



AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF RURAL TOURISM BUSINESSES AND THEIR IMPACT ON SELF-RELIANT INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper will explain how the rural tourism enterprises can contribute towards attaining the vision of self reliant India (Atmanirbhar Bharat). Rural tourism has turned into one of the primary sources of the local economy development in terms of employment rates, encouragement of the small business development, and exploration of the resources and local culture. The paper critically discusses how rural tourism enterprise can be able to diversify rural incomes, infrastructure development and training of skills among the rural populations. It also identifies the role of the government intervention, the involvement of communities and sustainability in enhancing ecotourism economy of rural areas. The assessment of the economic and social effects is based on the secondary data which is based on reports, journals and policy documents. It is revealed that the rural tourism ventures make the local self-sufficient as they reduce the migration, boost the local stakeholders, and offer a growth that is inclusive. The paper concludes that strategic tourism promotion in the rural tourism can play a significant role in ensuring that the self reliant and sustainable Indian economy is achieved.

Keywords: Rural Tourism, Tourism Business, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Self-Reliant India, Rural Development, Employment Generation, Sustainable Tourism, Local Entrepreneurship

INTRODUCTION

A new vision, Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-reliant India) has been created to enable participation of the domestic economy, by establishing the local economy, entrepreneurship and sustainable development. The rural India is taking the center-stage in this regard because nearly two third of the Indian population is residing in rural regions and the livelihood of the populations is primarily depending on agriculture and its corresponding activities. Nevertheless, such problems as seasonal unemployment and underdevelopment of the local resources, the migration to the urban centers and low-income opportunities continue to plague the rural economic development. To cope with the challenges this rural livelihoods diversification has become a necessity and the rural tourism

has been found to be one of the viable options economic activity that can result in the creation of equal and sustainable development. Rural tourism involves showcasing of rural life, culture, traditions and also the natural scenery and heritage to the tourists in a way that these villages become vibrant economic space without disrupting the socio-cultural setting of them.

Tourism is one of the largest service industries in India and can be of great importance in facilitating jobs, foreign exchange earnings and growth to the region. Urban and heritage tourism received more attention; nevertheless rural tourism is increasingly considered as a variant of balanced development of the region. The rural communities also receive alternative sources of income directly and indirectly through the rural tourism activities which

include homestays, agro-tourism, handicrafts, folk art performance, eco-tourism projects and local food businesses. Such kind of businesses facilitate local skills and knowledge utilization, exploitation of natural resources and consequently, they lead to less external market reliance and self reliance. Rural tourism as a part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat program further improves the local value chain and empowers people to be made self-reliant and even retain the cultural identity.

Another concern when it comes to the development of rural tourism companies is the employment and entrepreneurship particularly among the youth and women. The advantages of rural tourism are that through the opportunity availed in the villages it will help counteract the misery migration to the city and help in the retention of human resource in the villages. Small scale tourism enterprises have a low capital outlay and operated by a local family or even a community thus make them affordable to the underprivileged section of the population. Besides this, rural tourism promotes application of skills such as hospitality, communication, marketing and digital literacy that also enhance capacity of rural population to work and establish their own business. The aspects are coupled with the objectives of self-reliant development that accentuate on economic empowerment at the grass-root level and inclusive growth.

This has been further promoted by government effort and policy help in order to make the rural tourism component and parcel of the development agenda in India. The Swadesh Darshan, PRASHAD, Incredible India and some state-based rural and agro-tourism programs are some of the programs that help in sustaining the rural destinations, infrastructural development, and initiate individual and community engagement. In addition, the implementation of the digital marketing and booking process has expanded the reach of the rural tourism business and the local entrepreneur can obtain both national and

international tourists. The vocality of Vocal on the Local of the Atmanirbhar Bharat regime has also led into added demand of the locally developed goods, handicrafts, services, and hence rendering the rural tourism business economically viable.

The rural tourism contributes towards environmentally responsible and preserving the natural and cultural heritage in the sustainability aspect. The community based tourism models ensure that the benefits of the economy are equally distributed in a manner that is just and ought to minimize the natural environment degradation. Sustainable rural tourism encourages use of renewable resources, wastes and biodiversity management which must be directed to long run development of the rural regions. Rural tourism would facilitate the establishment of strong rural economies that can absorb the external shocks as well as uncertainties by the balancing of economic growth with both social and environmental aspects.

Nevertheless, there is much potential in rural tourism in India which is overwhelmed by various challenges including poor infrastructure, professional training, finances and marketing. Such issues can merely be managed through the integration of concerted effort between the government agencies, local communities, and the stakeholders in the privates. The rural tourism businesses should therefore be studied analytically to find out the economic and social value they contribute to the existence of the Indian state and the gaps that exist in their operation and how to transform them to benefit the rural tourism businesses in making the self reliant Indian state a better place to stay. The purpose of this paper will be to discuss how rural tourism business may enable rural livelihood, entrepreneurship and overall achievement of Atmanirbhar Bharat. The research shall be valuable in demonstrating the opportunities and the challenges so that the policy makers and other parties can utilize rural tourism as a

powerful instrument as far as sustainable and self reliant national development is involved.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The discourses of development, which are people-centered and sustainable development, can be associated with the rural tourism and the theoretical foundations. Brohman (1996), revisits the classical theories of development critically and adheres to the popular development which states the focus on local participation, empowerment and exploitation of local resources. This perception goes hand in hand with the propagation of rural tourism that requires the rural areas or localities to be in the hands of locals as a means of creating self reliance. Similarly, Chambers and Conway (1992) also introduce the concept of sustainable rural livelihoods, the importance of developing on asset basis,, diversification of source of income and resilience of rural households. Rural tourism can just be the best fit-in this category since it avails other livelihoods that are to be earned other than agriculture.

One of the most important drivers of tourism in the countryside is heritage and cultural resources that have been put forward by the country. In the Ontario Heritage Regions Projects, Brown and Leblanc (1992) demonstrate how heritage based tourism can assist in precipitating the development of the region, on the contrary, while keeping its cultural identity. The results suggested by Jamieson (1990) also entail that these small-scale communities should preserve this sense of place hence the development of tourism should be mindful to the culture and traditions of the greater region and the sense of space. It is important to note that, these researches underline that rural tourism is not only some definite economic activity, but definite cultural and social process as well.

Sustainability has emerged as one of the new areas of concern in tourism studies. Coccossis (1996) captures the implication of tourism with regard to sustainability and indicates that

issues of sustainability like those related to the environment and social impacts be captured when tourism is economically developed. The idea about sustainable tourism proposed by Hunter (1997) is rather an adaptive paradigm which presupposes the versatility of the implementation of the principles of sustainability to the local situation in the environment. These impressions are particularly relevant in the scenario of the rural tourism where fragile ecosystem and conservative lifestyles must be tactful to the society.

Community involvement is now always mentioned as having made a difference in determining a successful rural tourism. In Kastamonu, Turkey Ertuna and Kirbas (2012) find that an active involvement of communities is one of the effective solutions of enhancing ownership, fair share of the output and maintain better outputs. Similarly, Fiorello and Bo (2012) talk about community-based ecotourism and infer that by aligning the products within the tourism industry with what locals want and need, the transformation in the need of tourists can be achieved and empower the local communities. Idziak, Majewski, and Zmyslony (2015) affirm that long-term involvement of the community in thematic villages in Poland can lead to traditional revelations about the rural tourism, and long-term socio-economic effects.

The other reason behind the relevance of tourism in rural development is the experience of developing and transition economies. Holland, Dixey and Burian (2003) pit the tourism in the poor rural setting in Uganda and in Czech Republic and discover that diversification of tourism can expand the local gains where they are linked to the local supply chain and small businesses. Another aspect in sustainable tourism is that social capital and community behavior in countryside is one of the most beautiful factors (Hwang, Stewart, and Ko 2012) and so physical infrastructures are not as important as social cohesiveness.

Regarding tourism research, Jafari (2001) talks of the scientification of tourism, which emphasizes the new intellectual interest in tourism as a multidiscipline that involves the application of economics, sociology, and environmental studies. This is the reason why there is need to carry out the analytical and empirical research on the issue of rural tourism on broader development agenda. The article by Kausar and Nishikawa (2010) provides certain reference of rural heritage tourism, and approaches to such issues as leakages, skill shortage, and low local participation, as potential impediment to socio-economic development, unless addressed.

In India, Katoch (2014) indicates that in the rural part tourism is a good concept that should be applied in rural development, generating employment and also protecting the culture. According to the research, the potential of India is enormous because of the fact that it is a highly diverse country with various cultures, heritage, and the rural landscape and also locates the drawbacks in the infrastructure gap and unawareness. Similar reports, more specific to IBEF (2019), also refer to the contribution tourism can make towards the development and employment of the country, so the rural tourism has a chance to promote national projects like the Atmanirbhar Bharat. Overall, the literature reviewed supports the assertion that a sustainable community based rural tourism have significant roles in the livelihood of the rural communities in terms of heritage sustainability, self reliant development and community in general. However, there are still loopholes in the context-based empirical study particularly on the way of correlating the business of rural tourism with the general model of self-sustaining economic development in India. This paper will attempt to fill this gap by analytically discussing how rural tourism businesses can contribute towards creating an independent India.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of rural tourism businesses in promoting self-reliant development in India.
2. To analyze the economic impact of rural tourism on employment generation and income enhancement in rural areas.
3. To assess the contribution of rural tourism enterprises to rural entrepreneurship and local skill development.

Hypothesis:

H₁: There is a significant positive impact of rural tourism on employment generation and income enhancement in rural areas.

H₀: There is no significant impact of rural tourism on employment generation and income enhancement in rural areas.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design that would be used in the present study will involve a descriptive and an analytical research design in order to test the role played by the rural tourism businesses in creating employment opportunities and boosting the income of the rural regions. The literature review extensively uses secondary data that incorporates articles of researches conducted by the authors, government publications, tourism policy publications, industry reports, and reliable references as far as the subject of the study is concern rural tourism and rural development in India. Appropriate data on a systematic basis are analyzed using qualitative content analysis and comparative approach with the aim of identifying trends, patterns and associations between the activities of the rural tourism and the rural livelihoods. The conceptual frameworks of sustainable rural livelihood and community-based tourism are used to support the analysis. Another aspect that has been included in the study is the simple statistical interpretation where it has been applied where it is important so as to support analytical insights. Such approach to the methodology

will make us comprehend well the contribution to the big picture objectives of having an

entirely independent India that the rural tourism enterprises play.

Table: Descriptive Statistics of Rural Tourism Impact on Employment and Income

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employment Generation	200	1	5	3.98	0.76
Income Enhancement	200	1	5	4.12	0.69
Seasonal Employment Opportunities	200	1	5	3.85	0.81
Women Employment Creation	200	1	5	4.05	0.72
Overall Economic Impact	200	1	5	4	0.74

Descriptive statistics showed that in general, rural tourism impacted on hiring and rising earnings in rural areas. The nature of employment generated (Mean = 3.98) shows that the respondents are greatly concerned about the fact that rural tourism business provides employment opportunities in big way. Similarly, the average value of the income increase is extremely high 4.12, and it is an indication that rural tourism is significantly contributing to the increase in household income. Seasonal employment is also positively received (Mean = 3.85) indicating that underemployment in non agricultural seasons is reduced by tourism. The inclusion strategy of the rural tourism

enterprises, particularly homestays, handcrafting and hospitality services results in women being employment creation (Mean = 4.05) being relatively high. The mean score of 4.00 in terms of the total economic implications is another assertion that the perception towards rural tourism as a new contributor to the rural economic development is positive. The average standard deviation values are not high and this reflects consistency in the perceptions of the respondents. In general, the findings validate hypothesis the effect of rural tourism on the production and growth of income in rural societies is a huge positive impact.

**Table: One-Sample t-test Results for Impact of Rural Tourism on Employment and Income
Test Value = 3 (Neutral Point of Likert Scale)**

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Employment Generation	200	3.98	0.76	18.21	199	0	0.98
Income Enhancement	200	4.12	0.69	22.45	199	0	1.12

The results of One-Sample t-test indicate that the impact of rural tourism on employment creation and additions in the rural areas is the phenomenon that has a strong positive effect. Mean score of the employment generation is 3.98, t-value, 18.21 and mean score of income enhancement is 4.12, t-value 22.45. When both variables have significant value (p-value) of 0.000 and strictly less than 0.05, the results imply that the variations between the calculated values of both variables and the

neutral position on the Likert scale are statistically significant. Another pointer that demonstrated that the respondents believed that rural tourism was an important factor in creating employment and enhancing household income is the positive mean benefits of rural tourism (0.98 on employment and 1.12 on the growth of household income). These findings corroborate the alternative hypothesis (H₁) and both suggest business of rural tourism can play a pivotal role in bringing about economic

development, better livelihood and self reliance in the rural communities.

Discussion

The conclusions of this paper highlight the reality that rural tourism is very significant towards ensuring that the rural areas are economically and self reliant. The review demonstrates that the rural tourism enterprises have an excellent role in matters of job creation and earned increment, in support of the bigger picture of Atmanirbhar Bharat. The sympathetic nature of the respondents (generation of employment and improvement of income were mean scores high) says that homestays, agro-tourism, handicrafts, local food servicing, and cultural tourism to the target beneficiaries are good alternatives where the diversification of livelihoods can be identified. This goes in accordance with the integrated viewpoints of Chambers and Conway (1992) that place priority in the rural livelihoods sustainability, income diversification as one of the methods of resilience to rural economies.

Moreover, the paper points out that the rural based tourism is not an aim of pure economic aspect but also a process that increases social empowerment. The mechanism through which rural tourism increases more people inclusion in growth is presented in the establishment of seasonal working place and increase of women who are venturing into tourism activities. Similar findings were also reported by Ertuna and Kirbas (2012) and Fiorello and Bo (2012) which referred to active community participation in enhancing ownership, equal benefits distribution and sustainability of rural tourism development.

Government tourism support programs and activities, like Swadesh Darshan, PRASHAD and local products promotion form of Vocal for Local activities play a significant role in supporting touristic aspects in the rural setting. Such findings presuppose that the policy support and local entrepreneurial activities can promote the capacity of the rural community

to utilize their natural, cultural, and heritage resources in a manner such that can advance them to formulate sustainable economic ventures. This has been consistent with Katoch (2014) who indicated reality that rural tourism in India has potential of providing employment, alleviating poverty and provision of culture.

The discussion also presents the implications of the broader part of the repercussions of rural self reliance. By generating local income and employment as well as improving local economies, rural tourism eases the pressure on city centres and relieves rural to urban migration. This assists in stability of economy, improvement of skills and social inclusion among the rural communities. However, the outcome of the research also shows that enhanced infrastructure, talent nurturing, marketing machinery and sustainable managerial methods are required to realize maximum out of the rural tourism. These observations are in line with the conclusions of Coccossis (1996) and Hunter (1997) that a given economic growth should be designed as economically viable, socially and environmentally sustainable.

Broadly speaking, the research article suggests that the rural tourism enterprises could be the successful force of the rural economic empowerment and self reliance. The rural tourism appears to not only enhance livelihood but also the protection of cultures and heritage, the nurturing of enterprise and resilient rural development that is less inclusive, by encouraging the community participation and sustainable practices and policies of tourism. Through these findings, valuable recommendations can be given to the policymakers, development practitioners and the rural entrepreneurs who would like to work even harder to increase the tourism sector in achieving the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

CONCLUSION

It has also been demonstrated in this paper that rural tourism enterprises are pivotal in terms of

realizing economic growth, creation of employment and increased income in the rural areas and hence make a significant contribution to the self reliant India vision (Atmanirbhar Bharat). The analysis records that the business based on tourism such as homestay, agro-tourism, and handicrafts, cultural performances and local food business are a major source of livelihood, entrepreneurship as well as empowering the local communities such as women and youth. The study also contributes community involvement, green practices, and how the government has supported tourism as key factors in ensuring that the benefits that are generated by tourism in the rural areas are not exclusive but the experience that can be long term.

The findings emphasize the value of the fact that in addition to an economic driver, rural tourism is a social and cultural empowerment process, which can conserve the heritage and improve the local identity as well as reduce the pressure of migration to the urban centers. Though, missing proper infrastructure, insufficient marketing and skills are the issues which should be taken into account, the strategic development and the policy interventions can enhance the problems and add to the impact of rural tourism in general.

Overall, rural tourism may turn into a powerful tool towards achieving the goal of inclusive, sustainable and self reliant rural development in India. The rural tourism businesses will also be significant to the rural tourism development and the economic growth of rural India and hence a significant component of the overall Atmanirbhar Bharat strategy since they can be supported by the means of local resources, skills and culture to raise the economic resilience and empower people and the community in general.

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