

# Rural Tourism and Economic Development

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## Abstract

In recent years, Rural tourism is becoming more and more popular in the government and the society. In addition to the basic functions of tourism services, rural tourism has its own advantages and characteristics, which play a role in promoting economic development. This paper discusses the development of rural tourism, the basic characteristics, and the success factors of rural tourism development, and then clarify the close contact with the economic development, to provide reference for the development of rural tourism planning and management.

**Keywords:** *Rural Tourism, Economic Development, Factors, Community.*

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is a popular economic development strategy. Tourism development has its benefits and costs and that changes to the destination areas are inevitable. Careful planning and marketing can lessen the harmful effects of tourism development.

Tourism is an increasingly popular elixir to economic rural and urban underdevelopment. Its current prominence in the array of local economic development strategies can be traced to several features of the tourism industry. Tourism jobs are mostly low-skill jobs, which are a good fit with the job skills of many rural residents. Also, tourism has a potential for creating an export base that builds on favorable local advantages such as a pleasant climate or sites of historic or natural interest. More important, tourism strategies mesh with the current political philosophy and budget realities of minimizing government involvement and investment. The accommodations, restaurants, and entertainment activities that necessarily accompany tourism are assumed to be provided by the private sector. Critics of tourism as a development strategy cite its low-paying and dead-end jobs, its degradation of the local natural environment, and its potential corruption of local culture and customs. Further, not every jurisdiction in need of jobs and a tax base has tourism potential.

The study of tourism, like much of the economic development literature, draws from a wide range of disciplines. The forte of economists is in addressing the affects of tourism on the local economy; however, economists fail to describe who tourists are or why they travel. Anthropologists' major contribution to defining and studying tourism is in examining the impacts of tourism on local culture. Psychologists are more likely to dwell on the motives for tourism, but they ignore the impacts. Clearly, the complete definition of tourism includes the economic, social, anthropological, and psychological viewpoints. One strength of *Recreational Tourism: A social Science Perspective* by Chris Ryan is its multidisciplinary approach to the study of tourism. In contrast, the case studies from around the world found in *Hosts*

and *Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, edited by Valene Smith, dwell on tourism from the perspectives of history and anthropology, with its focus on the culture affects of tourism and tourism's role in the acculturation process. Behind the Glitter: *The Impact of Tourism on Rural Women in the Southeast*, by Michal Smith, focuses on the economic and cultural effects of tourism in the rural Southeast.

## 2. Benefits of Tourism

Perhaps chief among the advantages of tourism is that it is seen as obtainable, even for communities with minimal public resources. Most communities envision negligible public investments such as new roads, history markers, town cleanup, storefront rehabilitation, and marketing. The private sector is expected to provide hotels, motels, restaurants, entertainment, and other tourist accommodations.

Second, tourism is a relatively easy-to-understand concept for the lay public and can, therefore, generate local support. Community pride leads residents to conclude that their home town has something to offer tourists. Tourism builds on perceived and existing local advantages or amenities, such as sites of historical interest, mountains and other places of natural beauty, pleasant climates, or clean air. Tourism development uses these resources, which are "free" in the sense that the tourism industry has not paid for them. In some cases, these natural resources would have small economic value without tourism development.

Third, decades of experience in smokestack chasing has been disappointing for many communities. The competition for manufacturing plants is intense and as long as manufacturing employment continues its downward trend, competition for the remaining plants will only increase. Also, tourism is perceived as a cleaner industry for the environment than is manufacturing.

Fourth, rural tourism havens tend to be growth. This decade became known as the population turnaround as it was the first time in the history the population of rural areas grew at faster rates than urban areas.

Fifth, tourism is a labor-intensive industry, creating large numbers of jobs that employ low-skill workers and youths, who may otherwise remain unemployed. The low-skilled nature of tourism jobs is ideal for economies with poorly educated or trained labor forces. These added jobs help cut welfare rolls and provide a source of tax revenue.

Finally, tourism development means more income and profits for tourist-related businesses. Local income from tourist expenditures is mostly spent again in the local area, which leads to more local income, and perhaps, to more local jobs. Such indirect benefits of tourism are measured via regional economic impacts of tourism. Some studies introduce techniques used to measure the economic impacts of tourism. Many other studies

also focus on measuring economic effects of tourism. In contrast, other sources of economic activity, particularly for remote counties, create relatively few direct and indirect benefits. For example, nuclear power plants, waste disposal sites, and many manufacturing plants create relatively few jobs and generate small amounts of local purchases.

### 3. Factors for Success in Rural Tourism Development

Since the 1990s, economic restructuring and farm crisis have reduced rural communities' economic development options, making older development strategies less viable and forcing many to look for nontraditional ways to sustain themselves. One of the most popular nontraditional rural development strategies has been tourism and its associated entrepreneurship rural development strategies has been tourism and its associated entrepreneurship opportunities because of tourism's ability to bring in dollars and to generate jobs and support retail growth. The purpose of this study was to identify and examine those factors that have helped rural communities successfully develop tourism and its entrepreneurship opportunities. Several focus groups were conducted with local businesspersons and leaders in six rural communities. The results clearly demonstrate the importance of the community approach to tourism development and that rural tourism development and entrepreneurship cannot work without the participation and collaboration of businesspersons directly and indirectly involved in tourism.

These changes limited rural communities' economic development options, making older development strategies such as manufacturing less viable and forcing many to look for nontraditional ways to sustain themselves. One of the most popular nontraditional rural development strategies has been tourism and its associated entrepreneurship opportunities. Rural areas have a special appeal to tourists because of the mystique associated with rural areas and their distinct cultural, historic, ethnic, and geographic characteristics. Rural tourism also is less costly and easier to establish than other rural economic development strategies such as manufacturing. Rural tourism can be development strategies such as manufacturing. Rural tourism can be developed locally with participation from local government and small businesses, and its development is not necessarily dependent on outside firms or companies. Although tourism can be expensive to develop in certain cases or can involve large firms and chains, rural tourism can be developed with relatively little investment credit, training, and capital. Hence, rural tourism can be less costly to develop as compared to other economic development strategies; additionally, rural tourism need not involve dependency on outside firms and their decisions on whether they want to be in an area. Rural tourism provides a base for these small businesses that might not otherwise be in rural communities because of their small populations. Tourism particularly helps two types of small businesses in rural areas—those directly involved in tourism and those indirectly involved in tourism. Additionally, rural tourism works well with existing rural enterprises such as farms and can generate important secondary income for farm households. Nonetheless, rural tourism remains one of the few viable economic options for rural communities. Like other

economic development strategies, rural tourism requires several components to be successful.

Tourism development involves (1) attractions: the natural and manmade features both within and adjacent to a community; (2) promotion: the marketing of a community and its tourism attractions to potential tourists; (3) tourism infrastructure: access facilities (roads, airports, trains, and buses), water and power services, parking, signs, and recreation facilities; (4) services: lodging, restaurants, and the various retail businesses needed to take care of tourists' needs; (5) hospitality: how tourists are treated by both community residents and employees in tourism businesses and attractions. Left out of this list are tourism entrepreneurs and their role in fostering these components. While the above components and a community's assets are clearly important to tourism development, only the widespread participation and contribution of rural tourism entrepreneurs can ensure a broad-based foundation for successful tourism development. A research literature has emerged on how to best facilitate the development of tourism. One view, drawing heavily on the economic literature, argues that tourism and its associated entrepreneurship opportunities are best developed by helping and creating individuals businesses and then letting them compete in the marketplace for a review and description of this view). This view, however, has been critiqued because (1) it views tourism and tourism-related businesses as isolated from the larger community and its issues; (2) it does not recognize the interdependence of the various sectors and actors involved in tourism; and (3) most small tourism business, especially those in rural areas, do not have the individual resources to promote either themselves or the community as a tourist product. Opposing this view is the community approach to tourism development and entrepreneurship. As its name implies, the approach argues that tourism is a community product and that, along with entrepreneurial skills and the presence of tourist businesses, it is also necessary to have the community and local capabilities (e.g., local leadership and formal and informal networks) directly involved in tourism development and promotion effort. While the community approach may be an effective way to develop and promote tourism, creating the necessary intercommunity cooperation and collaboration is a complex and difficult process. Businesses are asked to share resources while simultaneously competing. Local governments may see collaborating to develop tourism as risky, or they may be worried about losing control over local decision making. Because of these problems, research on collaboration and those factors that allow for community development of tourism is needed. The purpose of the present study is to identify and examine those factors that help rural communities successfully develop tourism and its entrepreneurship opportunities. The present study makes an additional contribution to the research literature by including rural tourism entrepreneurs, an overlooked group in rural tourism research.

### 4. Conclusions

Aside from the fact that not all communities can be tourist havens, tourism development has its costs. It seems that every benefit of tourism development has a corresponding cost.

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