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# Conceptualization of Rural Tourism and Its Status in Himachal Pradesh

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## ABSTRACT

The research paper gives an explanation of the rural tourism. It gives various definitions related to rural tourism as given in the literature. And also narrates the problems associated with defining rural tourism in global context. Based on the content analysis, a definition of rural tourism has also been given by the researcher. Apart from it, the paper also gives explanation of rural tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

**Keywords:** rural tourism, concept of rural tourism, rural tourism in Himachal Pradesh

### Introduction

the tourism started it was seen as an eternal pmental means for the regions bestowed with natural lural possessions, but in the present days it is seen ternative option for the rural regions, which lacks cant wealth-producing resources (Chow, 1980; is, 2009; Katoch, 2014). The present traveler of 1 wants to experience good quality of life and escape sy routine resulted due to modernization, zation and industrialization (Page & Connell, 2006). e years, the man has become very conscious w.r.t ument and seeks peace of soul, mind and body. And, rsult of man has resulted in development of itive forms of tourism such as rural tourism, rism, geotourism and myriad other forms of tourism h, 2014).

ourism is a type of tourism which occurs in the /side (Lane, 1994). It provides serene surroundings, village or rural appeal and opportunity to participate oor activities in open spaces. According to lane , the attributes of rural tourism are- that they are in rural areas; based on small scale and traditional ies; rural in scale relating to small building & ents; relies on traditional attributes of countryside : complex rural environments & several forms, Rural 1 constructs unusual appeal and tourists enjoy the ness & solitude; nature; environment; biodiversity; nce of local communities, culture and their way of | freeness from urban life (Commission, 1995; Page , 1997).

But, apart, for being a rewarding experience for the tourist, it is equally a pleasing experience for the local community. It is related to native development through job creation; infrastructure development; culture restoration; environment protection and universal fraternity through promotion of understandings (Katoch, 2014). According to Hall and Jenkins (1998), the tourism flows in rural areas help in achieving diverse goals such as to maintain & create local incomes, help in building economic and social infrastructure, improve local amenities and further helps in protection of ecological and cultural resources. The review of literature of rural tourism clearly states that the aim of tourism in the rural areas is to provide opportunities for local community development. Local community development refers to benefits w.r.t economic, socio-cultural and ecological aspects. Though the development can have both negative & positive sides (Chow, 1980; Cooper et al., 2008).

There has been large number of studies on rural tourism which have focused on diverse aspects of rural tourism such as *concept of rural tourism* (Lane, 1994); *marketing of rural tourism* (Page & Getz, 1997; Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997; Roberts & Hall, 2004); *management of rural tourism* (Roberts & Hall, 2001; Hall, Roberts, & Mitchell, 2003); *rural product* (Luloff et al., 1994; Fleischer & Pizam, 1997; Edmunds, 1999; Sharpley, 2002; McDonald & Jolliffe, 2003; Iorio & Corsale, 2010); *rural tourists* (Kastenholz, 2005; Kastenholz, Cameiro, & Eusebio, 2006; Molera & Alhaladejo, 2007; Loureiro & Gonzalez, 2008; Rigg, 2014); *Impacts of rural tourism* (Chow, 1980; Cooper,

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Fyall, Gilbert, & Wanhill, 2008) and *of course on perceptions* (Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; & Pizam, 1997; Bansal, 2011; Chand, 2013). The experts too, advocate that for the efficient and complete development of the concept its timely rig (through research) should be done to see its reaction from the stakeholders. From all the stakeholders, the reaction of the local community plays an important role in the success of any form of tourism (Simpson et al., 2005; Sharpley, 2002). In order to reduce negative impacts and enhance the positive impacts, it is important to increase the engagement of the local community in tourism (Lankford & Howard, 1994; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Anderek et al., 2005) as well as to include them in its decision making process (Simpson & S. V., 1994; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Bramwell, 1999; Ashley, 2000; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Wang et al., 2010).

Very few studies have been done to see the impact of rural tourism on local community development. In the Himachal Pradesh too, very less researchers have worked on this area. The present study is an effort in this direction which focusses on the impact of rural tourism on community development in Himachal Pradesh.

#### Tourism Conceptualization

*"It is a question of striking a difficult balance between the needs of the past and the demands of the present, what is sought and what is consumed, between the aspirations of the city and the realities of the countryside"*

(Henri Grolleau, 1997)

Rural tourism is a complex form of activity where the aim is to get benefits through tourism industry, but also to maintain the traditional economies. It has to maintain a balance between the tourist experience and maintenance of values & customs. The paper is broadly divided into two parts. One part deals with rural tourism, which includes the various definitions of it. And, then gives a definition of the concept, based on review of other studies. The part two discusses about the rural tourism in Himachal Pradesh under study.

Rural tourism is a tourism which takes place in the rural areas. But, in order to have a better understanding of rural tourism, it is important to define it comprehensively which has a wider application. But, a lot of problems are associated with it, such as:

- 1. Rural areas are difficult to define owing to different definitions used by different nations;
- 2. It is difficult to define rurality concept and points of measurement are- population density and size of settlements; land use and traditional social structures.
- 3. Distinction between rural & urban is blurring due to

suburbanization, long commuting and second home development.

4. Altogether rural tourism is a multi-faceted activity based on diversity of attractions, tourism activity and agricultural base.
5. There exist great diversity in rural areas and further Tourism development and management may vary from one rural location to the other;
6. Not all forms of tourism occurring in rural level are strictly rural;
7. Historically tourism is a urban concept;
8. Though rural areas experience depopulation others are experiencing an inflow of people to retire or develop "non-traditional" businesses;
9. The concept of rural tourism is a new field, very complex and involves a lot of perspectives of the various stakeholders, agents etc (Frías and Polo, 2008; Hall, 2004; Lituchy and Rail, 2000; Roberts and Hall, 2001 & 2004; Simpson, 2008).
10. Rural Tourism needs extensive research and development as it is a new niche of tourism, which has arisen.
11. Need to understand the rural tourism market and the extent of commercial aspect involved with this concept.
12. The role and type of infrastructure, superstructures, accommodation and accessibility in rural tourism is a confusing aspect.
13. The rural tourism concept differs in developed, developing and poor countries.
14. The concept of rural tourism has to be sustainable, environmentally friendly and community oriented which makes its operation difficult (Cánoves et al., 2004; Goodwin, 1996; Hall and Brown, 2006; Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Reid, 2003; Swarbrooke, 1999; Simpson, 2008 & 2009).

The definition of rural tourism has been subject to many arguments in the various research articles & not reached a common agreement (Pearce 1989; Bramwell 1994; Komilis 1994). The rural tourism is a complex and multifaceted activity. It has its origins in farm & several other niches' within a larger niche activity (Clemenson and Lane, 1997) (see Table 1.1).

Rural Tourism extends beyond Farm Tourism to include- "Special-interest nature holidays and ecotourism, walking, climbing and riding holidays, adventure, sport and health tourism, hunting and angling, educational travel, arts and heritage tourism, and in some areas, ethnic tourism (Lane, 1994). It has been defined by various researchers in a number of ways. From the literature review it is clear that rural tourism is a tourism activity which occurs in rural areas, involve local community & sustainable in nature.

<b>Dimensions</b>	Economic, social & ecological development of local's i.e. sustainable development.
<b>Management</b>	Planning & management of the various resources.
<b>Involvement</b>	Involvement of the local community.
<b>Niche and marketing</b>	Marketing initiatives should deepen people's understanding & concern for countryside apart from attracting tourists.
<b>Nature</b>	Complex multi-faceted activity; Core (farm-stay; farm holiday; rural landscapes, rural cultures); Auxiliary (additional elements which are non-farm such as hospitality, foodservice, arts, crafts, tourist trail & outdoor activities); Augmented (government or regional programs to foster & support rural tourism).
<b>Size</b>	Rurality & all its components must be conserved; Small sized.
<b>Non-Urban</b>	Non-urban, Non-Industrial, Forest based; Peace & quiet; slower pace of life; fresh air; Non-urbanised; lots of space.
<b>Integration (Network involvement)</b>	IRT is constructed through social networks of exchange that are embedded, empowering & endogenous.
<b>Small scale</b>	Small scale of firms; Small establishments.
<b>Enriching experience</b>	Rural tourism is REAL (Rewarding, Enriches the spirit, Provides Adventure & learning).

content analysis of the various definitions given here, the generalized definition of rural tourism can be as:

#### *n of Rural Tourism*

Rural tourism may be defined as tourism phenomenon occurs in rural areas, involves complex multifaceted nature (farm & non-farm), multi-actor approach to benefit local community and provide variable, diversified & enriching experience to the tourists. Planning, management & sustainable development at local level."

#### **Development of rural tourism in Himachal Pradesh**

Rural tourism has got great prospects in Himachal Pradesh. The state is renowned throughout the globe for its beauty and is an established tourist destination for tourists all seasons. The state is too known for its customs, traditions, festivities, folklores, art & craft, history and exhibits the unique rural blend of The real culture of Himachal Pradesh dwells in villages, whether it is Naggar famous for art & craft, Jajpur for heritage or Baroh for Gurukul culture. There are many rural sites in Himachal which have great tourism potential. In order to augment tourism in rural areas, Home stay scheme was launched in Himachal Pradesh in 2008, so that tourists were able to experience tourism in the rural areas. But in true spirit the concept of rural tourism i.e. "HarGaon Ki Kahani" was launched in 2010 by Government of Himachal Pradesh. One village in every district was selected & folk tales, folklores and anecdotes related to these villages were used to entice tourists. This scheme

endeavoured to develop villages of historical significance by providing basic amenities & a glimpse of the rural life in the mountain state (KMPG, 2012). The total outlay of Rs 20243.92 crore was declared for this purpose. As per the scheme Shamsher in Kullu, Salasi in Bilaspur, Bela in Hamirpur, Sangrah in Sirmour, Baggi in Mandi, Saho in Chamba, Nerti in Kangra, Udaipur in Lahaul&Spiti, Brua in Kinnaur, Baniya Devi in Solan, Hewan in Shimla and Nari in Una have been selected.

The 89.97 percent of the total population of the state lives in the villages (Census of India, 2011). Also, the economy of the state is largely dependent on farming, horticulture, forests, and hydropower. The state has got huge market for its art & handicraft. A large number of rural locations in the state still remain untapped & have huge potential. This clearly underlines the fact that the state has great prospects for rural tourism and certainly more benefits could be passed on to the rural populace. The rank of the state is 13, in terms of visiting tourists and rural tourism further offers great scope to improve this figure through sustainable development.

In Himachal Pradesh, tourism sector contributes about 7.2% to the state GDP, which is fairly noteworthy. Owing to the rich natural and cultural resources, the state has tremendous potential and scope for further growth in Tourism. In the year 2016-17, 5,273.01 lakh under state budget has been allocated to tourism in Himachal Pradesh. The government is also giving high priority to tourism industry and backing up infrastructure development in the state to facilitate tourism development. This comprises improvement in public utility services, transportation, communication, airports and other public amenities.

(traditions, cuisines, festivities, folklores, art & craft, etc) and the natural beauty which still remains. It is also, one of the few activities, which can serve as a lifeline to the economic, social and ecological aspects of the rural areas. In the present time of globalization, capitalization, urbanization and economic restructuring the nations and various regions are struggling to fine tune and erect their economies. Tourism is a good opportunity to provide socio-economic benefits to the rural areas apart from maintaining the sustainability of the environment. But at the same time the negative impacts of tourism (such as loss of economic, social and ecological aspects) can not be ignored. And this demands research, which helps us to understand tourism phenomenon holistically to avoid unwarranted optimism and excessive negativism among the people.

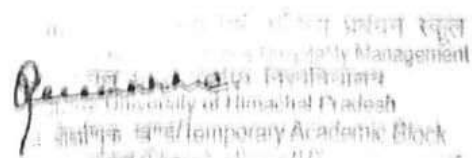
**Conclusion**

Rural tourism focuses on sustainability and to develop and preserve the rural areas by developing tourism which is beneficial for local community. It focuses on its culture; mitigating negative impacts (economic, socio-cultural and ecological); enhancing local participation in plan making and decision making process; keeping check on visitor carrying capacities; employing selective marketing strategy; strengthening local businesses; maintaining quality of tourism product & enhancing customer satisfaction; integrating agriculture & rural economy and focuses on long term goals (Lane, 2005). The power of tourism can be used to revitalize rural regions in decline. And to provide employment, income and capital flows to materially assist rural development. But rural tourism also has many challenges associated with it. The quality of tourism product, infrastructure, accessibility, skilled manpower, the involvement & support of local people, interest of investors to protect the rural destination. The challenges may further intensify complex owing to political and institutional hurdles especially in developing and less developed nations (Dixey, & Burian, 2003). All these aspects are associated with rural tourism in Himachal Pradesh. And, identifying the rural locations such as Naggar, Pragpur doing well. Still the scope is huge, just the need is to tap the potential and plug in the weaknesses through proper management and involvement of the key stakeholders including the local community.

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