
Issues Pertaining to Successful Rural Tourism in the Malda District of West Bengal.

Dr. Monirul Islam

Assistant Professor

Department of Business Administration

Aligarh Muslim University, Murshidabad Centre

ABSTRACT

On account of the green revolution in India, the rural areas are consuming a large quantity of industrial and urban manufactured products. In this context, a special marketing strategy namely, rural marketing has taken shape. Sometimes, rural marketing is confused with agricultural marketing – the later denotes marketing of produce of the rural areas to the urban consumers or industrial consumers, whereas rural marketing involves delivering manufactured or processed inputs or services to rural producers or consumers. Also, when we consider the scenario of India and China, there is a picture that comes out, huge market for the developed products as well as the labor support.

Rural tourism or tourism in rural areas is a new form of activity that can bring economic and social benefits to the society. In Asia especially in India, rural tourism in its true form is relatively new. This study identifies West Bengal, a Province in Eastern India; to explore the possibilities of the issues of growth of rural tourism that could play an important role in sustainable development of rural societies. The paper discusses on the socio-economic condition in rural West Bengal and throws light on a few potential rural tourism sites in this part of the state. The rationale behind selection of these potential rural tourism sites has been explained through brief descriptions of each of those sites. Certain projects carried out on rural/endogenous tourism in India by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India jointly with the UNDP as well as plans of the provincial government in West Bengal on rural tourism. The approaches and methods followed in the projects on rural tourism as well as comprehensive reports available from conference proceedings on rural tourism at the national level. Keeping in line with the issues of sustainability, capacity building, infrastructure, technology (ICT and telecommunications), monitoring and rural heritage, arts and culture few recommendations/ways have been suggested to establish an effective framework to develop rural tourism in a responsible manner.

Keywords: *Rural tourism, rural market, tourism ministry, opportunities, rural strengths.*

Introduction

India is a multi – destination country with a variety of tourism resources. Its rich cultural heritage has created magnificent architectural buildings & monuments. The snowcapped mountains, the beautiful beaches of coastal states offer the world tourist community some of the best & unique tourist destinations, which rejuvenate the mind, body & soul. Tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner after gem, jewellery & ready-made garments. Tourism generate more jobs than any other sector for every rupee invested. In spite of all types of tourism resources & potentialities in India we are unable to fully explore the tourism products & services to attract a size able number of International tourist. Now it is the right time to identify the right market & right consumer in this era of fierce competition among the tourism generating countries. So that India can be real **Incredible India**. India has been successfully placed as a destination in the map of World tourism. As the perceptions, attitude, is changing very fast of the present tourist communities & today's tourists are also very keen to enrich & experience about the unique features of a country. In view of the above changing pattern of the tourists steps are therefore being taken to develop the alternative strategy to promote Rural tourism in domestic & as well as International market .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 out -side main towns and seaside resorts, be they holidays, day trips, business trips or to visit friends & relatives.*

According to **Ganon 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.” Rural tourism has been seen as tool though which many problems in rural area scan be addressed in the countries like Sub Sahara, afflicted by debilitating rural poverty, tourism is perceived to be one of the few feasible options for development. (**Bride ham** and **Wickens** 2004).Any form of tourism which highlights the rural life, art, culture, heritage, at rural sites, thereby supporting the Hosts (Local) community socially, economically as well as enabling interaction among the Guests (tourists) and the Hosts (Locals) for more experience &enrichment can be called as rural tourism. This type of tourism takes place in rural sites.

Objectives of the Study

Major Objective - To understand the issues of rural tourism.

Sub objectives:

1. To find out the problems of Rural Tourism in the district of Malda.
2. To offer suggestion and make recommendations for tourism upliftment in the district.

Methodology

The present study consists of several parts. Primary data was collected through interviews and observations method. The respondents are the members of NGOs, villagers of Malda district and few staffs. The source of this study is based on the data published by Ministry of Tourism and other information available through Internet. On the other hand the secondary data was collected from various Books, Journals, Internet, Newspapers, Reports of Ministry of Tourism and also Parliamentary Committees etc.

Literature review

Suhrid Sankar Chattopadhyay (2008) in his study entitled, “Tourism in the East”, gives an account of the historical sites, mountains, forests, wildlife, sea, and the Ganges which are the attractive features in West Bengal. The study also tells that eastern railway and south eastern railway have played major roles for promoting tourism in eastern India. Besides, some of the rare information related to tourism is also given in the study. Therefore, the study contains very useful materials related to the field of tourism.

Suhrid Sankar Chattopadhyay (2010) made a study on, “Tourism in West Bengal”, highlights the importance of tourism industry. In his opinion, the present situation of tourism industry is not satisfactory. Therefore, the tourism ministry must take some effort to develop infrastructure and attract more investments in private sector.

Mahbubul Alam, Yasushi Furukawa and Salma Akter (2010) in their study on, “Forest-Based Tourism in Bangladesh: Status, Problems and Prospects,” attempts at exploring various dimensions of ecotourism industry and critically analyses the relationship among the stakeholders, overall strength-weakness of ecotourism sector in Bangladesh and impediments hindering its development. National parks, Ecoparks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Game Reserves, and the like have been developed in the natural forest ecosystems to attract tourists. This study identifies a number of impediments, including conflict among the stakeholders and forest degradation hindering expansion of ecotourism industry.

Analysis & Interpretation

Significance of rural tourism in West Bengal

Rural tourism's greatest potential benefit is its ability to generate money, which can translate into numerous positive economic opportunities for locals and their communities. For locals the first benefit of tourism development is jobs within the tourism sectors and outside of it. Tourism development means more income and profits for tourism related business. The economic multiplier model suggests that if local income from tourist expenditures is spent within local area, an increase in local income & jobs will follow. The following items will highlight the significance of Rural Tourism in West Bengal.

- 1) The concept of Rural Tourism is definitely helpful & effective for a state like West Bengal where a sizeable population lives in villages. Different villages have different types of tourism resources, which is scattered, in the entire state. (The Zamindar houses, Handicrafts, folk-lore & Folk music etc.)
- 2) Rural tourism can check & can stop the flow of people to migrate in Cities. The gradual expansion 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 solution to this problem.
- 3) Sometime rural economy adversely affected due to the increase in input costs and decrease in income. Number of debt-ridden farmers forced to commit suicides. Systematic efforts to promote rural tourism as a subsidiary occupation can attract this trend with balanced regional development.
- 4) A notable advantage of Rural Tourism compared to other types of economic activity for combating rural poverty is that as the consumer travels to a rural destination, there exists an opportunity for a direct economic linkage between the tourist and the rural poor, for example, through the selling and buying of handicrafts. (Handicrafts, village, shilpagram, rural hat, etc).
- 5) Small-scale enterprise development aided by microfinance schemes has a significant potential for enhancement of rural livelihood opportunities.
- 6) This concept has the tremendous potentiality to attract the investors in rural areas (Farm house, Agro based Industry, Organic fertilizer & rural development schemes).
- 7) Promotion of harmony & understanding
- 8) Restoration of Culture
- 9) Environmental preservation & Community development

STATEMENT OF TOURIST INFLOW INTO WEST BENGAL

YEAR	DOMESTIC TOURISTS	FOREIGN TOURISTS	TOTAL
1999	47,02,735	1,98,713	49,01,448
2000	47,37,112	1,97,061	49,31,173
2001	49,43,097	2,84,092	52,27,189
2002	88,44,232	5,29,366	93,73,598
2003	1,13,00,763	7,05,457	1,20,06,220
2004	1,23,80,000	7,60,000	1,31,40,000
2005	30,22,971	8,95,639	39,18,610
2006-2007	1,55,00,000	10,25,000	1,65,25,000
2008	NA	NA	52,82,603
2009	NA	NA	51,67,699
2010	NA	NA	57,75,692
2011	NA	NA	63,09,222
2012	NA	NA	65,77,745
2013	NA	NA	69,67,601
2014	NA	NA	76,79,099
2015	NA	NA	80,27,133

Source: Department of Tourism, Government of West Bengal.

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, with the help of State tourism departments has identified 31 villages across the country as tourist spots and providing Rs.50.00 lakh as financial assistance for each project. Besides, an additional amount of Rs 20 lakh would be provided for developing logistic facilities and starting community participation centers through self-help groups. Till June 2007 only 25 projects have been successfully completed or are in the verge of completion in the 16 states. The remaining projects are either not completed or have been recently sanctioned. The implementation of this scheme has been done through a convergence committee set up under the district collector. There are many other spots of potential tourist interest where adequate infrastructure needs to be developed. In the Annual plan 2006-2007, an amount of Rs.439.00 crore has been allocated for the purpose against Rs. 369.00 crore allocated in 2005-06. (Ramakumar and Shinde, 2008)

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 (administrative) problems.
- 5) Shortage of trained manpower
- 6) Insufficient financial support
- 7) Lack of proper physical communications.
- 8) Lack of basic business planning skills.

Few famous tourist destination in Bengal

In the rural villages & plains of Murshidabad & Fulia (Handloom Weaving) , Purulia (Dokra Art), Midnapore (Tribal Arts & Life), Santiniketan & Bolpur (Tagore Painting & Literature, Baul Songs), Jhargram (Village Life), Krishnanagar (Clay Modeling & Pottery) jungles of Sunderbans (Honey Collection) and in the Darjeeling (Tea Plantation), Kurseong, Lamahatta, Lolegaon (Heritage Forest / Canopy Walks), Rishyap, Lava (Small Treks), Kalimpong region where there are a few newly developed destinations for leisure holidays to experience the rural everyday life.

Staying in cottages or huts, fishing, small walks, cooking, learning local handicrafts or simply doing nothing are some of the options travelers ask for. Some basic facilities are being extended to guest who may not confirm to facilities with other International tourism standards but promises the factual village & rural life of Bengal and 70% of India, with some form of adventure for the guests. There are number of such home stay facilities in the region. The visit helps the economy, buying local products, buying art materials and using local villagers as guide or help. A concept fast catching up by most of the guest is the home stay, which is arranged and run by villagers and it includes staying in Tea Gardens or Tea Estate or villages or a whole village set up made especially for the guest. It also a part of responsible tourism and ecotourism with Bird watching, Short trails, Angling, River Rafting, Clay modeling, etc are part of the stay. Some of the offbeat village life & eco-tourism facilities in the Plains on offer are regularly experienced by the guests.

Conclusion

If a proper planning is done rural tourism, could bring lots of benefit to our society. It could be a sustainable revenue-generating project for the rural people of our state. It can help inflow to resources from urban to the rural economy. It can also 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 also. On the other hand Environmental management, sound legislation, sustainable marketing, local peoples participation & realistic planning are crucial factors for the development of rural tourism in west Bengal.

Rural tourism will emerge as an important instrument for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation, employment generation, environment regeneration and development of remote areas and advancement of women and other weaker section of the society. However, the present work, first of its kind, is expected to fill the vacuum and provide some amount of academic and utilitarian value. The findings and suggestions of the study would also be useful in formulating effective plans and program for sound development of the tourism in the state.

Acknowledgement

The author is highly thankful and indebted to Dr. Badaruddoza, the Director of Aligarh Muslim University, Murshidabad Centre for motivating and promoting the research in this vertical. Also the researcher is delighted from the director for the kind of support and avenues provided for carrying out this kind of research based study.

References

1. Betz, C. J. et al. An Examination of Recreation and Tourist Behaviors of Rural Residents and Travelers: Implications for Rural Tourism Development, Abstracts of the Proceedings of the 1991 NRPA Leisure Research Symposium held during the 1991 National Congress for Recreation and Parks, October 17-20, 1991, Baltimore, Maryland, 199-12)
2. Bond, M. H., (1988), Finding Universal Dimensions of Individual Variation in Multicultural Studies of Values: The Rokeach and Chinese Values Survey. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 55(Dec 88): 1009-15
3. Britton, S. G. (1982), The Political Economy of Tourism in the Third World, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 9 (2), pp. 331-584)
4. Cohen, E. (1979), Rethinking the sociology of tourism, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 6, pp. 18-355)
5. De Kadt, E. (1979), *Tourism: Passport to development? Perspective on the social and cultural Effects of Tourism in Developing Countries*; Oxford University Press. London
6. Jafari, J. (1989), Socio-cultural dimensions of tourism. An English language literature review In: J. Bystrzanowski ed.: *Tourism as a Factor of Change*; The Vienna Centre, Vienna, Austria.
7. Lundberg, D.E. (1976), *The tourist business*. Boston: CBI Publishing Management
8. Sharma, J.K. (2000), *Tourism Planning and Development – A new perspective* Kanishka Publishers, distributors, New Delhi
9. Suhrid Sankar Chattopadhyay, "Tourism in West Bengal", *Front Line*, Vol.27, No.6, 2010, pp.108-109.

Websites

- [1] Banglar Mukh, the official portal of the West Bengal State Government, retrieved on 03rd August, 2017 from <http://wb.gov.in/portal/banglarMukh>
- [2] The official portal of Government of West Bengal, Department of Tourism, retrieved on 01st August, 2017 from <http://www.wbtourism.gov.in>.