



# Niche Tourism in Rural Areas: A Case Study of India

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## Abstract

The travel and tourism industry around the world has been hit by the pandemic for various reasons, it is necessary to develop rural tourism, as soon as the new normal resume with the new rules for receiving tourists. The quality of life of people living in rural areas has always been an issue of concern around the world, post-pandemic era made it more critical. Under this circumstance, the growth of the rural tourism sector could bring a reasonable positive change for rural people. The major objectives of this study are to exploring the challenges faced by the stakeholders and how these challenges can be tackled by the stakeholders. Some of the major challenges in the rural tourism sector are a deficit of trained manpower, inadequate financial support, lacking of local involvement, and lacking of entrepreneurial skills. Success of this sector depends on how they recruit, train and educate, manage, value, reward and supports each other in the process of continuous learning and career development. The stakeholders are trying to develop strategies focusing on economic and non-economic benefits to unlock opportunities for the rural community at all levels.

**Keywords:** Rural Tourism, Rural Development, Stakeholders, Challenges, India

## 1. Introduction

UNWTO has designated 2020 as the **Year of Tourism and Rural Development**. This Year is an opportunity to promote the potential of **tourism to create jobs and opportunities**, especially in rural areas. It can also advance inclusion and highlight the unique role tourism can play in preserving and promoting natural and cultural heritage and curbing urban migration. For countless rural communities around the world, tourism is a leading provider of employment and opportunities. In many places, it is one of the few viable economic sectors. It is estimated that by 2050, 68% of the world population will live in urban areas, while 80% of those currently living in 'extreme poverty'

live outside of towns and cities. The situation is particularly hard for youth: young people in rural communities are three times more likely to be unemployed than older adults. Tourism is a lifeline, offering young people a chance to earn a living without having to migrate either within their home countries or abroad.

This sector is flourishing and the growth potential of this sector can be tied up with Rural Development in India, where almost 68% of the population lives in its 6,00,000 villages in India. The quality of life in rural areas has always been an issue of concern around the world, poor standard of living, lack of basic amenities such as nutritious food, safe drinking water, healthcare facilities and education are some of the major issues brought up by the researcher and stakeholders. This condition prevails because of poor availability and utilization of resources in the agriculture and rural industrial sector; infrastructure is one of the obstacles towards rural areas development. Unfortunately despite several measures and incentives provided towards the development of the agricultural and related sectors, contributions of the agricultural sector remain nominal to the economy. Tourism sector which is one of the important sectors in the service industry employing after retail can emerge as a stronger engine to reinforce overall growth in the Indian economy. Today the rural economy accounts for 56 percent of GDP of the Indian economy, 64 percent of total expenditure and 33 percent of saving making it large. Under this prevailing condition, rural tourism could emerge as a potential tool to bring a radical change in the life of the residents of rural India by generating direct and indirect employment and income for them.

Rural tourism was developed with an aim to promote visits to village settings to experience local culture, food and heritage and for relaxation. Rural tourism can be marketed as a niche product similar to other niche products like medical, wellness, adventure, cruise, wedding and caravan tourism and help the rural economy to grow through the creation of employment, better infrastructure and standard of living. It has been observed that growth in expenditure in the travel and tourism sector has induced a chain reaction leading to the creation of prerequisite conditions for growth of other related sectors. It will fuel in demand for food and non-food items in rural areas, to keep up with the demand rural retailers have to improve their merchandise. The companies have to develop their inbound and outbound logistics. The government has to provide better transport, security system, law and order have to be put in place. If the visitors enjoy their trip, feel comfortable and happy, and they come back again and recommend others to go for rural tourism. Hotel and guest house owners and other service providers have to improve their service quality so that the tourist feels at home. The comfort food and stay is an essential component of travel and tourism. The tourist guide has to be a good communicator, friendly and helpful in nature, and they should help the tourist to make their trip successful. This can help the local community economically and socially and facilitate mutual benefit.

The Ministry of Tourism has taken initiative and promoting the brand India all over the globe. The motto "Incredible India" is contributing significantly towards the enhancement of the brand India concept, where the Ministry of Tourism is deploying lots of efforts and resources to motivate all stakeholders to bring in their contribution which has resulted in growing numbers of tourists from both domestic and international sources. Rural India is taking full advantage of this promotion, initiatives and activities, 172 spots are identified

by the Ministry of Tourism as a rural tourist spot which is in the process of development and will be a great tourist destination in future.

In this context, the Ministry of Tourism has introduced a new sub-brand of 'Explore Rural India' in 2002–2003 of globally recognized Incredible India brand with the aim to showcase art, lifestyle, culture, cuisine, the heritage of rural India to the tourist. The objective of this scheme is to help the rural people to generate employment, income, control rural-urban migration, cultural exchange and promote handlooms and handicrafts to tourists directly. Rural India has much to offer in the world of tourism like natural beauty, local cuisine, harvest festivals, local festivals and ceremonies etc to the world. Those who live in cities would be crazy to knowledge about traditional ways of life, arts and crafts of rural India. Rich in the tradition of arts, crafts and culture can help rural India to emerge as a niche product.

The government effort to market the concept of rural life has resulted in the development of rural tourism sector. People living in urban India have started taking interest in rural tourism, people are visiting to explore rural India and learn more about rural life and spend few days in tranquility. It is also helping the tourist to spend stress-free life for few days at a reasonable cost. Because the cost of living in a rural area is low compare to urban areas making transportation, food, hotels, and shopping very reasonable.

## 1.1 Scope of Rural Tourism

Several organization and academicians have acknowledged the tourism sector as a prospective tool for economic growth and development, particularly for rural communities. Rural tourism is emerging as a useful tool for the socio-economic development of the rural people by employment generation. Rural tourism does not mean farm-based tourism. it includes farm-based tourism, nature tourism, ecotourism, medical tourism, climbing, horse riding, adventure, sport, hunting and fishing, research tourism, arts and heritage tourism, cultural tourism and, in some areas, ethnic tourism. There is an argument that rural tourism can offer a better choice and a superior portfolio of entertainment for consumers. Thus to boost rural tourism, they have to characterize it with a range of entertainments and attractions to stimulate sophisticated tourist clientele. Keeping in mind the ever-changing tourism demand and market trends, rural tourism has to be linked with a varied set of recreational activities, which in turn will evolve over time and lead to the development of niche tourism products in rural areas as an option to mass tourism. Hence, to create niche tourism in rural areas, there is a need to make rural tourism an interest destination basically 'particularizations' opposite to 'generalizations' (Novelli, 2005), which may lead to interest among the visitors and bring benefits to the hosting communities.

This paper examines the ways government, tour operators, local people can help each other in the best possible ways to capitalize on these new business ideas. This article however concludes that how niche marketing of rural tourism can help the local people in creating new businesses opportunities and expand their business and income.

## 1.2 Objectives of this Study

Although there is a high potential for phenomenal growth in the rural tourism sector, it was never given much priority. This sector is facing lots of challenges like a deficit of trained manpower, inadequate financial support, lacking of local involvement, and lacking in entrepreneurial skills lack trained manpower, insufficient financial support, lack of local involvement, lack of entrepreneurial skills etc. Proper planning and strategy in rural tourism can help in increase of productivity, employment, distribution of wealth in rural areas.

Not enough studies have been carried in India to assess the possibility of rural tourism as a niche product. This paper aims at exploring the challenges faced by the stakeholders and how these challenges can be tackled by the stakeholders and to what extent it is enhancing the standard of living of the rural community. Under this backdrop an attempt is made to find the answer to the following objectives:

1. To identify the challenges faced by the stakeholders.
2. How these challenges are being tackled by the stakeholders.

This paper has been organised under five major heads. Starting with the introduction, deals with a backdrop of this study, followed by a literature review. The second section is the objectives of the study. The third section is methodology. The fourth section is designed to deal with a discussion of the present study. The last section of the paper deals with the conclusion.

## 2. Literature Review

Tourism is emerging as the fastest growing industry in the globe (Edgell, 1990). The growth in the tourism sector will lead to a rise in the economic activity of the region (Hall, 1994). It not only helps in the image building of the country, but it helps in generating employment and reducing poverty (Barkley, 1993). Rural tourism is an important means of enhancing employment and income and can help the social and economic development of rural societies (Sharpley, 1994). Rural tourism must be in balance with other rural needs and long term protection of rural resources (Sharpley, 1994). In tourism research, it has been widely accepted that the hosts can benefit from tourism only when they are accepted as agents of their own development (Shen, Hughey & Simmons, 2008; Li, 2006). Nagaraju and Chandrashekara (2014, p. 43) state that rural tourism represents ‘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’.

Cawley and Gillmor (2008) developed a model of integrated rural tourism which includes a cultural, social, environmental, economic aspect of tourism and the role of the stakeholders. He has developed an effective model for promoting tourism as part of a rural development strategy. ‘Strategic fit’ concept was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the model in the local context in western Ireland. The model reveals considerable vigor in

identifying features that uphold the value in a holistic way and identifying the stakeholders and issues that are required to meet objectives more effectively.

Lane and Yoshinaga (1994) observed that the policymakers are burdened with socio-economic problems of the countryside for a long time. In spite of numerous institutional programmes and projects, rural developmental challenges are still a pressing concern. OECD's Rural Development Programme talks about an innovative strategy, i.e., 'niche marketing' which has helped in boosting the rural economy. Rural Tourism could be promoted as a niche product in three ways as described: floriculture production; craft goods; and special-interest tourism.

## 2.1 Current Scenario of Tourism Sector

According to WTTC, India rank 3<sup>rd</sup> among 185 countries in terms of contribution to GDP in travel and tourism in 2018, expected to grow at a rate of 7.1 percent in 2018–2028. Tourism sector has provided 8.1 percent of the total employment and 4.2 crores jobs in 2019. International tourists expected to reach 30.5 billion by 2028. e-Tourist Visa was launched by the Government of India, to extend facilities to people from 169 countries as of December 2019. During 2019, a total of 29,28,303 tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visa, total 10.89 million foreign tourists arrived. The country is offering a heterogeneous portfolio of niche tourism products like rural tourism, adventure tourism, medical tourism, heritage tourism, luxury tourism, eco-tourism, pilgrimage tourism, wellness tourism, yoga tourism, sports tourism, education tourism. Under Swadesh Darshan 15 thematic circuit tourism infrastructure is developed. India has been a place of attraction for many reasons for sacred tourism for domestic and international tourists. The government of India formulate the National Tourism policy in 1982 to promote tourism, During 1990–2000 government stressed private-public partnerships in promoting tourism, once again new National Policy on tourism was announced in 2002, online travel portal and low-cost airlines gave a boost to domestic tourism. The web portals and travel and tourism apps are helping in exploring a destination, and promoting tourism.

In recent years, India had experienced exponential growth in the travel and tourism sector due to an increase in an advertisement at national and international levels and by offering different kinds of travel opportunities by providing safe and convenient travelling. Ministry of Tourism launched an awareness campaign 'Atithidevo Bhava' in traditional as well as social media to develop good conduct and behaviour towards tourists.

Before the onset of the pandemic, the sector was growing rapidly as it supports a large employment base and rakes in huge profits. Today, people in rural areas are struggling with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The rural communities are usually much less prepared to deal with the short and longer-term impacts of the crisis. This is due to a number of factors, including their few income opportunities, low literacy, poor infrastructure and threat to safety and security. Tourism offers a solution to all of these challenges. The rapid spread of coronavirus has halted domestic and trade activities, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) estimates the hotel, aviation and travel sector together may incur a loss of about ₹85 billion due to travel restrictions imposed on foreign tourists, which has resulted in large scale cancellations. Though domestic transport facilities are being

made somewhat operations as of this writing, the social distancing norms will continue to impact tourism for the rest of the year. India's total foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) stood at 10.9 million and the foreign exchange earnings stood at Rs 210,971 crore during 2019. However, the sector is staring at a potential job loss of around 38 million, which is around 70 percent of the total workforce.

The growth of the travel and tourism sector will lead to a host of development in the related sector. It will contribute to economic development through direct and indirect employment, reduction in poverty, better rural infrastructure and growing hospitality industry in rural areas and liberalisation of air transport. Besides this, it will help in the growth of online travel portals, the inflow of foreign tourists, and an increase in foreign exchange earnings and betterment in the balance of payment. This sector stands in the third position in terms of earning foreign exchange after jewellery, gems and ready-made garments in India. By 2029, India's tourism sector is expected to reach Rs. 35 trillion (US\$488 billion) accounting for 9.2 per cent of the total economy.

### 3. Methodology of the Study

The research study involves identifying the challenges faced by the stakeholders and how these challenges are tackled by the stakeholders. The research process is carried out by reviewing literature related to the research objectives. Qualitative research method is applied for the current study, secondary data was collected for research purposes from books, journals, magazines and electronic data generated by research organisations.

## 4. Discussions

### 4.1 Barriers in Rural Tourism

According to the respondents, the major barriers in the rural tourism sector are a deficit of trained manpower, insufficient financial support, lacking of local involvement, lacking of entrepreneurial skills. The stakeholders need to focus on education and training of the local people involves directly or indirectly in the tourism sector, then they should focus on preserving the environment and natural resources. They are required to focus on proper understanding of tourists and local residents and develop the models to help the people at all levels participating in tourism development. All they need is to make proper planning and strategy that can help the rural community to increase their productivity, employment, distribution of wealth. For that, they have to focus on training the local resident on a different aspect of tourism service and production of handicraft and marketing promoting their products. They have to also focus on improving the landscape and the basic infrastructure and the environment to attract visitors and it will also improve the quality of life of local residents by creating a healthy environment for them. The cooperative system in Rural Tourism may be an effective approach to bring positive impact in the rural economy. Local residents can monitor and control both positive and negative impacts of tourism on their



own society, if they have an equal stake and authority in managing and developing the rural tourism sector in their local areas.

To boost rural tourism, a rural development program may be integrated with the Indian Tourism development programme and some of the villages may be converted into attractive tourist spots or a cluster of villages may be converted into a tourist destinations. Since rural tourism has tremendous potential in India due to its beautiful landscape, local culture and cuisine. Hence proper forward and backward linkages will lead to growth in rural tourism and it will boost other related sectors.

To do so, rural people are needed to be trained from every stratum to the society, starting from poor to rich, so that they can participate collectively and hold the hand of each other to bring positive impact in the rural tourism sector. The rural society is divided into four groups, on the basis of education and type of house they live in, these four categories are R1, R2, R3 and R4. (Kashyap, 2010, p.60). R1 (Rich landlords and educated, constitute 4% of the rural population) and R2 (Rich farmers above 5 acres of land and less educated, constitute 11% of the rural population). R3 (Average landholding and may not be educated, constitute 37 % of the rural population) and R4 (Has little or no land, living below the poverty line, constitute 48% of the rural population). The economic condition of the people in R1 and R2 category can take the lead to develop rural tourism projects in their villages and rope in the people from R4 and R3 and create jobs for them. It will lead to the overall development of rural people.

Thus government need to take an initiative in this direction and decentralize the policies related to tourism, effectively synchronize macro, meso and micro-planning and as participation of rural people is a pre-requisite. A hundred entrepreneurs can come up in the area of rural tourism, provided they get support from local people and the government. This will not be materialized overnight, yet the prospect is very high with good planning and aggressive marketing strategy.

## 4.2 Key to Success of Rural Tourism

Successful delivery of tourism services to the visitor is key to success, it depends on the education and skills of the service providers. It depends on they are recruiting, training and educating, managing, valuing, rewarding, and supporting each other in the process of continuously developing their knowledge (Fa' ilte Ireland, 2005a, p. 8).

Burns (1997, p. 240) notes discussed that 'soft' skills are more important in the service sector compare to 'hard' skills like technical skills. Burns and many other researchers tried to identify those 'soft' skills with attitudinal and emotional. Hence, they emphasize on two aspects such as social skills and interpersonal skills, which are largely concerned with ensuring employees are responsive, courteous and understanding customers (Hochschild, 1983). But the recent work on 'aesthetic labour' pointed out that employees are expected to demonstrate 'soft' skills with regard to their attitude and ability to 'look good' (Warhurst & Nickson, 2001) or 'sound right'. As per the SERVQUAL model, customers' perceptions of the service encounter, the front-line service provider have to be responsive, courtesy and understanding. Beyond this, they must be good communicators, good looking, presentable, courteous, helpful and empathetic (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry,1985).

### **4.2.1 Capacity Building**

There is a need to understand the strengths and weaknesses of all potential stakeholders in developing and executing long-term strategies for rural marketing. Capacity building programmes need to be carried out in these regions so that they can satisfy the tourist better. For capacity building a series of one-day seminars could be organized to explore the potential of rural tourism in these areas in partnerships between local governments, entrepreneurs and tour operators. This type of seminar should focus on different perceptive of potential mutual benefits arising from joint participation in rural tourism development. This type of seminars will also focus on creating niche products.

### **4.2.2 Training in Tourism Skills Development**

To raise service quality and awareness on tourism, there is a need for training and development programmes to create awareness on rural tourism. It was experienced that people live in villages are very doubtful towards stranger as well as they are totally unaware of the tourism potential of their areas, and they are uncertain about the development of tourism sector. Besides this, participation of the residents of the rural area is low in decision-making processes due to social structure and political environment. The entrepreneurs who are successful in developing rural tourism can share their experiences with the upcoming entrepreneurs. One-day seminars for beginners could be a great benefit for the employees as well as employers.

Beyond the knowledge and skills of the service provider, other factors like investment in hotel, transport, infrastructure etc also play a significant part in the success of rural tourism.

Growth and expansion of the tourism sector were never considered an important instrument for rural development. Rarely any funding is available for the development of Rural Tourism from any national or international agencies for tourism development. Ministry of Tourism is focusing on the macro levels of tourism development; they are spending on advertisement in electronic media like television and internet, print media like newspapers and magazines, billboard and posters in railway stations and airports. To promote tourism internationally, Ministry of Tourism is spending lots of money on promotional activities especially on 'Incredible India' to attract international tourists and by investing in developing tourism infrastructure, hotels and resorts. To promote rural tourism as an appropriate complementary product, the government has to spend on the development of rural tourism. Government has to shift their priorities towards rural tourism by involving local communities and giving them a degree of control as hosts. Before involving the local people in hosting, the government must spend more time and money to train the rural people, so that they can do the hosting effectively. To increase tourist spending on rural tourism, they have to be trained to create a niche product by giving something extra or unique in terms of resources, site, purpose, activities to attract the tourist.



### **4.3 How Barriers are Being Tackled by the Stakeholders**

Rural tourism is in a nascent stage and 84 percent of the respondents agreed that rural tourism has great potential in India. According to 90 percent of the respondents, the stakeholders are facing lots of challenges. 76 percent of the respondents said that they are not getting any support from the government. These challenges are tackled by the stakeholders on the number of fronts; they are trying to develop strategies focusing on economic and non-economic benefits as well as the government and stakeholders are developing strategies focusing on policy reforms to unlock opportunities for the rural community at all levels.

#### **4.3.1 Strategies Focusing on Economic Benefits of Rural Community**

The entrepreneurs have adopted tools and techniques to expand their business opportunities and employment opportunities and collective benefit of the rural community.

##### **4.3.1.1 Strategies for Expanding Business Opportunities for Rural Community**

The entrepreneurs are expanding their business opportunities by promoting rural tourism through digital marketing, they are developing a website, giving advertisements on internet in different tour and travel sites, making advertisements in newspapers and magazines, they are promoting their site by arranging meetings and picnics for corporate. They are engaging the school students in different farming activities like ploughing, driving tractors, sowing seeds, plucking fruits and vegetables and by organizing different sports activities like swimming, football matches, tracking, cycling, boating, fishing etc. The expanding business opportunities for the rural retailers, who are selling locally produced handicrafts and handlooms. They are also increasing the opportunity for the retailers to selling different goods and services to the tourist. Sixty-four percent of the respondents agreed that entrepreneurs and service providers are expanding their business opportunities by promoting rural tourism through digital marketing, they are developing a website, giving advertisements on internet in different tour and travel sites, making advertisements in newspapers and magazines, they are promoting their site by arranging meeting and picnics for corporate.

##### **4.3.1.2 Expanding Employment Opportunities for Rural Community**

The tourism sector is labour intensive industry, it gives ample opportunity to create jobs for both skilled and unskilled employers, and hence they are employing starting from managers to attendants. They are employing local rural people based on their education. Then they are giving them proper training soft skills and hard skills so that they can impart their duties effectively. Eighty percent of the respondents agreed that the growth in rural tourism will expand the employment opportunities for the rural community.

### **4.3.1.3 Enhancing Collective Benefits for Rural Community**

The growth in rural tourism always have a positive effect on community development and the benefits spread beyond the direct beneficiaries, starting from the tour operator, transport provider, suppliers, retailers, security providers and others involved directly or indirectly are also getting the benefits. The success of this sector depends heavily on the attitudes of the local community and the quality of service provided to the customers. Eighty three percent of the respondents agreed that growth in rural tourism will enhance collective benefits for the rural community.

## **4.3.2 Strategies Focusing on Non-Economic Benefits of Rural Community**

The entrepreneurs have adopted different non-economic to expand their business opportunities by competency mapping and capacity building through training, and development programmes for empowering the employees and mitigating the positive strength of tourism in the rural community.

### **4.3.2.1 Capacity Building, Training and Empowerment for Employees**

The rural people generally lack in skill and knowledge in taking advantage of opportunities. The entrepreneurs are appointing corporate trainers to give soft skill training to the employees, especially those who are working in front-line. Some of them are giving their employees training on spoken English, etiquettes and on personnel grooming. Most of the service providers are focusing on the service quality, so that they will come back again and recommend others to visit the site. Eighty-five percent of the respondents agreed that the service providers are sending money on capacity building, training and development of skills and knowledge of their employees. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents agreed that entrepreneurs should invest in capacity building through different training and development programmes for empowering the employees.

### **4.3.2.2 Mitigating the Effect of Tourism on Rural Community**

Tourism may affect the natural beauty of the site and it may lead to the development of the artificial landscape. This will help in creating the comfort of the tourist be it will lead to dislocation of the local residents from their own territory and degrade the natural resources which may affect the life of the rural community. So, the growth should planned in such a method that it will bring positive effect on the society. Sixty-two percent of the respondents agreed that growth in rural tourism may affect natural rural beauty and displace the people from native land.

### **4.3.2.3 Addressing Social and Cultural Impacts of Tourism**

Tourist attitudes and behaviour may ruin the traditional culture of the rural community. The culture of the rural community may get affected by the tourists' behavior, attitude and

culture like taking pictures and western practice etc. It may lead to cultural interruption which may affect society.

### **4.3.3 Strategies Focused on Policy/Process Reform**

The entrepreneurs have a focus on policy and process to build supportive policy and planning framework, promote the participation of rural community and bring big players to the rural tourism sector.

#### **4.3.3.1 Making Policy Framework**

Most of the rural residents and governments see rural tourism as a means of employment and income, to generate foreign exchange rather than as a tool to migration address and poverty. The government policy framework should restrain the progress in a form of transformation, which will bring positive changes in the rural community. Some states like Kerala, Rajasthan, Punjab government is putting effort to promote rural tourism. Seventy-five percent of the respondents agreed that supportive policy and planning framework of government can bring changes in rural areas.

#### **4.3.3.2 Promote Participation of Rural Community**

Ministry of Tourism has developed different programs to promote the participation of the rural community. The rural people are included in decision-making processes and in providing service to rural tourism, so that it will bring overall positive change in the society. 89 percent of the respondents agreed that promoting the participation of rural communities can bring changes in rural areas.

#### **4.3.3.3 Bringing the Big Players Into Rural Tourism**

The government policy should make the policy such that it should encourage the big players to invest in the tourism business. The big player will invest in developing skills, marketing links etc which will increase customer satisfaction. Ninety percent of the respondents agreed that government would bring in more and more big players into rural tourism to bring sustainable changes in rural life.

## **5. Conclusion**

As the world faces its biggest pandemic in a century, almost all the sectors of the economy are hit and will take a long time to recover. Unlike other business sectors, tourism will take a longer time to return to normalcy to recover because tourists need to ensure that the situation is really safe and secure before they step out to travel again. To assist the tourism sector to recover quickly after the pandemic, several actions must be carried out by the government and the stakeholders like disinfecting major tourist destinations, including hotels, in order to regain people's trust so that people feel safe to safe from Covid-19. So,

there is a lot of potential for rural tourism in India, which is less affected by pandemic due to low population density and little association with the urban areas.

Ministry of Tourism has already launched few campaigns like 'Go Rural' along with Clean India, Atithi Devo Bhava and Hunar Se Rozgaar to promote tourism. The government should encourage State Tourism Department to promote rural tourism at national and international markets. Every state in India has something unique hidden in the rural areas like natural beauty, festivals, food, culture and handicraft to sell. The state government should take initiative and identify them and promote them as a niche product of their state. It has been observed that rural tourism is neglected for many years, in spite of hidden potential in these areas they are never promoted. So, the entrepreneurs trying to promote rural tourism have to develop proper marketing strategies at micro level to reach their goal. It is impossible without the support of the government. So, they have to take the initiative to develop infrastructure without disturbing the natural beauty of rural India and act as a catalyst and liaison between stakeholders and the tourists.

The government should invest in capacity building through training and development and give technical support and assistance to the rural community to increase their understanding of the tourism industry. The joint effort will help in developing the skills of the entrepreneurs and people employed in this sector. Important elements for developing rural tourism sector all the stakeholders have to come together for creating and developing better infrastructure, and restructuring the policy to encourage more and more investment in this sector. Tourists should be astonished by wonderful surprises like agricultural activities, harvesting fruit and vegetables, horseback riding, tractor driving, natural swimming pools, playgrounds, amusement parks etc.

## 6. Managerial Implication

Based on the conclusions derived after the in-depth and comprehensive study, few implications can be drawn for the entrepreneurs working towards the development of rural tourism sector should focus on the strategies they make. Their strategies should focus on economic and non-economic benefits as well as the policy framework so that they can promote rural tourism as a niche product in India. The growth and development of rural tourism sector will not only bring positive changes in the life of the poor people, but it will bring overall positive change in rural landscape and infrastructure. The growth of this sector will bring in direct and indirect employment and income in rural areas and further it will help in earning foreign remittances.

Further research could be done to explore what else should be done to promote rural tourism in India as a niche product. New tools could be explored, which will complement the existing tools used in this research. The researchers can cover the larger geographical area in future research and may go for cross-comparison between two or more countries. New knowledge can be generated in this area of the rural tourism sector.

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