
Sustainable Rural Tourism in Darjeeling Hills: Case Studies of Takdah and Mineral Spring

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Abstract: *The paper analyzes the sustainable rural tourism in Darjeeling Hills that has brought about rural development and economic development. Rural tourism nowadays has become a new form of tourism activity that has contributed towards economic, cultural and social benefits to the society. Rural tourism has been able to preserve the values and beliefs, protect the environment, create employment opportunities, reduce unemployment, local handicrafts, increase the income and capital of stakeholders and local people, stimulate production of organic food, and infrastructural development, and provide possibilities for sustainable and economic development in rural areas. The objective of this research paper is to find the driving forces, benefits, potentialities, challenges, issues for future research and sustainable development of rural tourism and the impact of rural tourism upon the quality of life of the villagers. This paper identifies the available tourist attraction facilities, behavioral and functional aspects of tourists, challenges of owners at two rural tourism destinations of Darjeeling Hills namely **Takdah** and **Mineral Spring**. Mostly the stakeholders, owners and 400 tourists were interviewed on questionnaire basis. Random sampling method was applied for the selection of owners and tourists. Both the qualitative and quantitative methods have been used as **methodology** for the analysis of data. Arc GIS has been used for mapping. With regard to **findings**, the paper provides an overview of rural tourism at two different destinations leading towards economic, rural and sustainable development. Rural tourism opens up the door for employment opportunities. It enhances the growth of service sectors. It can be a means of conserving rural ecology in a sustainable manner. It minimizes the disparity between rural and urban area thereby bringing the rural areas in the path of development. It will ensure environmental improvements, landscape and resource conservation leading to sustainable development.*

Keywords: *Rural tourism, sustainable development, economic development, stakeholders, tourists, environmental improvements.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The temporary activities of a person which comprises travelling and staying in places outside his normal environment for leisure and recreational activities is referred to as tourism. It is the movement of the people to destinations outside their home and workplace and the activities undertaken to meet their cherished desires. Macintosh and Goeldner, (1986) defines tourism as the “sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host governments and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors”.

Rural tourism, an emerging phenomenon in the context of tourism has grown not only to be a potential business alternative but also a kind of recreational enterprise to the urban folks, taking them away to a peaceful destination from the hustle and bustle of swift Urban life. “Rural tourism is a form of nature based tourism that uncovers the rural life, culture, art and heritage at rural locations, thereby favoring the local communities socially and economically,” says NitashreeMili. (2012)

Rural Tourism is a part of both ‘Rural Development’ and ‘Sustainable Development’. It takes many forms as it brings people of different culture, faiths, languages and lifestyle close to one another and provides a broader outlook of life. It not only generates employment for the people but it also develops social, cultural and educational values and is one of the opportunities that rural communities consider to improve productivity and incomes.

Therefore, the focus of the proposed study would be to study the role of rural tourism in sustainable development, economic development and rural development of the study area.

Rural Tourism

Rural tourism as a concept has emerged for the growth and development of rural areas, providing diversified services but it not only caters to the growth of rural areas alone; instead, it helps in the development of the surrounding areas and the local people as well.

“Rural tourism offers a possible solution to some of the problems associated with lost economic opportunities and population decline that accompany the waning of agriculture. Many governments and regional authorities have embraced rural tourism as an opportunity to bring new money into rural regions, stimulating growth, providing employment opportunities and thus beginning to halt rural decline”. (Briedenhann and Wickens2004)

Rural tourism is not only an activity concerning the present; it is a growing industry, which has the potential to grow even larger in the future. It is a feasible growth mechanism that can be practiced with less capital without the risk of heavy financial losses but with an underlying security of sustainable growth and development.

Types of Rural Tourism

Rural tourism is often treated as alternative tourism, which is different from mass tourism. It is a kind of sustainable tourism that exploits resources in rural regions, benefiting both the rural and urban society. Rural tourism can be categorized into the following types: nature tourism, culture tourism, health tourism and ecotourism owing to its different characteristics.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is from *Our Common Future* also known as the Brundtland Report (1987) where sustainable development is described, as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. It is a principle stating the relevance of human life, where the development process must be participatory from all sections of people and the process itself should be continuous and long term.

Robert Repetto (1986) in his *Global Possible* said, “Sustainable development is a continuous process that considers all natural and human resources as a means to achieve certain goals or objectives. This development process should not be contradictory with nature. Rather, it should be corollary with natural productive process”. Therefore, sustainable development should be a collective endeavor aiming at a definite outcome without causing any disturbance in the social life of the individuals residing in a particular society. It is the integration and should always be the integration among the masses and in some cases even between generations.

Linkages between Rural Tourism and Sustainable Development

Rural tourism, which contributes to the protection and preservation of environment and local resources, relies on development. In fact, development is the basic yardstick of rural tourism. However, rural tourism aims not only on development in its varied forms; instead, it aims for sustainable development considering the resources needed by both the present as well as the future generations. Rural tourism and sustainable development goes hand in hand in the development of a new host region and both contributes to scientific resource management, economic satisfaction, social and esthetic satisfaction and preservation of cultural and biological diversity. They complement each other in meeting the needs of tourism, host region, and enhance varied opportunities for the future. Therefore, sustainable development in the context of rural tourism can be regarded as a long-term plan for tourism, which takes into account the interest of the community, its inhabitants, the tourist and the tourism industry as a whole.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Darjeeling Hills, though a popular tourist destination, the local people do not enjoy enough roles in the planning and implementation of rural tourism projects, which act as a hindrance on the growth of tourism in general and rural tourism in particular. Problems aggravating are lack of cooperation between various departments, problems relating to measure the ecological and environmental impact, deforestation, water pollution, air pollution, unhygienic conditions, loss of native cultural elements, low infrastructure growth in some areas, poor travel facilities, lack of proper planning, some climatic problems, inadequate private investment, problem in the government actions, lack of proper management causing negative impact on fragile ecosystem and so on. Due to the emergence of many new forms of tourism, the idea of tourism is moving towards the periphery from the center. Areas adjacent to Darjeeling town are also growing rapidly and some places like **Takdah** and **Mineral Spring** have proved their potential as tourist destinations in a very short span. Nevertheless, some rural tourism projects wither off after a certain period. Therefore, proper management and implementation of plans are essential at the initial stages. The local stakeholders need to be consulted before the initiation of the project and adequate governmental support is required for the sustainable growth of such projects. The proposed study attempts to analyze the select tourist destination in relation to rural tourism and sustainable development

Rural tourism models in Darjeeling Hills like **Takdah** and **Mineral Spring** are capable of offering inimitable experiences to the tourists. Though endogenous tourism has emerged as an important means in bringing sustainable development in rural areas, so far there is no specific study, evaluating the holistic impact of this tourism model. Therefore, this research proposes to make an in-depth study of the impact of endogenous tourism on the development of rural areas of Darjeeling.

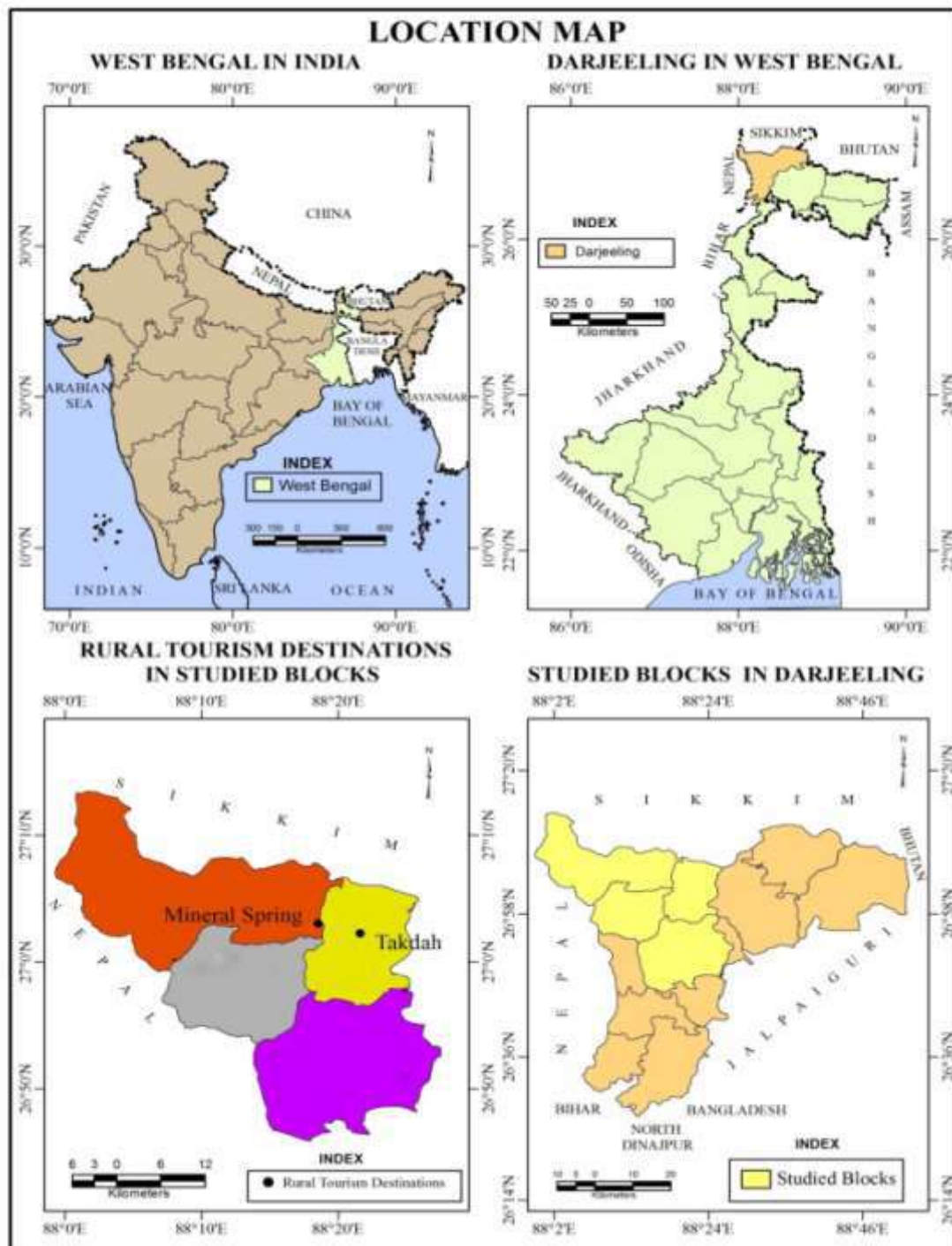
3. STUDY AREA

The proposed area of study comprises of one subdivision of Darjeeling district i.e. Darjeeling. Darjeeling district lies between 26° 31' and 27° 13' north latitude and between 87° 59' and 88° 53' east longitude. It is the northernmost district of West Bengal. It is located on the lap of the Himalayas. The district comprises of three subdivisions namely, Darjeeling Sadar, Kurseong and Siliguri. Darjeeling Himalaya forms a part of the Eastern Himalayan range and is bounded by Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan on the north, west and east respectively. The area covered by Darjeeling Himalaya is about 1721 Sq. Km. while the total area of the district is 3202 Sq. Km. The exquisite scenic grandeur and invigorating climate in the area has earned the title of "Queen of the Hill Stations" (Chakraborti 1989). River Teesta is the master consequent stream in the area while Rammam and Rangit are the two important tributaries of Teesta. The climate of Darjeeling is especially noteworthy. Springs and autumns are the seasons most favored by visitors. The monsoon is a period of continuous rainfall while the winter after December is too cold and unpleasant.

Case Study Areas:

Takdah and **Mineral Spring** from Darjeeling are the selected rural tourism areas from Darjeeling Hills.

LOCATION MAP OF THE STUDY AREA



Source: Municipal Office, Darjeeling and GIS Mapping

4. OBJECTIVES

The proposed research has the following objectives:

- i) To understand different types of rural tourism and to find the driving forces and benefits of rural tourism in the study area.
- ii) To examine the potentialities and various challenges of rural tourism in the study area.

- iii) To analyze the role of rural tourism for economic and sustainable development.
- iv) To identify issues for future research and development of rural tourism.
- v) To assess the impact of rural tourism upon the quality of life of the villagers.

5. METHODOLOGY

The methodology that would be adopted for the proposed study will be analytical, descriptive, comparative, evaluative and interpretive. Both Qualitative and Quantitative data will be used for the study. Structured interview will be conducted for collecting primary data from experts, tourists as well as the local stakeholders. A patterned questionnaire will be floated among the local people to observe their viewpoints. For the collection of secondary data, previous studies in tourism, rural tourism and eco-tourism, various publications of Tourism Department of India and Tourism Department of Darjeeling, newspapers, journals, magazines, management plans of various National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries will be studied. Specific Internet portals and websites will be browsed to get more information.

The **sample methods** have been adopted and the sample size has been given after the pilot survey of the select areas. Field studies, data collection and observations during fieldwork will be the basis of the present analysis. The data has been processed and represented by different statistical and cartographic techniques.

The **area of the study** has been restricted to **Darjeeling Hills** within **Darjeeling** subdivision. Gurung Guest House, Pradhan Homestay, Shiwani Homestay, Rai Resort, Darjeeling Blossom Homestay, Abiraj Homestay, Norlha Homestay, TinchuleyGurung's Homestay and Anugraha Homestay from Takdah and Tathagata Farm, Gautam Paradise and Humro Homestay from Mineral Spring has been surveyed for the study.

Two rural tourism areas have been surveyed for case study, namely, **Takdah** and **Mineral Spring** from Darjeeling subdivision.

6. CHALLENGES OF RURAL TOURISM IN THE STUDY AREA

Though rural tourism gives livelihood to many rural dwellers but the challenges faced by hosts should not be ignored. It takes long time, heavy effort and patience to build a good rural tourist spot. Tourism industry is an industry which depends on many factors and challenges overcoming those factors. The challenges faced by hosts, stakeholders of rural tourist destinations of **Takdah** and **Mineral Spring** are elaborated as follows:

a) Financial and monetary Support for sustainable development:

Tourism Business is highly fluctuating. Most of the hosts felt the lack of provision of financial support from different banks/ cooperatives in terms of loan. The capital required for set up of homestays, tourist places, and beautiful environment was not sufficient for the hosts at the initial stage. The community people of **Takdah and Mineral Spring** too suffered from provision of financial supports from different agencies. Only few people enjoyed financial support i.e. 20% of people whereas 80% did not get any financial support to help in sustaining their occupations. This reveals that tourism industry is at great stake. The challenges thus faced by all the hosts and communities should be taken into great consideration by government as well as other funding agencies.

b) Lack of education:

The survey revealed that most of the hosts of rural tourism at **Takdah and Mineral Spring** had acquired education up to primary level which clearly indicates the lack of knowledge in efficient running of rural tourism and the effective management. Thus proper information, lack of education, good knowledge and skill became another challenge for development of rural tourism in **Takdah and Mineral Spring**.

c) Political unrest:

Darjeeling hills has remained under political unrest under survey year twice for the demand of separate state i.e. Gorkhaland which totally ruined tourism industry in entire Darjeeling. The year 2013 and 2017 witnessed a mass

agitation having a long period strike (bandh) which totally shattered tourism in the study area. Homestays remained closed for more than three months which totally stopped income of the hosts and the villagers. "It was a struggling period" stated by Navin Tamang, owner of Tathagata Farm, Mineral Spring which really gave evidence that running tourism is not an easy task. It needs great sufferings. The challenge was to set up the industry again post - strike. Tourists feared to visit Darjeeling post - strike as the agitation may occur any time. When whole Darjeeling suffered a setback, tourism industry too suffered a setback and it went to that condition where income generation became a difficult task.

f) Short tourist season in the Hills:

The short tourist season in Darjeeling hills totally handicaps the tourism industry. The tourist season prevails mostly four to five months i.e. in Spring March, April and May and Autumn October and November. Rest of the months either remains cold or rainy which restricts tourists to visit the place. Homestays, eco-tourism remains closed for rest of the months which totally shatters the income and employment of rural people. The people of **Takdah and Mineral Spring** suffer with short tourist season which does not allow them to generate income and earn profit abundantly.

g) Publicity:

The information and description of all the rural tourism destinations and their scenic beauty and nearby tourist spots of Darjeeling Himalaya are least advertised or least publicity done. Tourists from different parts of India and world remain unknown and thus the rural place remains unexplored. Takdah lacks publicity and thus the flow of tourists remains low.

7. BEHAVIORAL AND FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS OF TOURISTS

Tourism industry rests on the behavioral and functional aspects of tourists visiting the selected destination. Rural tourism in particular relies on the selective perceptions of the tourists. Factors such as the demographic profile that includes education, income, occupational structure, information regarding the origin of the tourists and the purpose of visit, frequency of visits, mode of transportation, opinion of the local people, facilities, facilities available, demarcate the nature and standard of the tourists and also their behavioral trends.

Origin of the Tourists:

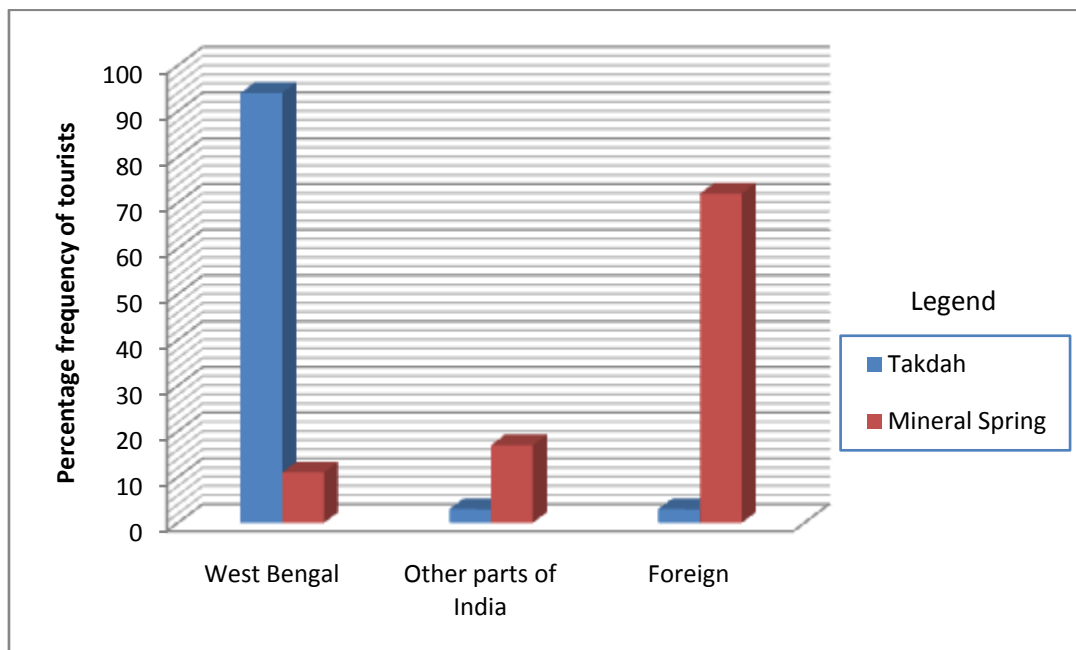
The survey reveals that half of the tourists, to be precise 188 tourists 54 % hail from West Bengal. This substantiates that the majority of the tourists are the domestic tourists who prefer to visit Darjeeling, owing to its easy accessibility, scenic beauty and moderate climate. The average cost at Mineral Spring is 3700 and that of Takdah is Rs. 1200 in general. Around 34% of the total tourists are from foreign countries. The predominance of factors such as distance between the origin and destination, per capita income of the tourists and their literacy ratio has been seen determining the intensity of the flow of incoming tourists. The study suggests that still much emphasis needs to be given to attract foreign tourists that will increase the income and capital of the local people.

Origin of Tourists				
Destinations	West Bengal	Other parts of India	Foreign	Total
Takdah	188	6	6	200
% frequency	94	3	3	100
Mineral Spring	22	34	144	200
% frequency	11	17	72	100

(Source: Field Survey: 2014 – 2018)

N=400

Origin of tourists at select destinations



N=400

(Source: Field Survey: 2014 – 2018)

Out of 200 tourists visiting Takdah 188 (94%), 6 (3%), 6 (3%) hailed from West Bengal, other parts of India and foreign countries respectively. The proportion of tourists coming from West Bengal seem high due to easy accessibility, hot climate at their native places driving them to cold and pleasant climate of Darjeeling, beautiful landscape and peaceful environment of Darjeeling. The scenario is bit different in Mineral Spring. Out of 200 tourists visiting Mineral Spring 22 (11%), 34 (17%) and 144 (72%) hailed from West Bengal, other parts of India and foreign respectively. The proportion of foreign tourist seems high at Mineral Spring due to high cost of stay.

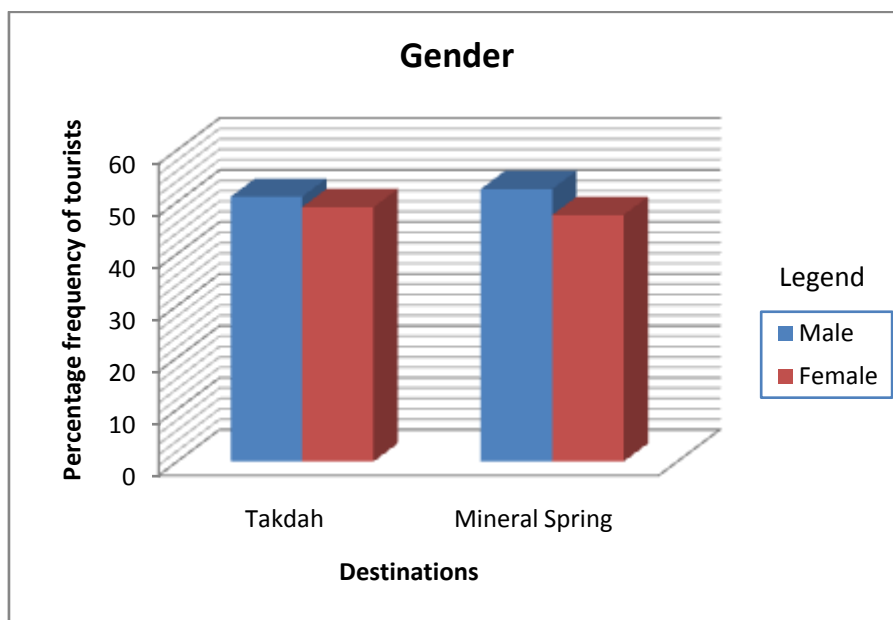
Gender:

In terms of tourists, gender plays a vital role in signifying which portion of gender i.e. male or female tourist tours mostly and is fond of travelling to different places for different purposes. The following table shows the number of male and female tourists in six rural tourism destinations of Darjeeling.

Gender						
Destinations	Male	Female	Total	Members from same family	Only male groups	Only female groups
Takdah	102	98	200	38	32	26
% frequency	51	49	100	19	16	13
Mineral Spring	105	95	200	6	74	72
% frequency	52.5	47.5	100	3	38	36

(Source: Field Survey: 2014 – 2018)

N=400



N=400

(Source: Field Survey: 2014 – 2018)

The study reveals that the male and female tourists visiting rural tourism destinations of Darjeeling at Takdah and Mineral Spring seem equal. Out of 400 tourists surveyed, 207 (51.75%) were male and 193 (48%) were female. 102 (51%) male and 98 (49%) female visited Takdah and 105 (52.5%) male and 95 (47.5%) female visited Mineral Spring. 38 (19%) and 6 (3%) members are from same family at Takdah and Mineral Spring respectively whereas 32 (16%) and 74 (38%) are only male groups and 26 (13%) and 72 (36%) are only female groups visiting Takdah and Mineral Spring respectively.

Occupational Structure:

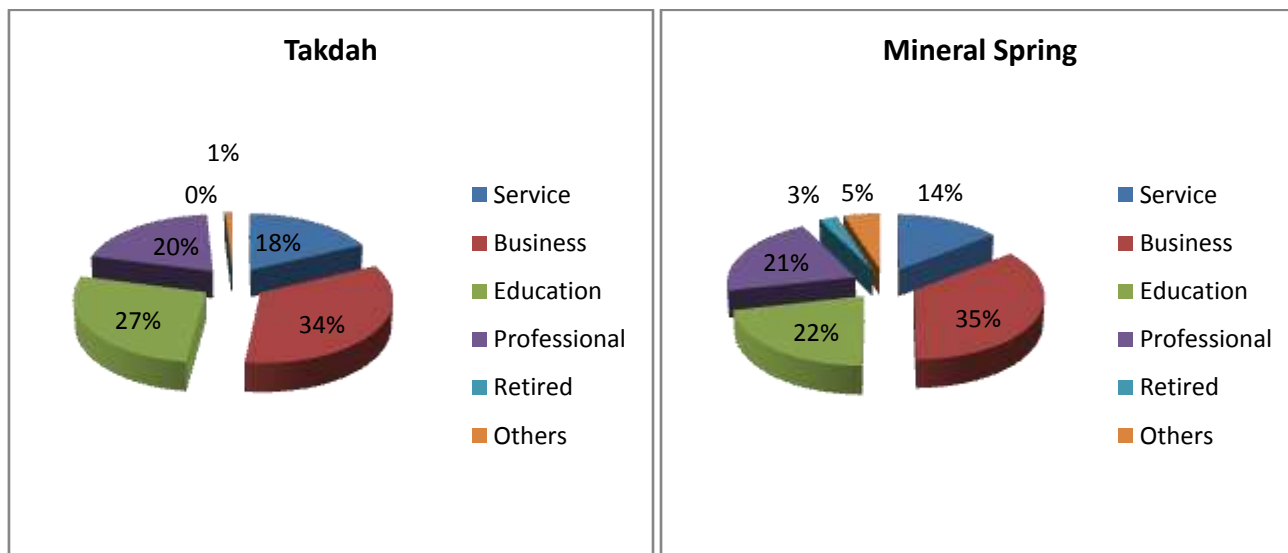
Occupational Structure of the tourists shows their economic character. It determines their earnings and income levels and determines their capacity to visit different and distant places and avail different facilities and services. It signifies the ability of the tourists to visit different tourist destinations from cheaper to costlier depending upon their occupation and their income and earnings. Some of the occupation provides free time to roam while some occupation keeps tourists busy within their occupation. The tourists with government services get opportunity to roam at least once a year with their family to distant places. The businessmen earn a lot and they invest some portion of their earnings for tour. Tourists pursuing education find difficulty in touring as they have to depend on their family for tour fare. The retired person mostly visits distant places for relaxation.

Occupational Structure						
Destinations	Service	Business	Education	Professional	Retired	Others
Takdah	36	68	54	40	0	2
% frequency	18	34	27	20	0	1
Mineral Spring	29	71	43	42	5	10
% frequency	14.5	35.5	22.5	21	2.5	5

(Source: Field Survey: 2014 – 2018)

N=400

Occupational Structure of tourist visiting select destinations:



N=400

(Source: Field Survey: 2014 – 2018)

Occupational structure revealed that most of the tourists at Takdah and Mineral Spring are engaged in business i.e. 34% and 35% respectively. 18% and 14% tourists at Takdah and Mineral Spring are engaged in service respectively, Takdah shows 27% of tourists in education, 20% as professional, 0% retired and 1% in others, similarly Mineral Spring shows 22% tourists in education 21% as professionals, 3% as retired and 5% in others. The data revealed that the tourists with service and business are larger in number which signifies that their occupation supports tourism and roaming to distant places.

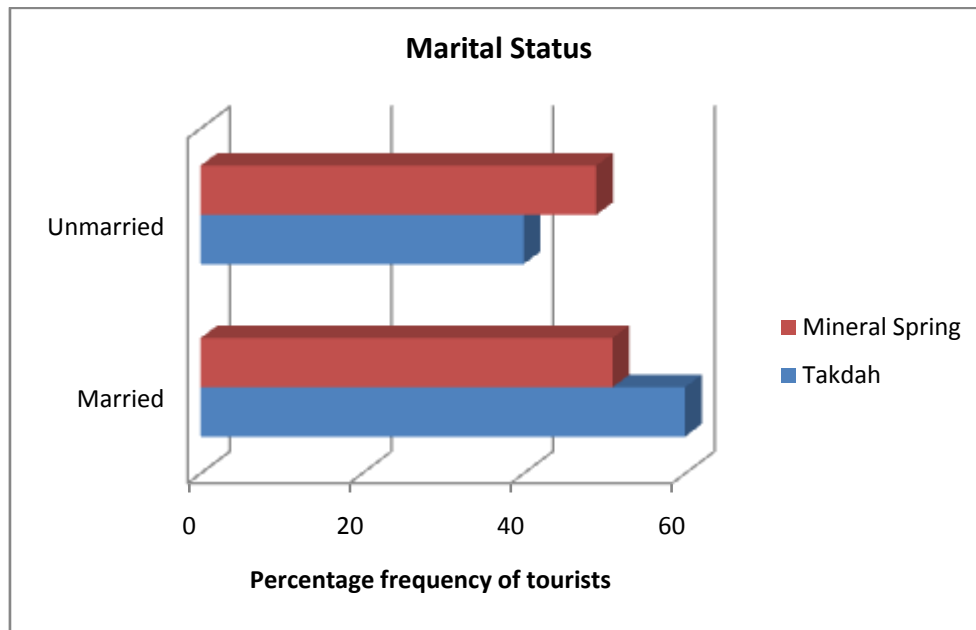
Marital Status:

Marital status of tourists shows the interest of the tourists to enjoy their leisure either alone or with friends, colleagues or with their partners.

Marital Status			
Destinations	Married	Unmarried	Total
Takdah	120	80	200
% frequency	60	40	100
Mineral Spring	102	98	200
% frequency	51	49	100

(Source: Field Survey: 2014 – 2018)

N=400



N=400

(Source: Field Survey: 2014 – 2018)

The data revealed that 60% tourists were married and 40% were unmarried at Takdah. Similarly, 51% tourists were married and 49% tourists were unmarried at Mineral Spring. The ratio of married couples is more at Takdah than Mineral Spring.

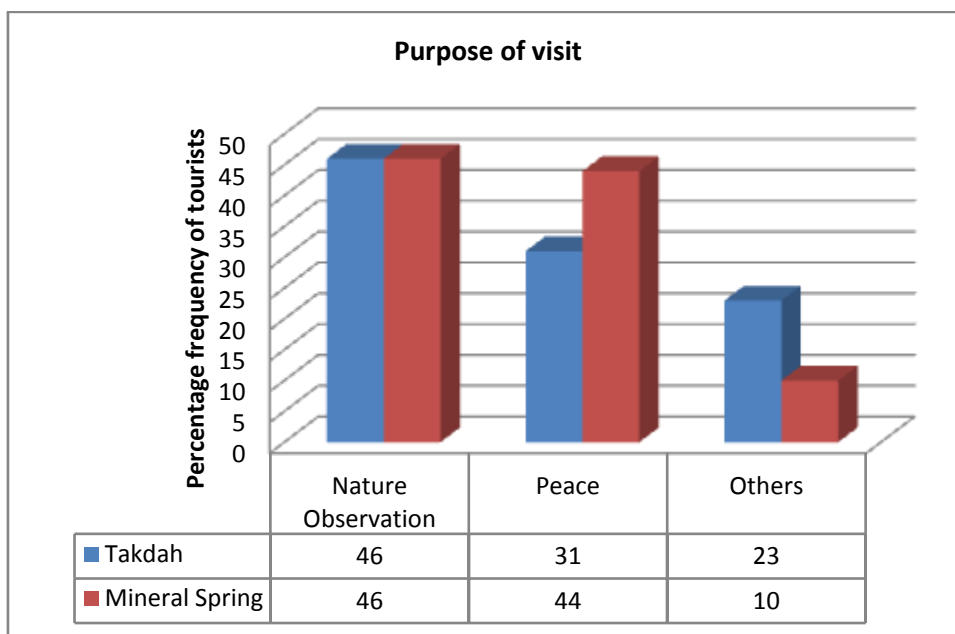
Purpose of Visit:

The purpose of visit varies within tourists. Different tourists have different purposes to visit different destinations. Some are nature lover, some love peace, some bird watching, some for photography, etc. Purpose of visit plays an important role in the evaluation of different components of tourism and different places.

Purpose of visit				
Destinations	Nature Observation	Peace	Others	Total
Takdah	92	62	46	200
% frequency	46	31	23	100
Mineral Spring	92	88	20	200
% frequency	46	44	10	100

(Source: Field Survey: 2014 – 2018)

N=400



N=400

(Source: Field Survey: 2014 – 2018)

It is revealed from the above data that most of the tourists coming to Takdah and Mineral Spring are nature and peace lovers. The same proportion of tourists i.e. 46% love Nature observation both at Takdah and Mineral Spring. 31% tourists at Takdah and 44% tourists at Mineral Spring love peace and peaceful environment free from noise and pollution.

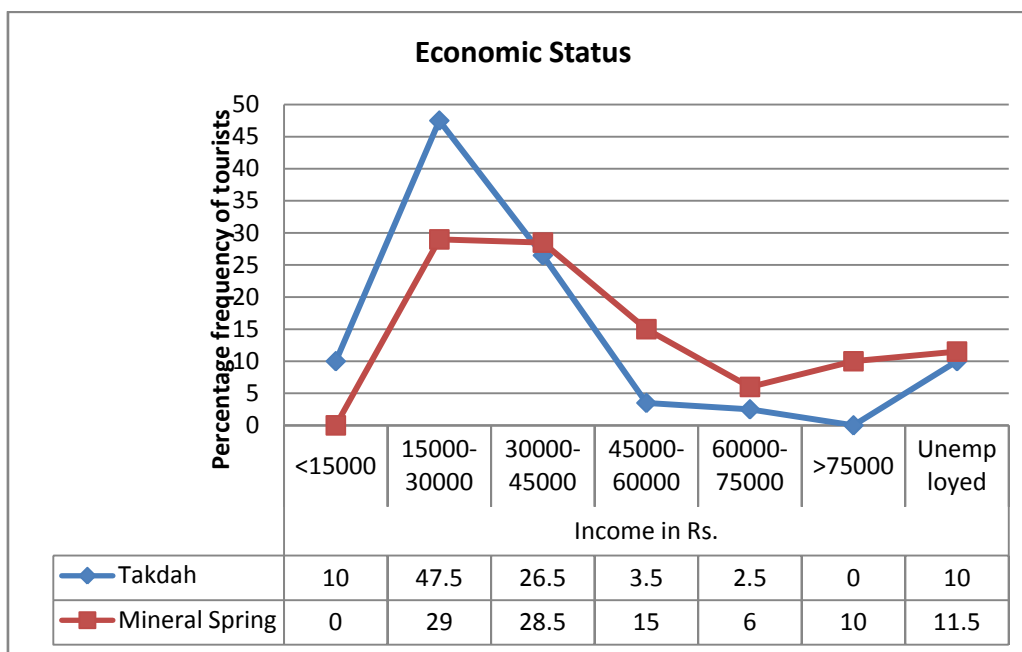
Economic Status:

The economic status of the tourists determines the capacity of the tourists to visit cheaper to costly tourist destinations with their varying per capita income. The more the income level, the more the costlier place they visit and more costly homestay they prefer with longer duration of stay.

Economic Status							
Destinations	Income in Rs.						
	<15000	15000-30000	30000-45000	45000-60000	60000-75000	>75000	Unemployed
Takdah	20	95	53	07	05	0	20
% frequency	10	47.5	26.5	3.5	2.5	0	10
Mineral Spring	0	58	57	30	12	20	23
% frequency	0	29	28.5	15	6	10	11.5

(Source: Field Survey: 2014 – 2018)

N=400



N=400

(Source: Field Survey: 2014 – 2018)

Most of the tourists coming to Takdah and Mineral Spring have good economic status. Out of 200, 20 (10%) tourists have earning less than 15000, 95 (47.5%) tourists have earnings between 15000 to 30000, 53 (26.5%) between 30000 to 45000, 7 (3.5%) between 45000 to 60000, 5 (2.5%) between 60000 to 75000, 0 (0%) more than 75000 and 20 (10%) were unemployed at Takdah.

No tourists have earning less than 15000, 58 (29%) tourists between 15000 to 30000, 57 (28.5%) between 30000 to 45000, 30 (15%) between 45000 to 60000, 12 (6%) between 60000 to 75000, 20 (10%) more than 75000 and 23 (11.5%) were unemployed at Mineral Spring.

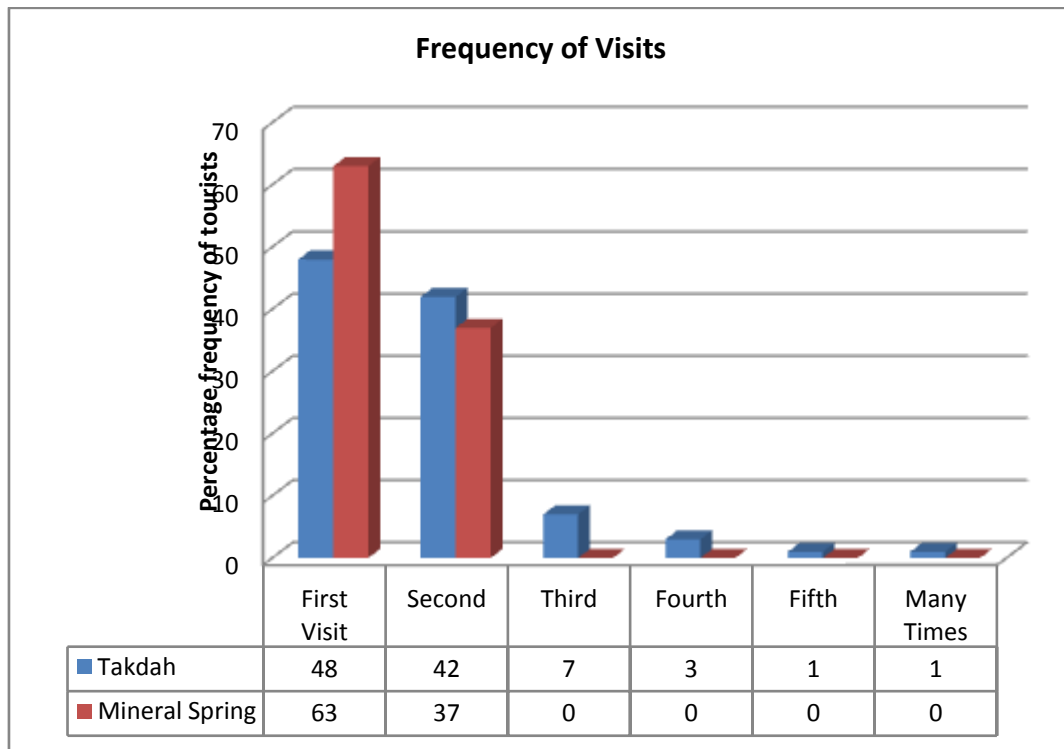
Frequencies of Visits:

Frequency of tourist provides a good idea about the popularity of particular rural tourism destinations. It helps to know about their love for nature, peace, different types of facilities or services enjoyed by a particular tourist at the same place. The frequency of tourist at a particular place proves the potentiality and efficiency of the place to attract tourist frequently. Tourists usually visit different places rather than focusing on a single tourist destination. The frequencies of tourists visiting a single place frequently more than one time clearly signifies the special interest of the tourists on the particular destination which has great attraction.

Frequencies							
Destinations	First Visit	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Many Times	Total
Takdah	96	84	14	6	2	2	200
% frequency	48	42	07	3	1	1	100
Mineral Spring	126	74	0	0	0	0	200
% frequency	63	37	0	0	0	0	100

(Source: Field Survey: 2014 – 2018)

N=400



The data revealed that most of the tourists 126 (63%) and 96 (48%) visited the rural areas of Takdah and Mineral Spring for the first time respectively, few 84 (42%) and 74 (37%) visited for second time at Takdah and Mineral Spring respectively and very few tourists visited the destinations more than two times. It is clear from the above table that some tourists visited Takdah more two times is because of cheap rates of homestay and friendly nature of owners and locals. Though the friendly nature of owners and locals, beautiful landscapes, pleasant weather attracted few tourists to visit Mineral Spring twice but no tourists visited more than two times because of costlier rates of homestays.

8. ROLE OF RURAL TOURISM IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

TAKDAH:

Takdah is a cantonment area located under Rangli-Rangliot block of Kurseong subdivision at an altitude of 1400 feet. Endowed with hanging bridge, orange garden, Teesta River, Rungli tea garden, rock climbing and many viewpoints Takdah has become a famous rural tourism destination.

There are many tourist destinations scattered in and around Takdah. Out of 75 homestays under Rangli Rangliot Homestay Owner Association, Takdah has 56 homestays and 14 homestays belongs to Lamahatta. Rural tourism at Takdah has become a good alternative livelihood source for local people.

Besides homestays, floriculture, forest parks has contributed towards the development of rural tourism at Takdah.

Floriculture is another hallmark of Takdah that has contributed in the growth of rural tourism in a very alarming rate. The region is known for the plantation of orchids of varied kinds. Orchids from this region are sold all over the country as well as in the global market. Some of the famous species that are synonymous with Takdah are appendicular cornuta, anthogoniumgracile, chasiloschistaparishii, eulophiaspectabilis, micropera obtuse, etc.

During our field survey, we even consulted the President of Rangli-Rangliot Homestay Owner Association (which has been formed in the year 2017 to address the grievance of all the homestays operating in the region), Mr. Narbuji Lama. He states that there is a long term agenda of the association to convert the region into a heritage location. He further states that rural tourism should not only focus as a business perspective, but it should have future prospects for the development of the entire rural area. The owner and local people should be giving best hospitality to the tourists. The relationship with tourists should be well maintained which will provide cultural, religion and language

exchange. Tourists come as a guest and return as a family which signifies that a family and relationship bond with tourists keeps increasing.

Buddhiraj Rai, aged 46, a native of Takdah, is a driver, who owns a vehicle, feeds on rural tourism for his livelihood. He takes tourists for sight-seeing of the nearby areas and guides them as well with good and abundant information about the place. His good behavior and guidance has attracted tourists a lot who want to visit Takdah again under his guidance.

During our field survey, we came in interaction with **M.K. Pradhan** who claims himself as the founder of rural tourism at Tinchuley, Takdah. As graduated in science, his interest was to conserve medicinal plant and as agro climatic condition favored environment he started rural tourism in Chhota Mangwa, Takdah in 1998. He could not attract any tourists till 2000. After continuous visit to Kolkata for many times he could bring eight tourists in 2001, since then his tourism started growing. Aged 65 he worked hard for the development of tourism. At the initial stage, he started ecotourism and started homestay tourism and now it is known as Bamboo Darjeeling Blossom Eco-tourism. With a view to sustainable development of rural tourism, he initiated his homestay which turned into an inspiration for whole of Takdah and Tinchuley and now it is a major source of income for the people. M.K. Pradhan's thinking was to upgrade his society through rural tourism. His interests for community development, environment protection, water conservation, electricity conservation helped the society to prosper for sustainable development. Around 25 families of Chhota Mangwa depend on his homestay for their livelihood. Apart from their salaries, they get extra incentives of Rs. 15000 per year along with medical facilities.

Another youth of Takdah, **Diwas Gurung**, aged 27, who works at Shiwani Homestay states that rural tourism has helped villagers to improve their livelihood. They are getting opportunity to open up their own business, new homestays, increase their income level, and develop their skills due to rural tourism at Takdah. They need not go out of their place for employment opportunities, since rural tourism has given them opportunity to generate self-employment.

The following table shows the trend of homestays at Takdah:

Destination	Homestays	House turned into homestays	Government homestays	Private Homestays
Takdah	i) Abiraj Homestay ii) Anugrah Homestay iii) Gurung Guest House iv) Rai Resort	i) Darjeeling paradise ii) Shiwani Homestay iii) Norlha Homestay iv) Tinchuley Gurung's Homestay	i) Saino Heritage Guest House	i) Pradhan Homestay



Shiwani Homestay - Takdah



Traditional Kitchen (Chula)



Swimming pool



Buddhiraj Rai (driver)

9. MINERAL SPRING

Mineral Spring is a small rural hamlet located 16 Kms away from Darjeeling town. It comes under Panchayat area and is under the jurisdiction of Pulbazar Bijanbari block. The nearest market is Lebong and the village falls under the category of revenue village where majority of the population are farmers endowed with land documents. They are basically engaged in farming crops and vegetables which they sell in the nearby market. This is also supplemented by animal rearing. Cows, goats, pigs and poultry also support their day to day living. The total households of Mineral Spring are 40 as per 2011 census. Among these households, our study reveals that 30% of the people are engaged in rural tourism. Some have set up homestays, some are engaged as skilled workers, and some provide necessary ingredients in running the homestays while some have opted to operate taxi services.

Mineral Spring is a farming controlled area where villagers are engaged in cultivation of potatoes, millet, corn and vegetables.

Endowed with orange garden, peaceful environment, organic farming, Yanku River, trekking, scenic beauty, viewpoints Mineral Spring has become a famous rural tourism destination.

Local people do not have to go outside their stations. There is an income of 2, 3 lakhs during season time.

The rich heritage is given due importance and heritage of socio-cultural and ethical are well preserved and protected in Mineral Spring.

Rural tourism at Mineral Spring has become an alternative livelihood for local people.

Besides homestays, floriculture, forest parks have contributed towards the development of rural tourism at Mineral Spring.

Navin Tamang, a local native left his NGO and has started an organic farm in 2007 and named it as Tathagata Farm in his village, Mineral Spring.

The locals get great opportunity to earn their livelihood in connection with Tathagata Farm.

Tathagata Farm not only serves as a homestay in the village but also engages itself in the production of organic tea. The organic tea of this farm is even sold to the markets of Darjeeling. The expensive tea of this farm earns lots of profit. The local villagers are engaged in the processing of this tea manually. The purchase of farm's tea by the tourists has helped in the growth of socio economic livelihood of villagers. Navin's effort and villagers' enthusiasm have given them a good quality of life for sustainable living. Homestay and production of organic tea have given them alternative sources of earnings. Navin has been successful in encouraging villagers to convert their homes into homestays for tourists and earn a good livelihood. And now most of the houses have been converted into homestays.



Tathagata farm, Mineral Spring



Tent Stay



Traditional Kitchen (Chula)



Tea Garden



Tourists and the Owner



Relaxation Point

Rajesh Chettri, aged 36 remarks on the influence of rural tourism at Mineral Spring. He states that the rural tourism brought a great change in the livelihood of local people. The local people are benefitted economically, socially and culturally. He himself is looking after Tathagata farm which not only gave him employment but an opportunity to develop his skills. He was given Permaculture Training two times in a single year which has helped him to manage tourists, their problems and develop his skills in Permaculture. According to him, local people gets the opportunity to work as guide, trekkers, cooks, gardener, cleaner, service provider, care taker, etc. As the farm owns only one vehicle, the farm has to hire different vehicles and drivers from the village as well as surrounding villages. Thus, the drivers too are benefitted economically.

Pratima Sherpa, aged 32, female in support and favor of rural tourism stated that it gives lots of opportunities for villagers to sustain their livelihood. Her family sells vegetables to the farm which motivates to grow more crops and prosper agriculture. The price of vegetables that she sells is bit higher than the price of local market.

LendupLepcha, aged 34, male, owns the shop which is the only source of income for him. Most of the tourists who stays at Tathagata farm visit his shop for different fast food items especially delicious momo, aaloomimi, thukpa, chop, chicken wings, leg piece, chicken typho, etc. His friendly nature attracts more tourists to his shop. Lendup Lepcha thus, sustain his livelihood with the income that he earns from Tathagata farm. Thus rural tourism in Mineral Spring has given opportunity to many locals to earn their livelihood in a sustainable manner.

AmbarThami, aged 36, is a driver and runs vehicle for Tathagata farm when there is excess tourist. During peak season he earns more than 50,000 per month which can sustain his and his family's livelihood. Thus most of the drivers from Mineral Spring are benefitted by rural tourism.

The infrastructural development like roads, buildings, new homestays, shopping facilities, plantations, floriculture, etc. along with the introduction of tents, cottages, swimming pool, etc. in the rural area of Mineral Spring has brought a great development and which is thought to attain sustainable development in the area.

The organization of capacity building program in this destination has allowed the people to promote their area for tourism.

Socially, the place is changing. People's perspective on the oriented society is towards its development. All the people work together to develop their society and as they have face to face relation, the behavior of the local people remains very good with the tourists. A good interaction and relation with local people leads to welfare of the society. Rural tourism in this area has provided incentives to maintain local cultures preserving traditional arts and crafts. Rural tourism in this area has increased the opportunities for social contact and social exchange.

Culturally, the village gets opportunity to interact with new people, learn new thoughts, ideas and diverse form of life.

Most of the agricultural products are organic. The villagers are not allowed to use pesticides, chemical fertilizers in their field. They too are not allowed to use phenyl, bleaching powder. The organic products too are another attraction of the village. The agricultural products are orange, cardamom, brooms, etc.

The progress of village is immense. All the stakeholders are working united for attaining sustainable development.

Environmentally, all the stakeholders, tourists and the local people are very much aware of keeping the village clean and green. Most of the environments are well preserved. Afforestation and plantations are given preference. Rural tourism too has encouraged sustainable use of biological resources.

The rural area of Mineral Spring is thus getting much attraction from the tourists and leading towards sustainable development.

In order to attain sustainable development in rural areas, the opinions of residents, be it positive or negative, should be given due preference since they can provide best information on socio-cultural, economic and environmental matters.

The following is the scenario of homestays at Mineral Spring:

Destination	Homestays	House turned into homestays	Government homestays	Private Homestays
Mineral Spring	i) Tathagata Farm ii) Gautam Paradise iii) Humro Homestay			

10. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that both the rural tourism areas Takdah and Mineral Spring have been able to develop their areas with the introduction of tourism and are moving towards sustainable development. The local people are becoming aware about the positive and negative impacts of tourism. To some extent rural tourism has been able to create employment opportunities. Rural tourism has a great future perspective in the rural areas of Darjeeling and can surely be an option for another income generation business.

All the stakeholders and local people should be aware of the environmental and social consequences of rural tourism.

All the owners, stakeholders should work on and progress on 3 keys of sustainable development: **making it more economically viable, socially equitable and environmentally responsible.**

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