**Tourism in Rural Areas: A study of Himachal**

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**Abstract:**

The focus of this research is on rural areas and rural tourism. In addition to descriptive study, theoretical understanding is provided to cover both elements. The research next describes and clarifies rural and rural tourism in the context of Himachal State. This research is mostly theoretical; although suggestions are generated from case studies .The case studies perspective is brought into the discussion, making the context more focused to present some suggestions that can be beneficial to promote both rural tourism and rural areas. This research views rural areas not only as an instrument to attract a tourist but as a means of economic generation and community development at large. In addition, rural areas are emphasized as a focus of rural life, art, culture and heritage.

Keywords: Rural Tourism, Rural Areas, Himachal

**Introduction**

In concept, rural tourism was often promoted as an effective strategy for rural development and regeneration. This type of special-interest tourism plays a key role in rural restructuring in response to the global decline in farm incomes, structure rural communities by creating employment and preventing emigration**. (Xue & Kerstetter, 2018) .**Rural tourism has gained a global perspective in the last few decades. Rural tourists are especially interested in the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, local communities. This research understands the existing trend of rural tourism and rural places at Himachal Pradesh. Based on a case-study viewpoint, this research addresses basic theoretical analysis of the two relevant terms: rural tourism and rural places.

**Rural Tourism: Features and Forms**

Rural tourism is a form of Special Interest tourism that addresses rich traditions, legacy, and values that should be well-marketed in order to educate people about ancient cultures. **(Verma, & Jain, 2018)**.Rural travel helps people to detach from the demands of daily life and reconnect with their interests and connections**. (Lewis & D'Alessandro, 2019).** Some scholars considered rural tourism, in the 1970s and 1980s, a new sort of tourism, which become popular in many rural areas, regardless of whether they were designated as scenic or protected areas. It was recognized as a worthwhile activity that had both rural regeneration benefits and was managed by markets, rural people and communities, and governments. **((Lane, & Kastenholz, 2015).**

**Gao and Wu (2017)** addressed the four key elements of successful Integrated rural tourism were embeddedness, non-embeddedness, endogeneity, and empowerment. In theory, rural tourism was seen multidimensional, encompassing farm/agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, natural tourism, adventure tourism, and ecotourism, among other things. In contrast to traditional tourism, rural tourism was characterized by the following characteristics: experience-oriented, the locations were sparsely populated, primarily in a natural environment and based on the preservation of culture, heritage, and traditions, and it mixed with seasonality and local events. **(Mohan, 2020).** A rural tourist is generally attracted towards a place that showcases rural culture and art. **Jha (2021**) clarifies that the goal of rural tourism product was to provide tourists with personalized contact, a taste of the unique village life, and the opportunity to engage them in local activities, traditions, and lifestyles. Only the rural tourists, who visit rural destinations, were primarily interested in true rural experiences and sports. **(Lo, Chin, Law & Fung-Yee, 2017)**. A study of **Hung-Che ,Ching-Chan & Chi-Han (2017)** defined rural tourism as a new form of tourism that takes place in rural areas, and it makes use of the unique natural environment, pastoral landscape, folk culture and customs, farming culture, rural villages, and other resources to provide tourists with sightseeing, leisure, experience, fitness, entertainment, and shopping opportunities’.

**Rural Place:** A primary motivation for rural regions to promote tourism was economic improvement. For many developing countries with extensive rural areas, tourism offers a comparative advantage because of a wide range of unspoiled natural environments. Such rural regions promote tourism to gain potential economic benefits and to attract direct foreign investment (**Ryu, Kisang ,Pazhayaparampil ,Kim & Ryu, 2020).**  These destinations pull in tourists and support rural tourism. Initially, in the beginning of developing rural areas ,the villagers turned local resources into products that the rural economy could trust, while maintaining rural social order through intimate social relationships. Since then, villages affected by external processes such as globalization, industrialization, urbanization and computerization have become increasingly dependent on cities and their markets**. (Li, Westlund & Liu,2019).** Moreover, "rural areas" were considered heterogeneous in many aspects including markets, resources, institutional arrangements, social capital, and culture**.** The term rural tourism not cover only agricultural tourism, but also for enjoying the rural life within the community and enjoying beautiful rural landscapes and maintaining prosperity and quality of the environment. (**Fang, 2020).** Rural Tourism and Rural areas have close relation with each other as rural tourism intended to support social and economic development in rural areas. Tourism can be an important source of employment for rural communities. Tourism not only provides local residents with business opportunities, but also improves the quality of life in the area. Tourism can also support local culture by facilitating the restoration of local and regional historic sites**.** As **Rinaldi, & Salerno**, (2019) clarified that employment opportunities were generated through the promotion of rural tourism and strengthened the ethnic culture of Ladakh, inland areas of Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh or the North East region by promoting cultural expressions such as traditional cuisine, religious trails and festivals . The natural and religious resources impact the travel choices made by tourists. Rural places can be characterized in different ways, but essentially, they obtain significance from connections with tourists. In the present study, an attempt has been made to highlight the role of rural tourism and rural areas in Himachal Pradesh. The state has immense rural resources and this paper stresses the opportunities and benefits of rural areas for the development of tourism.

# Case:

The Government of Himachal Pradesh has launched a scheme called Har Gaon Ki Kahani (the story of every village), in addition to the ‘Home Stay Scheme’, which was launched in the year 2008 and became successful and favorite with the tourists thronging the suburban and rural areas of the province. Under ‘Har Gaon Ki Kahani’, fascinating tales, folklore and anecdotes related to the remote villages in Himachal Pradesh are set to attract and engage the tourists. This scheme aims at developing villages of historic significance as tourism villages by providing necessary amenities and enabling the tourists to peep into the rustic life of this state.

Thus, the very essence of rural tourism is local cooperation and community involvement through appropriate forms of networking, arguably one of the most important requirements of rural tourism. The problem of rural development and planning is one of the most complex contemporary themes, because it quintessentially involves balancing the requirement of conservation of rural economic, environmental, social and cultural diversity of the country on the one hand and modernization of rural life on the other. This study is about the villages of district **kangra , karreri and kahbru .** Karreri and Kahbru both are trek points. Kareri is trek of 14 km and same Kahbru is trek of 5 km both are located on different places

**Karreri and Kahbru Village:**

As karrei is village from where you can start your trek to karreri lake a natural Lake and to reach kahbru village you have to take cab or bus from Shahpur local bus stand in district kangrakhbru is village where the attraction is Natural Waterfall. The waterfall is nestled in between the dense forest and amid the lush green hills. Being located at the Kangra district, the Khabru Waterfall is like something out of a fairy tale. From the regular hustle-bustle of the heavy traffic, Khabru Waterfall is a real solace. If you walk or trek from the Boh Village to the Khabru Waterfall, it will take you six kilometers. Once you have reached the top of the waterfall, you will notice the gradual change that nature has been going through. Youngsters are very enthusiastic about trekking in the Khabru Waterfalls. The mesmerizing water ripples and flows from a height of almost 50 feet. Thewaterfall is surrounded by rich and dense flora and fauna. It can be a wonderful place for biodiversity reserve. However, not many know about the Khabru Waterfall and the mystic beauty that this place with carries. The natural flowing spring water is in abundance running down the valley. On one side, there is the natural chilly water of the Khabru Waterfall and the other side is filled the greenery of the valley. The villagers of the Boh village mostly depend on agriculture as there is no shortage of water there. The area has good transport connection.

**Socio-cultural impact:**

Since the income from tourism is much higher than what rural people can earn from agriculture, tourism has been willingly accepted in many rural areas in spite of its negative effects. It is widely recognized that such negative impacts on rural communities have become stronger, and that rural tourism must be modified to give rural people its benefits. Poorly planned tourism can mean that villages are invaded by foreign visitors with different values, disrupting rural culture and environment. In village like khabru people use their home as accommodation for the guest or tourist they give them as paying guest provide everything from the kitchen garden.

**Positive Socio-Cultural Impact:**

•The rural people will learn the modern culture. They will learn to come out of their traditional values and beliefs. They will adopt different practice of modern society

• Education and health of the rural community will improve.

• Provide higher standard of living or the rural people.

• Cultural understanding through fairs and festivals.

• Exchange of cultural will be beneficial for both tourist and the rural people.

• Reduce migration of rural people to urban areas.

• Market for local agro products and handicrafts will develop in rural areas

**Suggestions**

The tourist wishes to see a new landscape and wish to fulfill not only needs of recreation, calmness and revitalizing, but also learning about nature and the rural life. Rural tourism, thus, can be considered as a stable/sustainable source of livelihood in the rural areas. Some recommendations can be made for further improvement in the following ways:

* Government should get involve to promote tourism in rural areas by providing accommodation to the guest
* Private sector partnerships and public-private partnerships should be incorporated.
* Proper development of basic infrastructure, tourist facilities, well trained tour guide enhancement of communication networks etc.
* Enhancement of the role of media in promoting tourism.
* State government should provide proper infrastructure for rural tourism development.
* Recording and formation of cultural map of Himachal which will include the existing and potential rural tourist spots and all the socio-economic elements that may contribute to the development of rural tourism.
* Promotion and advertising of rural tourism initiatives, which have been well organized and effective.
* Inspiring for infrastructural activities with sustainable rural development and enhancing transportation networks as well as production and supply of the needed goods and services for visitors.
* Those who want to visit and get connected with the region for its beautiful traditional poems, songs etc.

**Conclusion**

Tourists can enquire about the rural culture, traditions and generate awareness about rural tourism and what sorts of activities they can do at the rural places. A different perspective towards rural tourism has been explored by which the Khabru village can get benefits in the form of destination branding and promotion strategies. The Khabru village of Himachal Pradesh can become a location of rural tourism with the joint collaboration of the government, NGOs and community. For the promotion of rural tourism in the Khabru village, much effort is needed to launch new and ambitious initiatives to all major stakeholders. From the point of view of the “,Khabru village’’ of Himachal Pradesh there is the need for proper development of basic infrastructure, tourist facilities and well trained tour guides. This can also support both marketing and branding of this place, which, in turn, helps rural tourism in this destination. This paper assures that rural destinations are no longer areas that showcase the rural customs and traditions but within the modern time they become destinations of social integration. A rural area should have most or all of the above qualities to ensure its development and advancement in terms of rural tourism, which can be an area of future research.

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