



## Sustainability: A Crucial Issue in The Development of Rural Tourism

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**ABSTRACT**

Rural tourism is an increasingly important activity for the Indian economy where almost 74% of the population resides in villages. Also, there is a wide scope of developing rural destinations as a tourism product, to develop the industry as a whole. Rural tourism development is complex, considering the wide variety of agents and resources to be jointly managed, also to understand the objectives relating to the development and conservation of resources in the rural tourist destination in a sustainable manner. The aim of this paper is to provide a better understanding about the role of locals, tourists and the tourism industry as a whole in achieving the sustainable development as a strategy for improving the development of the rural tourism sector.

The present paper highlights the importance and challenges of developing sustainable tourism in rural tourist destinations. The paper is descriptive in nature and based on reliable secondary source of information.

### KEYWORDS

rural tourism, tourism industry, sustainable development.

### Introduction:

Tourism, being one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries will place great stress on biologically diverse habitats and indigenous cultures, which are often used to support mass tourism. It should counter the threats which can be brought by unmanaged tourism. Tourists who promote sustainable tourism are sensitive to these dangers and seek to protect tourist destinations, and to protect tourism industry as a whole. Sustainable tourism creates a relationship between three parties including host areas and people, tourists and the tourism industry. Sustainable tourism helps to minimize tensions between the three parties due to the problems caused by the global tourism. It helps to reduce damages, both cultural and environmental, and induces future economic growth of the region. It maintains a balance between the potential growth and conservation needs of environment. The declining status of the primary sector in advanced economies, encountering the impacts of globalization, and the efforts of nations to gain a grip on the ladder of economic and social development, have brought increasing attention on rural tourism.

### Review of literature:

A significant literature worldwide can be seen on the development of sustainable rural tourism.

Over a similar time-span, tourism in rural areas has grown, partly because of market forces, seeking different kinds of holiday, and partly as a result of government initiatives (Lane, 1991a; Weiler & Hall, 1992).

In the shift from an "industrial to a "risk" society, the need for development to

be "sustainable" becomes paramount (Eagles 1992). Local communities become important in terms of actions taken to pretend their own natural environment, and also form part of wider alliances to preserve the environment globally (Richards & Hall, 2000).

Region based communities have become more interested to the concept of sustainability, which integrates environmental, economic, political, cultural and social considerations. In this

way there is recognition that to be sustainable, the preservation of the "natural" environment must be grounded in the communities and societies, which exploit and depend upon it

### (Richards & Hall, 2000).

"Income leakages, volatility, declining multiplier, low pay, imported labor and the conservatism of investors. The least favored circumstance in which to promote tourism is when the rural economy is already weak, since tourism will create highly unbalanced income and employment distributions. It is better supplement for a thriving and diverse economy than as a mainstay of rural development" (Butler and Clark, 1992, p. 175). Sustainable tourism is developed and managed together with the principles of sustainable development (Hunter and Green, 1995).

"The concept of sustainable development results from the observation that current generations are imposing too great a demand upon the natural environment to allow it to continue to reproduce and maintain itself at its previous level of stability" (Butler et al, 1998, p557).

Sustainable tourism has been applied to humans and, more specifically to tourists. It has been defined for this purpose as "the maximum number of people who can use a site without an unacceptable alteration in the physical environment and without an unacceptable decline in the quality of the experience gained by visitors" (Mathieson and Wall, 1982, p168).

### Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the importance of sustainable tourism in rural destinations.
2. To study the connection between rural and sustainable tourism by combining both.
3. To study the Current Challenges facing Rural Tourism.
4. To study the advantages of rural tourism.

### The Rural Tourism Concept:

The development of a strong platform for the concept of Rural Tourism is definitely useful for a nation like India, where almost 74% of the population resides in its 7 million villages.

Combination of different types of entertainment and educational experiences.

Integrated rural experience based on the interaction of rural activities, man-made facilities and rural accommodation.

Comprises a group of activities and services organized by the rural population which presents rural life, art, culture and heritage.

#### **Is completely based on principles of sustainability.**

International trends suggest that rural tourism is becoming an increasingly wider concept and that the requirements of domestic and global demand can be met with its integration only.

Strong relationship and integration with other tourism products, e.g. culture, nature and earth, sport and adventure, well-being and health.

India is a country of great contrasts. The clear images of these contrasts are visible when we go deep in the interiors. There is high prosperity increasing everyday in urban areas, so visible in the vehicles, malls, multiplexes and restaurants. All these advancements are still not visible in the rural areas. Here time stands still, the life pace is quite gentle, working conditions are hard enough and each day brings with a lot of challenges. Amidst these hardships locals welcome visitors with open heart. Visitors can make visits, spend time in natural environment, enjoy rural lifestyle, and live in a home stay in scenic settings.

#### **Research methodology**

The research conducted is descriptive in nature. The facts of this study are collected on the basis of different research papers, magazines and articles published on sustainable environment comprising of rural tourism and environmental issues on sustainability.

#### **Role of sustainable tourism in rural destinations:**

As against conventional tourism rural tourism differs in certain aspects like it is experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated. It is necessarily in natural environment and countryside. It meshes with seasonality and local events and is based on preservation of local heritage and culture and traditions. There is also a greater human touch. It is multi-faceted and may comprise of farm/agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism and also eco-tourism.

Sustainable tourism is quite important in the rural areas as their natural and cultural heritage is the most important attraction and treasure of these regions. Thus the conservation and development of natural sites and environment is a must for rural tourist destinations.

Sustainable tourism can reduce the negative impacts of tourism in rural areas in many different ways by the following ways:

Informing the tourists about the culture, politics, and economy of the communities visited, so as to get an insight about the do's and don'ts.

Supporting the integrity of local cultures by favoring businesses which conserve the local heritage and traditional customs.

Supporting local economies by purchasing local goods and participating in the local consumption of goods.

Conserving the resources by firstly finding out and then using the least amount of the non renewable resources.

#### **Advantages generated by rural tourism:**

Rural Tourism can be a key driving force for rural economies by:

Creating opportunities for new business areas.

Creating opportunities for employment especially for women and youth.

Developing synergies between agriculture and tourism.

Contributing to the preservation and conservation of natural, environmental and cultural heritage.

Providing the tourist with the experiential natural rural traditional environment.

#### **Current Challenges facing Rural Tourism:**

Rise in competition and challenges for product differentiation and diversification.

Need of improvement in local infrastructure.

Need for holistic rural tourism products and experiences which include activities, accommodation and man-made facilities.

High seasonality with low occupancy rates.

Lack of human built facilities, worldwide standards, quality guarantees synergies between agricultural sector and tourism, including local art & crafts.

Need to raise human resource awareness and capacity development for the destination.

Need for the organization and management of rural tourism sector.

#### **Suggestions:**

Government should alter and revise the visitors' carrying capacity of the destination, an area can sustainably tolerate without damaging the natural and cultural heritage.

A major investment in human resource and infrastructure should be made in order to develop the sector. Proper training facilities must be built to improve the standard of personnel dealing with rural tourism sector for future development.

Local development groups should be formed to cater to the needs at grassroots levels.

The marketing plans should be developed to serve the needs of special interest group people and those seeking authentic rural tourism along with sustainable tourism.

#### **Conclusion:**

Sustainability and tourism must go hand in hand. Better future for the generations to come is based on the concept of sustainability. In the context of sustainable rural tourism, government, locals, tourists and tourism industry all have to come in front to develop the concept. Local communities in rural parts benefit the most from sustainable tourism through economic development and job creation. Increase in revenue to an area act as a driving agent for the development supporting the needs of both the tourists and the local community. Thus tourism should become better as a result of the responsible tourism approach for the society and nation as a whole.

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