



Rural-based Model : A Nature-based Health Tourism Practice at Tourism Destinations

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Abstract : More than half of population, its tradition, values and culture resides in its villages till today. With such diversification, most outsiders and urbanites prefer to visit in such non-urban settings. To live their lives peacefully for sometime, wanted to spend their vacation and leisure time by visiting such areas. Because till today rural areas have the potential to offer natural resources, green and blue spaces, local food, tradition, culture, festivals that reflects our ancient and beautiful pasts to revive the blessings of elders. So, to enhance visitors leisure time and their over all well-being. This study aims to conceptualise and proposed a theoretical rural model, which can be practiced as a nature-based health practice at tourism destinations. This model helps to incorporate health, nature and sustainability in the world of industrialisation. By examining the attributes of rural settings, contributes to the understanding of how rural model can be implemented as a holistic approach to health tourism.

Keywords: Rural, Natural resources, Health tourism, Nature, Nature-based health tourism

I. INTRODUCTION

With the increasing rate of rapid industrialisation era, the expansion of urbanisation and machinery life having a severe impact on one's peace and health (Esfandiari & Choobchian, 2020). To sustain with good growth and development of society and nation, man has to be in good state of mind and health to work better for their future. Today's roots are in technology and industry have a severe effect on physical, mental and social well-being. Therefore, The World Health Organization (WHO) main goal is to coordinate and improve the state of public health worldwide. According to WHO (2018), health is a state of physical, mental, and social well-being and is not just about the absence of disease or disability. Some researchers are trying to put their efforts to promote health tourism in three subsets, mostly defined as medical tourism (Lim et al., 2015), wellness tourism (Charak, 2019) and nature-based health tourism (Parashar, 2012). Nature-based health tourism, in this type of tourism, tourists do not have a specific physical illness, but they are more interested in enjoying the holistic healing of health-prone natural areas (Global Wellness Institute, 2018). This niche market of tourism industry related to physical activities, organic and ayurvedic diet,

enjoyment of nature, landscapes, flora & fauna, and local cultures attracts lot of attention in recent years (Cohen & Bodeker, 2008). This new sector of the tourism market provides good opportunities for the development of rural areas (Atun et al, 2019) (Hoang et al, 2020) where there is great potential for attracting tourists (Romão et al., 2018) (Deng et al., 2020). Since ancient times, mostly tourism destinations developed around the unique natural features such as mineral water, springs, mountains, forests and sacred sites (Sheldon & Park, 2009). Therefore, the goal of this article is to conceptualise the rural-based model as a nature-based health tourism practice at tourism destinations. That refers to a connection with community or nature, inner and outer beauty therapy, relaxation, energy balancing, art, music etc (Pesonen & Komppula, 2010).

According to several studies on rural tourism, it has been seen that many tourists are motivated and attracted by wellness experience: they escape from busy jobs, peace and quiet, sports, rejuvenation and relaxation, healthy gastronomy, spend time with nature. A rural holiday as a product means peace and quiet, an easy going and warm atmosphere, nature, scenery and activities related to nature (Pesonen & Komppula, 2010).

In this article, our aim is first to imagine rural based area as a model for enhancing wellness experience of tourists through existing research on motivations of well-being tourists. Second, the aim is to present the conceptual rural based model and it's application at the destinations as a nature-based health practice for over-all well-being.

This article is structured into three subsequent sections. In the first section rural based as a nature-based health tourism practice at tourism destinations are examined through the literature review. In the second section the activities and it's applications are presented. In the third and last section the results are discussed and implications for further research are suggested.

II. Objectives of this study

- To present a rural- based model (theoretical and creative) as nature- based health tourism practice at tourism destinations.
- To discuss about the various activities of rural areas that will be helpful for nature-based health tourism.
- To study about various natural elements and resources of rural areas that will boost nature-based health tourism.

III. Rural-based Model as a Nature- based Health Tourism

1) Rural-based Model – Natural + Man-made

Tourists are always pushed by their motivations and where they expect their needs to be satisfied. According to Crompton (1979), push and pull factors are the specific attributes that attract people to specific destination. Rural areas consists of greenery, landscape beauty and natural resources that can be a good source to provide nature-based health activities for unimaginable wellness experience. A conceptual model including both natural elements and man-made efforts to imagine such model at rural areas.

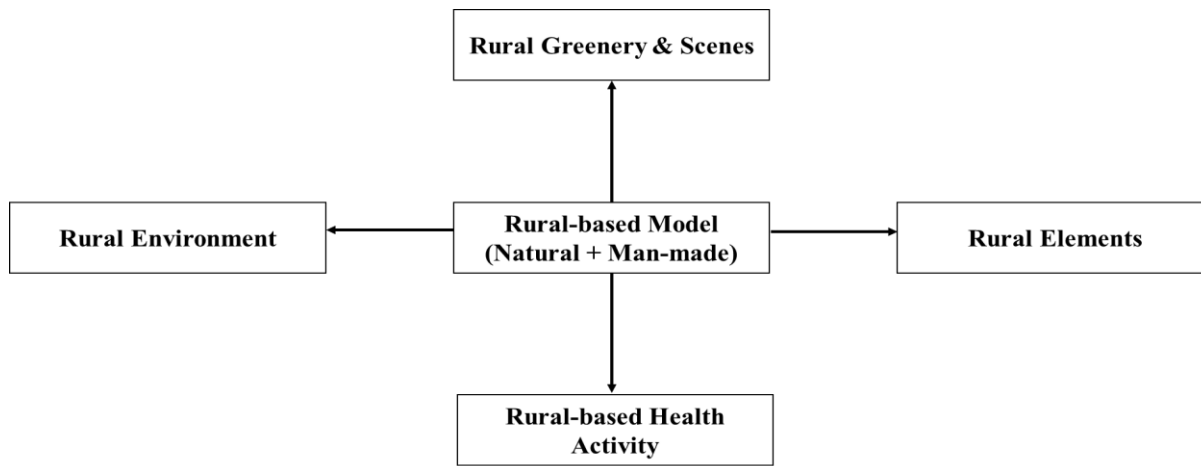


Figure 1 Rural based Model (Natural + Man-made)

Source: Own Elaboration

In the above given figure 1 this rural-based model can be imagined through both natural and man-made resources to sustain this model for creating a healthy and well-being experience to visitors for their holistic development. Rural greenery and scenes have always attracts everyone to mesmerise the landscape and natural beauty. Even special natural resources have always became the basis and source for the development of tourism destinations since ancient times (Sheldon & Park, 2009). Natural and man-made factor plays a significant role in creating a model based on rural resources to provide a holistic experience to tourists. THE MODEL WOULD INCORPORATE THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF RURAL AREAS, SUCH AS LUSH GREEN FORESTS, ROLLING HILLS, AND SERENE LANDSCAPES, WHICH CAN PROVIDE A CALMING AND REJUVENATING ENVIRONMENT FOR TOURISTS (López-Sanz et al., 2021). TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE, LOCAL CRAFTS, AND CULTURAL PRACTICES, ARE SOME OF THE RURAL ELEMENTS, WHICH CAN PROVIDE A UNIQUE AND IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE FOR TOURISTS. IT would consider the rural environment, including the local ecosystem, climate, and geography, which can influence the types of health activities and wellness programs that can be offered. Therefore, these are the factors that combines to sustain and implement with resources to further develop such models for creating an immersive experience to tourists while visiting any rural areas.

IV. Rural-based Model in Nature-based Health Tourism setting

Rural tourism leverages the intrinsic values of natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and local lifestyles, creating immersive experiences that promote overall well-being. By analyzing existing literature and case studies, this paper seeks to highlight the viability and advantages of integrating health tourism practices within rural and nature-based tourism destinations.

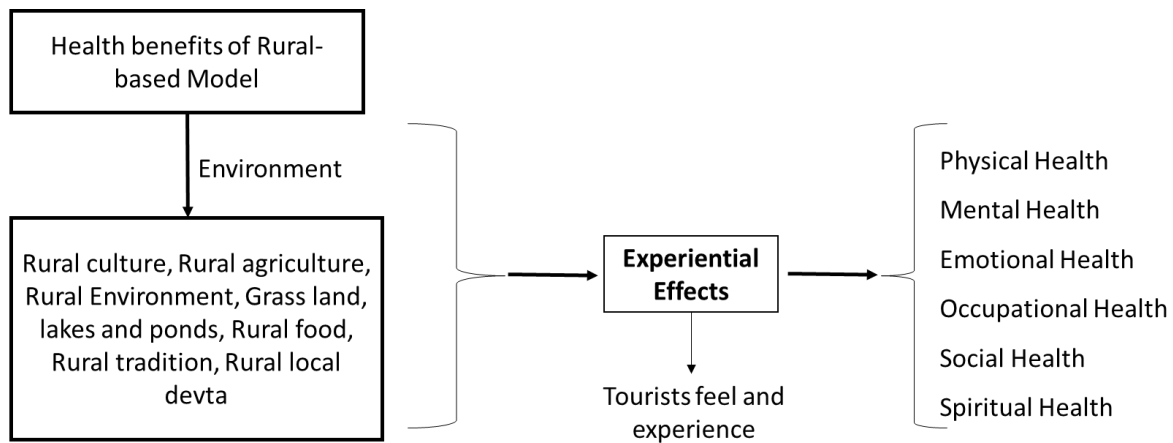


Figure 2 Rural-based Model in Nature-based Health Tourism setting

Source: Own Elaboration

In the above presented figure 2, which demonstrates about rural-based model in Nature-based Health Tourism setting, which are influenced by various experiential effects. Tourists can enjoy and feel good health and care in rural environment like their culture, land, food, tradition, natural scenery and local gods that promotes well-being within tourists for their physical, mental, emotional, occupational, social and spiritual health. Based on different scientific evidences, different nations are also trying to revitalize the rural tourism aimed at health care through its natural resources, which account for 63% approx. of the nation's total land (Statistik B.P., 2018). In order to promote rural-based model as a nature based health tourism practice at tourism destination, it is necessary to clarify holistic health effects of rural visits. Therefore, the present study aimed to explain and highlight the natural effects that one can avail while visiting to rural areas for their overall well-being and care (Parashar & Agarwal, 2024). Such concept of rural areas can provide benefits to both hosts and guests as well as to society, environment and nation. These are-

Conservation of Rural Resources: This type of tourism can also contribute to the conservation of rural resources by promoting sustainable practices and responsible tourism behaviour.

Preservation of Rural Culture: Preservation of cultural heritage, such as traditional crafts, local cuisine, and folklore. This can help to promote cultural diversity and support the conservation of rural resources.

Eco-benefits to Rural/ Local Community: Rural and local community involvement is crucial for the conservation of rural resources. This includes engaging local communities in the tourism planning process, fostering community participation, and promoting responsible tourism behaviour.

Rural Culture Experience: Such niche form of tourism let tourists to get interact with local culture. So that there will be an exchange of culture, values and ethics. Tourists also try to get submerge into their local goodwill to promote its significance, awareness and responsible travel among the minds of youngsters and travellers.

Feel Rural Happiness: Participating in local cultural activities, interacting with local people, engaging in community based activities, enjoying local cuisines enhances visitors experience and these are some of the ways tourists can experience rural happiness.

Sustainable tourism development: Sustainable tourism development through rural-based health tourism can be achieved by leveraging the natural resources and cultural heritage of rural areas. For sustainable development, it requires active participation from local and other people for its growth so that tourists can access rural areas safely and comfortably while also benefiting local communities.

V. Activities involved in Rural – based Model

India lives in its villages. Rural tourism must encompass experiencing living history such as rural customs, folklore, local traditions, beliefs, and common heritage (Pedford as in Jolliffe & MacDonald, 2003) and also includes farms, nature, adventure, health, education, arts, and heritage (Bramwell and Lane, 1994).

Agriculture Area Visit: Tourists can visit farms to feel, watch and learn about agricultural practices, such as farming, animal husbandry, and crop management, which aims to strengthen the role and Visitors have the chance to discover and enjoy the distinctive qualities and charms of rural villages and landscapes through this sort of tourism

Rural Hiking: Tourists can explore the natural environment through hiking and strolling, which allows them to connect with nature and enjoy the scenic beauty of the rural areas (Agarwal & Parashar, 2024).

Rural Health: Natural beauty always provides holistic health development to it's visitors by providing several resources that are available in fresh surroundings, From fresh air to fresh food, tourists experience over-all well being by just spending their time in peace, scenic environment. Additionally, the presence of clean air, silence, and dark nights, as opposed to urban pollutants, can act as additional resources for rural tourist destinations looking to innovate their offerings through health and wellness tourism, contributing to the overall well-being of visitors . By integrating these elements and focusing on sustainable and creative strategies, rural areas can enhance the holistic health experiences of tourists seeking relaxation, cultural immersion, and a connection with nature in their travel endeavours (Linda et al., 2019).

Rural Creative Activity- Rural tourism is a multi-faceted activity occurring in the countryside and it includes walking, climbing, adventure, and hunting (Bramwell et al., 1993). These activities not only offer unique experiences for tourists but also contribute to the local economy and preserve cultural heritage.

Rural Cuisine: Incorporating rural cuisine into nature-based health tourism not only enriches the travel experience but also promotes health, sustainability, and local economic development. In rural areas, farmers practices organic farming to grow their crops by maintaining good quality of soil and then local people use

such crops to cook their local foods by imparting their love and feelings in that particular food that not only fills their stomach but also provides happiness, positive and subtle energies to everyone.

Rural Culture: Rural area is blended with its rich rural traditional lifestyles, practices, and environment with physical and wellness activities. Spiritual support, nurturing cultural spirit, and serving as a key starting point for overall development to both hosts and guests (Lou, 2023).

Rural Attraction: To experience nature in a mechanized world. Rural attractions like local culture, agriculture, folklore etc. are totally based on practical exposure that provides tourists a comprehensive view by touching various dimensions of niche tourism like adventure, eco, nature and cultural. So, rural areas can be the best possible way of developing nature-based health tourism in rural areas (2024).

Rural biodiversity: Biodiversity well supports the wide range of ecosystem of a surrounding. For which rural areas are one of the suitable places than urban settings. Various plants and animals are currently existing in non-urban areas, which provides food, medicines, materials and many more things to sustain one's life. Tourists can also enjoy wildlife and bird watching, hikes, photography, adventures and outdoor experiences in fresh air (*Chapter 3 - Biodiversity Conservation and Traditional Agroecosystems*, n.d.).

VI. Application of Rural-based Models in Tourism Destinations

For better experience and to nurture nature-based practices in natural areas like rural areas in a sustainable manner for outdoor exposure to tourists and development of that particular destination. In this proposed conceptual model of nature-based health tourism in rural areas. Some steps have been suggested to implement it systematically and sustainably.

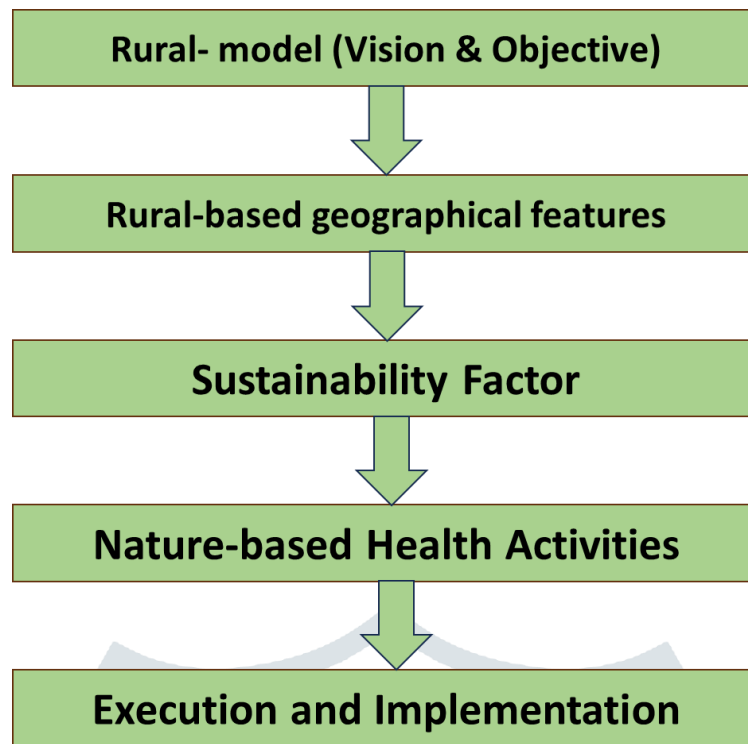


Figure 3 Steps for Application of Rural-based Models at Tourism Destinations

Source: Own Elaboration

From the above given figure 3, future stakeholders and industry experts can use such steps as their base model to create and design such practices for nature-based health tourists for attaining good health conditions and care of their holistic health naturally.

- **Rural-model (Vision & Objective):** The initial step involves defining vision and objective of the proposed model by setting long-term direction and measurable goals that supports the vision.
- **Rural -based Geographical Features:** This step will focus on identifying and leveraging the unique geographical features of rural areas that supports in the development of tourism products and services. One should also ensure that it should be designed to minimize environmental impact and preserve local heritage.
- **Sustainability Factor:** Sustainability is the key concept to sustain long-term viability to implement any model. This factor appeals to implement eco-friendly practices, promote local products and services, balancing economic, social and environmental factors to create harmonious and resilient tourism ecosystem.
- **Nature-based Health Activities:** Different nature-based activities like yoga, meditation, hiking, trails, naturopathy, forest bathing, bird watching, art & craft from waste helps to attract tourists for the betterment of their physical and mental well-being. Various packages, promotion and partnering with health practitioners helps to utilize natural resources in a sustainable manner for creating a memorable wellness experience to tourists in non-urban settings.

- **Execution & Implementation:** The final step is to combine all the steps and put into action and ensuring the implementation of rural based model for nature-based health tourists. This involves coordinating resources, managing logistics, and monitoring progress to achieve the desired outcomes.

VII. Research Methodology

For this theoretical research paper, researcher uses the secondary sources such as literature review, books, magazines and internet related to mountain-based model and health tourism. As well as researcher also draws a relationship between wellness experience offered by mountains, tourists and their destination with her personal thinking. Through her own think thank researcher developed model for mountain-based model in nature-based health tourism, that guides and helps the stakeholders to develop such market for visitor's health and well-being.

VIII. Findings, Possibilities & Recommendation

Wellbeing through natural and resources and nature- based activities offered at various destinations have shown significant impact and also attracts tourists. Activities like yoga, walking, meditation, hiking, spiritual activities, local food, etc. contributes to good health. In today's urbanisation and cocacolisation scenario, tourists are more likely to engage in and enjoy experiences that integrate local culture and natural features.

Therefore, by developing a variety of nature-based health activities can attract different tourist segments, including wellness seekers, adventure enthusiasts, and eco-tourists towards such destinations to spend their vacations calmly and relaxing. Establishing dedicated health and wellness destinations that offer holistic health programs, combining nature therapy, natural resources, fitness, and nutrition, can attract high-value visitors.

This niche form of tourism, will boosts this sector more through comprehensive strategic plans and clear objectives. Implementing and promoting such strategies then tourism destinations can effectively develop and sustain a rural-based model that leverages nature-based health tourism practices, benefiting both visitors and local communities.

IX. Conclusion

By developing such type of rural based health models in the realm of natural resources, tourists enjoyment can better be enhanced and maintained. Awareness has been raised that tourists experiences are no longer limited to entertainment. Such new form like nature-based health tourism , which pays attention to people's inner world and experiences, that may also contribute to sustainable management in protected areas. Thus, this study is significant from both tourism and environment perspectives by exploring innovative pathways

that the tourism industry can pursue for stress-ridden people who are eager to have mind-healing experiences from their travel activities.

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