

## **Challenges of rural tourism - Time to reconsider women as instruments of rural tourism promotion**

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**Abstract:** Promotion of Rural tourism through women can be considered as a great growing sector. The rural tourism can play a very decisive role in the changing global economic scenario. The liberalized economies have paved way for out pouring opportunities to attract consumers. The development of rural tourism through women entrepreneurship can be a way towards women empowerment. This paper examines issues relating to rural women as promoters of rural tourism, their identities in rural tourism, & issues relating to prospective strategies which can prove beneficial to promotion of rural tourism through women.

**Key words:** Rural women, tourism challenges, promotional benefits, role of government, prospective strategies

### **Introduction**

Tourism growth potential can be harnessed as a strategy for Rural Development. The development of a strong platform around the concept of Rural Tourism is definitely useful for a country like India, where almost 74% of the population resides in its 7 million villages. Across the world the trends of industrialization and development have had an urban centric approach. Alongside, the stresses of Urban

lifestyles have led to a “counter urbanization” syndrome. This has led to growing interest in the rural areas. ( Sri Lakshamma .K.- Empowerment Of Women - Serials Publication 2008). At the same time this trend of urbanization has led to falling income levels, lesser job opportunities in the total areas leading to an urbanization syndrome in the rural areas. Rural Tourism is one of the few activities which can provide a

solution to these problems. Besides, there are other factors which are shifting the trend towards rural tourism like increasing levels of awareness, growing interest in heritage and culture and improved accessibility, and environmental consciousness. In the developed countries, this has resulted in a new style of tourism of visiting village settings to experience and live a relaxed and healthy lifestyle. This concept has taken the shape of a formal kind of Rural Tourism. . ( Market research division, ministry of tourism, government of India. 2012) and Sri Lakshamma .K.-Empowerment of Women -Serials Publication 2008).

These days' people want to relax with leisure in a cool rural country side away from city life. Rural home stays gained popularity in European countries because the people wanted to know about rural people their arts & crafts their life styles their social customs their skills etc. India being a land of villages can

be more popular as a tourist destination. India being culturally plural & multi ethnic society can be made to attract local & foreign tourists if the policy framers redesign the tourism policy to include women as prime stake holders in policy making.

### **Objectives of Study**

1. This paper examines issues relating to rural women as promoters of rural tourism
2. This paper examines issues relating to rural women's identities in rural tourism
3. This paper examines issues relating prospective strategies in promotion of tourism

### **Initiatives of the Ministry of Tourism**

Initiative of the ministry of Tourism has been great influence on promotion of rural tourism. IT is focusing on the rural tour circuits. The ministry is focusing on home stay arrangement with greater push for foreign as well as native tourists. Rural Holiday

circuits which are now being focused are Hodka, Kachchh District, Gujarat, Kumbalangi, Ernakulam District, Kerala, Aranmula, Pathanamthitta District, Kerala Karaikudi (Chettinad), Sivaganga District, Tamil Nadu Pochampalli, Nalgonda District, Andhra Pradesh, Banawasi, Uttar Kannada District, Karnataka, Pranpur, Ashok Nagar District, Madhya Pradesh, Naggar, Kullu District, Himachal Pradesh .(The report of the Tourism ministry, Government of India 2011).The Rural Tourism centers which are around main cities with better connectivity are promoted actively India can do better if standards of accommodation provided at rural tourism centers can meet the expectations of comfort needed by international tourists.(Market research division, ministry of tourism, government of India. 2012).

Heavy emphasis is being given by Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India while financing the schemes. Some of the centers have really come up very well like

Raghurajpur in Orissa , Lachen in North District Sikkim , Samode (Jaipur), Aranmula(Kerala), Pranpur (Madhya Pradesh) to name a few centers which are ready to accept international tourists.

### **Challenges of Rural Tourism**

1. The success of rural tourism depends on the projects & destinations. The rail road connectivity plays a decisive role in success of such tourism. Government should see that destinations chosen should be very near to nearby rail junction of road terminal.
2. While choosing a destination as a rural tourism spot government should see that such a place is famous for its arts crafts festivities customary tradition unique handicrafts etc.
3. The role of capacity building programs is very significant .the rural local people should be trained to project their place as a unique touring destinations. Women should be given training through orientations & group discussion

to entertain tourists in their habitual way. (Market research division, ministry of tourism, government of India. 2012).

4. Women who are creative by nature can be made to accommodate tourists in local flavor special handmade garlands, apparels, eateries, seating arrangements, hospitality cuisines, kitchenware, Music, dancing, special musical instruments etc. Local traditional folk culture attracts tourists more than any other sophisticated tour location.

5. Most of the rural tourism project fails to succeed because they give priority for commercialization of the destination. In a bid to attract foreign / indigenous tourists heavy prices are attached to goods in the name of exclusivity, inimitability & folk.

6. Rural tourism projects fail to get promotion because women as key role players are neglected. All stake holders are equally important in such an endeavor, but women who are the assets of a community can be

promoted to participate in tourism linking constructive work. Such as women weave great apparels while the benefits of its sale is owned by male counterparts.

7. Most of the projects fail to succeed because the businessmen instill urban glance to rural setting & disregard the distinctiveness on a rural setting. Once the rural area turns into an urban / semi urban neighborhood the rural destination loses its originality & charm.

8. The creativity of women in arranging a local hospitality gives way for glass decorations , costly furnishings , glass fittings , glossy tiled sinks, bathing accessories , polished furniture , upholsteries etc. This also assists promotion of urban housing patterns while the rustic rural flavor which could have given locals good opportunities of employment & hospitality loses its charm. ( Market research division, ministry of tourism, government of India. 2012).

### **Role of government**

The objectives behind empowering women through rural tourism can become a sustainable & alternative livelihood resource. Government mechanism should concentrate on environmental friendly projects, sustainable water management projects, community oriented projects. Taking the feedbacks on visitor satisfaction is very important for policy formulations on tourism women as a key player of community empowerment process should be taken to consideration. India being a multi plural society with wide array of ethnic & traditional output could succeed in promotion of rural tourism if the polices could involve women as key players.

### **Prospective strategies**

1. India's geographical spread and cultural diversity provide multiple interests all season visitor experiences Hence Rural Tourism can be utilized as

a device to en-cash empowerment opportunities.

2. Rural Tourism can be utilized as a device to create a major tourism opportunity to position the Indian rural tourism product as a unique visitor experience in low impact settings. The visitors come nearer to India's rural heritage as they vibe with the present.

3. Rural Tourism can be utilized as a device to connect the visitor from the hectic current situation with traditional assets of communities whose domain still holds the traditional flavor.

4. Rural Tourism can be utilized as a device to give due weightage to women in civil society, the primacy of human developments & preservation of heritage.

5. Rural Tourism can be utilized as a device to put special packages in art & craft imparted by skilled local artisans/ weavers,/ singers / dancers/ artists , metal workers /masons. etc

6. Rural Tourism can be utilized as a device to village entertainment groups / SHGs

which can unveil local history & culture, natural and oral treasurers.

7. Thus rural tourism especially for ensures government's developmental preparation for economic & social development on environmental sustainability for women.

### Conclusion:

Women entrepreneurs can be involved in rural tourism promotional activities they be made to become economically active independent with a redesigned tourism policy women can be made to become entrepreneurs through capacity building. Special packages in art & crafts can be made to unveil the rural traditional treasures. Thus rural tourism ensures government's developmental plan for economic & social development of women as a thorough process of community empowerment.

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