

Sustainable Rural Development through Tourism Practices: A Case Study of Ranakpur, Rajasthan

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Abstract

Tourism has touted as the most lucrative industry emerged in last decade. Therefore, potential from the growth of tourism opportunities can be very well harnessed for the rural development. The research paper has worked on two objectives 1) Clarification of the concept of Rural Tourism, its significance and sustainable tourism development and 2) Contribution of tourism in rural areas through case study analysis of Ranakpur. The tourists' officers, local residents and tourists were interviewed during Ranakpur festival held in Ranakpur, Pali district, for the primary data and the secondary data were gathered through related research papers, journals, newspaper articles, official websites of Government of Tourism, United Nations World Tourism organisation and other tourism organisation. The paper concluded that the tourism practices when implemented with proper planning, assessing and due care is given to nature, culture and society then it becomes sustainable tourism practices. The contribution of tourism in rural development can be expressed not only in financial terms, but also in terms of jobs, contributions towards funding conservation, encouragement to the adoption of new working practices, and the injection of a new vitality into sometimes-weakened economies.

Keywords:

Rural Tourism, Ranakpur, Sustainable development

Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the most lucrative industry in last decade. Tourism growth potential can very well harnessed as a strategy for rural development programmes. India is a country where there are as many as 597,608 inhabited villages in India and among them 82,151 villages have a population size of less than 200. Nearly half of the rural population of India is residing in 115,080 villages with population more than 2,000 but less than 10,000 (Population Enumeration data, Census 2011 Data, Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs) and therefore tourism can be used to develop the rural areas in India too. Tourism as a progressive industry can create recreational uses for the natural and fabricated assets of a rural community and convert these into income producing sources. Tourism

can bring many benefits, including greater employment, increased social, economic and cultural prosperity and enhanced environmental conservation.

In India, the sector's direct contribution to GDP is expected to grow at 7.8% per annum during 2013-2023, in comparison with the world of average of 4.2%. The travel and tourism sector in India is estimated to create 78 jobs per USD 18,366 of investment compared to 45 in the manufacturing sector. Moreover, the contribution of visitor exports to total exports is estimated to increase at 5.7% per annum during 2013-2023 as compared to the world at of 4.0% (World Travel & Tourism Council, Economic Impact 2013, Aranca Research). However, these figures seem negligible when we compare the foreign tourist arrival of India in 2013 (6.97 million) with France (83 million), USA (69.8), Spain (60.7), China (55.7) [UNWTO Barometer April 2014 and Bureau of Immigration (BOI)]. International Tourist Receipts of India (18.4 Billion in US Dollars) with USA (139.6 Billion), Spain (60.4 Billion), France (56.1 Billion), and China (51.7 Billion) [UNWTO Barometer April 2014 and Ministry of Tourism (MOT)].

In the view of such fierce competition in global market, it becomes mandatory for a developing nation like India to strengthen its promotional as well as marketing efforts. Nevertheless, to keep the negative impact of tourism minimal and to contribute to sustainable rural development, its economic benefits must be availed giving due care to the

environment, social assets and cultural preservation of the area. The stresses of urban life styles have led to a 'counter-urbanization' syndrome. Therefore, this has led to growing interest of tourists in rural areas. Further, rural India has a lot to offer to the world. Rich in tradition, healthy environment and cultural craft, rural India can emerge as important tourist spot. Moreover, once tourism in rural areas finds its market then these areas can be developed sustainably.

Objectives of the Paper

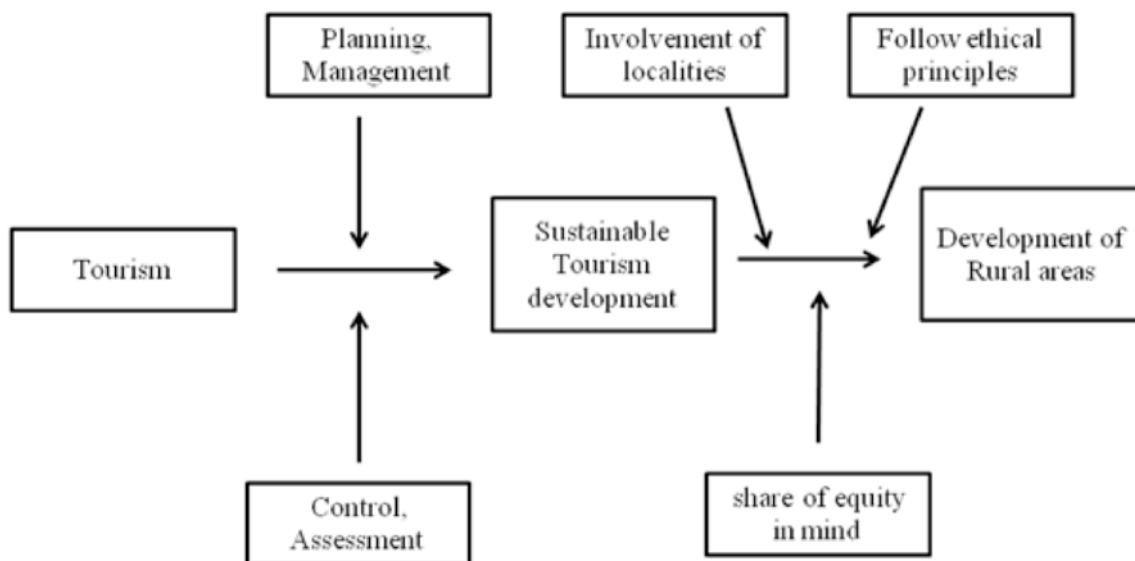
The main objectives of the paper are –

- 1) To clarify the concept of Rural Tourism, its significance and sustainable tourism development
- 2) To explore the contribution of tourism in rural areas through case study analysis of Ranakpur

Methodology

The research conducted for this study consists of several parts. Primary data was collected to support information collected by secondary data. Primary data was gathered through interview and observation methods. The respondents were comprised of Officials of Department of Tourism, Jodhpur and Jaipur, villagers and tourists. The village, Ranakpur was selected for case study. The secondary data was collected from books, journals, internet, magazines, and newspaper reports.

Research Model



Rural Tourism

The form of tourism, which displays the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby, benefits the local community economically as well as socially. According to Gannon, Rural Tourism covers 'a range of activities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their areas in order to generate extra income for their business.' In a similar way Lane (1994:14) defined Rural Tourism in tourism – experience related, product – related or geographic and demographic related. Consequently, rural tourism in its purest form should be –

- Located in rural areas
- Functionally rural – should be built upon natural world of heritage, culture, open space, small scale enterprises, 'traditional' societies and practices
- Sustainable – in the sense that its development should help to sustain the special rural characters of an area, and in the sense that its development should be sustainable in its use of resources.
- Traditional in character, growing slowly and organically and connected with local families
- Meshing with seasonal and local events
- Focus on outdoor activities
- Small establishments with mainly part time involvement in tourism by the local communities

In nutshell, rural tourism promotes a simple, hassle-free and deep-rooted life style. Therefore, rural tourism should be seen as a potential tool for conservation and sustainability rather than as an urbanizing and developmental tool. In rural tourism, tourists visit the homes of local people to understand their traditions, food habits, observe their life style, participate in their festivals, dances, rituals and other forms of cultural expressions. It also involves study, research and purchase of local products as well.

Significance of Rural Tourism:

Rural tourism's greatest potential benefit is its ability to generate money, which can translate in to numerous positive economic opportunities for locals and their communities. For locals the first benefit of tourism development is jobs both within the tourism sector and outside of it. Tourism development means more income and profits for the locals through tourism related business. The following points will highlight the significance of rural tourism in Indian context.

i) Tourism growth can be harnessed as a strategy for Rural Development. The concept of rural tourism is definitely useful for a country like India where majority of population

resides in villages.

ii) The trend of 'Urbanization' has led to falling income levels, lesser job opportunities in the rural areas. Rural tourism is one of the few activities, which can provide a solution to this problem.

iii) In many parts of India, the rural economy is in despair due to the increase in input costs and decrease in income. Many debt-ridden farmers are committing suicides. Efforts to promote rural tourism as a subsidiary occupation can arrest this trend with balanced regional development.

iv) This concept has the potentiality to attract investment from big industrial houses to open the small-scale enterprises in rural areas including valuable Foreign Direct Investment and ultimately increase in GDP of the country by creating value from rural opportunities.

Sustainable Tourism Development

UNWTO defines 'Sustainable Tourism' as 'Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities'. They further added that sustainable tourism should:

- 1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

- 2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

- 3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Further, Inskeep, 1991, has defined sustainable tourism as tourism which maintains its viability over time, sustainable tourism development can be viewed differently as meeting the needs of tourism and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. Sustainable tourism development should be:

- 1) Planned and managed for the protection of the natural environment for future generations.
- 2) Planned in an integrated manner with other economic sectors
- 3) Assessed on an ongoing basis to evaluate impacts and permit action to counter any negative effect.

Tourism has long been publicized as a 'renewable industry', that is to be greatly preferred over the traditional 'smoke

stack industries' of the industrializing age. However, it is recognized that tourism can endanger its own forms of degradation to the environment and to society unless it is carefully planned and managed. The concept of sustainable development is an approach by which efforts are made to balance the benefits or outputs of an industry with the investments and control is required to ensure that the industry can continue to exist without depleting or destroying the resources base on which it depends. In the tourism sector, this means caring of natural and built environments in a way that will ensure their continuity, viability and well-being.

According to World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987), put forwarded that sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In other words, sustainable development is careful and sensitive economic development without depleting natural and human resources needed by present and future generations. Tourism depends up on the utilisation of cultural, historical, natural and human resources in local environment as tourist attractions and destination. It is dependent on both on these resources and on a clean and non-polluted environment. In many rural areas therefore, new initiatives have begun to place more stress on the sustainable development of tourism resources.

The best chances of achieving sustainable tourism development come from developers of tourism. The most promising approach involves development, which is in low impact, small in scale and careful in progress, appropriate and sensitive to the local, natural and socio-cultural environment, and readily integrated into the exciting social and economic life of the community. This sort of activity enhances local involvement, participation in decision-making and local control in development.

Case Study: Rural Development at Ranakpur through Tourism Activities

The case study demonstrate the creation of rural cultural tourism industry accomplished by 1) Preserving and enhancing local small town character and history 2) creating complementary attractions and activities associated with lifestyles of the farm and small settlement in and around Ranakpur, and 3) developing marketing image based on collaborative and co-operative interactions among local people, government and stakeholders.

Ranakpur – an Introduction

Ranakpur is a village near Sadri town in Pali district of Rajasthan in western India. It is located between Jodhpur and Udaipur, in a valley on the western flank of the Aravali hills and is easily accessible from Udaipur. It is one of the

five holy centres of the Jain community. Ranakpur is famous for the Jain temple and is dedicated to Lord Adinatha. Built in 15th century A.D., these temples appear larger than life. Ranakpur is also known for a much older Sun Temple, which lies opposite the former. The place has immense natural beauty in it, surrounded by Aravali hills, settlement of dense woods, natural trails in nature-park and on hills. The economy is primarily agrarian. The place is full of rich cultural and religious traditions.

Tourism Initiatives in Ranakpur

Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, with their Jodhpur office and the local communities at Ranakpur took the initiative of pointing out the potential tourism spots in and around the village. They are in process of implementing a number of tourism projects by involving local communities at Sadri, Ghanerao, and Narlai too. The initiatives are presumed to yield positive results, and provide opportunities to the tourists to interact with the local communities in sharing with the local knowledge about primitive culture, traditions and biodiversity in the area. The initiatives will also throw open opportunities to the local youth, ethnic minorities and women who participate in operating the rural tourism projects on a community basis and sharing the benefits.

All the activities are directly or indirectly associated with tourism and provide opportunity to know about the environmental assets of the rural communities, local traditions, art forms, and their ethnic cuisine. Conscious efforts have been made to preserve the natural beauty and environment while creating infrastructure and facilities for tourists that fit in with the natural surroundings. Department of Tourism, Jodhpur is encouraging community based tourism in convergence with various stakeholders from the government and local communities. The forest department under its forest management program supports the initiative by providing opportunities for jungle walks, wildlife tourism, bird watching and trekking.

New tourism initiatives

The Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan and local communities have turned no stone unturned to develop the place at new tourists' destination. The main purpose behind their laborious efforts is to extend the stay period of any tourist up to 2 days, which is now only a half day. Currently, Ranakpur is not considered as tourists' point but an excursion point. Therefore, giving due care to the above objective the communities have taken certain new initiatives. Department of Tourism, Jodhpur in coordination with the forest department and the local communities identified new tourism destinations in and around Ranakpur, Sadri, Ghanerao, Desuri and Narlai. The operation model of tourism initiatives followed in Ranakpur is as follows:

- Tourism initiatives generally involve nature treks, wildlife tourism, mountaineering, nature tourism, village safari
- The village has abundant hotels including forest lodges and RTDC hotel (Shilpi) which will provide accommodation, security and food
- Transport to and from the destination will be provided by RSTRC/tourist buses.
- Nature Trails – The department of forest, Ranakpur, has developed the nature trek. The locals in two separate trails in Nature Park have spotted the pugmarks of a panther and two cubs. One can involve in wildlife tourism, trekking, bird watching activities in the nature park. The participation of tourists in Nature Park can open new revenue generation basis for local generation in addition to the Government.
- Fairs & Festivals – a) **Godwad Festival:** The first ever Godwad festival held in August 2011. The festival was publicised as yoga retreat and classical dance festival. Yoga has always identified as a means of healthy living and a heritage of India, which has in the recent past, found enormous favour with the foreign tourists, who are curious to learn about it. The concept was brought to the picturesque Aravali ranges, which has hitherto been unexplored, but has rich potential with rich historical and architectural values. b) **Ranakpur Festival:** Ranakpur festival held for the first time in 2011. It was 3 days festival. The festival was the beautiful amalgam of culture and craft. The festival had food and craft bazaar during both day and night time and cultural eve during evening time. Various artisans from Udaipur, Jodhpur, and Jaipur have gathered at one place before the beautiful Suryanayaran temple. The famous bhajan singer Subha Mudgal, Kathak dancer, and folk artists were contacted to give performance for successive days.
- Mountaineering-Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan will try its best to start an adventure activity, mountaineering, in Ranakpur on regular basis. Ranakpur has all the required characters to start this activity sky-scraping mounts, medical facilities and appropriate weather conditions. During Ranakpur festival, the activity was started on temporary basis for three days to see the prospects of the activity in Ranakpur. Surprisingly, the organisers received the overwhelming response from domestic as well as foreign tourists. For this reason, now the department is thinking to call a mountaineering institute for proper course and supervision to organise the activity.

Community Practices

- Camel Charisma – the first retail outlet has been opened on Ranakpur road, near Sadri (dist. Pali). It is run by the famous Raika community leader, Dayalibai and her son Maganlal. The store has all the camel items in stock: camel dung paper cards, camel milk soaps, camel wool mobile covers, assortment of rugs and fine shawls. Through the high influx of tourists to Ranakpur, the sale of these environmental friendly items will increase directly owing to the rural development.

- Tribal Dhurrie Udyog – two kilometres North of Ranakpur, one will pass through

Tribal Dhurrie Udyog, a traditional dhurrie carpet 'shop', where one can pick up beautifully crafted carpets. These carpets are made with the help of traditional wooden apparatus.

- Tourist Information Centre – Ranakpur, despite being a famous pilgrimage destination of Jain and Gujarati communities does not have a Tourist Information Centre (TIC). Local communities after understanding the importance of TIC had formed the local TIC at the main road to Ranakpur, from where everyone can get free information regarding site seeing places, transportation medium, accommodation facilities etc.
- Village Safari – village safari was added to the outdoor recreational activities by the local people. In a talk with a local, Mukesh, it was disclosed that they provide jeep facility to the tourists to undertake village safari. It's around two and a half hours activities in which tourists interact with local communities, their life styles and culture.

Enhancement of Sustainable Livelihood

The focus of various tourism initiatives is in, sustainable livelihoods & addressing issued of poverty eradication through community mobilization around income & employment generation activities related to tourism. It combines the cultural, craft and ecological dimensions of rural life and hold tremendous potential for income generation and enhancement of the basic quality of life in the rural areas.

The concept of such innovative tourism practices lie in two segments:

- 1) To create interest among the host communities who are the important part of society so that they take pride in their identity, culture and environment.
- 2) To attract visitors who are interested in and fascinated by nature, culture and artistic skills of tribal societies and who wish to enjoy and appreciate nature in all its forms

without abusing, manipulating and destroying it, thereby ensuring its preservation for future generations.

Economic benefits

The local communities derive many economic and social benefits from these tourism schemes both directly and indirectly. These benefits can be listed as:

- (a) Revenue to the local families involved in the tourism projects that are additional to their routine earnings.
- (b) Sale of camel products as camel dung paper cards, camel milk soaps, camel wool mobile covers, assortment of rugs and fine shawls made up of camel milk and wool.
- (c) Income from the charges of jeep safari.
- (d) Tips from visitors while performing folk dances.

Social benefits

The local communities also get social benefits out of interaction with the visitors. As tourism activity increases in the area, the local people exhibit their indigenous traditional skills and distribute these traditional knowledge systems to the visitors. The local tribes also get trained in interpreting the flora, especially the medicinal plants, as well as the habits and habitat of the wild fauna, traditional therapies and healing systems.

Marketing Initiatives

The Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan directly markets this tourism initiative through their state and district hierarchy. The destination is marketed through Department of Tourism, Govt. Of Rajasthan's websites and several others supporting materials, such as brochures, handout etc.

Conclusion

Village Ranakpur is a clear case of the potential for tourism to evolve into new revenue generating industry, providing considerable benefits for local people, and serving as a tool for sustainable development there and elsewhere where communities are located close to protected areas. However, the tourism practices at Ranakpur are of primitive stage but with the constant efforts of locals as well as Government, the village will be known as tourist destination point in coming few years.

Tourism practices when implemented with proper planning, assessing and due care is given to nature, culture and society then it becomes sustainable tourism practices. The contribution of tourism in rural development can be expressed not only in financial terms, but also in terms of jobs, contributions towards funding conservation, encouragement to the adoption of new working practices,

and the injection of a new vitality into sometimes-weakened economies.

Tourism initiatives could be a strategy for sustainable development for rural areas and also could be a tool for product differentiation for area those are at stagnation stage of the Destination Life Cycle model of Butler (1986). Further, for the continuous development on any area there should be proper balance between tourism stakeholders, government and local communities.

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