

Sustainable regional development through rural tourism in Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

Jammu and Kashmir is a State in India that has emerged from one and a half decades of long armed insurgency. Naturally, this political turmoil has negatively impacted the state's economy. The industrial sector of the state is not well developed and tourism is one of the main sources of revenue. However, mainstream tourism does not seem to be progressing which demands other alternatives be sought. One of the best possible alternatives could be rural tourism development. Rural development is increasingly associated with entrepreneurship, which is considered as a central force of economic growth and development. Tourism's role in rural development is basically an economic one and can help to sustain and improve the quality of life in rural areas. Tourism involves mostly small enterprises, so the role of tourism entrepreneurs can be very important for the development of rural tourism. Of all the economic sectors, tourism is perhaps the one in which the greatest degree of involvement is needed by the entrepreneurial sector in formulating sustainable development strategies. Rural tourism entrepreneurship has gained increasing importance as it is seen as a major driving force behind rural tourism. This study aims to highlight the importance and potential of rural tourism in a Kashmir region where about 73 percent of the population live in rural areas. Kashmir has a lot to offer tourists, such as its scenic beauty, a kaleidoscope of traditions, a variety of cultures and an array of opportunities to explore the outdoors through sporting and adventure activities. This study attempts to prove that, if managed and organized in a proper way, rural tourism could bring the economic prosperity back to the people of the Kashmir region after recent disasters and crises.

Key Words: Rural tourism, entrepreneurship, regional development, Kashmir.



Source: <http://tourismupdates.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/1362217251Jammu-and-Kashmir.jpg>

Introduction

Tourism has the potential to impact a destination's culture, economy and environment. These impacts can be both positive and negative. The positive impacts include revenue generation, job creation, decreased rural emigration, and incentive to preserve wildlife, history and culture of the destination. However, the negative impacts of tourism are affecting the future of tourism destinations due to the deterioration of the natural environment, depletion of natural resources, waste and pollution, and disruption of local lifestyles and customs. Tourism managed poorly can result in a phenomenon known as "tourism destroys tourism". Mass tourism is proving to be not only an environmentally unsustainable activity, but also an economic and social activity with damaging impacts on local social and cultural assets. The environment, being the major source of tourist products, should be protected in order to have further growth of tourism and economic development in the future.

The trends observed in the tourism industry in recent years indicate an increased demand for nature-related and rural tourism activities. It is simple to define rural tourism as "*tourism that takes place in the countryside*" but this definition does not include the complexity of the activities and the different forms and meanings developed in different countries, as well as the number of protagonists participating in rural tourism (Lane, 1993). According to Lane (1994), rural tourism has problems, since there is not a systematic source of data in rural tourism and neither the World Tourism Organization (WTO) nor the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have appropriate measures in place to promote it. Nevertheless, Opperman (1996) suggested that the field of rural tourism still lacks a comprehensive body of knowledge and theoretical framework. He argued that this is

caused by definitional problems concerning what exactly constitutes rural tourism and the lack of data sources on small rural enterprises, which make rural tourism much less obvious and signifies much more tedious work ahead for researchers in their quest for data on this topic (Butler et al., 1998:224).

There is still a need to differentiate rural tourism from other forms of tourism that exist. Even if there is ambiguity between urban and rural tourism, and it is difficult to speak about strictly rural characteristics, people still shape images and views of the countryside that differ from those of the town. The social representations of rural areas by the media and the perceptions of individuals for the countryside create a demand for these spaces and shape the distinctive form of rural tourism (Bramwell, 1994).

Looking at the supply side, rural tourism can be understood in three different ways:

- a) Rural tourism is perceived as "working class tourism". It depicts images of a poor man's holiday, including stays with a local resident in a rural area.
- b) Rural tourism is associated with a particular form of accommodation, as well as with the option of undertaking specific and usually nature based activities.
- c) Rural tourism is defined as a type of holiday where the place of stay is on a farm, and the organized activities are connected with and around the farm. In this case, rural tourism is limited to farm tourism or Agri-tourism (Grefe, 1994).

According to a broader definition, given by Gannon (1994: 5): "Rural tourism includes a range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their area in order to generate extra income for their businesses". According to a European Union definition, "rural tourism is a vast concept covering other services besides accommodation

such as events, festivities, outdoor recreation, production and sale of handicrafts and agricultural products". (Commission of the European Communities, 1987: 218). Nevertheless, according to Murdoch (1993), not all tourism in rural areas can be considered to be strictly "rural". Therefore, because of the complex nature of tourism as well as that of rural areas there is a considerable ambiguity as to what constitutes rural tourism. Indisputably there arises a need for a more unequivocal definition of rural tourism (Lane, 1993).

Benefits of rural tourism

Rural tourism is beneficial not only to the local people, but also for the tourists and the government. Some of the important benefits of rural tourism are listed below:

- Rural tourism is obviously a small scale industry so it cannot create jobs like the government itself, but it can help in the job retention. It especially helps in increasing the flow of retailing, transportation, hospitality, medical care, farming and fishing.
- It creates jobs for the local people in tourism related places like hotels, catering, retailing, transportation, communication and heritage interpretation.
- It gives opportunity to the youth of the place to get involved in tourism related activities.
- It helps the new businesses boom. Handicraft business and local food business come in, demand when the flow of tourists increases.
- It helps in the preservation of rural culture and heritage, because when people understand that their culture and heritage are the source of their prosperity, they are inspired to preserve their culture and heritage.
- Tourism brings money and that money could be used in the maintenance of the place.

- The environment is also improved because, like in our daily life, when we are expecting visitors, we clean the house as much as we can; local people try to keep their village clean for the tourists.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development was first defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development, in the Brundtland Report of 1987 as "development, which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Five basic principles were identified: the idea of holistic planning and strategy making; the importance of preserving essential ecological processes; the need to protect both human heritage and biodiversity; to develop in such a way that productivity can be sustained over the long term for future generations; achieving a better balance of fairness and opportunities between nations. The pursuit of sustainable development is much more than just minimizing the environmental impacts of economic development. It calls upon a new approach to development planning whereby the full costs and benefits of these three elements are taken into account and fully integrated into the planning process from the start. Sustained economic growth and quality of life is dependent upon the quality of the environment. Whilst economic growth itself leads to increased production and consumption, more efficient use of environmental resources and a reduced reliance on waste and emissions is required. While economic development and social prosperity have traditionally been the focus of development planning, the challenge now is to integrate these closely with environmental enhancement and protection.

Good management of rural tourism can make a positive contribution in supporting the rural economy and community and become one of the main forces influencing the direction of regional development.

However, to achieve a region's true potential, care needs to be taken to conserve the rural heritage, biodiversity, landscapes and local culture. Therefore the objective of the present research is to analyze the potential of rural tourism in Kashmir; to determine the role of rural tourism for sustainable regional development of Kashmir region and to provide suggestions and recommendation to develop the of Rural Tourism in Kashmir.

Literature Review

Rural tourism is not altogether a new phenomenon. Interest in the countryside recreation started to grow towards the end of the eighteenth century as a reaction to the stress of the increasing urbanization and industrialization. The nature and the countryside became the “gaze” of tourists (Urry, 1990) and influenced poets and artists. However, its growth and development is due to technological advance, the availability of free time and the increase in disposal income (Sharpley, 1996). The biggest demand occurred after the end of the Second World War, and the most influential factor was the increase in car ownership, which enabled more people to visit the countryside (Harrison, 1991). However, the rural tourism of the eighties, the nineties and the current era is different. The number of tourists involved has increased significantly, the range of activities and types of rural holidays has continued to expand, and tourism has developed in all types of countryside instead of being limited to areas of exceptional scenic beauty (Knudson, 1985).

Tourism has been viewed largely as a consumer activity with most of the studies focusing principally on visitor needs, motivation and satisfaction; and little on rural development. Although tourism is perceived as a channel to rural development, the focus has always been on urban and coastal regions thereby

overlooking potential rural areas. The integrated sustainable rural development strategy [ISRDS] (2000) acknowledges rural development as multi-dimensional broader phenomena that focuses on social programs and transfers in the rural areas.

According to ISRDS (2000) rural development initiatives should place emphasis on changing environments to enable the rural people to earn more, invest in themselves and their communities and contribute toward maintenance of key infrastructure. Previous research indicates that tourism activities focusing on beaches, large holiday home developments, big hotels among other major touristic products are difficult to integrate into the concept of rural development (Reeder and Brown, 2005; Cabrini, 2002).

In regard to this notion, rural tourism is thought to be one of the sustainable development channel through which rural areas can achieve economic, environmental and socio-cultural growth (Haghsetan, Mahmoudi and Maleki, 2011; Reeder & Brown, 2005). Rural areas of most touristic countries have become the centre of attraction for tourism planners and holiday makers (Haghsetan, Mahmoudi and Maleki, 2011; Kneafsey, 2001). It is believed that only those rural regions with specific cultural, natural or social charm can attract tourists and this in turn can have significant impact on rural development strategies (Mostowfi, 2000). It is evident from the literature that many countries have incorporated tourism activities with the aim of achieving even development in both urban and rural regions. However, this calls for a balancing act between rural environment, rural population and natural products (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004; Hall and Page, 2002), the stakeholders in the industry and policy formulators and planners. Given that tourism which focuses on beaches, large hotels and the broader tourism market poses some challenge when integrated in the rural development concept

(Reeder and Brown, 2005; Cabrini, 2002) focus tends to shift towards rural tourism (Kim, Chen and Lang, 2006; Viljoen and Tlabela, 2007; Sharpley, Dalgleish, Power, and Telfer, 2008).

According to OECD (1994) rural tourism comes into existence when the rural culture is the key component of the product on offer. This form of tourism varies from one country to another and one region to another as well with various channels of rural tourism having been suggested. These include interest in farms, nature, adventure, health, education, arts, and heritage; and experiencing living history such as rural customs, local traditions, beliefs, and heritage (Jolliffe and MacDonald, 2003). Haghsetan, Mahmoudi and Maleki (2011) argue that developing rural areas through tourism calls for developing rural tourism first. This is attributed to the fact that rural tourism possesses strong social and economic potential for growth of the rural areas. Viljoen and Tlabela (2007), points out that rural tourism is as a way of involving the rural population in ventures that call for local ownership and management of tourism facilities in a given destination. In order to increase participation by the rural communities in rural development initiatives, Holland, Burian and Dixey (2003) stress the importance of considering appropriate forms of rural tourism.

Rural areas have historically relied heavily on agriculture as the main economic activity. While this is still the case, rural economies have gone through drastic changes in the last 30 years. In the West, rural economic decline can be attributed to consolidation, mechanization and globalization (Tchetchik, Fleischer and Finkelshtain, 2006). These factors led to the farm crises in the 1980s and resulted in continued fallout from rural areas, first primarily in agriculture and then manufacturing (Gannon, 1994; Sharpley, 2002; Wilson et al., 2001).

Economic benefits of rural tourism have been expressed as growth in new jobs, and diversification of products through creation of new markets for agricultural products and broadening of the regional economic base. Most rural tourism businesses are small, owner-operated, and act as a second income, so they generally are not earning a lot of money. This income is still important however, as it increases the economic viability of businesses on-and-off the farm (Oppermann, 1996, Warren and Taylor, 1999). New business may be attracted to the area, and economic stabilization may occur with increased demand for rural services and products. Growth with new and second incomes created through tourism including the selling of trades and crafts and other activities may emerge (Sharpley, 2000). Studies demonstrating modest economic gains include Ribeiro and Marques, (2002, citing CCRC, 1992; Robalo, 1999; Umbelino, 1997). Page and Getz (1997) suggest that the challenges for rural tourism are accessibility, financing, labour, and management expertise. Alexander and McKenna (1998) go beyond that to suggest the key issues are: the rate, type and amount of product development; improving standards; marketing activities and analysis; leadership; infrastructure; government's role; education/training. For rural tourism to be successful there needs to be professional development coordinators, working capital funds, a distinct image created, marketing supports including coordination with wider product and marketing strategies and support available to the community based on individual initiatives (Page and Getz, 1997). Long and Nuckolls (1994) suggest four key factors in organizing resources for rural tourism planning; leadership, education, planning strategies that fit the local situation; access to technical information and expertise (Page and Getz, 1997).

There is a growing amount of literature that specifies the importance of taking a community focus and the importance of

community involvement in tourism development (Roberts and Hall, 2001, citing Richards and Hall, 2000; Murphy, 1993; 1985; 1998; Taylor, 1995; Bramwell et al., 1996). Sensitive social integration is vital for rural tourism initiatives (Hall, 2000). A community approach to decision-making helps to ensure that traditional lifestyles and community values are respected (Campbell, 1999, citing Carter, 1994; Wild, 1994).

Useful themes to rural tourism development studies include the importance of locally controlled agendas to reach centralization, which is the benefits of the community's shared ideas resulting in funding developments and appropriate tourism plans for the rural areas (MacDonald and Jolliffe, 2003). Rural tourism enterprises need to be developed within an appropriate economic context whereby tourism development can create back linkages with the local and regional economy to complement and enhance existing activities (Hall, 2000).

Often government intervention and public private partnership coordination are needed to assist the sustainability of rural tourism (Hall, 1998). Major themes from the Rural Tourism Management: Sustainable Tourism Conference (1998) is the need to improve partnerships, networks and integration, also, for political linkages with the local and global economy (Hall, 2000). Murphy (1985) proposed a community approach to tourism development which focused on the businesses forming networks, sharing resources and information (Wiley et al., 2001, citing Murphy, 1985). For rural tourism to be successful, collaboration needs to exist amongst entrepreneurs (Wilson et al., 2001). As rural tourism is comprised of predominately small businesses, the role of the tourism entrepreneur is very important and needs to be supported. Networks provide linkages and networks assist small business development (Roberts and Hall, 2001, citing Richards and Hall, 2000). Small remote operators lack marketing and political clout

and must make up for this problem with greater participation in organizations. However, fewer numbers greater distance, fewer resources and cultural factors act against collaboration (Page and Getz, 1997) problem with greater participation in organizations. However, fewer numbers greater distance, fewer resources and cultural factors act against collaboration (Page and Getz, 1997).

Methodology

The data for this study was generated through systematic review of existing literature on the rural tourism and sustainable tourism development and is a conceptual analytical study. In the present study, secondary data has been used. Secondary data have been collected from various books, journals, tourism department of Jammu and Kashmir, economic survey of Jammu and Kashmir and other online resources. Being the qualitative nature of the study there are the various articles and theses and other reports and online resources have been referred and downloaded from the Ugc@Inflabanet and open access journals and magazines. The various key words like "*Sustainable tourism development, sustainable development, community participation, Rural tourism*" etc., used for searching the secondary data from the search engines. There were full 102 research papers/ articles, abstracts and thesis downloaded from the resources and almost 63 were exactly referred which meet with the objectives of the study.

Discussion

The objective of the present study was to identify the potential of rural tourism in Kashmir, It was found from the from the existing literature that the valley of Kashmir possess an authentic account of its history from the very earliest period. This past account of the valley, its culture and traditions, rise and fall of the various

Kingdoms, victory and defeats of the people have been noted carefully, yet critically by the sons of its soil. True it is, that the 'Kashmiri, literature is very rich in information about Kashmir.

The beauty and the salubrious climate of the valley were known even from ancient times. The mythological traditions supported fully by the research of geologists confirm that the valley was originally a huge lake called "**Satisar**", (the land of goddess Sati, consort of Lord Shiva) and its waters were blocked near Baramulla (ancient Varahmulla). In the words of Sir Francis Young-Husband, "The huge lake must have been twice the length and three times the width of the lake of Geneva, completely encircled by snowy mountains as high, and higher than Mount Blank, while in the immediately following glacial period, mighty glaciers came wending down to the Sindh, Lidder, and other valleys even to the edge of water."

Kashmir's greatest historian Kalhan writes about his native land: "It is a country where the sun shines mildly, being the place created by Rishi Kashyap, for his glory - big and lofty houses, learning, Saffron, icy cool water and grapes rare in Heaven are plentiful here - Kailash is the best place in the three worlds (Tri-lok), Himalayas the best place in Kailash, and Kashmir the best place in Himalayas".

The land of Kashmir is characterized with young folded mountains, deep gorges, waterfalls, cascades, scenic beauty and alpine pastures. Its lush green forests, rich wild life, snow clad peaks, mountainous gorges, giant glaciers, rich fishing grounds, lofty skiing grounds, carpet green turfs, perennial rivers, gushing fountains, floating gardens in Dal Lake, hissing springs, cool breeze, shimmering lakes, invigorating climate, apple-almond orchards, saffron fields and benevolent and kind hearted folk are well known all over the world. Tourism, however, is dominating economic activity in the state. Moreover, about, 20 percent of

the workforce of the state is directly or indirectly dependent on tourism. In changing economic scenario of the world, tourism has emerged as one of the world's largest service industries with sizable economic benefits. So in a region like Kashmir, blessed with enormous sites and locations and a range of tourist attractions, there is much scope for accelerating the process of tourism. New areas need to be identified and developed in order to attract the more tourists. In a region inhabited by more than 70 percent rural people mostly dependent on agriculture. The rural areas need to be selected as the sites of attraction for the tourists in order to benefit the rural people also from the process of tourism. In bringing the rural areas and rural people on the scene of tourism, rural tourism is one of the important options for the region, its agencies especially those concerned with the rural development. Rural development and rural tourism can facilitate the ways of progress for each other. This in turn can develop and diversify the rural economy.

Rural tourism in simple terms means carrying the process of tourism in rural areas. Rural Kashmir comprises of villages, where we have ample availability of land. Land is the major source of livelihood and income of the rural people in Kashmir. Land is mostly used for the agricultural purposes. And people are mostly dependent on agricultural. Their livelihood and income from agriculture is subjected to out of control forces like nature, climate and market. The same land under the same crops cultivated in villages can be brought on the scene of tourism in the form of rural tourism. It needs just the planning and developmental initiatives on the behalf of the state. Rural tourism, as an option can cover the rural areas of Kashmir and make these the sites of attraction for the tourists coming to the valley. Rural tourism in Kashmir on one side can benefit the rural people socio-economically. It can also bring diversification in the agricultural activities, which in turn will develop the rural economy of the valley. On the other side, it will

decrease the burden on the urban centers of the valley in terms of reducing traffic jam, pollution etc. and also tourists can become familiar with the rural society of Kashmir, its culture, craft works, art etc. The land under different agriculture activities throughout the agriculture cycle provides beautiful and charming scenes to us at different times in a year.

There are endless beautiful places in valleys within the rural areas surrounded by villages and laying close to these villages. In addition to the beautiful natural spots, the land under the utilization of agriculture and allied activities, can be brought on the scene of rural tourism by establishing agri-farms. Agri-tourism is the concept of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. In general Agri tourism is the practice of attracting visitors to an area used for primarily for agricultural purposes.

The culture also forms an important attraction of rural Kashmir. The cultural heritage of Kashmir valley is an amalgamation of sorts. The numerous civilizations that have inhabited the Kashmir valley from time to time have left their impression on the culture of Kashmir. The state of Kashmir abounds in ancient literature, language, religion, arts, crafts, dance, music, etc. The people of Kashmir have made significant contribution in the fields of storytelling, poetry, philosophy, sciences, etc. The handicrafts of Kashmir like Pashmina shawls, papier-mâché products, silk carpets, woodwork, etc. are admired throughout the world.

The renowned folk songs and dances are an integral part of the Kashmir culture. Music and dance is a way of celebrating festivities for the people of Kashmir. At one point of time in the past, Kashmir served as one of the highest learning centers of Sanskrit and Persian. With time, the cultural heritage of Kashmir, India, has evolved

more and more. However, this beautiful and peaceful valley has managed to protect itself from the ravages of progress to some an extent. The rich and deep-rooted ancient tradition of the Indian culture stills retains its place in the heart of Kashmir.

The up-to-date results point that Jammu and Kashmir, opposite many tourism-oriented states in India, notes very modest results in tourism, particularly to rural tourism. Although the authorities are now trying to frame a strategic document for this issue, the rural tourism potentials in Kashmir are still insufficiently exploited. In this regards, it is necessary that rural tourism must have a significant position in regional programs and national development strategy being defined as key opportunity for sustainable development of Kashmir region.

Role of Rural Tourism in Sustainable Development of Kashmir

Sustainable development is seen as an essential element of eco-tourism and it includes making use of natural resources but without causing lasting harm or depleting them. As Wilson (2006:10-11 citing Zeiger and Mc Donald 1997) points out, sustainable development “helps to provide the local community with freedom, education and welfare and they can thus be given the opportunity to act as partners in the sustainable development of their land and not as enemies to it.” Clarke (2002:19) views sustainable tourism as a contested concept that refers to the development of indicators to measure the achievement of objectives. Clarke cites the World Tourism Organization’s (1995:5) accepted definition of the term sustainable tourism, which requires that it...meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes,

biological diversity, and life support systems.

Jammu and Kashmir with its vast potential and growing economy has immense potential for the sustenance of tourism industry. Tourism has no doubt remained an instrument of economic growth in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and has contributed a lot in developing the economy, particularly in Kashmir valley. Tourism is an important industry of Kashmir. This sector has given jobs to a large number of people of Kashmir and generated economic activities especially in the tertiary sectors. Its impact in Kashmir is visible in service industry sectors, such as transport, hospitality, horticulture, handicrafts and small scale industry

Rural tourism 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 region like Kashmir where more than 70 percent of the population resides in rural areas. The trends of industrialization and development have had an urban centric approach across the world. Along with this, the stresses of urban life styles have led to a counter urbanization syndrome. This led to growing interest in rural areas. Rural development initiatives if taken in consideration with the concept of tourism can facilitate the process of rural tourism in rural areas. The progress of rural tourism in turn can facilitate the process of rural development of the rural areas. Taking initiative for introducing rural tourism in Kashmir primarily demands the development of the rural infrastructure; that is at the center of rural development programmes. So the two processes of rural development and rural tourism are interdependent. After all there is a limit to the number of tourists that can be accommodated in hotels, and also houseboats in Srinagar. There is a scarcity of land for dumping of the wastage generated by the human activities during the tourist seasons in the Srinagar city. Dal

Lake, Jhelum are facing severe problems of pollution. Noise pollution, water pollution, air pollution and traffic jams are other problems faced by the Srinagar city. For all these problems, tourism is one of the causative factors. Centralizing tourists within a particular area of Srinagar city has various bad consequences and such planning is neither desirable nor safe for the Srinagar people and administration and needs to be addressed. Rural tourism is the best option for tackling this problem. Firstly, it can decrease the burden of tourists on Srinagar. Secondly, various problems of administration such as the growing problem of pollution, the management of waste disposal, and traffic jams, to some extent, can be checked. Thirdly, it will diverge the benefits of tourism to the rural people. Fourthly, tourists can enjoy the quiet, calm natural environment of the countryside, free from noise. At last we will give an overview of the resources available in Kashmir that can become the sources for the rural tourism and also the various benefits of the rural tourism to the community and the tourists.

The majority of people in Kashmir live in villages. The main source of livelihood and income for people here is agriculture. There is huge unemployment among youth of Kashmir. Also there is a lack of industrial development. Tourism, if given considerable importance in Kashmir can become source of creating employment and income. Visiting any rural area by the tourists is accompanied by various other income generating activities like trained tourist guides, trained cooks, hotels, stalls etc. Developing these places in rural areas of Kashmir could benefit the rural people and could encourage the development of rural tourism in the valley. In the hilly areas of the valley, the production of land is very low because of climatic constraints and practices of single crop cultivation. The people in villages mostly depend on agriculture. Due to less productivity, they are facing rural poverty. To solve the problem of rural poverty they need to avail

themselves of the allied sources of income generation options for these people. They have land but it is less productive, and this needs to be utilized for farm tourism activities like establishing large dairy farms, fish ponds, poultry farms, sheep farms, floriculture units, horticulture units etc. Such units should be established in such a way that they can become examples used in order to attract more domestic and international tourists. In addition, these units should become spots of recreation for the local people. These types of innovations in terms of rural tourism can become the instruments of increasing the rural economy. They can diversify the land use activities, create employment avenues and can reduce the rural poverty.

Entrepreneurship in Rural Tourism

For the sustainable regional development of regions like Kashmir, creating entrepreneurship in rural tourism could prove a best option. Rural tourism entrepreneurship needs to be focused in Kashmir region for the following important reasons:

1. To facilitate the use of local resources (both human and non-human).
2. To create additional scope of employment for every type of rural labour.
3. To achieve a better standard of living and increased income sources.
4. To explore the possibilities of forward and backward linkages through vertical and horizontal integration of labour.
5. To preserve and maintain the traditional culture and value system along with refinements on these via the assimilation process of tourist linkages.
6. To grow the consciousness towards eco-biodiversity.

Challenges to Rural Tourism development in Kashmir

There are a number of challenges that have been associated with tourism development in rural areas, such as the general lack of capacity and tourism development related skills. Most rural areas in Kashmir region are characterized by lack of infrastructure, high illiteracy rates, unemployment, underdevelopment, poverty and a general lack of knowledge and understanding of tourism development issues. Tourism infrastructure, especially in rural areas of the region is poorly developed. Development of infrastructure facilitates development of rural environment, ensuring compliance with environmental protection requirements. Rural tourism development is hampered by the poor quality of roads. Many rural tourism attraction sites are not easily accessible by vehicular transport. This limits their potential for rural tourism development. There is the problem of inadequate publicity of the tourist potentials in the area. Most people within rural communities of Kashmir are often not aware of the existence of tourist potentials such as attractive cultural ceremonies and festivities, scenic sites and unique features around them. There is therefore the need to package the tourist products properly and make it known to the people through media adverts in Radio houses and Television stations.

Lack of information or ignoring the basic principles of sustainable rural tourism development can create serious problems for rural tourism businesses as well as the local population. Initially, as the numbers of tourists are comparatively low, rural tourism entrepreneurs offer free rooms to tourists in their family homes. With growing numbers of visitors, the farmers start to transfer from the traditional farming to tourist business, enlarging rooms, building separate cottages for tourists, opening small hotels and guesthouses, opening and improving camping sites. These activities involve a more intensive use of natural resources,

increasing volumes of waste, the use of chemicals, etc., thus increasing environmental impact.

Suggestions for enhancing rural tourism in Kashmir

The crucial point of tourism development in rural communities is not "whether" but "how" to develop. Without clearly defined guidelines, development cannot be accomplished efficiently.

Managerial approaches to tourism development in rural communities may be divided into five main areas: environmental management, the involvement of rural communities and sectors concerned, legislation, sustainable marketing, and design objectives.

➤ **Environmental Management**

- **Carrying Capacity**

Before tourism development takes place in rural areas, we must be sure that the type and level of development is in keeping with the capacity of rural communities to absorb visitors. The number of tourists should be limited in order to prevent any harmful impact. The appropriate carrying capacity can probably be identified on the basis of the capacity of the most sensitive variable factors and the minimum social cost. Getz (1983) notes that there are three variations in capacity, linked to costs and benefits. These are:

- Whether a limiting factor can be overcome in pursuing such goals as economic growth;
- To what extent social and ecological problems should be tolerated in the pursuit of the goals;
- Whether an optimum balance can be found between the costs and the benefits.

With reference to ecology, economy and socio-culture of rural communities, the number of tourists should also depend on

the particular characteristics of each rural area. After carrying capacity is assessed, the number of visitors must be controlled to ensure that it remains below this number.

- **Development of Physical Structures**

Although inadequate infrastructure is one of the major limitations in rural tourism, sustainability must be a major concern in the development of physical structures. The appropriate type and volume of infrastructure and utilities should be carefully designed, planned, and monitored.

In some rural tourist destinations, a great deal of infrastructure is provided to improve access and convenience. While local people may benefit from this, they may lose their unique way of life. Therefore, physical structures should be developed under the three following conditions:

Firstly, infrastructure, and necessary facilities should be constructed according to a design and in a quantity that meets the needs of tourists as well as of local people, and at the same time causes no negative ecological or socio-economic impacts on rural communities. In this respect, such physical development projects as the water supply, sewerage treatment system, solid waste disposal management, and tourism activities such as camping, trekking and diving, all of which may contribute to rural degradation, must be all monitored according to clear environmental and socio-cultural standards. Secondly, physical development from both the public and private sectors should be based on the needs, goals, values and attitudes of the rural host communities. Rural assets such as the architectural heritage and historic values must be protected. New buildings should be constructed in a design consistent with the local architectural style. In addition, local businesses providing accommodation, food etc. should be given priority in terms of marketing and management, to ensure that the benefits

come to local people rather than outside investors. Physical development should be carried out in accordance with zoning plans, so as to achieve a balance between conservation, tourism and public use.

- **Zoning**

Careful attention must be paid to zoning in determining how land will be used. The four different zones used in Japan's Mt. Fuji Park (Inskeep, 1995) could usefully be applied to tourist destinations in rural areas of Kashmir.

The local government, private entrepreneurs, local people and tourists must all have a unified perception on zone management. Tourism must not invade land used for wilderness or farming. Where tourism takes place on farms, it must be looked upon as a secondary source of income, not as a replacement for agriculture (Poostchi, 1997).

- **Involvement and Cooperation**
 - **Local Involvement**

Tourism is developed most efficiently when rural communities participate, including local institutes, volunteer groups, tourism associations, the Chamber of Commerce, municipal councils and, particularly, groups of local people.

During planning, implementing and monitoring, the involvement of each rural community is greatly needed so that projects can be realized according to local preferences. If local people receive sufficient incentives, financial aid and technical support; they can develop their rural resources according to their own traditional practices. Education and training in management and finance for small businesses is a crucial factor. Groups of experts should be available to provide advisory services to rural communities engaged in tourism development. In addition, there should be continuous research on how to maximize the economic benefits from tourism in a sustainable way.

Armed with the knowledge and experts' assistance, local people can then decide what kind of tourism they want: urbanization with congested environment, or a rural atmosphere where they can enjoy peaceful, pollution-free natural resources.

- **Cooperation between different parties**

As tourism is an integrated activity, the multilateral meetings which include government organizations, local people and the private sector, especially business investors, should be regularly organized to establish a network of tourism, training institutes and organizations in rural areas. In addition, the role of responsible authorities in both the private and public sectors has to be clearly defined. Since the bureaucratic structure of government cannot easily be adjusted, the private sector, which is more flexible in a changing economic situation, plays an essential role in providing entrepreneurial skills, management and marketing. Strong cooperation between the public and private sectors may minimize the "Black Hole" in which government tourism authorities tend to operate, and can create more competitive rural tourism.

- **Regulations**

Regulations on land use, building density, carrying capacity, and appropriate business patterns should be strictly imposed. However, if regulations are too strict, they may discourage investment, to the detriment of the local economy. The scope of regulations and the means to enforce them are very important in creating a successful rural tourism industry. Regulations should be discussed and agreed on by guides, village leaders, teachers and investors. The following are examples of regulations on tourist behavior which can apply to all sectors:

- Do not give money, candies or gifts to village children;

- Buy food or drinks only from local shops, to discourage unlicensed street stalls or vendors from outside;
- Take photos with due regard to local beliefs, and only when it is permitted by villagers;
- Buy handicrafts directly from local people, so they get the profit rather than urban traders and middlemen.
- Take part only in those tourism activities which are supervised by a local guide or liaison officer.
- Both horizontal and vertical integration among the organizations concerned is needed to set up regulations that are positive to all parties.

➤ **Sustainable Marketing**

To ensure that rural tourism will be sustainable, private enterprise should be active in "green marketing" and in creating a type of tourism which conforms with both tourists' expectations and industry standards (Wight, 1994). Though there has been no consistent approach to marketing rural tourism, the following policies advocated by the English Tourist Board (1991) may be beneficial.

- Be honest, and substantiate the company's socio-cultural and environmental claims;
- Identify the socio-cultural and environmental benefits of the company's products;
- Present details of the environment surrounding the operation;
- Consider developing socio-cultural and environmental boards at a local level; and
- Match suitable tourism products with each market segment

➤ **Objectives and Plans**

Tourism should be considered as one component in economic development, so that tourism projects are harmoniously

linked with the development of the whole community. Furthermore, tourism development in rural areas should focus on the environmental and socio-cultural impact at all levels of the planning process. Efficient government institutes with the authority to coordinate planning, implement policies and enforce legislation are essential.

The state government in Kashmir should recognize the importance of rural tourism as a priority and help in creating a healthy competitive business environment. The 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. Some of the essential services required for rural tourism are the following.

- Plan for sustainable growth of rural tourism
- Invest in new technology
- Business must balance economics with people, culture and environment.
- Develop rural tourism protecting natural resources, local heritage and lifestyles.
- Fill the narrow gaps between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'.
- Promote traditional tourism products.
- Improve quality, value of rural tourism.
- Give quality standards of services at all levels
- Transfer skills and best practice.
- Share information to make better business decisions.
- Communicate more effectively.
- Share the pursuit of long-term growth and prosperity.
- Set environmental policy goals.
- Develop and deploy skills effectively.

- Collaborate on information requirements.
- Develop confidence on all sides

Conclusion

There is vast potential for the development of rural tourism in Kashmir. If properly developed, rural tourism could bring great benefits to the valley. It could be a sustainable revenue generating project for rural development of the government. It can help the inflow of resources from the urban to the rural economy. It can prevent migration of rural people to urban areas which are crowded. 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. Rural tourism will emerge as an important instrument for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation, employment generation, environmental regeneration and development of remote areas and advancement of women and other disadvantaged groups in the region apart from promoting social integration and international understanding. The government should promote rural tourism to ensure sustainable economic development and positive social change after various security related problems and natural disaster in Kashmir valley.

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