



Rural Tourism: A Source for Enhancing Rural Economy

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ABSTRACT:

India is a vast country having geographical cultural, ethnic religious and linguistic diversity with a bewildering variety of customs ideas values and aspirations. Indian culture is a very ancient as long as at least five thousand years old. According to Eravati Karve, India is the epitome of the world. Oswala Spengler has made study of 30 civilizations said that India because of its religious dominance, has been able to maintain its cultural continuity all through the history.

History reveals that there are as many as 4,635 communities in India. In terms of space India is the seventh largest country in the world. It covers nearly 3.7 million Kms of area. It has a splendid past covering a span of 5000 years. It is the second largest populated country in the world. In spite of the diversity, there exists a thread of unity. The early people called this country "Bharat". The muslim rulers called the country 'Hindustan' and the British called it 'India'. The bond of unity is called Indian Culture.

Rural Tourism is one of the Niche Tourism products promoted by the Ministry of Tourism. These promotions are availed through Ministry's official website www.incredibleindia.com.

KEY WORDS: *Tourism, Geographical Importance, Best opportunities in Rural Tourism.*

INTRODUCTION:

India is a geographically diverse and offers a variety of culture that come with its own experiences, making it one of the leading countries in terms of international tourism expenditure there are two of the largest industries in India with a total contribution of about US \$178 billion to the country's G.D.P. The country's big coast line is dotted with several attractive beaches and in addition to that rural geographical structures of temples, rivers, lakes, some uncommon products, the travel market in India is projected to reach US \$125 billion by financial year 2027. International Tourism arrival is expected to reach 30.5 million by the year 2028.

Adoption of cloud solutions and the development of software as a service (saas) technologies would reach tourism department to the high economic growth. As per the startup India data, the travel and tourism industry has close to 1500 startups that comprise of companies in Rural Tourism. Rural Tourism, this concept was initiated



through the National Tourism Policy 2002. This policy is coincided with the commencement of the 10th five-year plan.

SOURCES OF DATA:

Mostly the secondary data is used. It is collected by secondary sources such as websites, books, articles and magazines.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

India is a mosaic of multicultural experience with diverse nuances of cuisines, faiths, arts crafts, history, sport nature and tribes. Objective of this study is, 1) to see how the concept of rural tourism was initiated through the National Tourism Policy and 2) to take the review of tourism business in rural India. Rural India is really a tourists place. It's a real heritage.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Present study is based on secondary sources, books, articles and information from various websites is used and magazines are referred.

RURAL TOURISM:

The heritage and culture India is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Most of the people in India live in rural areas. In another word we can say India is a country of (rural people) villages. Rural Tourism can give a tremendous fillip to economic, political and cultural benefits, as a larger part of India is rural.

Rural tourism as a concept was launched in 2002. In the tenth five-year plan (2002 – 2007), United Nations Development Programme was launched a pilot initiative to develop rural tourism in India. Through the planning commission, under the policy, seven key areas (7 'S') were identified. Swagat (Welcome), Suchana (information), Suvidha (facilitation), Suraksha (safety), Sahyog (co-operation), Samrachna (Infrastructure development) and Safai (cleanliness). The policy identified some places which have more importance in respect of their culture and local productions and climate, has given the uncommon name as Incredible India. Incredible India, the phrase was adopted to create an international brand position for India.

This policy identified the tourism places like Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Ladakh, Kutch, Chattisgarh, the North Eastern States and the plantation regions as optimum location for the promotion of endemic tourism.

The Ministry of Tourism has taken an initiative in 2008 from ancient Upnishad of Shikshavalli, "Athithi Devo Bhav" to teach etiquette and proper behavior with foreign visitors. Meaning of this shikshavalli is Guests are like God in 'English'.

Ministry of Culture has initiated (launched) another scheme "Dekho Apana Desh", that encourages Indians to travel across the length and breadth of India. To encourage this scheme, the message of tourism for all was spread under the name of 'Paryatan Parv'.



Local community is the key stake holder; NGO's also can play a crucial role in foreign community linkages.

Tourism in Jammu & Kashmir:

The charm of the Inion territory of Jammu & Kashmir as a tourist's destination is neither new, nor unexpected. Kashmir has a bounty of natural beauty including lush green meadows, towering show-capped mountains and a plethora of picturesque rivers and rivulets as several large lakes places of tourism e.g. Gurez Valley, Tulail Valley, Lolab Valley are famous valleys.

Pahalgam, a significant tourist destination in J&K has beautiful parks, crystal-clear lidder river and the mountains covered with fir trees. Tourists love to stay here. This place is also associated with the annual pilgrimage Amarnath Yatra.

Sonamarg, a Golden Meadow is an alpine valley located at the height of 2,740 meter above sea level on the banks of Sindh Nallah. It has been a significant tourists destination for centuries sonmarg is the middle road to reach the most important pilgrimage destination, the Amarnath Cave. The Govt. of Jammu & Kashmir has made new firm policy to increase both tourism and investment in the Union Territory.

India's North Eastern region is a paradise for tourists from all over the world. In Assam – Sualkuchi, Hajo, Mayong, Jatinga are the three popular rural destinations, these are the tourists attractions.

Arunachal Pradesh: Ziro Valley – Ziro is a small district town, the Ziro Valley itself is a wonderful rural setting perched in the Eastern Himalayas. Ziro also figures in India's tentative list for UNESCO's World Heritage Site. Intricate handloom designs, traditional cane and bamboo crafts, and vibrant traditional village councils called Bulysn have made Ziro valley an interesting example of a living cultural landscape.

Mizoram: Thenzawl – Thenzawl is located about 90 km from Aizwl, the Mizoram Capital. Thenzawl has several historical sites, as also nature parks and waterfalls.

Rural tourism is multifaceted and entails agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure and ecotourism, which are all closely aligned.

India's rich cultural, historical, religious and natural heritage provides a huge potential for the development of tourism and job creation in the country. There are several other rural destinations spread in the North Eastern Region.

Tourism Indicators of India:

A big chunk of the tourism in India is domestic tourism. In November 2019, the Ministry of Tourism launched the 'Dekho Apna Desh' programme. Year 2019 is considered as the normal point, we can focus the following data:

Number of International Tourist Arrivals in India in 2019 (million) Annual Growth Rate (3.7%)	17.42
Number of Domestic Tourist Visits in 2019 (million) Annual Growth Rate (11.9%)	1854.93
No. of Indian Nationals Departures From India in 2019 (million) Annual Growth Rate (9.8%)	26.29

From the above table it is clear that domestic tourism is high, as compared to International tourism and tourism of number of Indian National Departures. Therefore the concept of Rural Tourism is definitely useful for a country like India, where almost 69% of population resides in its 6 million villages. Each village is unique in terms of the tourism resources it has which can be transformed into a tourism product.

International acclaim for a village can act as a motivator for many other villages which required for rural tourism to thrive.

Key Points required to make rural tourism successful:

There can be no tourism without a destination. For a destination to develop and sustain itself, following things are important.

A – Attraction: It refers to those features that pull or attract tourists to a destination. There is no easy way to enumerate or analyse attraction that a place offers rural attractions can be divided into three categories:

- 1) By virtue of geographical and climatic characteristics of the region, flora and fauna, rivers, landscape, scenic beauty.
- 2) Aspectss of the rural culture like village folklore, handicrafts, textile products, social bonds, etc.
- 3) Farm produce and practices like sowing, harvesting etc.

B- Accessibility: It refers the fact that how the tourist destination can be reached in terms of transportation. These destinations may have all attraction which are needed for being popular. If these are not linked properly, the tourists can avoid these places.

3. Accommodation:

It includes boarding and lodging facilities for tourists to stay at the destination.

Accommodation infrastructure has to be built in the rural area itself as per the core theme of rural tourism. District Administration, Panchayat Raj institutions, NGO's are playing an important role in providing accommodation to the tourists.

4. Transport Infrastructure:

Tourism infrastructure is very important in boosting tourism. There are three important transport modes to make tourism business reach to the successful activity.



Road Transport, Water Transport, Air Transport are the important mode of transport for passengers.

Road Transport: Pradhanmantri Gram Sadak Yojna, a project launched in 2000 which gives good all weather road connectivity to all villages in India. Bharatmata is a road infrastructure project. In addition to this Ministry of Road & Transport and Highways, launching projects to boost tourism.

Water Transport: India is a land of rivers. It has a coastline of 7500 km. It has more than 15,000 km. of Navigable water ways. Under the project undertaken by the Ministry of Shipping, high quality roads will be constructed in the coastal areas, ensuring development of coastal economic zones, inland waterways. National Waterways are an important mode of transport for both passengers and cargo. Air transport is also important to encourage the tourists, who can afford to travel.

Multi-modal Connectivity: Gati Shakti is a digital platform that will bring holistic infrastructure by 16 ministries and departments of the Govt. of India together.

Problems / Difficulties in Rural Tourism:

- 1) During pandemic situation, tourism business is nearly collapsed. Like the rest of the world, foreign tourists arrives in March 2020 were almost 66% lower compared to the tourist arrivals in March 2019. International tourist/visitors are in search of facilities at heritage sites, monuments.
- 2) Rural markets are often characterized by the rural population which is still poor and less literate than their urban counterparts. Therefore, localities / villagers in these places have less awareness about displaying their culture and heritage.
- 3) Villagers do not have idea about the potentiality of rural tourism that can act as alternative source of earning for them.
- 4) Absence of proper mode of surface transportation lack of basic infrastructure, inadequate lodging – fooding, amusement facilities, inconsistent electricity, telecommunication problem etc.
- 5) Major problem is of Marketing – Visitors / tourists / travelers have no information about these rural tourism projects. Another problems are of lack of trained manpower, insufficient financial support to start the new facility or business.

To overcome these difficulties here are some steps and some recommendations are as follows:

- 1) Rural tourism is an economical source to the rural economy, before investing in this project availability study of destination should be conducted.
- 2) Popular culture being present at the destination so that special attention would be given to these cultural activities to attract many tourists.



- 3) Connectivity to the rural tourism destination is a major problem and should be the primary focus of the implementing agency.
- 4) The rural tourism projects should be in the vicinity of famous tourist spots, so that it attract.
- 5) The destinations should be developed as a whole instead of just creating partial infrastructure and providing a few pieces of training to the beneficiaries. Instead of building monuments and hotels which cannot connect to the local culture.
- 6) For boosting rural tourism Public, Private, Partnership model can be considered which enable the developer and investors to take initiative for the improvement of socio-economic condition of local population.
- 7) Participation of local village panchayat and local stakeholders is important for the successful implementation of rural tourism project which is very crucial.

CONCLUSION:

In order to develop a village as a tourist destination, it is necessary to identify the key strength of the village around which the central idea of rural tourism can be developed. Location, tourist destination, implementation and maintenance of hardware and software components must be considered.

Rural tourism is of prime importance where various schemes under ministries are implementing with the help of Public, Private, and Partnership beyond tourism. Convergence of schemes must be considered for a holistic approach.

The sustained development of rural tourism holds the key to India's occupancy of a prime spot in the list of countries with a treasure trove of rich and diverse cultural heritage. If this industry of rural tourism grows rapidly, it will not only boost India's economy, but it will also whet the appetites of tourists to experience the magic of India's rural grandeur.

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