PREFACE

Tourism is usually viewed as being multidimensional, possessing physical, social, cultural, economic and political characteristics. Tourism is the fastest growing industry in the world. The rural, a diminishing global resource, provides us with an increasingly important environment for tourism. On the supply side, its impacts, both positive and negative, are well documented, widely debated and the subjects of an increasing literature. Often overlooked, however, are the benefits to rural visitors, the welfare effects of improved mental and physical well-being that are the widely sought effects of assimilating the restorative and curative powers of nature. The convergence of supply and demand, the phenomenon loosely called ‘rural tourism’, takes differing forms, develops within a vast range of physical, social and political environments, and results in a wide diversity of outcomes. Rural tourism is a dynamic phenomenon, both creating and reflecting change within its reach.

Over the last 20 years the concept of sustainable tourism has been developed to counter the threats which unmanaged tourism can bring. Sustainable tourism sees tourism within destination areas as a triangular relationship between host areas and their habitats and peoples, holidaymakers, and the tourism industry. In the past, the tourism industry dominated the triangle. Sustainable tourism aims to reconcile the tensions between the three partners in the triangle, and keep the equilibrium in the long term. Sustainable tourism aims to minimise environmental and cultural damage, optimize visitor satisfaction, and maximize long-term economic growth for the region. It is a way of obtaining a balance between the growth potential of tourism and the conservation needs of the environment. The focus of any tourism development in rural areas, therefore, should be on sustainable development that protects or retains the intrinsic qualities of the countryside. There is need for adopting sustainable development policies: (i) the need to implement sustainable management systems to protect fragile areas; (ii) the need to mediate between the conflicting aims of conservation and development; (iii) the need to encourage balanced, broad-based but community focused economic growth; and (iv) the need to maintain the ‘rurality’ of rural areas. These principles are, of course, common throughout the sustainable tourism literature. Effectively, therefore, rural tourism is seen to be synonymous with sustainable tourism development, with all that is implied for the nature, scale, character and ownership of tourism development.
Himachal Pradesh has very diverse rural tourism attractions - religious centers, spiritual retreats, hill stations, waterfalls, wildlife, art, culture, architecture, crafts, heritage, monuments, etc. which enchant tourists. The present study focuses the sustainability issues of rural tourism in Kangra and Kullu districts of Himachal Pradesh. The study also focuses upon the capacity building measures for local community for rural tourism, community participation, rural tourism impacts and tourists expectation and satisfaction about rural tourism impacts in the selected districts.

Chapter-I studies conceptual basis of rural tourism, sustainable tourism, community participation for tourism and related aspects. The chapter also discusses that how rural tourism can be an important source of jobs for local communities and can enhance the quality of life of local people. Chapter 2 tries to find out the opinion and an extract of various researchers in the field of rural tourism, sustainable tourism, community based tourism, community participation etc. at international, national and at domestic level. The aim of this literature review is to studies that have explored a given topic in the past. This chapter defines the current level of knowledge about the theoretical and conceptual research on tourism impact derived from different sources. Chapter 3 tries to explain the complete research process. It explains the research need, objectives, scope, limitations, methodology, and sources of primary and secondary data. Chapter 4 discusses the brief historical, topographical and other features of Himachal Pradesh. Himachal Pradesh .It also studies the various trends of tourism in Himachal Pradesh with special emphasis upon two districts namely Kangra and Kullu districts of Himachal Pradesh. Chapter 5 studies the local community perception about various rural tourism impacts in Kangra and Kullu districts of Himachal Pradesh. The responses various attitudinal statements related with various tourism impacts are divided into various sections that correspond to social, economic, environmental, and overall impacts of tourism. Chapter 6 studies the sustainable rural tourism indicators, barriers and stakeholders perception in this regard. Chapter 7 studies the need of community participation for the rural tourism development and the community capacity for rural tourism development. The opinion of local people in Kullu and Kangra districts on various attributes of rural tourism are studied and compared. Chapter 8 tries to study tourists’ expectation and satisfaction about various attributes of rural tourism in Kangra and Kullu districts of Himachal Pradesh. The comparison helps to identify the shortcomings of the destinations and may be helpful in taking remedial measures. Chapter 9 gives some practical
suggestions and recommendations based upon findings primary and secondary data as well as upon personal observations. These suggestions and recommendations will be of importance to rural tourism developers in the tourism community finally concludes with the need of the awareness of the local people and direct involvement of representatives of the local community in development decisions affecting their locality

Rakesh Kumar