from the private sector.

The specific role of the Private Sector should be to:

- ✓ Build and manage the required tourist facilities in all places of rural tourist interest.
- ✓ Assume collective responsibility for laying down industry standards, ethics and fair practices.
- ✓ Ensure preservation and protection of rural tourist attractions and give lead in green practices.
- ✓ Sponsor maintenance of monuments, museums and parks and provision of public conveniences and facilities.
- ✓ Involve the local community in tourism projects and ensure that the benefits of tourism accrue to them in right measure.
- ✓ Undertake industry training and man-power development to achieve excellence in quality of services.
- ✓ Participate in the preparation of investment guidelines and marketing strategies and assist in database creation and research.
- ✓ Facilitate safety and security of tourists
- ✓ Endeavour to promote tourism on a sustained and long term perspective.
- ✓ Collaborate with Govt. in the promotion and marketing of destinations.

Voluntary agencies and volunteers have to contribute their expertise and understanding of local ethos to supplement the efforts of other sectors to provide the human touch to tourism and foster local initiatives. All such efforts shall be encouraged.

Problems in Rural Tourism

In order to further accelerate the development of tourism in the country, rural tourism as a major engine of economic growth. A National Tourism Policy-2002 was announced by the Government with, inter-alia attempts to position India as a global brand to take advantage of the global travel and trade and the vast untapped potential of India as a destination especially in rural areas of India. Acknowledge the critical role of private sector with government working as an active facilitator and to Create and develop integrated tourism circuits based on India's unique civilisation, heritage and culture in partnership with states, private sector and other agencies. Ensure that the tourist to India gets physically invigorated, mentally rejuvenated, culturally enriched, and spiritually elevated.

The tourism industry of India is based on certain core nationalistic ideals and standards which are: *Swaagat* or welcome, *Sahyog* or cooperation, *Soochanaa* or information, *Sanrachanaa* or infrastructure, *Suvidha* or facilitation, *Safari* or cleanliness and *Surakshaa* or security.

The rural tourism industry in India is victim of problems like –

- ◆ Low share in the world – only 0.38 per cent
- ◆ Inadequate capacity – e.g. 85,481 hotel rooms as against 8,97,206 in China
- ◆ Costly travel – soaring fuel surcharges, poor flight management etc
- ◆ Poor organization – fragmented market, poor advertising, stringent rules for service providers
- ◆ Underdevelopment of technical and social infrastructure – bad roads, improper health and hygiene, communication gaps, etc
- ◆ Gap between demand and supply of manpower
- ◆ Lapses in security and safety – incidents of tout and harassment of tourists in some places
- ◆ Uneven progress – slow growth of village tourism, lack of information about tourist profile etc
- ◆ Broken-up agrarian structure (small, non-contiguous fields) prevents taking advantage of economics of scale
- ◆ Lack of capital and its significant dispersion, which prevents modernization investments and
- ◆ These constraints have led to poor visitor experience, and slow growth of revenue.

However, the concentrated efforts of industry and the Government are coordinated to solve these problems. They could mobilize voices of many world-wide agencies like National Geographic to endorse and assure safe rural tourism in India for the travelling community and promoted India as a must see destination.

Suggestions and Recommendations for Rural Tourism in India

A complete rural tourism package can be provided through initiation by the local government bodies of activities such as beautification campaigns, sponsorship of special events that tie in with local tourist attractions and participation of all businesses in the area.

- Good community leadership; Successful tourism promotion and development requires good leadership by open minded and enthusiastic persons from local village agent, community groups, the business community and Non government organisations.
- Support and participation of local government; The role of local government is especially important in the following areas; funding for tourism development and promotion, creating and maintenance of infrastructure necessary for tourism, zoning and maintenance of the community so that it looks clean and appealing to tourists and educational support for farmers.
- Sufficient funds for tourism development; Most of the rural communities depend on public funds that are very often insufficient to cover all the needs of the rural community; private funds are something that most often can't be reached since local people do not have sufficient incomes by themselves to invest; therefore it is very important to explore for other sources of funding and assistance.
- Strategic planning; Planning is fundamental for the efficient and effective use of village resources and funds, especially in rural areas that have few funds and resources. Good planning for tourism development and promotion can help develop and support local businesses connected to tourism.
- Planning for tourism development should be integrated into a community's overall economic strategy because of the interdependence of the community and key aspects of tourism development and promotion. Hence, planning for tourism requires the involvement of various stakeholders in the community.
- Coordination and cooperation between rural tourism entrepreneurs; Tourism requires different types of businesses to work together because, by its nature; tourism has knotted relations between different types of business such as shops, accommodation facilities, restaurants and tourist attractions. They may create different types of networks, both formal and informal. Tourism network allows for a standardized, yet high quality, business management, which small enterprises lack.
- Strategic planning and tactical decisions such as pricing, product differentiation and yield management can be handled much healthy by a qualified management. A tourism network can substantially improve small tourism business performance by transforming their sporadically scattered products into a one-stop-shop selling a wide variety of functionally interrelated tourism products.
- Information and technical backing for tourism development and promotion; Different types of information for tourism development and promotion are especially important to rural tourism development because small communities usually cannot afford to hire.
- It is observable that management and marketing of rural tourism often require a community effort because of the nature of tourism; the community as a whole and its image must be marketed, not just one attraction.

III. Conclusion

India's tourism industry is experiencing a strong period of growth, expansion in high spending foreign tourists and coordinated government campaigns to promote 'Incredible India'. The sector is reaping the economies of scale too. For instance, rural, health and medical tourism in India is flourishing. India needs a long term plan for this industry with periodic evaluation and revision. Development of tourism in India, especially rural areas is still in its nascent stage. Rural tourism's uniqueness should be clearly understood. Many villages have perfect opportunities to enhance its rural tourism offer and it also represents one of the few states, which unifies different climates, natural characteristics and socio-cultural entities. Though there has not been much initiative taken by the central and state government for rural tourism development, it can be successfully initiated through the rural people efforts and other various voluntary organisations. Tourist attractions and their influence on handicrafts are the main factors for attracting tourism and consequently it increasing occupation in rural areas. Indian handicrafts particularly, jewellery, carpets, leather goods, ivory and brass work are the main shopping items of foreign tourists. According to estimate nearly 40 per cent of the tourist expenditure on shopping is spent on these items. Tourism creates jobs, thus stimulating economic growth, and can improve the standard of living for those living in tourism-targeted area especially rural areas in India.

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