

RURAL TOURISM: AN INTEGRATED WAY OF DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN RAJASTHAN

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ABSTRACT

Tourism in rural areas is a new form of activity that can bring economic, environmental, and social benefits to the society. Emphasis on promoting rural tourism is however a comparatively recent phenomenon of the north. Rural tourism on the one hand helps the urban people in releasing their stress of city life in the midst of nature, and on the other hand, helps in the development of the rural areas through various ways, such as, income and employment generation of the rural people, creating social and cultural awareness among them, raising demand for physical infrastructure, ICT services as well as health and educational services, and above all establishes linkages between rural and urban areas. It has become an important tool for social inclusion in Rajasthan. Tourism is a key sector earning foreign exchange for Indian economy and contributing significantly to GDP. It can have positive and negative impacts on rural as well as urban communities. The government should encourage private enterprises to promote tourism in rural areas. The study is based on the secondary data available in books, journals, various websites. In the present article, a review of the sector's competitive strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats indicates that it has considerable growth potential. A separate SWOT analysis after examining the available resources could prove beneficial and is necessary to chalk out the target market groups. It helps in designing marketing strategies to promote rural tourism in Rajasthan. This paper describes the context and framework for assessing destination attractiveness of Rajasthan, an emerging tourism destination in a developing country. The analysis highlights the importance of specific destination attraction elements as core appeals of the destination. In addition, this paper gives a glance into the development and prospects of rural tourism in the state of Rajasthan and highlights various initiatives taken by the government for promoting tourism.

KEYWORDS: SWOT, GDP, ICT Services, Physical Infrastructure, Rural Tourism, MICE Tourism.

Introduction

Tourism denotes travel for any purpose like leisure, recreation, business or any other purpose. The economy of a country can be transformed through tourism. Tourism is known to be a major contributor to inclusive growth. Inclusive growth= equal opportunities + equal access to people (Governor of R.B.I, Mr. Raghuram Rajan). According to World Trade Organisation, tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their rural environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. Rural tourism is relatively a new concept in the field of tourism which can bring great economic and social benefits to the local people. Rural tourism

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is "a form of tourism which is located in rural areas is rural in its function and represents a complex pattern of rural environment, economy and history" (Lane, 1994). 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). Rural tourism will bring people of 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 opportunities for the people but it can also develop social, cultural and educational values. In Asia, especially in India, rural tourism in its true form is relatively new. The potential for rural tourism to be a major force in rural economic development resulting in poverty alleviation is yet to be realized to the fullest extent. Tourism growth potential can be harnessed as a strategy for Rural Development. The development of a strong platform around the concept of Rural Tourism is definitely useful for a country like India, where almost 74% of the population resides in its seven million villages. Rural Tourism is one of the few activities which can provide a solution to these problems. Besides, there are other factors which are shifting the trend towards rural tourism like increasing levels of awareness, growing interest in heritage and culture and improved accessibility, and environmental consciousness. In the developed countries, this has resulted in a new style of tourism of visiting village settings to experience and live a relaxed and healthy lifestyle.

Objectives

The main aim of the study is to measure the potential of rural tourism in Rajasthan. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To find out the impact of rural tourism to our society.
- To clearly identify the concept and role of rural tourism.
- To find out the ways and means how rural tourism can be an important instrument of socio-economic development and help in the upliftment of the society.
- To examine the ways through which awareness among the community can be raised regarding the role of rural tourism.
- To identify the challenges and opportunities in rural tourism.
- To identify the essential elements for development of rural tourism.

Methodology

The study is based on the secondary data and information available in various journals, websites, data and reports published by Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, Art & Culture-Government of India, Rajasthan Micro finance report, UNICEF India Report.

Rural Tourism in Rajasthan

Tourism in Rajasthan has been one of the major sectors for sustaining livelihoods in the state. Rajasthan is known for its heritage, rich culture, handicrafts and cuisine, which has been attracting international and domestic tourists every year. There are various famous destinations in the state. As the economic scenario in the country and abroad is changing due to various factors like increase in income and expenditure, it gives an opportunity for the state to attract more tourists. However, apart from the well known destinations existing in the state, there are other sites that can attract tourists that are situated at proximity to these major tourist destinations. The tourism scenario in the country is undergoing change, with such change there is a need for the state to promote lesser known destinations that offer rural, cultural and adventure experience. Rajasthan's age old forts, havelies, monuments, hotels have always attracted the tourists. Now tourism is no longer confined to the historical monuments or shopping in big cities, instead niche tourism is in demand now a days. Department of Tourism, Govt. of Rajasthan with its shift of focus on rural tourism has decided to provide the tourist a glimpse into everyday lives of villagers who carry a unique flavour of Rajasthan and make it a once-in-a-life-time experience. Since most societies have developed in villages, there is a strong link with these small communities where the way of life, more often than not, has remained unchanged. Fortunately, tourism has taken cognizance of this fact around the world, and the development of rural tourism, as a result, has ensured a more equitable distribution of tourism income, and provided a fillip to the sustenance or ethnic cultures and lifestyles. Nowhere else can be found the true village life depicting colourful way of living. These not only helps to sustain local ways of living, art, dance, music and culture, but also allows the local community to take pride in such practices. The tour operator / travel agents can combine these with camping tours or heritage tours with a feel of rural environment with the means of local transport, camel rides, campsites

stay, local cuisine, participating in dance, music, festivals. There are various small villages and rural towns all over Rajasthan which depict rural life in its true sense. Efforts are being made to develop rural tourism in an organized way in the areas around Udaipur, Jodhpur and in Shekhawati region.

Rural Tourism in Few of the Selected Destinations of Rajasthan

- **Banswara:** The district of Banswara is situated among the valleys of Aravalis representing the tribal culture in its original form. Most of the area is covered by bamboo clumps in the past because of which it was named as Banswara. In this area, the tribals are mostly Bhils but Mina, Damor, Charpotas tribals can also be seen in the district. There are various temples and historical places in Banswara to visit. The best time to take a tour to Banswara is during the Baneshwar Fair. This colourful tribal fair is celebrated at Baneshwar. Anand Sagar Lake and Dialab Lake are other two shimmering lakes of the place. "The tribal here are involved in various activities like making bamboo baskets, lamp shades, bamboo shelves, trays, and also marble carvings like deities, agarbatti stands. Some of the tribals are employed by the business community on marble carvings like decorative pieces, deities, and artistic items like thoranams" (SEEDS May. 2006). A tour to Banswara would provide an in depth knowledge of tribal culture and history.
- **Dungarpur:** Located 120 kms from Udaipur, Dungarpur is also known as the city of hills. The tribals are mostly Bhils and there are some sub tribes in the district. Dungarpur village attractions are the best to see the raw beauty of Rajasthan. Various places of attraction are Gaib Sagar Lake, Juna Mahal Palace, Shrinathji Shrine. Here one can try the rural flavour by trying a plate of fresh bread, baked on wood fire along with the traditional 'gatte ki sabzi', savour the taste of fresh butter churned out in front of you, and cherish the taste and the memories throughout your life. One can experience the Gair dance performed by the bhil tribes during the fair after holi in Bhuvaneshwar situated 9 kms from Dungarpur.
- **Udaipur:** Udaipur, city of lakes is situated in the south of Rajasthan has tribal population. Most of the tribals belong to the Bhils and their sub tribes. Shilpgram was set up to encourage handicrafts in the area to attract tourists at a distance of 3 kms from Udaipur on the banks of Fateh Sagar lake. It is a museum depicting the varieties of handi crafts and handlooms prepared in the district and also in other parts of the district. There are various huts in the museum representing various states. Among these, 2 huts represent the tribal farmer communities of the Bhils and Sehariyas. Jhalonkaguda is a village near Udaipur with scenic beauty and filled with temples and places of religious importance. The tourists can interact with the villagers and get to know the way of living of wheel potter, blacksmiths, farmers and dairymen. One can also experience the craft created by the porters and blacksmiths.
- **Sirohi:** There are mainly two types of tribes found in the Sirohi District: Bhils & Grasiya. The life of the tribal people is full of traditions and social customs from birth to death. The source of entertainment and amusement for the people of Sirohi are their folk dance and folk music. The Gacchi Ghodi dance is very attractive dance performed by the tribal people. There are various fairs and festivals celebrated by the tribal communities.

Impact of Rural Tourism in Our Society

Rural tourism can bring various benefits such as foreign exchange, employment, higher government revenues and the transformation of agriculture into a modern service industry, it can also damage many indigenous societies.

- **Economic Impact**
 - **Positive Economic Impact:** It will create employment for the rural people and generate income for them. The villagers will be able to provide better food and education for their children.
 - * Create employment especially for the rural youth.
 - * Income level will rise.
 - * Generate foreign exchange.
 - * Demand for other goods and services will increase.
 - * Improvement in the public services.
 - * Generate revenue of the government.
 - * Modernization of agriculture and other rural activities.
 - * Local small businessman will be benefited.

- **Negative Economic Impact:** The facilities provider and investors such as resorts, hotels and tour operators will be mainly from cities; who will take away most of the profits. Most the products consume will be imported from outside, not produced locally. The economic benefits may go to urban communities and entrepreneurs. There is a chance that limited employment will be generated for the rural people due to their limited knowledge and exposure.
 - * The rural people can be exploited.
 - * The rural people have to depend on the urban entrepreneur, so the benefit may not reach them.
 - * The urban investor will take away most of the profit.
 - * Food, drink and necessary products will be imported from outside and not produced locally.
 - * Rural people may be under paid.
 - * Local artisan may not get benefited.
 - * Due to competition the local handicraft and farm produce products will be sold at lower price.
 - * Increase in the price of local agro products.

- **Environment Impact**

The rural people can learn to develop the healthy environment with proper sanitation, roads, electricity, telecommunication etc for better living on one side on other side the tourist can exploit natural resources and have a heavy impact on the environment.

- **Positive Environment Impact:** The rural people learn from the visitors how to lead a healthy and hygienic life.
 - * Help in create and maintain the natural park.
 - * Learn the importance of preservation of natural resources.
 - * They will learn to use modern tools and technology.
 - * They will learn to preserve the natural habitats, bio-diversity historical monuments.
- **Negative Environment Impact:** The visitors may overexploit natural resources and it can have a heavy impact on the environment. In addition, rural tourism will require infrastructure, transportation and other facilities which can cause environmental distortion.
 - * Development of infrastructure may distort the natural beauty.
 - * Huge number of visitors may exploit the natural resources
 - * Hunting can affect the wild life population.
 - * Natural ecology will be disturbed.

- **Socio-Cultural Impact**

Since the income from tourism is much higher than what rural people can earn from agriculture, tourism has been accepted willingly in many rural areas in spite of its negative effects. It is widely recognized that such negative impacts on rural communities have become stronger, and that rural tourism must be modified to give rural people its benefits. Poorly planned tourism can mean that villages are invaded by foreign visitors with different values, disrupting rural culture. The higher standards of living in urban tourist destinations have caused emigration from nearby rural neighbours, resulting in changes in the demographic structure and possible culture shock. Furthermore, employment and education can have a negative social impact. The younger generation may gain better prestige than their elders as they gain experience, jobs and money from tourism.

- **Positive Socio-Cultural Impact:** The rural people will learn the modern culture. They will learn to come out of their traditional values and beliefs. They will adopt different practice of modern society.
 - * Education and health of the rural community will improve.
 - * Provide higher standard of living or the rural people.
 - * Cultural understanding through fairs and festivals.
 - * Exchange of cultural beneficial for both.

- * Foreign tourist will bring cultural change faster.
- * Reduce migration of rural people to urban areas.
- * Market for agro products and handicrafts will develop in rural areas farmers and artisans will develop a direct contact with the customers.
- **Negative Socio-Cultural Impact:** Poorly planned tourism can affect the villagers. It may affect the traditional and cultural practices, agriculture and other allied activities.
 - * Can create disharmony in development.
 - * Modernization can affect their traditional values and cultural practices.
 - * Traditional products will be replaced by modern products.
 - * Rural people may shift from traditional business to tourism activities.
 - * Decline in participation in rural traditional and cultural practices follows.

Challenges in Rural Tourism

The major challenges are need to preserve the environment and natural resources, the need for education, proper understanding for both tourists and local people, and the need to generate a democratic movement which helps people at all levels to participate in tourism development. These are some major challenges are:

- Lack of basic education
- Language problems
- Legislation problem
- Insufficient financial support
- Lack of trained manpower
- Underdeveloped people
- Lack of proper physical communications
- Business planning skills
- Trained tourist guide
- Communications skills

Importance of Rural Tourism for Tribals

Rural tourism can benefit the local / tribal community as well as can be of great interest for the visitors. It can benefit tribal people in many ways:

- Financial benefits to the tribals.
- Revitalizing the community's traditional resources.
- Social integration between tourists and the rural community.
- An alternative avenue of tourism.
- Personal income will be enhanced by getting involved in tourism related activities.
- Literacy rate of the tribals would increase as demand for education will increase.
- Proper training would enhance skills of the tribals and build self confidence in them.
- Increase in prestige and recognition of the tribal community.
- There would be better relationship among the tribal community.

Initiative by the Government and NGO's for the Development of Rural Tourism

- Creating awareness about the development programmes for the local artisans After going through the information provided, it is seen that most of the rural people are not aware of the development programmes initiated by the government. Although the funds for various developmental schemes are released by the central government, it is the duty of the state government to make local community aware of the various developmental programmes made for them. According to a study, "Training programmes can raise the skill base of the industry and thereby contribute to the delivery of quality tourist experiences" (Study on 20 Year Perspective plan for sustainable Tourism in Rajasthan).
- Conducting Social activities in the rural areas An attempt towards reaching the remote areas is made to update the villagers as they are away from common city living. Various activities are conducted like health awareness, village civic sense, labour problems etc.

- Special programmes in rural areas Tours are conducted for the tourists in the rural areas who wish to experience rural lifestyle. Community participation plays an important role. "Grameen Heritage Tourism" is an attempt towards rural tourism which also promotes the local economy.
- Jatan Sansthan, a non profit organisation in Udaipur working with the rural population of the state encouraging rural rajasthani youth in achieving literacy, learning various skills, to have a strong hold in the community by participating in local policy formulation and decision making. Another non profit organisation is in Southern Rajasthan which works with marginalized communities. Human Employment Ability Development Society encourages micro enterprises through various capacity building workshops, skill building activities and other activities.

SWOT Analysis of Rural Region on Tourism Potential Scale

Strength	Weakness
<p>Resources: Quality and preserved natural environment Numerous and quality built heritage hotels and accommodation which spread in the whole region.</p> <p>Tourism Practices and Products: Wide Range of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurants and fast food centers • Good quality of hotels/ Resorts • Good products made by local craftsmen • Numerous possibilities of traditional activities. 	<p>Resources: Presence of too many forests that enclose the region cultural heritage too diffuse in the region History/culture of the region is not enough exploited.</p> <p>Tourism practices and products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of local and rural food shops • Lack of infrastructural development • No big hotel name to attract tourist groups • Lack of three and four-star hotels • Presence of low quality of the hotels • Occupancy rates are not very high for hotels • Quality of the camping sites has to be improved.
Opportunity	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing motivation for rural tourism • Trend toward a classification of the accommodations. 	<p>Disappearance of the cultural heritage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living heritage and built heritage if it is not preserved. • Low financial helps from the governments to renovate heritage buildings.

Conclusion

Tourism plays an increasingly important role in the development of communities. The benefits of tourism include both tangible (e.g. job creation, state and local tax revenue, etc.) and less tangible (e.g. social structure, quality-of-life, etc.) community effects. In addition, tourism can, and often does, result in less desirable effects on the economic, social, and environmental fabrics of communities. These benefits and costs provide ample opportunity for creative public policy debate. But still we can see that most of the rural areas are Untapped. An important tool to reach out to the rural audience is through effective communication. A rural consumer is brand loyal and understands symbols better. Rural tourism in the coming days will emerge as an important tool for employment generation, poverty alleviation, development of rural areas, and advancement of tribal communities. The tribals do not have to wander from one place to another for sustaining their livelihood. They can involve in the activities related to tourism in their area which would not only bring tourist to their area but also benefit them socio-economically. The government must recognize the importance of rural tourism and thus promote the tribes and their culture which can be a tourism product. Various fairs and festivals are held in the tribal areas of Dungarpur, Banswara and Udaipur which can promote rural tourism as well as benefit the tribals. As these tribals have their beautiful culture and traditions in the form of dance, dress etc which they can be promoted. Local artisans and handicraftsmen can exhibit their products in such fairs which would help them to earn good amount of money as well as keep their traditional handicrafts alive or we can say this would help in the revitalization of traditional arts and crafts. The developmental programmes for tribal women have provided opportunities for women to make decisions, undertake initiatives which have made them to develop self esteem. Government and non profit organizations must take initiative to conduct various training programmes for the

tribal community where they are trained on various aspects. It can help inflow to resources from urban to the rural economy. It can prevent migration of rural people to urban. Both short-term and long-term planning, implementing and monitoring are vital in avoiding damage to rural areas. Environmental management, local involvement, sound legislation, sustainable marketing, and realistic planning are crucial for development of rural tourism. The government should promote rural tourism to ensure sustainable economic development and positive social change. Government should try to generate data for decision-making bodies investing for developing the human resources, create adequate facilities and suitable infrastructure like accommodation, roads, airport facilities, rail facilities, local transport, communication links and other essential amenities become essential for development of rural tourism. Tourism sector has made impressive strides in past two decades of trade reforms regime and its role in Indian economy is increasing. Government has initiated different schemes and policy measures to promote this sector and to earn foreign receipts. There are many emerging tourism areas such as Eco Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Agri-Tourism, Healthcare Tourism, MICE Tourism, Cruise Tourism and Adventure Tourism which can attract FDI and contribute for Inclusive growth.

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