

Rural Tourism: Prospects and Challenges in Indian Context

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to throw light on the various aspects of Rural Tourism in the Indian context. India has variety of tourism types to offer to offer. Sustainability being the most talked about element has to be taken into consideration during the development of tourism related activities in a particular area. Indian government is constantly striving to project its rural tourism destination in both domestic as well as international market.

Keywords: Rural tourism, culture, nature and sustainability

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INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism is a type of tourism that takes place in rural areas. It is a broad term that encompasses a variety of activities. Rural areas often have a rich history and culture that is worth exploring. Tourists can visit historical sites, such as castles, museums, and churches, or they can participate in cultural activities, such as festivals, concerts, and dance performances. Rural areas are often surrounded by natural beauty, such as mountains, forests, lakes, and rivers. Tourists can enjoy a variety of outdoor activities, such as hiking, biking, fishing, camping, and swimming. Learning about local culture and traditions: Rural areas often have their own unique culture and traditions. Tourists can learn about these cultures by visiting local villages, meeting local people, and participating in traditional activities. Supporting local businesses: Rural tourism can help to support local businesses, such as farms, restaurants, and shops. By choosing to stay in rural areas and patronize local businesses, tourists can help to boost the local economy.

Rural tourism can offer a number of benefits to both tourists and local communities. For tourists, rural tourism can provide a chance to experience a different way of life, learn about local culture and history, and enjoy the peace and quiet of the countryside. For local communities, rural tourism can provide a source of income, create jobs, and help to preserve the environment.

Challenges in Developing Rural Tourism and Ways to overcome Them

There are a number of challenges that rural tourism faces. One challenge is the lack of infrastructure in many rural areas. This can make it difficult for tourists to get to and from rural destinations, and it can also make it difficult for local businesses to provide the services that tourists need.

Another challenge is the need to manage tourism in a way that does not damage the environment or disrupt the lives of local residents.

Despite the challenges, rural tourism is a growing industry. It has the potential to benefit both tourists and local communities, and it can play a role in sustainable development.

- Reduce the environmental impact of tourism: This can be done by using sustainable transportation, reducing energy consumption, and minimizing waste.
- Benefit local communities: This can be done by providing jobs, generating income, and preserving culture and heritage.
- Be economically viable: This can be done by attracting tourists and providing them with high-quality experiences.
- Be socially responsible: This can be done by respecting the rights of all stakeholders, including tourists, local communities, and businesses.
- Lack of infrastructure: Many rural areas in India lack basic infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, and water. This makes it difficult to attract tourists to these areas.
- Lack of awareness: Many people in India are not aware of the potential of rural tourism. There is a need to raise awareness about rural tourism and its benefits.
- Lack of investment: There is a lack of investment in rural tourism. This is due to the perceived risks and challenges of investing in this sector.

Categories of Rural Tourism in India

India has a vast and diverse rural landscape, with a wide range of attractions for tourists. Rural tourism in India can be broadly classified into the following categories:

- Nature-based tourism: This includes activities such as trekking, camping, birdwatching, and wildlife safaris. India is home to a wide variety of ecosystems, from the snow-capped Himalayas to the tropical rainforests of the Andaman Islands. There are also many national parks and wildlife sanctuaries where tourists can see a variety of animals, including tigers, elephants, and rhinos.
- Ecotourism: This type of tourism focuses on sustainable travel that minimizes the impact on the environment. Ecotourism activities in India can include hiking, mountain biking, and river rafting. There are also many homestays and community-run tourism projects that allow tourists to experience rural life first hand.
- Cultural tourism: This type of tourism focuses on exploring the history, culture, and traditions of a particular region. India has a rich and diverse culture, with a wide variety of languages, religions, and customs. There are many historical monuments, temples, and museums to visit in rural areas. Tourists can also participate in traditional festivals and events, and learn about the local way of life.
- Rural farm tourism: This type of tourism involves staying on a working farm and learning about rural life. Tourists can participate in activities such as farming, cooking, and handicrafts. There are many farm stays and agritourism projects in India that offer this type of experience.

Rural tourism has the potential to bring economic benefits to rural communities in India. It can create jobs, generate income, and promote sustainable development. However, there are a number of challenges that need to be addressed in order to develop rural tourism in India. These challenges include:

There is a growing interest in rural tourism in India. The government is taking steps to promote rural tourism, and there are a number of private sector initiatives underway. With the right support, rural tourism has the potential to become a major source of income and employment for rural communities in India.

Aspects of Rural Tourism in India

- Rural tourism is a type of tourism that focuses on the natural and cultural attractions of rural areas.
- Activities that are popular in rural tourism include hiking, biking, fishing, camping, and visiting historical sites.
- Rural tourism can be a great way to experience a new culture and way of life. It can also be a more affordable and less crowded alternative to traditional tourism destinations.
- When planning a rural tourism trip, it is important to do your research and book your accommodations in advance. Many rural areas have limited tourism infrastructure, so it is important to be prepared.
- Rural tourism can be a great way to support local economies and communities. When you choose to travel to rural areas, you are helping to create jobs and boost the local economy.

Benefits of rural tourism

- It is a great way to experience nature. Rural areas are often home to stunning natural beauty, from mountains and forests to beaches and rivers. Rural tourism gives you the chance to get out and explore the natural world.
- It is a great way to learn about local culture. Rural areas often have a rich culture and history that is worth exploring. Rural tourism gives you the chance to meet local people, learn about their traditions, and experience their way of life.
- It is a great way to relax and de-stress. Rural areas are often quieter and less crowded than urban areas, which can be a great way to relax and de-stress. Rural tourism can also be a great way to get some exercise and fresh air.
- It is a great way to support local economies. When you choose to travel to rural areas, you are helping to support local businesses and communities. Rural tourism can help to create jobs, boost the local economy, and preserve the local way of life.

Role of Indian Government in Promoting Rural Tourism

The Indian government has a number of policies in place to promote rural tourism. These policies include:

- The National Tourism Policy 2002: This policy identifies rural tourism as a priority sector and outlines a number of initiatives to promote it, including:
 - Developing rural tourism infrastructure, such as roads, accommodation, and attractions
 - Providing training and capacity building for rural tourism operators
 - Promoting rural tourism through marketing and publicity campaigns
- The Swadesh Darshan Scheme: This scheme provides financial assistance to states and union territories for developing and promoting tourism products and destinations, including rural tourism.
- The PRASHAD Scheme: This scheme provides financial assistance to states and union territories for developing and promoting rural tourism infrastructure, such as roads, accommodation, and attractions.
- The CBSP Scheme: This scheme provides financial assistance to states and union territories for developing and promoting community-based tourism, which is a type of tourism that benefits local communities.

The Indian government's policies on rural tourism are designed to promote economic development, create jobs, and preserve rural culture and heritage. In addition to these policies, the Indian government also works with the private sector to promote rural tourism. The government has partnered with tour operators, hotels, and other businesses to develop and market rural tourism products and destinations. The Indian government's efforts to promote rural tourism have been successful. Rural tourism is a growing sector of the Indian tourism industry, and it is expected to continue to grow in the future.

Benefits of Rural Tourism for the Indian Government

- Economic development: Rural tourism can help to boost the local economy by creating jobs, generating income, and attracting investment.

- Job creation: Rural tourism can create jobs in a variety of sectors, including hospitality, agriculture, and transportation.
- Income generation: Rural tourism can generate income for local businesses, communities, and governments.
- Investment attraction: Rural tourism can attract investment from the private sector, which can help to develop and improve rural infrastructure.
- Preservation of culture and heritage: Rural tourism can help to preserve local culture and heritage by providing a way for tourists to learn about and experience it.

The Indian government's policies on rural tourism are a positive development for the country. Rural tourism has the potential to bring many benefits to India, including economic development, job creation, income generation, investment attraction, and preservation of culture and heritage.

Rural Tourism an Answer to Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism is a type of tourism that takes into account the environmental, economic, and social impacts of tourism. It aims to minimize the negative impacts of tourism and maximize the positive ones.

- Protect the environment: Sustainable tourism should minimize its impact on the environment. This includes reducing pollution, conserving natural resources, and protecting wildlife.
- Benefit local communities: Sustainable tourism should benefit local communities. This includes providing jobs, generating income, and preserving culture and heritage.
- Be economically viable: Sustainable tourism should be economically viable. This means that it should be able to generate enough revenue to cover its costs and make a profit.
- Be socially responsible: Sustainable tourism should be socially responsible. This means that it should respect the rights of all stakeholders, including tourists, local communities, and businesses.
- Increased awareness of environmental issues: People are becoming more aware of the environmental impact of tourism. They are looking for ways to travel that are less harmful to the environment.
- Demand for authentic experiences: Tourists are looking for authentic experiences that allow them to connect with local cultures and communities. Sustainable tourism can provide these experiences.
- Government support: Many governments are supporting sustainable tourism initiatives. They recognize that sustainable tourism can help to protect the environment, create jobs, and boost the economy.
- Choose sustainable tourism operators: When you travel, choose operators that are committed to sustainable tourism. These operators will have policies in place to minimize their impact on the environment and benefit local communities.
- Support sustainable tourism initiatives: There are many sustainable tourism initiatives that need support. You can support these initiatives by donating money, volunteering your time, or spreading the word.

- Travel responsibly: When you travel, be mindful of your impact on the environment and local communities. Follow the rules, respect local customs, and be a good steward of the environment.

Sustainable tourism is a win-win for everyone. It is good for the environment, good for local communities, and good for the tourism industry. By promoting sustainable tourism, we can help to protect the environment, create jobs, and boost the economy.

Ways in which rural tourism can be made more sustainable:

- Reduce the environmental impact of tourism: This can be done by using sustainable transportation, reducing energy consumption, and minimizing waste.
- Benefit local communities: This can be done by providing jobs, generating income, and preserving culture and heritage.
- Be economically viable: This can be done by attracting tourists and providing them with high-quality experiences.
- Be socially responsible: This can be done by respecting the rights of all stakeholders, including tourists, local communities, and businesses.

Conclusion

The concept of rural tourism has evolved over time. In the early days, rural tourism was seen as a way to provide economic opportunities for rural communities. It was often associated with activities such as farming, fishing, and hunting. However, in recent years, rural tourism has come to be seen as a way to promote sustainable development and protect the environment.

There are a number of factors that have contributed to the evolution of rural tourism. One factor is the growing interest in ecotourism. Ecotourism is a type of tourism that focuses on nature-based activities and sustainable practices. Another factor is the increasing popularity of farm stays and agritourism. Farm stays allow visitors to experience the day-to-day life of a farmer, while agritourism includes activities such as picking fruit, milking cows, and feeding animals.

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