

Economic Opportunity through Rural Tourism: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Rural development in India is increasingly associated with agriculture, which is considered as a central force of economic growth and development in rural areas. Now, Agriculture sector in India is facing many problems mainly because of deficit rainfall, water scarcity, industrial revolution and rural people migration. Hence, the new and alternative source of income is needed to retain the people's livelihood and to preserve the rich cultural associated with rural area. Most of the Tourism, related business involves in small enterprises, the role of tourism entrepreneurs in the rural area could be considered as an important factor for the rural tourism development. Of all economic sectors, tourism is perhaps the one in which the greatest degree of involvements is needed by the entrepreneurial sector, especially in rural tourism; entrepreneurship has gained an increasing importance as it is seen as a major driving force. With these major components, the main objective of this paper is to analyse the influence of rural tourism in entrepreneurial development in Auroville and surrounded villages in Pondicherry. Auroville – a worldwide renowned destination attracting tourists from all over the world, and it has been identified as a region with many opportunities for real return of the business. The research analysis shows that rural tourism strategy with the involvement of entrepreneurial development has generated many economic and business opportunities to local community. This empirical study finally concludes by highlighting various impacts of rural tourism and its role in developing entrepreneurial approach in rural area.

KEYWORDS: *Rural Tourism, Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Business Opportunity.*

Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries, and it has been identified as a means of generating large income and foreign exchange earner in less industrialized countries (UN, 2007). Like other countries in the world, India has promoted tourism as a major source of national income for the past two decades. However, tourism has had some destructive effects in highly well-known and renowned destinations mainly because of ecological and environmental factors (Saravanan and Rao, 2012). The well-developed destinations become crowded because of the people migration taken place from nearby cities and surrounded

villages for their livelihood (Hein de Haas, 2008). It ultimately leads to unbalance growth of tourism and creates many ecological issues to the destinations. Having suffered from uncontrolled tourism, India is now searching for less destructive approaches, which are now part of the nation's sustainable development. One of the most intriguing sustainable tourism themes is rural tourism, which has been lately become very popular in less industrialized countries (Syukur I, 2008). As 70% Indian population residing in around 6 million plus villages, there is a viable opportunity to develop the rural tourism all across the country to develop entrepreneurial skill and also to create the employment opportunity to the local community. The development of rural tourism will also lead to preserve the rich cultural and historical art forms of the rural villages. The research formation as follows: In the first part, the paper will discuss about the rural tourism and its potential in India. The second part of the paper discussed about the Pondicherry tourism and its initiatives towards the rural tourism empowerment. The third part of the paper will demonstrate Auroville and surrounded villages as a potential place to develop the rural tourism. It also highlights the role of Pondicherry government in the development of entrepreneurial skill among the rural people apart from the agricultural business. Finally, the study ends by suggesting the rural tourism as an alternative effective factor to empower the entrepreneurial skill in the rural vicinity.

Review of Literature

Rural or peripheral areas have often been regarded as being less favourable than their urban counterpart for regional development. Rural areas tend to be associated with more traditional industry or having standardised secondary businesses that support more innovative developed areas (Landabaso, 1999). Murdoch (2000) further supports this argument as he postulates that rural space "is (once again) reconfigured by forces emanating from urban centres" (p. 408). Indeed, it has been acknowledged that governments of developed countries need to recognise and better understand rural communities and the process of economic development that occurs (Brennan & Luloff, 2007) in order to address challenges in these areas. Fleisher and Falenstein (2000: 1007) specifically state, "the promotion of small scale tourism is intuitively perceived as a suitable form of economic development for rural areas". Rural tourism also fits well with the concept of rural development as it has strong linkages to rural resources, which focus on social networks and takes account of the complex linkages among regional stakeholders. Traditionally agriculture and farming activities have been synonymous with rural areas and have been to the fore of policies to develop the countryside. However, data from the last few years has been acknowledged that the significance of agriculture to rural development is in decline (Van der Ploeg et al., 2000). In recent years it has become increasingly recognised that one of the greatest challenges facing rural economies is the restructuring of the agriculture industry and this objective has been to the fore of many national policies (Fuller-Love et al., 2006;

Stathopoulou et al., 2004; Marsden et al., 2004; McQuaid, 1997; Wortman Jr., 1990). In India, Rural development is increasingly associated with agriculture, which is considered as a central force of economic growth and development in rural areas. Now, Agriculture sector in India is facing many problems mainly because of deficit rainfall, water scarcity, industrial revolution and rural people migration (UNEP, 2006). The time has come to find the new and alternative source of income for the rural community to retain their livelihood and rich cultural activities. The role of Tourism in rural development is basically an economic one and can help to sustain and improve the quality of life in rural areas. Most of the Tourism related businesses involves in small enterprises, so the role of tourism entrepreneur in the rural area could be considered as an important factor to develop the rural tourism (Anderson, 2000). Of all economic sectors, tourism is perhaps the one in which the greatest degree of involvement is needed by the entrepreneurial sector in formulating sustainable strategies. Especially in rural tourism, entrepreneurship has gained an increasing importance as it is seen as a major driving force behind rural tourism.

Tourism, and its incumbent networks, is one such economic activity that has often been cited, in relation to rural economies, as a key strategy for regional development (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008; Saxena et al., 2007; Fleisher & Falenstein, 2000). Rural tourism plays a wonderful role in the rural and community development in the low developed areas where potential of wealth were found (Cawley & Gillmor (2008). The reason the not achieving the great extent height of development is not formulated in those place mainly because of the lack of governmental involvement and the local people perception about the rural affinity. To bring a drastic change, rural tourism has been suggested as one of the viable options for the development and achievement of economic condition with an inclusion of offering business opportunities. The entrepreneurial opportunity has to be given to rural communities to achieve in the greater extent. The possible ways of formulation of entrepreneurial activities can be explored by developing tourism in the rural places. It also creates the opportunity for the local communities to find business opportunities and to come-up with innovative ideas to build their own society economically developed. This paper will, therefore, examine rural development through the medium of rural tourism activities. This research strategy is supported by several writers' recommendation to enhance the entrepreneurial opportunities through rural tourism activities on a regional or geographic basis (see for example: Malewicki, 2005; Kaufman et al., 2000; NCOE, 2000), and answers Murdoch's (2000) call to use tourism as a "new paradigm" for rural development. This paper is structured as follows: the author begins by exploring the nature, content and functions of rural tourism in rural area development.

Methodology

An applied study encompassing Primary data, and key findings relating to this research are proffered in relation to the ultimate research objective – “Rural tourism activities in promoting entrepreneurship and local area development. The author goes on to present this model, and explains how these relationships shape collaborative regional development, in a rural environment. The intention of this research is to analyse the important of rural tourism in the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills in the rural areas. The researchers had collected 100 questionnaires from the people those who are resident at Alankuppam, Sanjeevi Nagar and other group of villages near Auroville. The Scheduled questionnaire was prepared to know the rural people perception about the tourism development. The paper concludes with recommendations for further research in the area of stakeholder roles and functions in rural tourism, and their further course of action for integrated and equitable rural development.

Objective of the Study

The main objectives of this paper are:

- To reveal the present scenario of Rural tourism in Auroville;
- To find the role and significance of rural tourism activities in promoting entrepreneurship;
- To analyse the influence of rural tourism in creating sustainable business opportunity in the regions;
- To suggest rural tourism as a key factor in generating employment opportunities through entrepreneurial development in rural areas.

Scope of the Study

Entrepreneurship in tourism activities brings innovation and creativity in business that drives community tourism development. The greater that level of tourism entrepreneurship, the greater the likelihood that tourism attractions and support enterprises would be created, and consequently, the greater the socio-economic benefits associated with tourism development. Thus, the main scope of the study is to analyse the present status of tourism segment in the Auroville and surrounded villages. The study also states the possible ways to develop the rural tourism destinations with an inclusion of entrepreneurship.

Area of the Study and Research Design:

For the research work three important villages in and around Auroville has been taken for a detailed study. Three villages have been identified as a major potential destination for rural tourism development because of its accessibility and people involvement. The three villages namely called Alankuppam, Sanjeevi Nagar; Auroville has taken for the study to conduct primary data collection on the topic of

empowering economic opportunities through rural tourism development. The objective of the social science research will provide relevant, accurate, reliable, valid and current information to identify the problems. With the collected data, the solution has to be suggested to deal the issues and problems. The research will intend to convert the problems into opportunities. Numerous strategic decisions has to be taken in the process of identifying the needs of the rural tourism development in order to avoid the rural people migration by creating employment and entrepreneurial opportunity in their own place. Research will help the planners and policy makers to link the rural tourism opportunities with the entrepreneurial point of view for the development of rural places.

Major Hypotheses:

- H0:** There is no significant correlation between the rural tourism development and employment opportunity.
- H1:** There is significant correlation between the rural tourism development and employment opportunity.
- H0:** There is no significant relationship between rural tourism and entrepreneurial development.
- H2** There is a significant relationship between rural tourism and entrepreneurial development.

Questionnaire Construction, Data collection and Statistical Technique:

The questionnaire for the research was divided into two parts: the first part deals with the demographic data of the respondents and the second part of the questionnaire includes the variables pertaining to various dimensions of rural tourism development in the form of independent statements. These statements are measured through the five point Likert scales. The study is broadly applied and empirical in certain aspects, and the primary data were collected from respondents by using structured questionnaire. The sample size for the study is 100 and all the items in each questionnaire were measured with a 5-point interval scale with 5 = Strongly Agree to 1 = Strongly Disagree. The researcher had met the respondents individually with questionnaire and collected all the information by interacting with them. In order to supplement the primary data, the researcher had also collected the secondary sources from Books, Journals, published articles, Indian tourism and statistics reports and official industrial and tourism websites of Pondicherry. The data collected from the above sources were analysed with the help of SPSS 16 software. Mean, median, standard deviation, correlation and regression analyses have been done with the help of SPSS software. Data were analyzed by using univariate, bi-variate and multivariate techniques. Graphical presentations of the results are also given for the better understanding of the output.

Rationality of the Study

Entrepreneurial concept has been emerged in many sectors especially in Small scale industries, micro enterprises and regional level organisations. Entrepreneurial development through various sectors has been explored by many scholars. Here, the researcher has taken rural tourism as a key factor to develop the entrepreneurship in rural areas. As far as tourism, industry is concern, the urban development and contemporary management concept was highly considered by the developing countries. But, it is the right time to explore the alternative form of tourism to create huge number of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Thus, rural tourism concept could assist the destination to attain sustainable growth of tourism in all the rural areas. This study defines entrepreneurial development as the creation of equal opportunities for all potential rural tourism destinations to participate in the tourism activities, contribute to and benefit from development.

Rural Tourism – An India Perceptive

Since the 1990s, the expansion of the tourism sector in India was ideally emerged in global wise, and it was seen a remarkable response from all over the world in terms of tourist's reception. Later, after the implementation of LPG (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalisation) in the country, the tourism industry played a predominant contributor of National Gross Domestic Product (GDP). During this period, tourism development was only concentrated in the urban and metropolitan cities. Many numbers of star category hotel chain and hi-tech multi complex were constructed in this period to develop leisure tourism in urban areas. Mass tourism was the only concept adopted in this period to get many tourists from all across the world for entertainment. Later, the expansion of Mass tourism leads to create many negative impacts to the environment and historical monuments, which was reached out the authorities to realise the important of alternative form of tourism to sustain the historical and cultural aspects of India for few more years. Only in the very recent years, rural tourism concept was emerged in India to demonstrate the lifestyle and cultural background of the rural people to the tourists. The emergence of rural tourism segment is seen to be an effective means of contribution to the economic, social and cultural regeneration of the less populated economically depressed areas of the country. India also faces the inequalities between urban and rural areas within its territory. The stakeholders are very much conscious of the fact that the rural tourism segment could be a unique opportunity to them to demonstrate their cultural richness to other people of the world as well as to demolish the disparities between the regions. For these reason, the regional and state government has taken keen initiative to promote rural tourism all across the region. Rajasthan is the state which has got rich cultural and historical background, had taken up the rural tourism segment as a prime tourism product to attract many foreign tourists, and it has successfully promoted the rural tourism concept all across the world. Finally, recent experience in the rural tourism concept shows that any village is a tourist destination and most villagers are very hospitable across globe.

Contribution of Rural Tourism to the Society

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 inurbane 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. 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. Under this Scheme, thrust will be to promote village Tourism as the primary Tourism product to spread Tourism and its socio-economic benefits to Rural and its new geographic regions. Key geographic regions would be identified for development and promotion of Rural Tourism. Activities like improving the environment, hygiene, infrastructure etc. would be eligible for assistance. Apart from providing financial assistance, the focus would be to tap the resources available under different schemes of Department of Rural Development, State Governments and other concerned Departments of the Government of India. Tourism has certain typical characteristics like; it is experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated, it is predominantly in natural environment, it meshes with seasonality and local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and traditions.

The Evolution of Rural Tourism in Pondicherry

Initially, Many rural places are identified for the implementation of rural tourism project in Pondicherry, among them Alankuppam and nearby rural villages has been identified as a real potential areas for the implementation of rural tourism and also various effective steps to taken for concentrate with the development of the village without disturbing the lifestyle of the local communities. The rural tourism concept emerged in Alankuppam and surrounded villages because of its affinity towards the world-renowned tourist destination, Auroville. On the whole, it was emerged as a rural tourism spot because of its affinity towards the Auroville. The foreign and domestic tourist arrival to the Auroville enhanced the rural tourism in Alankuppam and it has created business opportunity to the local community people all around the village. The inflow of foreign tourists in Auroville facilitated a lot to the nearby villages in terms of infrastructure and social development.

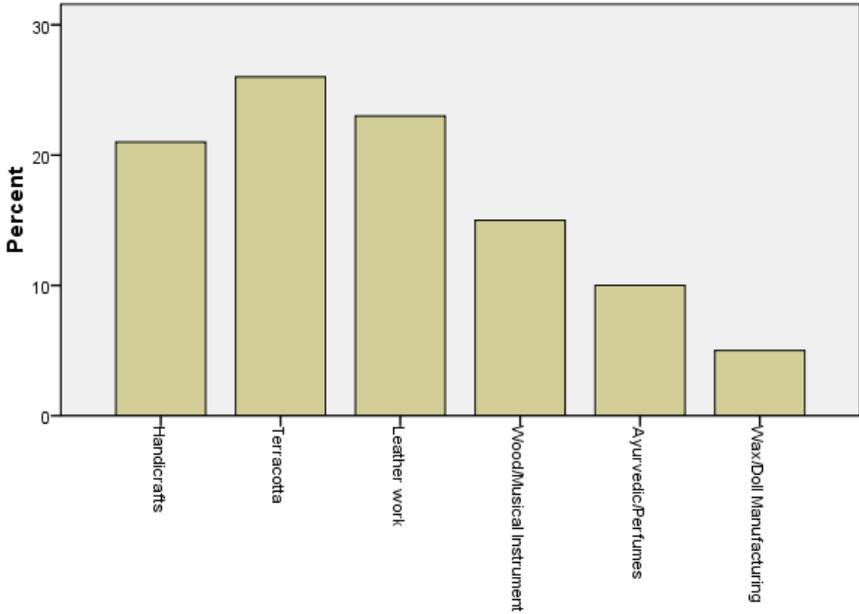
Data Interpretation

The Data shows that the majority of the entrepreneurs are ventured into the business activities, after the group of villages are identified as a rural tourism destination. Rural tourism activities in the destination helped them to create innovative business in tourism and allied sector. The entrepreneurial skills of the people in the villages are boosted by the foreign people who were settled down in Auroville and surrounded village. The financial supports of the entrepreneurs are generally sponsored by the Pondicherry Industrial Promotion Development and Investment Corporation (PIPDIC). The various training and development programme to enhance the skill set of employee are also given by District Industrial Corporation (DIC) and PUDUMAI (Artisans Co-operative society). The researcher has identified some of the authentic facts about the tourism entrepreneurs and their business model with the help of questionnaire in primary data collection; main among them was highlighted below.

Most of the business in the three villages are under medium and small scale, nearly 26% (i.e.) 26 entrepreneurs are manufacturing terracotta, ceramics and ornamental products by using clay as a main raw material. The terracotta products manufactured by them was directly procured by the government handicraft department for export and to sale the product throughout the country through exhibitions, apart from these, the rest of the manufactured products were sold through direct outlet by the manufacturer themselves in the tourist place near Auroville. About 23% (i.e.) 23 entrepreneurs are involved in the business of manufacturing the leather items, and 21% (i.e.) 21 entrepreneurs doing handicraft and paper works. The other major businesses of the entrepreneurs are manufacturing of, Wood & Musical instrument, Ayurvedic & Perfumes and Wax & Doll manufacturing. The table and graphs shows the distribution of entrepreneurs business:

Table 1 : Entrepreneurs Business

	Entrepreneurs Business	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Handicrafts	21	21.0
	Terracotta	26	26.0
	Leather work	23	23.0
	Wood/Musical Instrument	15	15.0
	Ayurvedic/Perfumes	10	10.0
	Wax/Doll Manufacturing	5	5.0
	Total	100	100.0

Chart 1**Entrepreneurs Business**

The collected data represents that 40% of people in the village are doing on their own business and 38% of the people are working as an employee in various manufacturing units. This shows that the rural tourism concept boosts them into entrepreneurial aspects and it also engages the livelihood of the rural people by providing the employment opportunities in great extent. More than 80% respondents (i.e.) 35% of the people in the village are getting benefits from the rural tourism activities, among the entrepreneurs 78% are directly associated with the tourism activities and 22% are indirectly involved. The empirical data shows that many people in the rural villages are interested to involve in the tourism activities. Since, the government has initiated to develop to many tourism activities in the destination, there is a huge opportunity for the people to safeguard their livelihood.

The charts shows that the difference of last five years average income of one and 100 entrepreneurs in the Auroville and the surrounded villages:

Chart 2

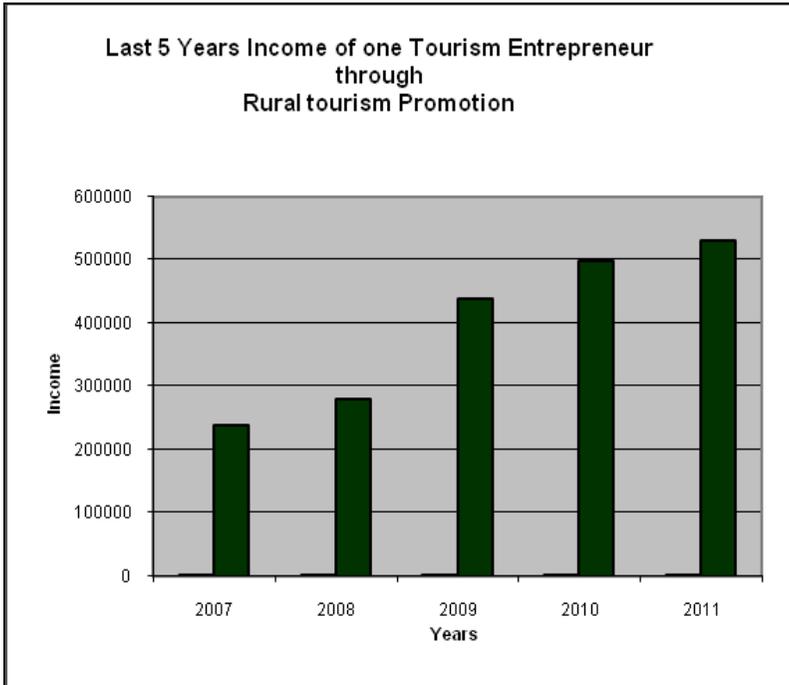
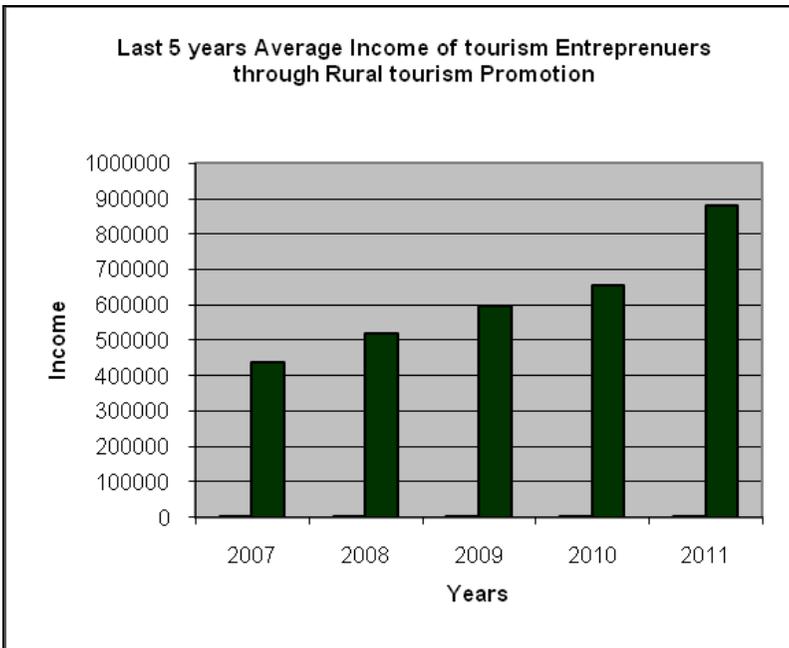


Chart 3



The annual average income of the one medium scale tourism entrepreneur in the villages is near about 5.3 lakhs in the year 2011. The same average annual income of the single tourism entrepreneur in the year 2007 was just 2.40 lakhs. The recent rural tourism development and foreign tourism inflow helps them to achieve in great extent in business. In the same manner, the annual average incomes of the 100 small and medium scale entrepreneurs are showed in the chart 3. It shows that the average annual income of the 100 tourism entrepreneurs in the year 2007 were about 4.25 lakhs and in the same time the average income has raised upto 9 lakhs in the year 2011. This shows the real impact and empowerment of rural tourism development in their business activities, and 52 percent of the respondents are strongly agreed and 44 percent are agreed to the statement that the rural tourism project encouraged themselves to develop entrepreneurial skill and it has also given the facelift to the villages.

The table and chart shows employee strength in an organisation:

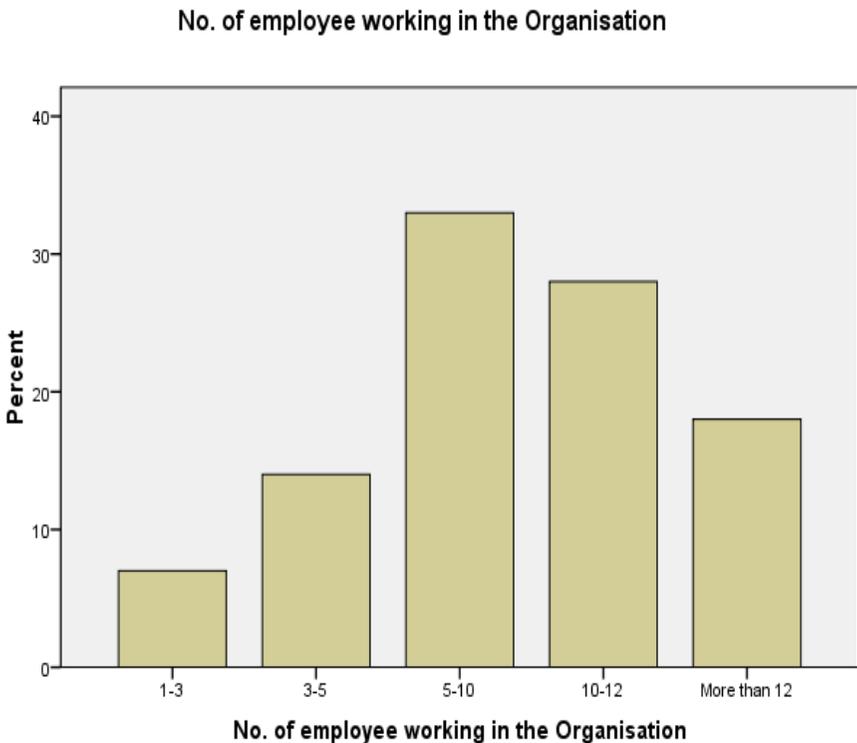


Table No. 2 : of employee working in an Organisation

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1-3	7	7.0
	3-5	14	14.0
	5-10	33	33.0
	10-12	28	28.0
	More than 12	18	18.0
	Total	100	100.0

The majority business activities are mostly associated with tourism business among the entrepreneurs, thus, 33% of the organisation has the employee strength of 5 to 10 people and 28% of the organisation has 10 to 12 employee strength. The medium and small-scale sector gives direct and indirect employment opportunity to the local people and made them financially wealthy. Most of the Respondents (90%) strongly agreed to associate themselves to the rural tourism project and 10 percent of them agreed. It shows their involvement and active participation in association of rural tourism project in their area.

Cross-tabs for Hypotheses

**Table 3 : Rural Tourism creates employment opportunity to the rural people *
Rural Tourism promoting Entrepreneurship opportunity to the rural
community Cross-tabulation**

		Rural Tourism promoting Entrepreneurship opportunity to the rural community				Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
Rural Tourism creates employment opportunity to the rural people	Strongly Agree	6	23	4	0	33
	Agree	21	21	7	2	51
	Undecided	8	3	3	2	16
Total		35	47	14	4	100

The above cross-tabs determine the relationship between rural tourism and entrepreneur/ employment opportunities. It's clearly defines that there is a strong relationship between the two variables and the significant level is also achieved, the level of significant are shown in the Chi-Square test:

Table 4 : Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Diff.	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.508 ^a	6	.017
Likelihood Ratio	16.530	6	.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	.050	1	.824
N of Valid Cases	100		
a. 5 cells (41.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .64.			

A cross tab of the rural tourism and employment/entrepreneur opportunities were analysed to establish the significance of employment and entrepreneurial opportunity in rural tourism. Chi square test was done by assuming the significance level as "0.05". The output shows that there is a significant relationship among the variables and it justifies that the rural tourism creates the employment and entrepreneurial opportunity. The significance level between rural tourism and the entrepreneurial/employment opportunity is 0.017(as per Pearson Chi-Square test) and the likelihood ratio is 0.011. Thus, the null hypothesis for the statement has been rejected. The alternative hypothesis, (i.e.) the significant relation between rural tourism and employment and entrepreneurial opportunity has been taken for consideration. The question regarding the government involvement in rural tourism, 84 percent of respondent are strongly agreed with the statement and 14 percent are agreed and finally 2 percent respondent are in the state of undecided about the statement. 70 percent of the people are strongly agreed and 20 percent are agreed the tourism industry is contributing in many such ways to enhance the local community lifestyle. This shows that tourism industry playing an important role in the rural community development apart from traditional agricultural sector.

Local community participation for tourism development

People involvement and participation are the important factors that need for implementation of rural tourism in the rural landscape. Auroville and surrounded villages are very rich in local people involvement. The halves of the local people are involved in tourism related entrepreneurial activities in the three villages, and many of them started their own venture after realising the opportunities. Most of the business in the village is on manufacturing terracotta products, Musical instruments, leather products, ornamental candles etc., Rural Tourism allows creation of alternative source of income in the non-farming sector for the rural folks. The reverse cash flow from cityscape also allows lost folk arts and handicrafts to reinvigorate and thrive locally. The major benefits of the rural tourism development,

it decreases the migration of village people to the metropolitan and other developed region. It is an ideal and natural setting for rural and urban economic exchange. High proportion of farmers and land-owners looking for alternative income and it is better to consider diversification of business into tourism and allied sector for livelihood. The aesthetic cultural beauty of the rural place can be preserved and it can be expressed through the rural and cultural tourism in the rural villages. Apart from the Government initiative in the development of rural tourism in those villages, the youth group called Mohanam cultural and environmental trust playing an important role for creating awareness and safeguarding the traditional occupation and activities of the local community. It also provides various training and development programmes to the local people and children to safeguard the traditional arts and crafts of the villages.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the rural tourism development and its impacts on rural enhancement by seeking out alternative paradigms and ideological values. The core argument of this paper is to build on the conceptualisation of rural tourism and its impact on the entrepreneurship implication in rural areas. Given their focus on entrepreneurship in the rural place, our concept of 'rural tourism' illustrates the extent to which the cultural context is a significant element in the dynamics of small-business activity. The development impact of rural tourism will not be uniform: it will vary widely within and between communities; Enhancing the livelihood impacts of local people does not mean simply maximising the number of tourism developments in rural areas, A wide range of costs and benefits need to be taken into account. In particular, it is as important to address negative impacts as to maximise positive ones. Careful planning and design, based on an understanding of local livelihoods, can greatly enhance the positive impacts of rural tourism. This can be done either by devolving tourism rights to community level, and helping communities with participatory planning; or by ensuring that government planning processes are participatory and responsive to local needs; or by ensuring, through government incentives to develop the SME's sector, that planning by entrepreneurs is responsive to local needs and the details of how to enhance livelihood impacts are location-specific. The principles of recognising that a range of livelihood concerns are important and supporting systems that enable local people priorities to be incorporated into rural tourism decisions, can be generally applied. On the case of analysed rural areas, the researcher could not find the much negative impacts of the rural tourism implication. However, the rural tourism proved to be one of the most important factors for securing the sustainable rural and livelihood development in analysed regions.

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Annexure: Photos of Artisans and products manufactured by them in Alankuppam village

