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**Rural Tourism in Banavila and its surroundings, Illambazar Block,
Birbhum District, West Bengal, India**

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A B S T R A C T

This paper discusses the nature of Rural tourism in Banavila and its surrounding areas. It also depicts the status of eco-tourism and infrastructure facilities in the study area. Pattern of tourist frequency and causes has also been discussed here. Besides an attempt has also been made to highlight the basic problems of tourism in the study area and possible remedial from it.

Introduction

Rural tourism or tourism in rural areas is a new form of activity that can bring economic and social benefits to the society. In Asia, especially in India, rural tourism in its true form is relatively new. The basic concept of rural tourism is to benefit the local community through entrepreneurial opportunities, income generation, employment opportunities, conservation and development of rural art and crafts, investment of infrastructure development and preservation of the environment and heritage (Mishra, 2001). The development of a strong platform around the concept of rural tourism is definitely useful for a country like India, where almost 70% of the population resides in villages. Rich diversity

and variety that India has in terms of different cultures in each province, the customs and traditions, colourful festivals, folk arts and handicrafts as well performing arts and historical heritage make many rural areas in India as potential rural tourism sites. Rural tourism is a major source of revenue and employment for local communities, providing a strong incentive to protect biodiversity. Rural sustainable Tourism has the potential to create new jobs, reduce poverty and increase export revenues. Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and

the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural tourism.

Rural tourism has typical characteristics & importance

- 1) It is experience oriented.
- 2) The locations are sparsely populated.
- 3) It is predominantly in natural environment.
- 4) It meshes with seasonality and local events.
- 5) It is based on preservation of culture, heritage and traditions.
- 6) It has delivered supplementary income and inter sectoral linkages.
- 7) It acts as the creator of job opportunities.

Types of rural tourism

Rural India has a great potential for different segments of tourism like ecotourism, adventure tourism, health tourism, farm/agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, religious tourism, folk tourism etc.

Agri. / farm tourism

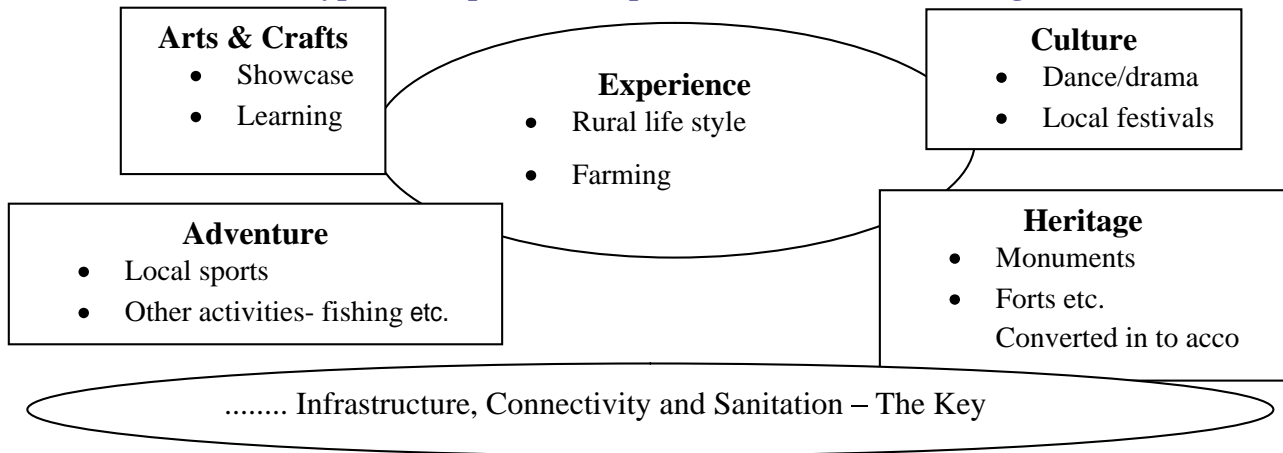
Agri-tourism is the practice of attracting visitors to an area used primarily for agricultural purposes.

It is described as – Rural / Agricultural Environments + Farm Commodities + Tourism Services = Agri-tourism. Agricultural tourism is one alternative for improving the incomes and potential economic viability of small farms and rural communities.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism originated as a type of sustainable tourism. According to Hector Ceballos – Lascrain (1980s) “ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy and appreciate nature that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio economic involvement of the local population”.

Typical component of a potential rural tourism village



**Model of Typical Components of a Potential Rural Tourism Village
by AF Ferguson & Co., 2001**

Heritage tourism

It refers to leisure travel that has as its primary purpose the experiencing of places and activities that represent the past.

Study area

The present area under study is located in Ramnagar & Chaupahari mouza under Illambazar Panchayet Block and Police Station in Birbhum district of West Bengal. It is located just at the midpoint of Bolpur town and Illambazar market. Geographical location of this tourism hub is between 23°36'30"N to 23°38'30"N latitudes and 87°34'30"E to 87°37'00"E longitudes. Surrounding villages of Banavila Ramnagar are Daranda, Srichandrapur, Laxmipur, Ramchandrapur, Murgabuni, Amkhoi etc.

The major objectives of this study are:

1. To know the concept of rural tourism.
2. To know the role of rural tourism in economic development.
3. To identify the nature of ecotourism in Banavila.
4. To study the status and infrastructure of tourism in Banavila.
5. To identify the frequency of tourist, flow & its relation with season.
6. To identify the basic problems & certain remedies for sustainable tourism development in the study area.

Methodology

This paper is mainly based on through field observation, survey, questionnaire and interviews. After field investigation and observation data are represented in field book through different cartographic methods and simple interpretation tools.

Rural cum ecotourism at Banavila

Banavila is an ideal unit of ecotourism. Every component of ecotourism is present here. Physio-graphically Banavila is a lateritic terrain with both soft and hard caps. It is a part of Chaupahari protected forest which is mainly of fairly dense sal. Other trees include teak, palm, bamboo, sonajhuri, mahua, palash, piyal etc. This forest is the shelter of some animals like – wild cat, dog, fox, rabbits, wolf, snakes and some singing birds. There is shadow and pleasure pollution free air. The nights at full moon days are very adventurous to stay here. Main attraction of Banavila is 'Banalaxmi' – a rural agro-farm cum restaurant. Another feature of Banavila is the surrounding tribal villages – Ramnagardanga, Murgabuni, Gopalnagar, Amkhoi, Khoyerbuni, Daranda Adabasi para, Phoolbagan etc.

Tourism infrastructure of Banavila is very rich. There are about four hotel cum restaurants, two lodge cum fooding places, thirteen guest houses, and three resorts. These are under private sectors. Besides these hotels and guest houses, there is a mini market at Banavila bus stand, where almost every essential commodities like – grocery items, poultry, sweet, vegetables, motor and cycle guarrage, fish shop, medicine shop, hardware shop, carpenter shop, mobile shop etc. are available.

It is situated just at a distance of 10 km. from Bolpur station. The distance of Illambazar is about 7.5 km. This place is well connected with Bolpur, Illambazar, Durgapur, Burdwan, Suri and other places with state high way. From Banavila bus stand other places are connected with secondary metalled routes and morrum path.

Table.1 Rural cum ecotourism status of Banavila & surroundings

Sl. No.	Site	Purpose of visit
1.	Murgabuni Santal Village	Santal tribal livelihood, folk, culture & festivals – Badna (in January), Tribal wall painting.
2.	Amkhoi Santal Village	Fossil Park.
3.	Farm - 1	Nature & forest, fruit, flower, vegetable gardening, cow, duck, hen (poultry farm), agricultural farm, rural handicrafts & cottage industrial products – jam, jelly, rice, puf rice, batik, badni, kantha stich products, night staying and taking of meal.
4.	Farm -2 (Near Laxmipur)	Fruit culture (mainly banana), medicinal plants.
5.	Friend Package (near Laxmipur)	Biscuit factory, Water bottle and hard packing paper manufacturing
6.	Banauddan	Nature Park, (flower gardening, fruit orchards)
7.	Srichandrapur village	Ajoy river & its beauty, agricultural fields.
8.	Hut Farm	Fruit, flower, vegetable gardening, swimming, ‘Baul’ song, night staying
9.	Ramnagar village	Tribal (Santal) art, festival folk, “Baul” song, “Adibimba” tribal cultural festival (in December), “Tribal Charak Utsav” (in May)
10.	Export Company	Ceramic & Pottery products
11.	Farm - 3	Pisciculture, Poultry farm, Fruit and flower gardening
12.	Banavila	Forest, Lateritic soil and landscape, wild birds and animals, picnic, night staying in rainy, winter, full moon days and in the days of santali festivals.
13.	Pottery	Pottery products
14.	Resort	Forest, tribal and rural life, agricultural fields.
15.	Farm - 4	Cattle shed & milk collection centre.

Source : Field Survey

Line Graph Showing Monthly Total Daily Tourists & Monthly Total Night Staying Tourists in Banavila (On the basis of Ten sample organisation)

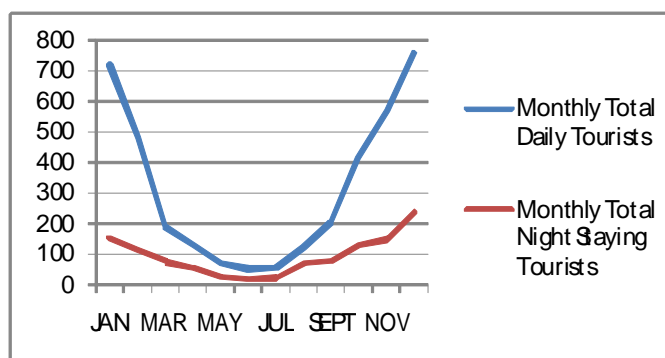


Table.2 Month wise Daily Average Tourist Frequency of some Guest house / Hotel / Lodges of Banavila
 Month wise Daily Average Tourist Frequency of some Guest house / Hotel of Banavila

Sl. No.	Name	Months																								Total
		J		F		M		A		M		J		Ju		A		S		O		N		D		
		D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	
1.	Guest House-1	200	40	100	25	50	15	35	10	20	05	15	02	20	03	40	15	70	20	150	35	150	35	200	40	1295
2.	Hut - 1	60	15	40	08	15	05	15	05	05	03	05	02	05	02	20	10	20	10	50	12	60	13	60	22	462
3.	Alo	60	13	35	10	10	07	10	04	05	02	05	02	03	02	15	07	20	07	30	10	40	12	70	22	401
4.	Hut -2	65	13	30	11	15	06	10	06	05	02	03	02	03	02	10	08	10	08	20	12	30	10	65	20	366
5.	Guest House-2	50	12	40	09	30	05	10	05	05	02	03	02	03	02	05	06	20	07	20	11	40	15	60	21	393
6.	Guest House-3	60	13	60	12	20	12	10	05	10	02	05	02	05	02	05	05	10	05	30	10	60	15	70	23	451
7.	Guest House-4	50	10	50	10	10	07	10	06	05	02	05	02	05	03	05	04	20	05	40	08	50	10	55	20	392
8.	Guest House-5	65	13	45	10	15	06	10	05	05	03	03	02	03	02	05	07	10	06	25	10	45	12	60	24	391
9.	Rannaghar	60	13	45	12	15	06	10	06	05	02	05	02	05	02	05	06	15	06	30	10	45	10	60	20	395
10.	Guest House-6	50	12	40	10	10	05	10	05	05	02	03	02	03	02	05	05	10	05	20	12	50	15	60	25	366
	Total	720	154	485	117	190	74	130	57	70	25	52	20	55	22	125	73	205	79	415	130	570	147	760	237	491
	Average (rounded fig.)	72	(15.4)₁₅	(48.5)₄₉	(11.7)₁₂	19	(7.4)₀₇	13	(5.7)₀₆	07	(2.5)₀₃	(5.2)₀₅	02	(5.5)₀₆	(2.2)₀₂	(12.5)₁₃	(7.3)₀₇	(20.5)₂₁	(7.9)₀₈	(41.5)₄₂	13	57	(14.7)₁₅	76	(23.7)₂₄	205

Source : Field Survey

N.B. { D – Daily Tourist
 N – Night staying Tourist.

Table.3 The table showing the status of Employment generation in 10 sample organization

Sl. No	Farm/hotel or, Lodge	Worker		
		Male	Female	Total
1.	Guest House-1	12	10	22
2.	Hut - 1	15	05	20
3.	Alo	27	0	27
4.	Hut -2	09	01	10
5.	Guest House-2	05	02	07
6.	Guest House-3	40	25	65
7.	Guest House-4	07	02	09
8.	Guest House-5	05	02	07
9.	Rannaghar	05	02	07
10.	Guest House-6	06	02	08

Source : Field survey

From the table it is clear that the month of October, November, December, January and February have maximum daily and night staying tourists than other seven months. October to February is the peak season. In summer tourist frequency is very marginal due to scorching heat. Generally from September, tourist flow increases. October is the month of Durgapuja and holiday continues to November. In December “Poush Mela” of Santiniketan attracts significant amount of tourist.

In January winter picnic is arranged so there is gathering at that time. From mid of February it decreases. At the time of “Dol Yatra” or, “Basanta Utsav” in Santiniketan, the number increases. Sometimes in rainy season, tourists come to observe the beauty of forest. It is seen that out of total tourist visit, 80% come from outside Birbhum and 20% from inside Birbhum. Outsiders mainly come from Kolkata, Durgapur, Asansol, Chittaranjan, Dhanbad, Dumka, Ranchi, Kharagpur, Bandel, Kalyani, Burdwan, Krishnanagar, Bharampur, Bankura etc.

Tourism & its impact on economy

Tourism in Banavila has great impact on the surrounding villages. It is the source of

income of some people. It is clear from above table that both male and female members are engaged in tourism activities. Not only in case of the above organisation but there are another 10-12 guest houses or, lodges or hotels in which they are working. Depending on tourism a mini bazaar and gramin hut has been establish at Banavila bus stop with various shops which are the source of income of many people. Some people engage in transport activities like – riskaw, toto, motor van, taxi, maruti van, tata magic, choto hati etc. “Sayambhar” – a Self Help Group, by women of surrounding villages, has been formed to prepare various food stuff and handicraft products, which are supplied to Banalaxmi restaurant for selling among tourists. Sometimes ‘Baul’ singers entertaining the tourists and earn something.

Recommendation for further Development

1. Construction of Government guest house.
2. Arrangement of proper water supply, electric supply and street lighting.
3. Giving of proper security to the tourists by local police station.

4. Construction of children's park.
5. Govt. Financial support and planning for sustainable tourism.
6. Creation of more infrastructure
7. Encouragement of investment for tourism development.
8. Formation of market complex with craft and handicraft products.
9. Proper advertisement.
10. Arrangement of tourist guide.
11. Making of pay and use toilet & latrine for frequent visitors.
12. Construction of big community shed for daily tourists.

Conclusion

Rural tourism in Banavila is an important instrument for sustainable rural development including rural employment generation, environmental protection, poverty alleviation, women empowerment, tribal development, and economic development. It brings resource from urban to rural areas. So it should be developed more in future.

Acknowledgement

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