

Exploring the Dimensions of Spirituality, Wellness and Value Creation amidst Himalayan Regions Promoting Entrepreneurship and Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

Spirituality and wellness are intertwined in Himalayan regions with each other. We can find a unique blend of spiritual traditions as well as healing practices in these regions. The experiences of tourists in Himalayan regions are very profound and transformative in various aspects. In order to seek spiritual solace and blessings, various travelers undertake pilgrimages to in these regions to various sites, temples, monasteries and routes. The intersection of spirituality, wellness, value creation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability in the Himalayan regions can have several implications. The findings highlight that the Himalayan highlands are regarded as being serene, beautiful natural areas for spiritual retreats. There is an emphasis on holistic well-being that goes beyond financial considerations by highlighting wellness and spirituality in entrepreneurial and environmental activities. In the Himalayan areas, integrating spirituality, wellness, and sustainability can encourage and support entrepreneurship. An innovative and creative attitude can be encouraged by placing a strong emphasis on values, awareness, and connectivity.

Keywords: Spirituality, Wellness, Value Creation, Himalayan region, Himalayas, Entrepreneurship, Sustainability

Introduction

We are living in an era which has gradually started to be known as the era of shocks, calamities, natural environmental degradation and a whole series of pandemics such as SRS, MERS and the Covid-19 pandemic. The latest in the list did not surprise the watchful, cautious and aware denizens of this world much owing to the fact that they had been having the permeation of everything has happened thus far and even worse that can happen in the remaining decades of 21st century. The human race today has been impelled to rethink its life priorities. Hyper materialism and endless greed for material possessions, for senseless consumption of natural resources, for inhuman apathy towards nature and diverse forms of life, abrogation of spirit of ethics and the rejection of values such as empathy and compassion stand as evidence of a global downslide into a world which is without values such as togetherness, love, mutual concern and spiritual well-being.

Amidst such overwhelming sense of gloom aggravated further by the onset of unpredictable situations caused by Covid-19 force us to rethink and repurpose our life which can have some semblance of normalcy, mutual coexistence, respect for nature, respect for day-to-day interpersonal interaction and a little modicum of joy and spiritual satisfaction. Moreover, if we think in terms of providing an antidote to the situation that has arisen due to the pandemic and thereby providing a little help to the suffering humanity, notions of value creation, rural tourism, physical and spiritual well-being develop in the mind. The very thought of value creation has the potential of serving as a counter narrative to crass consumerism, humanism and hyper materialism. Likewise, the very idea of rural tourism emerges as a solid counter to commercial tourism involving huge amounts of money.

Similarly, the very thought of well-being helps us rise above the distressful state of mind. Viewed collectively, these concepts have the potential to offer an alternative to the unimaginable and excruciating turmoil caused by the present-day world that has gone absolutely hay wire because of the poor planning and policies of governments across the globe.

Life has become so unpredictable and uncertain. We don't know as to when and how we can become invading victims of this pandemic now an endemic. Because of such a helpless state of mind, people have started gradually moving out of their homes and rather than preferring a far-off destination they have started exploring the perspective local spaces and spots scarcely explored by

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the tourist. Such spots exist in the countryside across the world, but because of our conditioned mind set vis-a-vis of travelling to far off places, many people find it hard to plan out excursions/tours to such unexplored and beautiful tourist spots, offering spiritual solace and deep inner satisfaction. This is one of the key thrust areas of this paper which aims at travelling rural tourism rather than the commercial, intercontinental tourism. There is a particular reason behind this. This pandemic has caused a large-scale disruption of human life everywhere, be that business, economic, social, cultural, or political (Arora & Sharma, 2021). As a result, people in the world are psychologically shattered and many of them have developed ailments such as claustrophobia, schizophrenia and paranoia due to the onslaught of the various insecurities of life. Psychosocial well-being refers to a combination of mental and social health, both of which have been significantly impacted by the pandemic and require intervention in the post-pandemic period (Arora & Sharma, 2021)

The time spent in rural surroundings benefits us multifariously. There are studies that show how nature in the country side and its different aspects benefit distressed souls (Arora & Sharma, 2022). Nature has the capacity to cure physical as well as mental ailments. Its effect is ennobling and alleviating on the soul. When we connect the notion of value creation with rural tourism the enquiry becomes all the more interesting. Rural tourism presupposes value creation of diverse sorts in which entrepreneurship plays an important role. A traveler/tourist who explores the rural tourist spots ends up benefitting multifariously in the entire process. Right from the word go there is a serene sense of serendipity, which a person undertaking rural travel experiences. The very decision of moving out of one's comfort zone into the lap of nature is value enhancing in several ways for instance the moment of deciding to move is the moment of transformation particularly because you have bidden adieu to stasis, a lack of movement and lethargy and a depressed and dejected state of being. Moreover, the transformation is not transient which takes place inside you. It has a sense of permanence in it as it acts at the level of brain cells which get reinvigorated and renewed in that moment of transformation.

This rejuvenation causes fundamental change in the perception as well as the consciousness of a person who has decided to make a physical foray into the lap of nature (Arora, Sharma & Walia, 2021). Once the inner being of a tourist synchronises with the simple and beautiful world of nature it adds tremendous value to the quality of his life. In fact, this quality is immeasurable in material terms, but in spiritual terms one can feel the rich rewards in the form of transformation at an inner level which enables us to see the essence of being in everything in each and every aspect of creation.

Value Creation can also be viewed as a natural corollary of tourism. It has powerful communication dimensions to it. The notions of value creation, rural tourism and well-being are all inherently, intrinsically communicative. This is because of the fact that all these concepts lose their essence in the absence of language which is used in the process of thinking about them, planning them and also articulating them. Language is everywhere. We can also go to the extent of claiming that rural tourism is language incarnate and so is the value creation and even the idea of well-being will simply lose its sheen if language is not there.

In this way Value Creation is a language which can turn amorphous in a sense that it can change its form, shape and character as per the changing scenario. For instance, a rural tourist seeking spiritual solace will prefer to use the language of silence because of his inability to articulate his spiritual experience. Therefore, he/she has no choice but to silently benefit from the language of silence. However, on the other hand, upon coming into contact with an artisan in a rural arena, a tourist may feel humbled. As a result of the realisation as to which wave length of life is that rural artisan at, a tourist might suddenly become familiar with the language of simplicity and humility. He/she may wonder how uncomplicated life can get and so as to how simple human life can become promoting sustainability. This basically is the process of value creation in the form of communication by nature that seldom requires expression.

Such a silent communication from the Himalayas casts a deep and transforming impact on the psyche of a tourist who may not be prepared for the same. At yet another level nature has altogether different language to converse with the rural tourist. She can serve as a friend, philosopher and guide which William Wordsworth writes about in his poetry. "*One impulse from Vernal Wood may teach you more than all the sages of world can*". Therefore, the communicative dimension of value creation and rural tourism must occupy a place of centrality.

Methodology

This paper is qualitative in nature and aims to build a conceptually informed and considered opinion vis-a-vis the significance of rural entrepreneurship and rural sustainable practices in the process of value creation which takes place as a result of rural tourism. The major thrust of this paper is to demonstrate conceptually as well as through common place instances that one comes across while exploring hitherto unexplored and least known rural tourist rural destinations. There are plenty passing references to the rural tourist destinations in the vicinity of Dharmshala in India which happens to be a centre of international tourism attraction because of the presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and it has got spiritual dimensions for people connected across the world. The observation method to build up a narrative will be used as two of the authors happen to be the native of the place since birth and has spent four decades observing the tourists and area. Further, in order to find out the tourist opinions about the Himalayan

region, 20 tourists in the Dharamshala region, from different areas and countries were approached with a small questionnaire where they were asked five open-ended questions. The narratives have been analysed by the authors in order to understand the spiritual and wellness dimensions of the Himalayan region, if any. Manual content analysis has been performed to build an opinion in this regard. Before collecting data for this study, ethics committee approval (Faculty of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences, Elizade University; Date: 16.05.2023) and informed consent (verbal) was obtained from the participants.

The approach of triangulation is also followed in order to establish the validity of the answers. Literature support from SCOPUS database has been taken to contend the third research question. The research questions that the author would like to explore are as follows:

Research Questions/ Statements:

1. What are the spiritual and wellness dimensions of travel in the Himalayan regions?
2. How do these dimensions promote sustainability?
3. What role does rural tourism and rural entrepreneurship play in value creation?

What are the spiritual and wellness dimensions of travel in the Himalayan regions?

The Himalayan region has been associated with mental wellness and spiritual dimensions for a long time. The region has been associated with various religious and spiritual practices. Talking particularly about the Dharamshala region which is in the lap of the Himalayas, it has been a world-famous tourist destination due to many reasons. The state of Himachal has been known as land of Gods and deities. Many religions have shown their prominence mark in the Himalayan regions. The region has vast treks, plenty of river side destinations which attract tourists around the world.

The Himalayan regions are best known for countless spiritual traditions and have always been a rich source of inspiration for many practitioners throughout history (Manhas & Kour, 2014). Various religions like Hinduism and Buddhism have contributed towards the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the Himalayan regions. The Himalayas are considered to be sacred in Hinduism. They are considered to be the home of gods and goddesses. These regions are marked by the existence of many ancient temples and places of worship. They are considered to be a holy place for pilgrimage in various aspects. These regions have also been associated with Buddhism. There are several monasteries, and retreat centres with strong spiritual presence in the Himalayas. The Himalayas are also associated with serenity and peace. They are considered to be ideal places for meditation and spiritual retreats (Manhas, Charak & Sharma, 2019). Many spiritual seekers visit Himalayas for various meditational practices. Tourists always seek solitude and find a deeper connection with their inner self in the lap of the Himalayas. The Himalayas are also considered to be an important source of inspiration for practicing yoga and Ayurveda (Arora & Sharma, 2022). Presently, various healing and well-being practices can be found in these regions in the form of ashramas and meditation centres. The region has been nourishing many spiritual practitioners and famous yoga masters who have contributed to the development and dissemination of ancient Indian practices (Arora & Sharma, 2023). The Himalayan region has also been the nurturer of various cultures and local communities (Berreman, 1963). There are deep rooted beliefs of nature, spirits and deities which are associated with particular regions, places, forests and mountains (Luchesi, 2006). The rituals and ceremonies of these tribes and communities are conducted in the lap of nature in order to seek blessings from various natural forces, including mountains and hills. They are the land of indigenous cultures and local castes and tribes (Rana et.al, 2021). The Himalayas are also the lands of mystic experiences to many. Certain esoteric practices like tantra and mantra can also be found being practiced by certain communities here (Tiwari & Pande, 2010). It is also the route to various famous pilgrimages and is considered highly sacred in Hinduism. In order to understand the opinions of tourists in the present scenario the narratives from 17 tourists out of the twenty random tourists in the Dharamshala region were found relevant. Some of the excerpts to the question “How do you think the Himalayan region promotes spirituality and wellness among tourists?” are stated below:

Note: No language edits or transcribing of the responses have been done, the responses have been filled by the traveler himself/herself and have been reproduced in their original form below:

Excerpt 1

“The Himalayan region is a beautiful home to many ancient temples belonging to different religions like Buddhism and Hinduism. Himachal is one part of this Himalayan region and it is land of many Gods and goddesses. I usually visit Himachal with my family to attend the temples of different deities on different occasions like *Navaratri*'s. I also visit Himachal to enjoy the beauty of greenery and the hills. In winters, I go to places like McLeod Ganj, the *Bhagsunath* temple”

Excerpt 2

“The Himalayan region is known for bringing peace to one's mind. We come to visit these regions to get away from the hectic life of the city. There are a number of spiritual places in the Himalayan regions. One can go visit these spiritual destinations and can

feel a sense of belonging and calmness. The environment of these places possesses healing benefits. I feel energetic and full of life after visiting. My mind is refreshed and I can focus on my day-to-day tasks afterwards.”

Excerpt 3

“The Himalayan region promotes spirituality and wellness among tourists by offering a unique blend of ancient traditions, stunning natural beauty, and holistic wellness practices.”

Excerpt 4

“The region is home to some of the world’s oldest spiritual traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. These traditions offer a variety of practices that can help tourists connect with their inner selves and find peace and tranquility.”

Excerpt 5

“The region offers a variety of holistic wellness practices, such as yoga, meditation, and Ayurveda. These practices can help tourists improve their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.”

Excerpt 6

“In my opinion the Himalayan region is doing its share of promoting spirituality and wellness amongst tourists as there are various religious sites, spiritual landscapes, pilgrimage centres in our region and tourists are often seen visiting these places.”

Excerpt 7

“The Himalayan region’s unique combination of natural beauty, sacred sites, spiritual traditions, and wellness offerings create an environment that facilitates self-discovery, inner growth, and holistic well-being for those seeking spiritual and wellness experiences.”

By analysing the content of the responses given by the tourists, it is quite clear that the Himalayan regions are regarded to be the combination of beauty and spirituality. They also offer the wellness environment for the inner growth and holistic development of humankind. They’re associated with giving inner peace and strength to the mind and soul. Further, most of the responses are inclined towards the spiritual practices being propagated by His Holiness Dalai Lama to make it a spiritual destination along with the spiritual practices of Hinduism being prevalent in these lands. The Himalayan region is associated with temples and monasteries and is considered appropriate for religious practices by the majority of respondents. When the respondents were asked about the Dharamshala region in particular, most of them associated Dharamshala with being a spiritual destination due to the facilities of the meditation and yoga retreats available in the region. The presence of various Tibetan monasteries and the dominance of Buddhism and Hinduism is also regarded to be the reason for the region to be considered spiritual.

Spirituality and wellness are intertwined in the Himalayan regions with each other. We can find a unique blend of spiritual traditions as well as healing practices in these regions (Vidyarthi, Samant & Sharma, 2013). The experiences of the tourists in the Himalayan regions are very profound and transformative in various aspects (Parashar & Chandel, 2019). In order to seek spiritual solace and blessings, as well as for finding the connection with the supreme divine, various travellers undertake pilgrimages in these regions to various sites, temples, monasteries and routes. The travel to various pilgrimages can be very transformative for the pilgrims, which contributes to one’s well-being and spiritual growth (Tomer, 2011). The Himalayas are considered to be home to numerous spiritual gurus and teachers who have preserved as well as transmitted their wisdom and spiritual practices from generations to generations (Derasaria & Kumar, 2011). When tourists try to seek knowledge and guidance from these gurus, they gain insight and tools for personal growth as well as self-discovery which paves the way to the spiritual transformation of one’s overall well-being. The Himalayan regions offer a perfect environment for bringing harmony to the mind and body. The serenity and solace which nature offers in these landscapes help one to find and seek a holistic sense of well-being. The spiritual practices which are prevalent in these areas provide a perfect environment for the travelers exploring the dimensions of physical and mental wellness. These regions have always offered plenty of meditational workshops and wellness training programs. The rich biodiversity of the region and abundance of flora and fauna have given opportunities to healers, resorts and spas to provide therapies, treatments and wellness programs. Ayurveda which is a traditional healing practice is very close to the holistic wellbeing of humans and nature. It promotes sustainable practices. Further the region is a hub to Yoga retreats and related wellness programs. The yogic practices focus on physical postures, breathing exercises, meditation and is all about bringing balance in the mind and body for which the Himalayan region provides a perfect environment. These retreats provide opportunities for rejuvenation, wellness and de-stress which enhances overall well-being. The pure air and rich environment with a focus on organic products add to the benefits of the region and therefore it is becoming a preferred destination for international tourists. Nature acts like a strong healer and the Himalayas provide a pristine natural environment. Nature walks, fresh air, mineral rich water, treks on mountains, organic food promotes relaxation, wellness and reduces life stress.

There are several holy places, temples, monasteries, and pilgrimage routes throughout the Himalayas. Many people travel on pilgrimages to these holy locations in search of spiritual comfort, benefits, and a sense of kinship with the divine. Even just going on a pilgrimage can be a life-changing journey that advances one’s spiritual development and general well-being.

How sustainability is related

There is a close relationship between spirituality and sustainability. When we observe minutely, we can find that all the religions stress on the interconnection of all beings and the significance of living in peace with the environment in many spiritual traditions. This point of view motivates people to see the intrinsic worth of the environment or nature as a whole and to care for it. People are more inclined to adopt sustainable behaviours and contribute to the preservation of the environment when they have a strong sense of connection to nature.

Spirituality frequently demands routines that foster mindfulness and presence in the present moment, such as meditation, prayer, or respecting nature and the gifts of nature. Due to their increased awareness, people are better able to understand how their actions affect the environment and make more thoughtful decisions. With spiritual orientation, a positive mindset is inculcated. We can lessen our consumption, waste, and ecological footprint by adopting responsible behaviour towards ecology and human beings. A moral and ethical foundation offered by spirituality directs people toward sustainable activities. Compassion, gentleness, and non-harming/ nonviolence are some of the important virtues that are emphasised in many spiritual traditions. These principles can be further expanded or be associated with promoting ecological values, minimising environmental harm, and giving the wellbeing of all living things top priority.

People who are spiritually inclined always follow the path of material detachments and are compassionate towards all living beings. They follow the path of love, compassion and bliss to find happiness in simplicity. The Himalayas have been a source of inspiration to many sages, saints, gurus and teachers in this respect for centuries. This viewpoint simply opposes the consumerist culture that encourages wasteful and excessive purchasing habits. People can live more sustainably by embracing simplicity and letting go of their material desires, which will lessen their impact on the environment. Nature, especially the Himalayas and Himalayan cultures and traditions are the best influencers in this regard.

Since the past, present, and future are all intertwined, spirituality frequently emphasises the bigger picture of existence. This long-term outlook encourages people to think about the sustainability of the world and the welfare of future generations. Spiritual people are more inclined to adopt sustainable behaviours that protect resources for future generations because they understand that our actions now have ramifications for the future. To further explore the relationship between spirituality and sustainability the respondents of the study were asked: How do you think a spiritual destination promotes sustainability? The following excerpts from the respondents' interview support the notion fully:

Excerpt 1

"It develops a kind responsibility and respect towards the place in minds of the tourists to not violate the tourist destination."

Excerpt 2

"A spiritual destination always promotes sustainability greatly by emphasising mindful consumerism"

Excerpt 3

"A spiritual destination promotes sustainability as whenever I visit such spiritual destinations with beautiful nature, I become more conscious about protecting environment."

Excerpt 4

"A spiritual destination awakens one's sense of belonging to place and life. So as of my experience I want future generations to feel the same and enjoy these hidden gems by practicing sustainable activities keeping the environment clean and green."

Excerpt 5

"Sustainability is the need of the hour. Nowadays most of the things are taking the form of digitisation, like CCTV cameras. So, it's an upgradation to the existing process. Moreover, it promotes eco-tourism and environment awareness among the local guardians of the place. These are the promoters and supporters of sustainability."

Excerpt 6

"Spiritual destinations can promote sustainability in a number of ways. For example, they can: Encourage visitors to connect with nature and appreciate the beauty of the natural world. Promote respect for local cultures and traditions. Support sustainable businesses and practices. Raise awareness of environmental issues. Inspire people to live more sustainably in their own lives. In short, spiritual destinations can help people to see the interconnectedness of all things and to develop a sense of responsibility for the planet. This can lead to more sustainable behavior, both at home and when traveling."

Excerpt 7

"There are ongoing cleaning drives and the thrust on being plastic-free, and when tourists come and see the places they tend to act and follow the guidelines of the place and will protect the peace and sanctity of the place."

Excerpt 8

"In a strife torn world people are searching for peace. They require places which can bust their stress."

Excerpt 9

“The influence of humanity on the environment and the use of natural resources may be affected by spirituality, through awareness for developing a greater conscience about the implications of human actions and needs to adjust these in achieving sustainable development.”

Excerpt 10

“Spiritual destinations promote sustainability by encouraging mindful practices, fostering a deep connection with nature, promoting cultural preservation, and supporting local communities.”

Excerpt 11

“Promoting more spiritual tourism enhances the scope for rural entrepreneurship which in turn helps sustainability”

Excerpt 12

“Spiritual destinations can promote sustainability in several ways: Connection with Nature, Mindfulness, Ethical Values, Education and Awareness: Community Engagement. Moreover, spiritual destinations provide spaces for introspection, connection with nature, and the cultivation of values that promote sustainability.”

Excerpt 13

“Spiritual destinations can operate as role models for ecologically responsible and culturally respectful tourism by incorporating sustainable concepts and practices into their design. These places have the power to motivate people to live sustainably, make thoughtful decisions, and advance the welfare of the planet and all of its inhabitants.”

The excerpts above stated from the narratives given by the tourists directly indicate that a spiritual destination can promote sustainability by not emphasising the aspects of consumerism. Spiritual destinations are always a motivation to people that they should protect the ecology and the environment should be taken care of in a way that the next generations are also able to see that. They promote ecotourism as well as environmental awareness among local people to protect the natural environment of that destination. They are also supporters of the cultures and traditions prevalent in that particular destination. Which is in one way a sustainable practice. When we look for peace and tranquility in nature, it alleviates our stress and it may help us to achieve a greater conscious about human actions and lead our way towards sustainable development. Another important aspect of being in nature is indulging into more ethical practices and community engagement actions, which provide a way of introspection and connection with nature for the cultivation of sustainability among the masses.

What role do Rural Tourism and Rural Entrepreneurship play in value creation?

Rural entrepreneurship and rural tourism have a significant influence on value creation, both socially and economically. The hospitality and tourism sector serves as a favourable environment for entrepreneurship because startups and entrepreneurs are essential for tourism value creation and innovation (Solvoll et al., 2015; Kallmuenzer et al., 2019). Rural tourism generates demand for local products & services, attracting tourists, and boosting economic activity. On the other side, rural entrepreneurship includes creating and running a business venture in rural areas, which promotes local economies, creates wealth, and reduces unemployment. The growth of rural tourism destinations greatly relies on creating new tourism startups that meet customers' needs through tourism products and services (Cakmak et al., 2018). Rural communities can create job opportunities (Nagaraju & Chandrashekhara, 2014) and business avenues through rural tourism and entrepreneurship.

Tourists are showing a huge interest in rural tourism experiences after the pandemic era as rural tourism has expanded entrepreneurship toward the rural dimension (Madanaguli et al., 2021) and rural tourism has emerged as a critical development strategy for rural areas (Guan & Huang, 2023). The preservation of cultural traditions and heritage is promoted through rural tourism. The distinctive cultural landscapes, traditional arts and crafts, regional festivals, and historical monuments that can be found in rural areas draw the attention of tourists. Rural tourism and small business development in rural areas can promote natural resource preservation and their sustainable use. Rural places frequently have diverse biomes, beautiful scenery, and distinctive ecosystems. Rural areas can generate value by protecting their natural resources and bringing in environmentally conscious tourists by encouraging eco-tourism (Dorobantu & Nistoreanu, 2012) and implementing sustainable practices such as responsible waste management, energy conservation, and the protection of natural habitats. In conclusion, rural entrepreneurship and tourism can help create value by preserving cultural heritage, fostering community base tourism, protecting natural resources and encouraging economic growth. By leveraging their unique assets and resources, rural communities can create sustainable and inclusive growth while preserving their distinctive identity and way of life.

In order to promote sustainable tourism practices, cultural tourism is important because cultural tourism promotes unique traditions, heritage, and practices of a particular location. The promotion and preservation of regional culture and traditions is one of the essential elements of sustainable tourism. Authentic cultural expressions of a community, such as its art, music, dance, food, festivals, and historical places, are the focus of cultural tourism. Cultural tourism promotes a sense of pride and identity within the

community by enticing tourists to respect and appreciate local customs. As a result, cultural heritage is preserved, and traditional wisdom is passed on to the next generations.

A Tree map visualization of rural tourism and rural entrepreneurship-related research work

In order to understand the relationship between rural tourism and rural entrepreneurship, we explored the literature from the Scopus database by searching the key strings as “Rural Tourism and Rural Entrepreneurship”. The results were analysed using R studio, and a tree map has been prepared in order to see the most frequent occurring keywords, to see the contributions of researchers in the field of rural entrepreneurship and rural tourism and to understand the future possibilities of research in this area.

Figure 1 shows the most frequently occurring keywords in the tree map which are: rural tourism, with 42 times occurrence; tourism with an 81 times occurrence; rural entrepreneurship 72 times; sustainable development 49 times and sustainable tourism 34 times of keyword occurrence in the research field. This means that most of the research in the tourism field has revolved around these major keywords and the research community has focused mainly on these dimensions, as these are the prominent hotspots of the field. Rural tourism is essential to promote rural entrepreneurship (Gannon, 1994; Wilson et al., 2001; Utami et al., 2023) which in turn helps in the development and growth of rural areas sustainably. Rural entrepreneurship means the initiatives taken by people or communities in rural areas to create and develop small ventures (Dabson, 2001; McElwee & Atherton, 2021). Rural tourism fosters entrepreneurship by utilizing rural communities’ unique cultural, environmental, and historical resources (Lane, 1994; Fang & Fang, 2020). Rural tourism and rural entrepreneurship go together, because rural tourism gives rural entrepreneurs a market and potential customer for their goods and services. As a result of this demand, rural communities experience an increase in revenue and job prospects. Rural entrepreneurs contribute to the preservation and development of cultural heritage by marketing local goods, crafts, and services, improving tourists’ tourism experience.

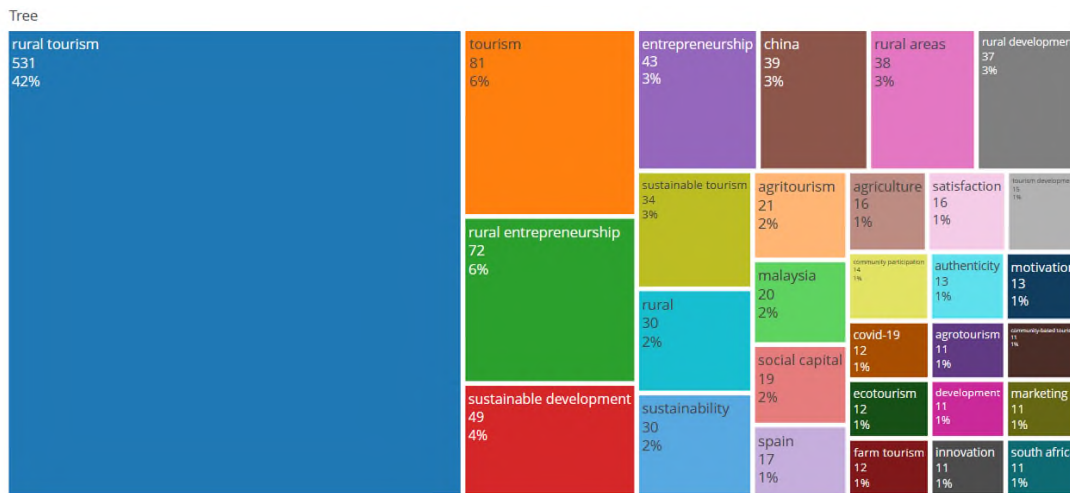


Figure 1. Tree map of author’s keywords.

Source: Extracted from RStudio

Rural entrepreneurship also promotes innovation and economic diversification in rural areas (Ozoliņš, 2015; Sá, 2018). Entrepreneurs open up new opportunities for economic growth and draw investment to rural areas as they recognize and take advantage of niche markets and developing trends in the tourism sector. Rural areas become even more attractive destinations for tourists because the rural area of the Himalayas has beautiful hills, serene rivers, magnificent weather, divine holy places, and is full of peace; this all results in increased economic activity. More importantly, the growth of rural tourism and entrepreneurship encourages the rural community to be independent, empowered and can boost the local economy with the help of community-based tourism. In a nutshell, rural development and growth is the combination of rural entrepreneurship and rural tourism. Rural entrepreneurship improves the tourism experience and helps ensure rural communities’ economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

In the tree map, other keywords have a very low frequency, which means the research work on those themes has not been explored much. The keywords are rural (30), eco-tourism and farm tourism, with a frequency of 12 each. Another important keyword is agrotourism and innovation, with 11 occurrences each. Promoting rural development while emphasising sustainability and protecting local resources relies heavily on eco-tourism, farm tourism, and agrotourism (Fagioli, 2014; Streifeneder & Dax,

2020). For prompting sustainable agriculture practices, farm tourism and agrotourism are highly important as they are rooted within organic farming and organic farming is a growing trend. Farm tourism enables tourists to participate in agricultural pursuits, learn about farming methods, and gain first-hand knowledge of rural living (Yu & Spencer, 2021). While agrotourism highlights rural cultural traditions and history by fusing agriculture with tourism. It encourages agricultural diversification through niche markets like organic farming and farm-to-table ideas, strengthens local ties, and fosters local entrepreneurship. In a nutshell, eco-tourism, farm tourism, agro tourism, and innovation work together to support sustainable rural development by fostering economic growth, protecting the environment, and glorifying rural culture.

Further the respondents of the study were asked: “How do you think rural tourism can promote value creation?”

The answer from most of them was quite affirmative and some of the excerpts are given below:

Excerpt 1

“It can create a bigger value to small rural entrepreneurs in monetary terms. Also, it promotes the unique rituals and customs of different places as our country is very culturally diverse.”

Excerpt 2

“Rural tourism can promote the value creation as it generates economic benefits for the local people. It can also bring social value as it brings different entrepreneurial opportunities to local people.”

Excerpt 3

“For realizing the value creation potential of rural tourism, it is important to adopt sustainable practices, involve the local community in decision making processes and ensure that tourism development aligns with the cultural, social and environmental values of the rural areas”.

Excerpt 4

“Rural tourism indeed promotes value creation in the form of the generation of GDP, employment and productivity of regional products. Plus, these are the main indicators of any successful economy”.

Excerpt 5

“Rural tourism can promote value creation by providing economic opportunities for local communities, preserving and promoting local culture and heritage, and protecting the environment. Rural tourism can create jobs in hospitality, agriculture, and other sectors. It can also help to boost local economies by increasing spending on goods and services.”

Excerpt 6

“Rural tourism can help to preserve and promote local culture and heritage by providing opportunities for visitors to learn about and experience traditional ways of life. Rural tourism can help to protect the environment by encouraging visitors to appreciate and respect the natural beauty of rural areas. It can also help to raise awareness of environmental issues and encourage visitors to adopt sustainable practices. In short, rural tourism can promote value creation by providing economic, cultural, and environmental benefits to local communities.”

Excerpt 7

“By promoting the culture, spirituality and lifestyle of the people. We can definitely boost rural tourism and it will undoubtedly lead to value creation overall.”

Excerpt 8

“Rural tourism means that people can market their products which are ethnic and linked to the traditional arts and crafts. This will help in conserving their cultural ethos as well. Moreover, it will provide many opportunities for the rural folk to grow”

Excerpt 9

Yes, rural tourism promotes value creation but it needs more time and efforts from the ground level.

Excerpt 10

“Rural Tourism increases the influx of travellers since these offbeat places offer a beautiful and relaxing ambiance. This thereby enhances the economic growth of remote rural regions. This ensures a stable income to the local community through various aspects - employment, entrepreneurship, or investment.”

Excerpt 11

“Rural tourism can play a crucial role in promoting local economic growth and bringing about social transformation. To facilitate rural tourism, the government should provide both financial and infrastructure support.”

Excerpt 12

“Rural tourism promotes value creation through the preservation of local culture, economic opportunities for communities, community development and empowerment, sustainable practices, and authentic and immersive experiences for tourists.”

Excerpt 13

“Rural tourism promotes rural entrepreneurship thereby creating new products and services, they stimulate new employment, which ultimately results in the acceleration of economic development and promote value creation”.

Excerpt 14

“Rural tourism can promote value creation by generating economic opportunities, preserving cultural heritage, conserving the environment, empowering local communities, improving infrastructure and services, and facilitating knowledge exchange.”

Excerpt 15

“In general, rural tourism fosters value creation through creating job opportunities, protecting regional heritage, strengthening local communities, encouraging environmental stewardship, and promoting cross-cultural dialogue and education. It can improve locals’ quality of life, help rural areas develop holistically, and provide visitors with memorable experiences.”

Thus, local economies can be boosted by rural tourism by attracting and serving tourists and providing economic opportunities to the local entrepreneurs and service providers. When tourists travel to rural areas, they generally spend money on lodging, meals, transportation, mementos/souvenirs and other local services. Thereby tourist expenditure is induced and has the potential to boost the local economy, help small companies locally, and create jobs. Most of the rural communities frequently have distinctive cultural traditions, heritage sites, local art, and local goods. These areas may conserve and present their unique identities through boosting rural tourism, which can increase pride in and admiration for regional customs, thereby promoting sustainability. As a result, local cultural traditions may become more resilient and intangible cultural assets may be preserved, which leads to higher value creation. Rural tourism can act as a motivator for the preservation and conservation of biodiversity and natural environments. There is a great need to safeguard these resources when tourists travel to rural areas for their spiritual and ecological interests. This requires the adoption of sustainable practices that support the long-term preservation of the ecosystem, such as responsible tourist policies, conservation initiatives, and environmental education programs. A lot of rural communities are strongly dependent on traditional businesses like agriculture or mining, which may be subject to market swings but most of them are based on sustainable practices. By focusing on economic activities, the rural communities can lessen their reliance on outside sources of income and become more robust to economic shocks by diversifying their sustainable economic activities.

Findings and Conclusion

The intersection of spirituality, wellness, value creation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability in the Himalayan regions can have several implications. The Himalayan areas are well-known for their extensive spiritual traditions and age-old knowledge. Traditional knowledge and practices can be preserved and promoted by integrating spirituality and wellness into entrepreneurial and sustainability activities. This can involve, among other things, eco-friendly farming techniques, mindfulness exercises, *yoga*, *Ayurveda*, traditional healing techniques, meditation and sustainable resource management. It is possible to add value and respect and preserve the Himalayan communities’ cultural history by incorporating these practices into commercial endeavours.

The findings highlight that the Himalayan highlands are regarded as being serene and beautiful natural areas for spiritual retreats. There is an emphasis on holistic well-being that goes beyond financial considerations by highlighting wellness and spirituality in entrepreneurial and environmental activities. The sustainability of the environment can be considered part of this holistic approach, along with physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Entrepreneurs in these areas can launch businesses that value both the health of people and the environment by providing wellness retreats, meditation facilities, eco-friendly lodging, organic farming, and sustainable tourism experiences.

In the Himalayan areas, integrating spirituality, wellness, and sustainability can encourage and support entrepreneurship. An innovative and creative attitude can be encouraged by placing a strong emphasis on values, awareness, and connectivity. Entrepreneurs might spot chances to build enduring enterprises that adhere to wellness and spirituality-related ideals. This can include environmentally beneficial and socially conscious businesses like organic farming, environmentally friendly travel, alternative energy sources, the manufacturing of herbal medicines, and eco-crafts. Entrepreneurship in these fields can support local economic growth and employment while fostering sustainability and protecting the distinctive cultural and natural resources of the Himalayan regions. Local communities in the Himalayan areas can be strengthened through entrepreneurship that incorporates spirituality, wellness, and value creation. It is possible to develop inclusive and sustainable enterprises by incorporating community members in decision-making procedures, capacity building, and project ownership. Greater social cohesiveness, economic empowerment, and community resilience may result from this. People can be empowered to take an active part in entrepreneurship and sustainability activities through programs that support skill development, sustainable livelihoods, and community-based tourism.

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