



Reflection on Rural youth empowerment and addressing the issues of community tourism – New trends

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Abstract

Community tourism is one of the emerging trends of tourism. The Community tourism if linked with rural youth empowerment strategies is one of the supportive phases of rural tourism. If community is aware of the commercial benefits of the local tourism development, then regional growth is positively influenced by the tourism development of strategies taken up by concerned local government and local community. A community has to wake up to the benefits of community tourism prospects in right direction and rural youth can prove right hand in such endeavors. But rural youth empowerment to make them responsive to benefits of community tourism comes with numerous challenges as well. The rural Indian suffers from several infrastructural lacunas which are severely proved detrimental to rural growth. In such cases developing tourism destinations would be not only risky but impossible as well. Government has taken several diversification initiatives to make rural tourism branch out as Pastoral tourism, Social tourism , Community tourism, farm tourism, Agro tourism, Folk tourism, etc. Several states have also taken numerous initiatives in making these emerging branches of tourism more prominent to visitors both indigenous and foreign tourists.

Key words: Rural youth empowerment, rural tourism prospects, community tourism, emerging trends

Introduction

The rural youth form nearly 45% of the population of rural India. Rural India is facing unemployment, poor access to higher education, poor access to internet connectivity, poor energy solution, poor transport, communication facilities etc. The issues of digital divide have made rural poor youth exceedingly intricate to open up the global employment opportunities. This has increased joblessness ratio and this is unconstructively forcing them to migrate to urban centers in search of sustainable opportunities of livelihood. Studies have shown that 50 % of the rural youth are becoming unemployable as they lack vocational skills, nearly 69 % of the rural youth are finding jobs below their qualifications, 34% of the rural youth are working in jobs which are not related to their studies. These rural youth can involve voluntarily in drafting impact assessments studies on past projects such as solutions for displacement, farmer education initiatives, obtaining access to governmental programs, models for demanding rights, and literacy improvements. The urban migration of the rural youth is reaching newer heights annually. This migration is alarmingly disconnecting the rural youth from community issues.

This chart shows the increasing rural to urban migration in India

1951	62 million	17%
2011	377 million	31%
2025	600 million	42.5%

Source: The Report of the census of India Government of India publication New Delhi 2011.

In 2010, 29.8 percent of all Indians lived below the national poverty line, while 33.8 percent of rural Indians lived below the national rural poverty line, according to World Bank data.

The rural regions have become old age homes as only aged people are surviving with lease support from local government and community. This migration has made the rural women further sufferers as they are left with very few choices of livelihood opportunities. All these sections of rural community have become vulnerable and are entirely reliant on government initiatives to support them.

Viewing the increasing rural unemployment, Government diversified the tourism sector with introduction of

1. Pastoral Tourism,
2. Social Tourism,
3. Community Tourism,
4. Farm Tourism,
5. Agro Tourism
6. Folk Tourism.

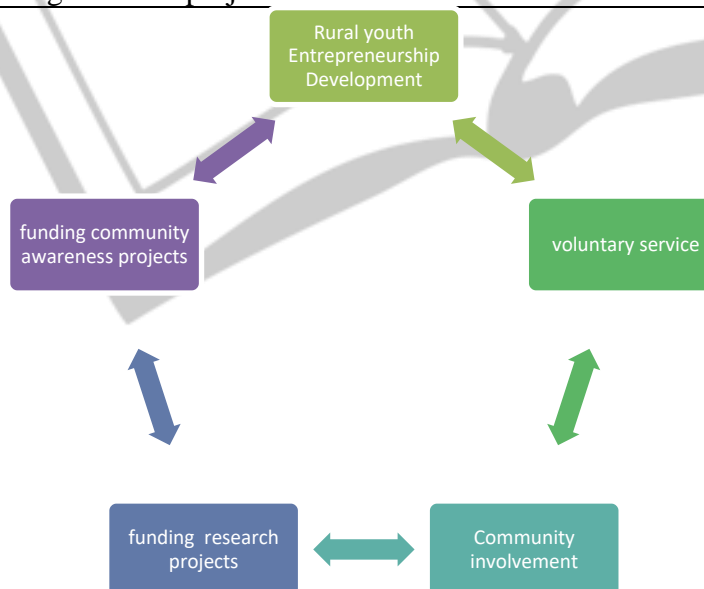
All these types of rural tourism initiatives helped the local rural communities with income generating small employment opportunities. Even though government initiatives supported rural communities, it was felt that seasonality of the tourism landed the rural people in bigger distress. Rural communities were benefited through tourism only during farm seasons and otherwise they faced idleness for the rest of the seasons.

Viewing these problems a need was felt for empowering rural youth and several government and non government organizations are involved in training rural youth towards engaging community tourism.

Rural youth Development & prospects for community development

The rural youth can involve in several voluntarily supportive assistance to tourism sector through

1.	Rural youth Entrepreneurship Development
2.	Contribution of voluntary service
3.	Community involvement
4.	Funding community awareness
5.	Funding research projects



Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Development -Youth can be trained to become small scale entrepreneurs. As entrepreneurs they can set up tourist management systems facilitating tourist destinations which supports in appropriate management of basic infrastructure including drinking water and waste water management, solid waste & garbage management, health care & hygiene management etc. Youth entrepreneurs can set up tourist a training management system which helps in preparing online training modules for training youth in awareness promotion about elementary requirements at tourist destinations. These qualified volunteers can be accommodating in creating awareness on safe & pure drinking water, sanitation, environmental effects of open defecation, need for hygienic practices among vulnerable communities , healthy physical education habits among children , eco management etc. This helps in keeping the tourist destinations clean and hygienic, besides this initiative adds to totality of satisfaction of tourists. Youth entrepreneurship schooling also supports organizing workshops & capacity building sessions for rural youth in eco friendly habits, sanitation management , pure drinking water, disaster risk management, disaster risk reduction etc.

Community involvement & rural Youth development

Youth entrepreneurs can offer voluntary service through involvement along with all community stakeholders. Rural youth can offer assistance to rural women about the promotion of renewable energy technology such as smokeless woodstoves, bio-gas plants, solar stoves, solar home lighting solutions, solar road lighting systems, solar fences, solar walls, solar energy resale options, and solar lamps for electric meters in rural regions. Rural youth can offer assistance to rural communities through establishment of local industries with strategies to develop rural landscapes & greenbelts, managing regional level bio-degradable waste recycling, migrant labor management programs, providing shelter, health and financial services such as road side schools for migrant labor children, promotion of healthy living for migrant labor population, arranging for temporary sheds for labor groups etc. This also avoids seasonality of tourism proceeds and helps rural youth in maintaining consistency of profits and income.

Community involvement and social tourism

Rural Youth can involve in social tourism including promotion of community tourism. This involves all stake holders of the community towards creation of awareness and safeguarding tourist destinations from any prohibitive activities. This volunteerism benefits the local community to become conscious towards eradicating social evils, dealing youth unemployment. These initiatives will support the rural locality to march towards establishing equitable & empowered rural society.

Enlargement of local grassroots level organizations

Success of any government sponsored tourism development initiative depends on enlargement of local grassroots level organizations and promotion of participatory rural associations such as rural women self help organizations, youth associations, rural social voluntary associations etc in community volunteerism. Any number of such self proposed collaborative participatory networks clearly addresses tourism related issues and challenges in community specific issues.

Identification of the community issues

The rural youth can help the nation in early identification of the community issues which further helps the policy makers to understand the seriousness of the issues & helps them to frame long term policies. The rural youth involvement can make community to pressurize the government to form policies towards specific issues

specially drinking water , hygiene, sanitation, garbage disposal , health care education , water management, plastic recycling , waste management etc. The rural youth can help the community to involve in tourism social inclusion.

Funding community awareness projects- Rural tourism can be more rewarding if it is linked with community awareness projects. Rural people often endure digital divide and regional divide challenges. They are uninformed of global growth and global development in tourism sector. Hence, it becomes necessary that local government have to think of initiatives to fund community awareness projects. These projects will certainly help rural youth in understanding and identifying community issues more closely at grass root levels. If issues are appropriately identified then tourism prospects will blossom to newer heights. Information on agricultural production agricultural market prices, rural youth consumer trends, cereal crops marketing & management, cattle health & livestock management, dairy development, fisheries management agro food marketing & management etc will support community awareness projects.

Conclusion

Thus, framing of policies regarding funding research and development studies in rural youth empowerment is of utmost necessity to promote rural tourism. The government initiatives have to focus on funding research and development studies in rural youth which can positively benefit in augmenting tourism prospects at local level. But rural youth empowerment can be more effective when identification of the community issues is linked with tourism policy framing.

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