



Cover Page



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SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RURAL TOURISM: A STUDY ON BARPALI VILLAGE OF BARGARH

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Abstract

Rural tourism is based on the natural and cultural resources in an area with people as the main drivers. In recent years, rural villages of India have found a place on the tourist map of the world. The rural tourism not only provides an additional source of income to the villagers but it also helps showcase the rural life and culture of the people, such as art, crafts and heritage etc, of the village and community. At present, most of the states of India are facing many challenges for the implementation of rural tourism projects which stands against achieving the projective of the project set-up by the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. Of India. Some of the problems are very grave and need immediate attention of the administration. The department of Tourism, Govt. of Odisha, has identified eight villages in the state for implementation of the Rural Tourism Project. Barpali, a village in Bargarh district is one of them. In this paper, Barpali village has been taken to study the impact of rural tourism on the socio-economic life of the local community. Here an attempt may be taken to highlight the village has a high potential for tourist, but due to the delay in implementation and completion of the project, the stakeholders are not getting the desired benefits. This paper may draw a conclusion as the village will be the best rural tourist destination after looking and taking care of proper management and completion of project.

Keywords: Rural Tourism, Project, Implementation, Completion, Management.

INTRODUCTION

The rural tourism includes, the elements like, rural art, handicrafts, culture, scenic beauty, monuments, and wildlife. The concept of rural tourism supports the drive for green tourism. It helps in enhancing developmental activities, employment opportunities, along with the care for Mother Nature. The rural sector is the key to all ecofriendly projects which are absent in the urban sector. Rurality represents all those qualities, which are missing from urban area and modern urban society. The reverse trend of migration from urban to rural areas is widely supported by the presence of natural amenities. The sustainable rural tourism helps to narrow down urban-rural discrepancies by enhancing the scope for reverse migration. However, the real responsibility lies with the rural communities along with the regulating bodies and authorities.

This paper describes rural tourism development in Barpali village region, the socio-economic impact of its activity and how it has evolved from the point of view of relevant informants, which has not been studied previously.

Rural tourism is a very important activity in a local space and most activities arise from its natural resources and cultural heritage. The WTO¹ uses several dimensions to define this concept: the natural and territorial resources of rural areas, the historical and cultural heritage that it calls ‘rural heritage’, the activities performed in the territory, which it calls ‘rural way of life’ and the culture of rural populations. Out of all the definitions we analysed, they are usually based on the one established by the WTO represented¹.

Rural tourism products and activities need a good state of conservation of natural and cultural resources, accommodation integrated into the environment, services offering local products and handicrafts, local food and keeping of traditions. Rural tourism is characterised by development in small territories with their own identity that have an extensive offer of diffuse, non-concentrated and small-scale accommodation and leisure activities. Due to the characteristics of this type, the tourism development of rural areas has to ensure the territory does not lose the identity that makes it a destination capable of attracting the interest of an increasingly demand. Tourists do not buy products; they buy the satisfaction of an expectation and they value that expectation as an integral whole. So, it must be measured social costs that can be derived from rural tourism development as rural areas are quite prone to adopt new values and ideas that in some cases can damage the idiosyncrasy of the place and population².



Cover Page



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DEFINITION & DIMENSION OF RURAL TOURISM

Rural Tourism has emerged as a new mantra for alternative tourism development. This concept has been already tested in the developed country & proved the best results. Our country & its villages have so many things to cater the needs of the tourists. The rural people, its culture, tradition, arts, handicrafts, scenery, landscape can attract the tourists irrespective of its taste, perceptions & attitudes. Rural tourism has been defined as ‘a variety of visits away from home to locations outside main towns and seaside resorts, be they holidays, day trips, business trips or to visit friends & relatives.

As per Gannon, “Rural Tourism” covers “a range of activities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their area in order to generate extra income for their business.” Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural tourism. Rural tourism is essentially an activity which takes place in the countryside. It is multi-faceted and may entail farm/agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism, and eco-tourism. As against conventional tourism, rural tourism has certain typical characteristics like: it is experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated³, it is predominantly in natural environment, it meshes with seasonality and local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and traditions.

Materials and Methods

The research method chosen was the case study based on the Barpali village region. This area comprises 23 Panchayats which have in total 57 villages. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used for the research and to achieve the aims of this study.

A documentary analysis was conducted on secondary data from institutional data bases, such as Regional Tourist Office and Municipality Tourist Offices Secondary Data.

Primary data were compiled using two instruments: semi-structured interviews with political leaders and tourism business people; and a participatory direct observation process in focus groups. The aim of both was to analyse the social reality of tourism and its evolution in Barpali village⁴.

Description of the Village Barpali

Barpali is a block (Tehsil) within the Bargarh district in the state of Odisha, India. The geo-coordinates for Barpali are 21.1813⁰ N, 83.5976⁰ E, which is situated at a height of 182 m (597 ft) from sea level. As of 2001 India census, Barpali had a population of 19159. Barpali has an average literacy rate of 68.5%, higher than the national literacy average. The majority of the population is depended on agriculture. It has many cultural notations which have made Barpali famous nationally and internationally, like: the indigenous sambalpuri saree weaving art and the earthen pottery handicrafts etc, creations from the native inhabitants of Barpali⁵.

IMPORTANCE OF ‘RURAL TOURISM’ IN BARPALI

Rural tourism’s greatest potential benefit is its ability to generate money which can translate in to numerous positive economic opportunities for locals and their communities. For local the first benefit of tourism development is jobs both within the tourism sector and outside of it. Tourism development means more income and profits for tourist related business. The economic multiplier model suggests that if local income from tourist expenditures is spent within local area, an increase in local income and jobs will follow. The following points will highlight the significance of rural tourism in Indian context. The concept of rural Tourism is definitely helpful & effective for a state like odisha where a sizeable population lives in villages. Different villages have different types of tourism resources, which is scattered, in the entire state. (The Zamindars houses, Handicrafts, folk- lore & Folk music etc.) Rural tourism can check & can stop the flow of people to migrate in Cities. The gradual expansions of cities & urbanizations some time allures the people to migrate from rural to urban areas. Rural tourism can be one of the important aspects, which can provide a



Cover Page



solution to this problem. Tourism growth can be harnessed as a strategy for Rural Development. The concept of rural tourism is definitely useful for a state like Odisha where majority of population resides in villages. The trend of “Urbanization” has led to falling income levels, lesser job opportunities in the rural areas. Rural tourism is one of the few activities which can provide a solution to this problem⁶. In many parts of Odisha, the rural economy is in doldrums due to the increase in input costs and decrease in income. Many debt-ridden farmers are committing suicides. Efforts to promote rural tourism as a subsidiary occupation can arrest this trend with balanced regional development. This concept has the potentiality to attract investment from big industrial houses in rural areas including valuable Foreign Direct Investment and ultimately increase in GDP of the country by creating value from rural opportunities. Small-scale enterprise development aided by micro- finance schemes has a significant potential for enhancements of rural livelihood opportunities. This concept has the tremendous potentiality to attract the investors in rural areas (Farm house, Agro based Industry, Organic fertilizer & rural development schemes⁷.

RURAL TOURISM PROJECTS IN BARPALI

Viewed against the backdrop of the above definition, Odisha with its vast geography, rich traditions, culture and heritage, a vast and beautiful rural landscape, is naturally suited for this. The growing prosperity in urban areas, so visible in the vehicles, malls, multiplexes, restaurants and designer brand outlets is still to be seen in the rural areas. Here time stands still, the pace of life gentle, working conditions hard and each day of life brings new challenges. Amidst these hardships, the people exude warmth and welcome visitors with open arms. The Ministry of Tourism had started the projects in 2007 not only to promote rural tourism but also provide opportunities to rural populace to improve their socio-economic condition⁸. In Odisha, the ministry had identified eight villages where rural tourism projects were to be developed by the respective district administrations. These are Raghurajpur and Pipili in Puri, Khiching in Mayurbhanj, Barpali in Bargarh, Hirapur in Khurda, Padmanavpur in Ganjam, Deulajhari in Angul and Konark Natya Mandap. The projects have two components, infrastructure and training and skill development of artisans. The project envisaged construction of open-air auditoriums, tourist amenities, craft demonstration and sale centers on the infrastructure front apart from training and skill development of artisans. However, after the recent evaluation by the ministry, it was found that except Raghurajpur, works in other villages are moving at a snail’s pace. It was also pointed out that lack of sightseeing options does not draw tourists to Raghurajpur even though all the components have been properly implemented. In the absence of tourist traffic, socio-economic condition of the villagers is not improving. While construction of any kind is yet to start in Hirapur, Pipili and Barpali, the project has not been successful in Deulajhari and Padmanavpur and moderately successful at Khiching. At Deulajhari, the infrastructure components are partially completed, but absence of maintenance has resulted in the project being accorded average rating. At Khiching, construction works are in progress. Another drawback is that some of the projects are still inaccessible with communication facilities yet to be developed⁹.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the predominantly agrarian economy plagued by rising unemployment and a greatly reduced availability of land, weaving silk and handcraft production once provided the main opportunity for the generation of additional income to a large section of the rural folk. Thus, these village industries, the most prominent and widespread of which is weaving, seemed to be the only scope for self- employment for many in rural folk in Odisha. Indeed, handloom weaving has played a very vital role in the rural economy of Odisha. But in the past ten years, with changes brought in by globalization, liberalization and economic reforms, handloom sector has been facing adverse government policies and discriminatory competition. As a result, the family economy has been in turmoil. The resultant burden is the most on the weavers. In these circumstances, it becomes important to address the problems and needs of this 'vulnerable section' of handloom sector. Globalization and the opening of global markets may require their skills and knowledge to be upgraded to face this competition. This needs capacity building in the form of network building, site marketing etc. so that this small village of Odisha, Barpali, can carve out a niche of its own in the international market. Hence, the present paper attempts to argue in favor of village Based Tourism or rural tourism as an alternative for growth and development of Rural India in the present-day competitive world. Based on the benefits derived from the alternative-based tourism initiatives generally, one therefore wonders if any such benefits come the way of the local people of Barpali by way of livelihood enhancement, hence the need for this research. And the present globalized and financial liberalized market, owing to the popularization of machine based low cost and superior quality



Cover Page



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consumer goods, the handicraft industry in general and Odishan craft industry in particular is facing enormous problems. As there has been the evolution of the modern market system economy, the artisans have lost their holds over the old patron-client market network and jajmani relationship. In the globalization times, though with their products going global land increasing demand for it, there is a rise in the handicraft sector economy, still 'the artisans have become increasingly dependent on middle men like petty merchant capitalists who pay the artisans in wage on piece rate bases. The government's initiative to create cooperatives has not become much successful. A report says there are over 25lakh crafts persons in India, based mostly in the villages who are not used to interaction with buyers and don't have the necessary skills to safeguard their own interests. Illiteracy often makes them more vulnerable¹⁰.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY AREA

Under the 10th Five Year Plan, thrust has been given to promote village tourism as the primary tourism product to spread tourism and its socio-economic benefits to rural and its new geographic regions. For creation or improvement of infrastructure at the selected site, various activities have been undertaken, viz, improvement of surroundings of the village which include landscaping, development of parks, fencing, compound wall etc; improvements of roads within the Panchayat limits; illumination in the village, provision for improvement in solid waste management and sewerage management; procurement of equipments directly related to tourism, like eco-friendly modes of transport for moving within the tourism zone refurbishment of the monuments, signage, reception centres, tourist accommodation and other work/activities directly related to tourism. Barpali, a village, located 22 kilometres from Bargarh is known for the indigenous creation called 'bandha' or ikat handloom fabrics. The uniqueness of Sambalpuri handloom creations lies in the carefully created motifs of birds, animals, flowers, leaves and other geometric patterns¹¹.

CHALLENGES IN RURAL TOURISM

- 1) Traditional belief that agriculture can help the rural people
- 2) Off let realization of the fact that tourism can also play an important role in developmental process
- 3) Absence of supporting industry
- 4) Legislation problems
- 5) Shortage of trained manpower
- 6) Insufficient financial support
- 7) Lack of proper physical communications
- 8) Lack of basic business planning skills

MARKETING RURAL TOURISM :

Marketing becomes a major problem for the promotion of Rural Tourism in India as well as Odisha and Barpali. This is because the local bodies are either not aware about the developmental role of tourism or are constrained by their own politics or lack of funds. Most rural tourism businesses of all kinds invest relatively little in marketing and related training. But to be sustainable as businesses, and in turn to sustain their communities and cultural landscapes, rural tourism operators have much to gain from improving marketing practice. While marketing a rural tourism destination (region, village or leisure spots) there is need of strategic approach on following aspects¹².

- (A) Attractions - like promotion of rural tourism around a heritage site
- (b) Infrastructure (accommodation, cuisine, hygiene, clean water basic amenities) etc.
- (c) Accessibility (roads, means of transportation) - should not be too far from railhead or airport: 2-2 1/2 hr.
- (d) Carrying capacity of the destination
- (e) Environmental issues (Pollution, Eco-fragility, etc.
- (f) Safety, law and order situation etc.
- (g) Continuous Maintenance



Cover Page



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There is a need of comprehensive research in finding out the suitable locations, ascertain market size, tourist profile, perceptions and expectations, to demarcate roles and responsibilities among various stakeholders, complete package to tourists, product development, provision and management of infrastructure, accommodation and food facilities, promotional plans and more importantly about the role of NGO and local government and community for the strategic implementations of project. Product development and management ensure long term viability of project.

IMPACT OF RURAL TOURISM ON 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 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 or the government.
- Modernization of agriculture and other rural activities.
- Local small businessman will be benefited¹³.

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 exposure¹⁴.

- 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 paid¹⁵.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Numerous places are there with historical significance like art and crafts.
- The traditional patta sarees are yet to be patronized and supported.
- The traditional figured saree from Barpali – the sambalpuri saree from christened after the villages where the crafts practiced. They need to be marketed and the weavers have to be brought to the crux of tourism.



Cover Page



CONCLUSION

If the proper marketing plan is done in rural tourism, it could bring lots of benefit to Barpali. It could be a sustainable revenue generating project for rural development for government as well as destination. 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. 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 country apart from promoting social integration and international understanding. The government should promote rural tourism to ensure sustainable economic development and positive social change.

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