
RURAL TOURISM: AN ENGINE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**Dr. Vasant Balu Boraste**

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Abstract:

Rural tourism is a new trend of tourism industry and growing up to be a potential business in its individual space and it can bring economic and social benefits to the humanity. It is a form of environment based tourism that exposes the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby favouring the local communities socially and economically. Rural tourism has created incredible impact on the local economy and socio-cultural setup of the concern area. In Asian countries, particularly in India, rural tourism is a latest concept. Rural tourism can help in shaping our society. It can have both positive and negative impacts on rural as well as urban people. There is a scope of rural tourism in India. Rural Tourism also carries a potential scope for the rural populations. This paper aims to exploring rural tourism in India which can help to setup rural tourism policy for the rural people who actually living in and around the tourist location and also finds the possibilities of sustainable development of the rural area. For developing the rural tourism we need to understand the need of rural area with rural environment, demography, and socio-culture, economic and political background of that place. Rural tourism worked as an engine of various kinds of opportunities for the rural development. The Government should encourage private enterprises to promote tourism in rural areas. To develop a strategic marketing plan for rural tourism we have to identify the target customer their needs and wants and how to match it with our rural infrastructure. Rural Tourism can develop a win-win situation for both the rural and urban populations.

Keywords: *Tourist, Rural Tourism, Rural Development, Sustainable development.*

Introduction:

Tourism is currently the world's largest industry and the fastest growing sector of the market. Tourism is usually viewed as being multidimensional, possessing physical, social, cultural, economic and political characteristics. "Definitions of tourism share a range of common elements" (Dowling 2001, p24). The levels of regional disparity are such that they make one wonder to consider the life in rural area. In India people from urban and rural regions want to travel more and get experience and pleasure from travelling. India is a land of multi seasons and variety of climatic condition which invites the people from all over the world. It can be changed with the support of tourist inflow in rural and undeveloped sites. After independence Government was focusing on development of the main areas like Agriculture, Industry, and Infrastructure etc. in rural India. Tourism was fully neglected and it was never seen as a potential business, it was growing at its own space. Although tourism has started receiving some attention from last decade, but rural tourism was never given any priority. Worldwide tourism is ranked second highest revenue-generating industry next to the oil industry. It is necessary to differentiate between different type of tourists to understand and analyse their purpose of visit. There are different ways to attract domestic and foreign tourists, there is a need to adopt and understand what types of services are required to attract and retain the customers. There is a large potential market for rural tourism especially for foreign tourists, which has not yet developed because

government has not taken up any systematic approach to attract foreign tourists. Rural tourism brings number of people from different cultures, faiths, languages and life-styles close to one another and it will provide a broader outlook of life. It will not only generate employment for the local societies but it can also develop social, cultural and educational values of the particular rural area. Promotion of rural tourism helps in employment generation, enhancing earning capacity, check migration and better livelihood for the rural population. Rural tourism also helps the inclusive development in remote and backward areas. Though Ministry of Tourism has already sanctioned 172 rural tourism projects, desired benefits have not been achieved. One of the limitations of the current strategy is the sanctioning of rural tourism projects on stand-alone basis. In the 12th Plan, current strategy is proposed to be revised to pursue a cluster approach rather than stand-alone approach. (Report of the working Group on Tourism 12th Five Year Plan 2012-17, Page 46, 47). Rural Tourism is the main driver of economic growth and employment generation in more than 80 countries It has the potential of addressing issues such as rural poverty, empowerment of women, strengthening the economic status of the rural artistes, earning foreign exchange etc.

Objectives

Objectives of the present study are:

- 1) To identify the essential elements for development of rural tourism
- 2) To clearly identified the concept and role of rural tourism
- 3) To understand the potential of rural tourism
- 4) To create an awareness of rural tourism in host community

Methodology

The data for the present study were collected from local citizens those who are engaged in rural tourism activities. Tourists were identified as a key factor in developing tourism in local communities. This research is based on Primary data such as questionnaire for tourist. The secondary data is also collected from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India Report, Tourism Policy of Maharashtra Government and Indian Ministry, Research Papers, brochures, Advertisement, Pamphlets, Books, News Papers, Internet, etc.

Review of Literature

1. **Government of Maharashtra ‘The Tourism Policy 2006’ (2006):** The Tourism Policy 2006 describes that the growth of tourism in India has been rapid in the last five years. Tourist arrivals have gone up by more than 25% and foreign exchange earnings has jumped by 40%. Public-Private-Partnership, Special attention towards world heritage sites (Ajanta, Ellora and Elephanta), development of pilgrimage sites and rural tourism.
2. **Kumbhar V. M. (2009)** explored the exciting possibilities and opportunities for the Farmers in Maharashtra. In India Maharashtra state has a potential for development of Agri-tourism due to its natural heritage and variety of agricultural crops. He further describes that more than 45% of population is living in the city areas and they want to enjoy rural life and to know about the rural life.
3. **Thorat S. K. et al. (2012)** states that agro tourism is the new machine of economic development in the developing countries. Agro tourism allows scope to skilled as well as unskilled workers. There is a wide scope to agro tourism in Maharashtra state due to its variety of rural traditions, fairs and festivals. More than 35% of the urban people want to realize the rural environment and culture of the farmer. They also

mention the need of Government aid in the development of agro tourism sector which improves the living standard of farmers as well as rural community.

4. Many of our regional and rural areas are facing economic and population decline as jobs and young people migrate to the capital cities. Youth suicide has become an issue of concern particularly in regional Australia where the availability of a range of services has been reduced by the withdrawal of government services and commercial operations such as banking. Providing services to remote communities of indigenous people presents many challenges.

Tourist:

The tourists are the main performers and the key elements of the tourism industry. Tourists are not the travelers of the open road. They look for physical leisure, entertainment, tranquility in nature, education, recreation, enjoyment and more. Tourists are people from surrounding area or from other parts of the country or overseas, who travel around state for various purposes. The tourist is the ultimate actor in making sustainable tourism a reality. If tourists do not choose to come to the rural destination, or are not willing to pay fees to support sustainable tourism, any one project will fail.

Attracting tourists to sustainable tourism usually involves two factors.

1. Communicating to the tourist that the rural tourism exists and what its attractions are.
2. Encouraging the tourist to support sustainable tourism rather than conventional tourism.

The tourist may need to be willing to pay fees to visit a site that is sustainable, rather than attending a similar tourism experience elsewhere that is less environmental friendly.

Rural Tourism:

Defined as “Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural tourism”. (Ministry of Tourism Report 2011-12). India is a country of villages. The government has to pay attention on rural tourism because India has a natural heritage and culture of village. The rural tourism scheme was introduced by Ministry of Tourism in 2002-03 with the motive of rural development. Rural tourism comprises the interchange of thoughts, values, traditions, cultures etc. Many developed countries adopt the style of visiting villages; get the experience of relaxed and healthy lifestyle. Rural tourism has been identified as one of the priority areas for development of Indian tourism. Rural tourism experience should be attractive to the tourists and sustainable for the host community. Indian villages have the potential for tourism development. With attractive and unique traditional way of life, rich culture, nature, crafts, folk-lore and livelihood of Indian villages are a gifted destination for the tourist. It also provides tourism facilities in terms of accessibility, accommodation, sanitation and security. Rural tourism is not totally new. According to the Organization for Economic Co- Operation and Development (OECD), rural tourism is defined as tourism taking place in the countryside (Reichel 2000) and that rural tourism must be fulfill the following-

- ✚ Located in rural areas
- ✚ Traditional in character, growing slowly and organically, and connected with local families.
- ✚ Functionally rural, built upon the rural world's special features: small scale enterprise, open space, contact with nature and the natural world, heritage, traditional societies and traditional practices.
- ✚ It will often be very largely controlled locally and developed for the long term good of the area.

- ✚ Sustainable, in the sense that its development should help sustain the special rural character of an area, and in the sense that its development should be sustainable in its use of resources. Rural tourism should be seen as a potential tool for conservation and sustainability, rather than as an urbanizing and development tool.
- ✚ Of many different kinds, representing the complex pattern of rural environment, economy, and history. (Lane 1994)

The scheme of Rural Tourism was started by the Ministry in 2002-03 with the objective of showcasing rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations and in villages, which have core competence in art & craft, handloom, and textiles as also an asset base in the natural environment. The intention is to benefit the local community economically and socially as well as enable interaction between tourists and local population for a mutually inspiring experience. The promotion of village tourism is also aimed at generating revenue for the rural communities through tourist's visits, thereby stopping the migration from rural to urban areas. While in the initial two years of the scheme, only physical infrastructure development activities were taken up under the scheme, from the year 2004-05 capacity building activities also were taken up. The Ministry gives Central Financial Assistance for creating infrastructure and for human resource development in rural areas for developing sustainable tourism in the form of rural tourism projects. In 2010-11, an amount of 3.46 crore has been sanctioned for Rural Tourism projects to different States of the North Eastern Region. (MoT, Govt. of India, AR 2010-11) Ministry gives Central Financial Assistance for creating infrastructure and for human resource development in rural areas for developing sustainable tourism in the form of rural tourism projects. In 2011-12 an amount of Rs. 2.34 crore has been sanctioned for Rural Tourism projects to different States of the North Eastern Region. (As on 30.11.2011) (MoT, Govt. of India, AR 2010-11) Whether there is a possible customer for rural tourism and the physical characteristics that will appeal to tourists seeking a rural tourism, generally fall into the following groups:

- ✚ Scenic value - including mountains, seashores, lakes, islands, rivers, and special interest.
- ✚ scenery such as wetlands, native bush, geological features;
- ✚ special wildlife assets - flora and fauna both native and exotic:
- ✚ Cultural assets - including historic buildings, towns, settlements, historic sites and other.
- ✚ Cultural experience opportunities, other ethnic heritage.
- ✚ Agricultural/horticultural/forestry assets - farm systems and activities e.g. sheep rearing.
- ✚ Cattle rearing, interesting crops, flowers etc.
- ✚ Special facilities for sporting activities - including hunting, fishing, skiing, trekking, walking.

Forms of Rural Tourism:

Village based tourism: It is a type of tourism in which tourists share in village life and villagers gain economic and other benefits from tourist activities. Tourists often come to witness the life style of the people of villages. The traditional way of life right from their traditional attire to their traditional food, forms a delightful destination for tourists.

There are various terms used to describe tourism in rural areas, including

- 1) Agro-tourism
- 2) Eco Tourism
- 3) Nature Tourism

- 4) Cultural Tourism
- 5) Adventure Tourism

Sustainable development approaches-The concept of sustainability means that mankind must live within the capacity of the environment that supports. Sustainable development has been defined briefly as “that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The concept of sustainable development is all about conservation and stewardship of resources for the future. The support for ecologically sustainable development emerging strongly in the tourism sector, as it is the logical way of balancing environmental concerns with growth and development of the industry.

Scientific and Educational Organization/Institutions: Scientific and Education institute related to tourism helps the Government to develop the policy frame work for the sustainable tourism development. These institutes take part in identification, development of tourist destination and takes initiatives for the research and development. Technical consultancy is the main role played by such institutes for sustainable tourism development.

Financial Institutions:

For the development of Small and Medium tourism enterprises, capital is necessary. The financial institution provides the required financial assistance to the entrepreneur. The above three major stakeholders are required to established the rural tourism project in the villages but the development of the tourism project is depend upon the following stakeholders

1) Local community:

The local community is not an undifferentiated mass, but encompasses persons of different economic classes or family groups, cultural groups, both genders, and various special interest groups. Every community is different and includes many groups involved directly or indirectly with coastal resources, such as subsistence-level fisher people, commercial fisher people, farmers, and those involved in transportation and tourism.

Generally, involvement of the community often is following four steps:

1. Identifying stakeholders and forming partnerships.
2. Community organization. An NGO, SHG, Community development organizations, Farming-Fishing Communities organizations or local government unit can assist the community in identifying an appropriately trained community organizer. Stakeholders are more accessible and have more opportunities to be involved if they are organized, such as with a small pool of representatives who can attend meetings and relay information to and from the rest of the community. The community organizers can also help local community members increase their level of participation.
3. Involve the community in the planning process. Community participation in the early Stages of planning of any activity (sustainable tourism or any other management activity) will keep the activity focused on community-defined goals and benefits, and will make the community feel engaged from the beginning. Later, ongoing monitoring/evaluation ensures that the plan continues to meet community-defined goals.
4. Ongoing information, education and communication.

Key Deliberations for Sustainable Tourism Development through local Communities

- 1) Create partnerships: Sustainable tourism organized by tourism operators requires assistance and

cooperation from local communities, who usually will have much better links to the market better understanding of tourist's needs, and better language skills and communications.

2) Avoid putting all eggs in the tourism basket. Relying solely on tourism is unwise, because tourism demand fluctuates unpredictable, and because tourism alone cannot provide enough jobs to sustain an entire community. Sustainable tourism must be seen as one of several strategies in a community's development. Other important elements are: education, access to information, protected area management, and increasing economic opportunities in other fields.

3) Link sustainable tourism benefits to conservation goals: For sustainable tourism to promote conservation, local people must clearly benefit from sustainable tourism, and must understand the link between the benefits they are receiving and the existence of the protected area.

Local Institutions:

1) **Cultural institutions:** Takes part to explore the culture of a specific rural area and helps to entertain the tourist. These institutes conserve the rural culture.

2) **Heritage sites:** Develop the rural tourism on heritage aspect.

3) **Rural creative industries and Agro based industries:** These industries provides the employment to the rural poor also these industries get the market at their door step for their products.

4) **Hospitality industry:** This industry can manage the increased flow of tourist toward specific rural tourism sites by providing hospitality services to them.

5) **Health care centers:** Important local stakeholder regarding health of the tourist.

6) **Local Travel and Tourism Industry:** This industry includes the tour operators, travel agencies, transportation agencies, tourist guides and hotels. They have their own networks. This network responsible for flow of tourist towards rural site, marketing of rural tourism product and promotion of rural tourism activities etc. This industry provides the valuable information like,

- Information about the potential market
- Advice on visitor preferences for attractions, lodging, food and transport
- Marketing
- Providing services to facilitate visitor access to & appreciation of the site
- Training of local guides and entrepreneurs
- Investing in a local sustainable tourism operation
- Operating a sustainable tourism operation

For the sustainable development of rural tourism, this network should be linked with the other investors.

Rural Development:

The basic concept of rural tourism is to benefit the local community through entrepreneurial opportunities, income generation, employment opportunities, conservation and development of rural arts and crafts, investment for infrastructure development and preservation of the environment and heritage (Mishra, 2001).

For Rural Tourism infrastructure development, the thrust is towards development of tourism infrastructure at the identified rural tourism sites so that socio-economic benefits percolate down to the rural community. A maximum amount of 50.00 lakh is sanctioned for each rural tourism project under this scheme for development of tourism related infrastructure. During the 11th Five Year Plan, (as on 31.12.2010) Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned, an amount of 3112.71 crore for 991 tourism infrastructure projects, including

rural tourism and human Resource development projects. Ministry of Tourism holds Prioritization Meetings with the States/UTs to identify, for funding the tourism projects. While prioritizing, projects involving construction and upkeep of wayside amenities along Highways/Roads leading to tourist destinations, cleanliness at the tourism sites, projects in backward areas, etc. are given due emphasis. To ensure the contribution of tourism in the development of remote and backward areas in the country, 2.5% of total plan outlay of Ministry of Tourism will be earmarked for tourism development in tribal areas from 2011-12.

Data Analysis:

34.21% tour operators in Nashik district provide sightseeing and 23.27% tour operators provides rural tourism and 5.91% tour operators provide other packages. However, 41.18% tour operators provide medical tourism and 35.29% tour operators provide rural tourism. Rural tourism packages provided by 50% tour operators. 21.05% tour operators provide rural tourism package and 5.26% tour operators provide other packages. 10% tour operators provide wine and rural tourism packages.

Attraction for Tourists in Nashik district:

Nashik district has a lot of potential to attract tourists from all over the world. Pleasant climatic condition attracts highest (69.23%) number of tourists followed by pilgrimage sites (62.64%) and new trends like winery park or wine tourism (35.16%). Availability of educational facilities in Nashik district attracts 50.55% tourists, business opportunities attract 37.36% tourists and 27.47% tourists visit because of hotel industry. However, ample water facility, cleanliness, agricultural environment, transport facility and local people attitude attract 13.19%, 15.38%, 21.98%, 14.29% and 7.69% tourists respectively. (Table No.1)

Sr. No.	Districts	Pilgrimage/holy sites	Educational facilities	Ample water facility	Transport facility	Agricultural environment	Local people's attitude	Pleasant climate	Cleanliness	Winery park	Hotel industry	Business	Other
1	Nashik	62.64	50.55	13.19	14.29	21.98	7.69	69.23	15.38	35.16	27.47	37.36	4.40

Sustainable development:

Increasing environmental awareness and interest in the relationship between humans and the environment. Green issues have raised the attractiveness of rural experiences as ecologically sustainable tourism. Research is necessary to evaluate the management, control and operational questions involved in creating sustainable rural tourism. This approach must be developed within the host community.

Conclusions:

The public private partnership should be strengthened for developing tourism products like Agri-tourism and will be beneficial to rural area. Rural Tourism can also enhance local quality of life. For example, tourism can serve as an important source of tax revenues for local jurisdictions. Some rural areas may be more willing to levy higher taxes on tourists because they are transitory, and, hence, may be perceived by local authorities as being more captive to user fees and other forms of taxation. This can lead to higher quality public services and lower local tax rates. Tourism can also support local culture in rural areas by encouraging restoration of local and regional historic sites. And tourism, which is generally considered to be a relatively clean industry, may foster local conservation efforts. Rural Tourism is growing in terms of number of visitors and the Government of India focuses on it as an engine of growth. We believe that any rural tourism development plan needs to focus on sustainable development and take into account the priorities and needs

of local people. This paper emphasizes the need for sustainable forms of tourism by outlining the possible socio-economic, cultural and environmental impacts of current forms of Rural Tourism. The paper first explores the meaning of terms such as Rural, Rurality and Rural Tourism. It focuses on the genesis and growth of Rural Tourism, Rural Tourism in India, impacts of Rural Tourism and the need for sustainable Rural Tourism. For the sustainable tourism development we must follow some parameter which can help in the process of development. A general tourism policy incorporating sustainable tourism objectives at national regional and local level should be adopted. Targets established for the planning, development and operation of tourism involving various Government Departments. Public and private sector partnership can provide widest possible safeguards for success. Primary consideration should be given to the protection of natural and cultural assets. All tourism participants must follow ethical and sound behavioral and conservative rules regarding nature, culture, economy, and community value system. The distribution of tourism development project should be rationed on the basis of equity. Public awareness of benefits tourism and how to mitigate its negative impacts should be pursued. Local people would be encouraged to assume leadership roles in planning and development. Rural tourism could help in boosting the local performing arts and help conserve the local culture, and can prevent rural-urban migration. Thus rural tourism could attract tourists by providing excellent glimpse of the village ambience with local cuisine. Moderate, but clean, accommodations for tourists should be constructed by the villagers in traditional design and architecture. Bank finances should be made available at attractive terms and conditions for promotion of such projects. India has potential to develop the rural tourism industry as most of its population resides in rural areas. This can benefit the local community economically and socially, and enable interaction between tourists and locals for a mutually enriching experience. Rural tourism is necessary to create the right environment to attract FDI by establishing progressive legal-institutional framework and facilitating organizations Circuit development approach yields fastest results HR is the key Presenting bankable projects to the investors not only increases the possibility of attracting forex but also establishes benchmarks for the future

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