‘Pros’ and ‘Cons’ of Rural Tourism and the Sustainable Development of Rural Communities
(an innovative proactive model for introducing sustainable development to rural communities)

Hesham M. M. El-Barmelgy

Assistant Professor, Urban Design Department, Faculty of Urban and Regional Planning, Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt.

Abstract
The notion of linking sustainable tourism to the sustainable development of the Egyptian rural communities although well recognised is not without its doubts. Sustainable tourism could (Fsdni and Selwyn, 1997; Mills, 1993; and Hall, 2000) and should (Butler, 1993; and WTO, 1993) provide means of economic, social and environment regeneration for such communities. However, sustainable tourism is not a panacea and cannot be self-contained, its’ needs must be recognised within the wider context of the community sustainable development framework (Lane, 1994; and Human, 1994). After all it is the challenge of sustainable tourism to ‘build on the positive’ and ‘not to reproduce the negative’. The paper provokes the ability of sustainable tourism to act as the catalyst for promoting sustainable development in rural communities through the ability of introducing a deep ecological sustainable form of tourism defined as ‘sustainable eco-rural tourism’.

The paper aims to investigate and define a practical model for promoting a sustainable form of tourism within the Egyptian rural context defined as ‘sustainable eco-rural tourism’ through adopting the ‘Innovation-Diffusion’ theory (Moseley, 2000) in an attempt to address the questions of, what is meant by ‘sustainable eco-rural tourism’ as an innovative form of tourism, and how can it be locally adopted through a community-led approach to insure maximum host integration in the process ‘diffusion elements and channels’.

Key Words: Sustainable tourism, sustainable eco-rural tourism, sustainable rural development.
**Introduction**

**Sustainable Rural Development**

Egypt as a developing country with a total population of over 70 million, very limited industrial opportunities and the urban sprawl through most of its cities have realised the importance of sustaining its rural communities. The city dwellers in Egypt are around 30 million forming around 42% of the total population (MLD, 2004). According to the BMPF (2004) latest studies this percentage is expected to reach the boundaries of 65% in developing countries by the year 2020 due to the very high rate of immigration from the rural communities to the urban communities (BMPF, 2004). If we estimate the growth of the population in Egypt to add around 10 million inhabitants over a 10 years time interval meaning that Egypt total population is to reach 90 million by the year 2020. Based on the BMPF (2004) estimated 65% percent (BMPF, 2004:5) therefore the total number of city dwellers in Egypt are expected to reach 60 million, i.e. double the existing 30 millions.

Are cities of developing countries ready to accommodate such expected population explosion? The answer is surely ‘no’ most of developing countries cities are already overloaded by thousands of urban problems concerned with safety, insufficient infrastructure, high unemployment rates, housing problems, witnessing all means of pollutions, increasing crime rates, erosion of culture and social values and finally total damage of there unique heritage. Cities are in massive needs for panacea from heaven that would release the pressure of them if there will be any future for them to be able to rejuvenate and develop in a sustainable way. One of the greatest opportunities for such countries to have a better future, can be seen, through the ability of sustaining and enhancing the role of their rural communities as the first defence line and as the mean of forming an ecological stability upon which the ability of promoting a ‘better future’ is determined. But, how can developing countries with such fragile economic situation develop and maintain their rural communities? There is a crucial need for an innovative action oriented proactive approach, one that can maintain such unique fragility and diversity while help in sustaining its economic balance, rejuvenate the family economic theory, retain the efficiency of the house as a productive unit and enhancing the community sense of pride.

**‘Innovation-Diffusion’ Theory**

Moseley (2000) introduced the theory of 'innovation-diffusion' system (Moseley, 2000). Figure, 1 expresses the interpretation of the author regarding the ‘innovation- diffusion’ theory where the innovation box is to process all variables regarding the innovation issue. The result of the innovation box presents the required innovated approach. Furthermore, the appropriate diffusion channels should be emphasised to insure maximum efficiency. The paper
adopting the innovation-diffusion theory (Moseley, 2000), aims to innovate an appropriate tourism typology named as ‘sustainable-eco rural tourism development’ approach, emphasising the ability of such tourism product to contribute and enhance the sustainable development process of the Egyptian rural communities while maintaining the diversity and community elements of locality. According, to the adopted methodology the paper is structured into three parts. The first part (innovative part) deal with the ‘innovation-process’ of the proposed model, through conducting an analytical correlation study between elements of Egyptian rural communities (elements of fragility) and that of the sustainable tourism development (elements of potentialities), aiming to prove the efficiency of the innovated approach thus defining the ‘sustainable eco-rural tourism development’. The second part (diffusion part) is to investigate the appropriate diffusion channels (diffusion-process) investigating the applicability of the approach. The final part (findings and conclusions) presents the final proposed SRETD model with the proposed development priority zones.

**Part One: The Innovation Process**

‘Elements of Fragility’

**Egyptian Rural Communities**

This part of the paper is to report and define Egyptian rural communities’ element of ‘fragility’, based on a profound analysis of a number of detailed studies that attempts to define and report such elements (Mohktar, 2003; Abd-Wahab, 2003; and Al-Bourg, 2003).

To initiate a development the ability to define its ‘pros’ and ‘coins’, existing and future challenges as well as resources and advantages, is required. The
major problem of Egyptian rural communities is the long period of neglect by government in addition to exposing the community to a number of external factors such as media, technology high accessibility among others that have great negative impacts on the norms and the values of such rural unique communities (Amer and Roushdy, 2003). These elements have lead the community to expel a lot of its native advantage (Aly and Khalil, 2003) and exchange them with another exported element in addition to the already existing elements of deficiencies leaving the rural community with its present situation of ‘total-fragility’; the term ‘rural fragility’ refers to a community that suffers a critical situation and is in massive need to integrate itself in a comprehensive sustainable process of development. These changes extended to include very dangerous epochal dimensions such as; loss of cultural heritage and sense of cultural pride, the interweaving of the economic regions, and finally diminishing locality (El-Barmelgy, 2004; and Al-Adawy, 1997).

The Egyptian rural communities at present suffers a lot due to the transformations that have led to an exaggerated economic problem resulting from the end of the family economic theory, where now we can find 2.8 million unemployment forming around 15 percent of the total Egyptian labour power (Al-Bourg, 2003). The main reason of such high unemployment rate is the loss of highly rated cultivation land for urban growth propelled with the abandonment of traditional soil cultivation methods and poor vocational training (Al-Bourg, 2003). The loss of cultivation land has weakened the agriculture sector diminishing the revenues leading to the loss of the well trained farmers and the transformation of the rural labour power to comprise other limited undeveloped sectors (Al-Adawy, 1997). Such transformation can be said to be the 'sin quo' for the present current situation of rural ‘fragility’.

The top-down, state dominated model adopted by most developing countries for responding to local wants and needs in some blanket fashion generally assured a fairly low plateau of provision in rural areas, the model of relying on local initiatives and innovation is with its risks of producing a landscape of peaks and troughs (Moseley, 2000). Community-led rural development is not without its difficulties, even when such a plan has been prepared. It is easy to estate that communities must be able to sustain a consistently high level of commitment, yet experience has demonstrate the difficulties of achieving such commitment associated with such local communities limitations and visions.

**Contemporary Changes and Elements of Fragility**

El-Barmelgy (2004) has managed to define and record elements of Egyptian rural community fragility and to chart them under the epochal dimensions of the
sustainability process (El-Barmelgy, 2004). Table 1, report’s on recorded elements of Egyptian rural fragility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Fragility</th>
<th>Socio-cultural Fragility</th>
<th>Environment Fragility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Diminishing of the agricultural sector.</td>
<td>▪ The repulsion environment of the rural community leading the highly qualified trained farmers to immigrate internally or externally seeking a better life, such trend has the most negative effect on the families’ construction of the rural communities.</td>
<td>▪ Providing rural areas with water supply systems without providing any sewage systems has lead to the pollution of the under-ground basins, the agriculture canals and the purity of the surrounding environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ The end of the ‘family economics’ theory.</td>
<td>▪ Diminishing the role of the family economic stability to be a house accommodated family with weak social bonds in most cases.</td>
<td>▪ Soil erosion problems due to trained farmers’ immigration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ The robust growth of population.</td>
<td>▪ The most important rural community social bond accumulated over thousands of years known as the family bond is threatened of demolishing being the first and the most important community social node.</td>
<td>▪ Intensive unscientific use of chemicals and industrialised fertilizers negatively effective the crops, community health and the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Extension of buildings on cultivation lands.</td>
<td>▪ The decline of the enclosed inner oriented community to semi-exposed outer-oriented community.</td>
<td>▪ Using of imported building materials with their impact on the conformability of the houses leading to high energy consumption affecting the natural environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Expelling traditional and native cultivation techniques and corps for quick profit crops and cultivation methods.</td>
<td>▪ Consequently, the community sense of belonging has diminished to a level that threatens the possibility of promoting sustainable development.</td>
<td>▪ Community education and interpretation needs is highly needed to overcome attitude problems such as putting on fires to exterminate cultivation and houses leftovers instead of recycling them leading to the black cloud phenomena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ The end of the rural house theory as self-sufficient productive units to be a consuming unit.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Utilising incompatible building materials leading higher rates of energy consumptions and high depletion rates of natural resources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ 15% unemployment of the total active labour force meaning the need to provide 2.8 million jobs opportunities within the rural communities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1, Egyptian Rural Communities Elements of Fragility
(Source: Researcher after; El-Barmelgy, 2004:7-8)

Based on the former analysis the need for a successful innovation is recognised. One that would respond to locally identified needs and concerns; after all they are initiatives whose ‘time has come’ and which attack the constraints that have ‘hitherto’ held back positive changes. Egyptian rural communities are in a need for an innovative action oriented proactive approach through which sustainable development can be introduced to such communities. But, can sustainable tourism bare elements of potentialities for such fragile situation?
‘Elements of Potentialities’
Sustainable Tourism Development

Although the undeniable recorded fragility of the Egyptian rural communities, they still holds up great opportunities to rejuvenate such community through engaging them in an immediate proactive action oriented sustainable development approach. One that can have an immediate objective of stopping the demolishing of the rural communities elements of permittivity and initiate the long term objective of sustainable developing such communities. Studies have proved that such elements of fragility have been factor in distance between rural communities and major cities, forming the foremost source of impacts and transformation (El-Barmelgy, 2004). That means there are still thousands of Egyptian rural communities that have not yet suffered such great deal of fragility especially on the environmental and social dimensions. The importance of these dimensions lies in that they form the primitive stability of the Egyptian rural community. Proved on one hand to be a sustainable way/form of life (El-Barmelgy, 2004), and on the other hand to form the natural assets; expressing elements of purity and diversification; as the major requisites for promoting sustainable tourism development in such communities.

Rural Tourism on the International Market

The notion of rural tourism has started to gain the interest and the focus of the tourism industry by 2003. The WTO recording the trend through the tourist market where the need to escape to nature or ‘back to nature’, where tourist seeks a break time away from civilisation with all its faces was recorded. The WTO (2003) organised a seminar entitled "Rural Tourism Pathway to Sustainable Development", the seminar was so successful that the WTO arranged a second seminar same year to follow up on the recommendation of the first seminar. The year 2004 witnessed a following international occasion represented in the International Eco & Rural Tourism Marketing Conference in New Delhi, organised August, 2004 by FICCI (Federation of Indian Chamber or Commerce and Industries). There were total agreement regarding the importance of rural tourism as a tool for rejuvenation of rural entrepreneurship and empowerment. The multiplier effect of the tourism sector would help the government’s agenda for the job creation thus providing the required economic stability through: introducing new sources of income to the rural community; offering job opportunities, thus reducing out migration (social stability); expanding and empowering agricultural activities; offering infrastructure improvements; and promoting new sustainable form of local industries (Sugiarti et al., 2004; and Ratz and Puczko, 1998).
The WTO (2003) defined rural tourism as “tourism away from the mainstream, away from areas of intensive tourism activity. It is engaged in by visitors who wish to interact with the rural environment and the host community, in a meaningful and authentic way” (WTO, 2003). Such importance has been recognised by many countries all around the World; developed and developing. France as an example has been among the entrepreneurs in the field of rural tourism through the innovative rural development project known as the ‘Gites de France’. Also, India noticing such opportunities has adopted a comprehensive development program for a 5 year period, aiming to empower the tourism sector, to continually innovate more sustainable business practices which contribute to a wider sustainable development strategy, effective nature conservation and the well-being of the local rural communities; not to mention Nepal, Indonesia and others (WTO, 2003; Nepal, 2004; and Sugiarti et al., 2004). However, it has to be noticed as a fact that tourism is not a panacea and that it can lead to; depletion of the natural environment; speculating land prices and therefore affecting land uses; changing the community factor of power by introducing new powerful interest bodies; high demands for imported amenities and services; self-destructive effect especially on an adequate infrastructure; changes to the host community social values and culture structure; high crime rates, vandalism and loss of values; competing with locals for their main needs; and finally heritage loss, destruction of locality and destroying sense of place and belonging (after; Human, 1994; Butler, 1993; McKercher, 1993; Mills, 1993; Bramwell and Lane, 1993; and Pearce, 1995); if not appropriately introduced to a development region.

But, how can we empower the contribution of the concept without reproducing on its’ negatives?

Sustainable Eco-Rural Tourism
Rejuvenating the Egyptian Rural Communities

Sustainable eco-tourism has been defined as a highly comprehensive ecological form of sustainable tourism (El-Barmelgy, 2005). Where there is a shift of concerns to the environmental dimension (figure, 2) of the sustainability process. Providing, a highly sensitive form of sustainable tourism development with unique characteristics (table, 2).

Figure 2, Ecotourism and Sustainability
(Source: El-Barmelgy, 2005)
The paper provokes the ability of such sustainable form of tourism; eco-tourism to introduce the appropriate form of sustainable tourism and development to the Egyptian rural communities. Attempting to prove such possibility the paper is to conduct a correlation analytical study aiming to study the relation between elements of fragility table, 1 (representing the Egyptian rural communities) to that of elements of potentialities table, 2 (representing the sustainable eco-rural tourism defined characteristics).

### Environment Aspects
- Promote positive environmental ethics
- It must not degrade the resources
- Enhance bio-centric, not homocentric
- Empowering conservation and protection of natural resources
- Innovative build design principles
- Water and waste minimisation practices
- Enhancing hosts and guests about sensitive environmental issues
- Use of local materials
- Sensitive to fragile nature ecosystems
- Implementing energy saving methods
- Introduction of alternative energy supplies
- Building compatibility with nature to the degree that buildings are hardly noticed

### Socio-cultural Aspects
- Preserve cultural heritage
- Concentrated on intrinsic, not extrinsic values
- Training and education courses
- Fostering preferred behaviour
- An expectation of gratification measured in appreciation and education
- Promoting a high cognitive and effective dimension to the tourism experience
- Stimulating the local cultures sense of pride to the native communities
- Indigenous operation of enterprises enhancing the sense of ownership and locality of the industry
- Sensitive to fragile cultural systems
- Equitable distribution of resources
- Enhancing community participation thus insuring local support for conservation projects
- A catalyst providing finance for the improvement of essential services
- Provides incentives for improved education, skills and the potential for participation in decision making
- Providing incentives or survival of traditional cultures
- Building upon local experience
- Enhancing local livelihoods

### Economic Aspects
- Minimum capital investments required
- Empowering wildlife and natural environment
- Innovative marketing strategies
- Simple and small scale
- Locally owned infrastructure
- Use of local materials
- Indigenous operation enterprises
- Fuel economic growth
- Alleviate poverty
- A very high quality product
- Limited number of tourists
- Profitable and self-sustaining small scale business
- Capturing tourism income locally, increasing multiplier factor and minimising the leakage
- Direct and indirect economic benefits to local communities

### Correlation Study Elements of Potentialities v. Elements of Fragility

This part is to presents the paper analytical correlation study utilising the defined elements of fragility and potentialities. Aiming to provide a vision concerning: the innovative ‘sustainable eco-rural tourism’; and to further
investigate the ability of such innovative form of tourism to contribute to the fragility issues of the Egyptian rural communities.

**Sustainable Eco-Rural Tourism and Rural Elements of Fragility**

This part of the paper report on the finding of the profound analytical study conducted between the defined elements of fragility versus those of potentialities. The paper adopted a comprehensive study where elements of potentialities where correlated to those of fragility covering the three defined development dimensions respectively. Each element where quantified as; positively contributing (+1); negatively contributing (-1); and has no effect (0). The study does not mean to purely quantify the process which is beyond the scope of the paper, however, a vision (table, 3) of the relation that can occur between the elements of fragility and potentiality is the focus of the paper, upon which the efficiency of the model is determined. A second layer is added to the study using element of shallow eco-tourism instead of those of deep eco-tourism aiming to provide the clearest vision of what positives can be build-up as what

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of Potentialities</th>
<th>Minimum investment req.</th>
<th>Empowering wild life and natural environment</th>
<th>Innovative marketing strategies</th>
<th>Simple &amp; small scale strategies</th>
<th>Locally owned infrastructure</th>
<th>Use of local materials</th>
<th>Indigenous operation enterprises</th>
<th>Fuel economic growth</th>
<th>Alleviate poverty</th>
<th>very high quality product</th>
<th>Limited no. of tourists</th>
<th>Profitable and self-sustaining small scale business</th>
<th>Minimizing leakage &amp; inc. multiplier factors</th>
<th>Direct and indirect benefits to local communities</th>
<th>Sustainable Eco-Rural Tourism v. Elements of Fragility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diminishing of the Agr. Sector</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family economic node</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robust growth of the population</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumption of cultivation lands</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of traditional cult. techniques</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The house as a productive unit</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilising incompatible building materials</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High unemployment and depopulation rates</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
<td>Positive (+1)</td>
<td>No effect (0)</td>
<td>negative (-1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3, Correlation analysis Potentialities V. Fragility on the economic dimension**
(Source: Researcher)

- Positive (+1)
- No effect (0)
- Negative (-1)

**Figure 3, Correlation Study Sustainable Eco Tourism V. Element of Fragility**
(Source: Researcher)
negatives can be reproduced if we are not able to introduce/promote the required type of tourism to such sensitive tourism community regions.

Figure 3, reports on the result of the study in a graphical vision. As presented the ability of sustainable eco-rural tourism to illuminates elements of fragility and to empower and emphasise elements of stability for the Egyptian rural communities. Further on, the approach has the ability to start to build on elements of sustainability with unlimited potentialities that are expected to increase as a factor of time. Figure 3 shows the stability zone defined as the minimum requirement to overcome elements of fragility represented by the red zone. The green zone presents the potentialities that can be acquired through promoting the deep eco tourism defined by the paper as ‘sustainable eco-rural tourism’ positively contributed with an open potential limits. The red zone presents the predicted development zone as a result of promoting shallow forms of eco-tourism. As the figure presents the shallow product might attain some potentialities which are unlike the deep product is to diminish as a factor of time.

**Defining Sustainable Eco-Rural Tourism**

The first correlating layer of the study presents the ability of eco-tourism to contribute to issues of environmental and social fragility, having a consistency rate of over 90% with the pre-defined elements of rural fragility, as presented in figure 3. Eco-tourism has the ability to introduce environmental sensitive form of tourism to remote regions. However, the tourism regions we are dealing with here are that of a very highly scenic cultural, social and environmental attributes. Figure 4, presents the paper vision regarding the definition of ‘sustainable eco-rural tourism’. Defining eco-rural tourism as a highly ecological form of sustainable tourism that is socially and community-led, packed and introduced. As presented from studying elements of deep eco-tourism (table, 2), eco tourism can be argued to have the highest priority for dealing with indigenous cultures and social attribute producing a highly sustainable form of tourism in environmental sensitive areas/regions which the paper introduces as ‘sustainable eco-rural tourism’.
Part Two: Diffusion Process

Sustainable Rural Eco-Tourism and Elements of Diffusion

The proceeding studies of the paper have managed to prove theoretically the efficiency of the innovated proposed model to promote sustainable development to rural Egyptian communities. However, the efficiency of the model will always be questioned without being able to recognise the appropriate diffusion channels.

The Gites de France (a successful case study)

The Gites des France provides the study with a successful rural tourism development based on which a practical identification for the rural development diffusion channels can be recorded.

By the eve of the 1950’s France rural areas especially remote areas were suffering badly from the depopulation problem, insufficient employment opportunities and low living standards (Wrathall, 1983). The notion of the Gites is similar to the notion of the ‘sustainable eco-rural tourism development’ proposed by the paper. The analysis of the French Gites as a case study helps in defining a number of key elements that leads to the success of the Gites in ameliorating the socio-economic problems and in introducing an environmental social form of tourism, which best suits the Gites communities. Among the defined key elements or as the paper interpret the diffusion channels were the following:

- The total acceptance and willingness of the local people to the idea and the notion of the Gites.
- The providences of financial aids in the form of both grants and low-interest loans, indicating the significant involvement of the government.
- The Gites is to be owned and managed by individual (local community members).
- The Gites has often been developed in disused public buildings such as schools, market halls, old presbyteries, etc.
- The Gites is developed based on the host and guest theory, where the tourist is regarded as the welcomed guest and the hosts are all the members of the local community. (after Wrathall, 1983:36-50)

Through utilising the former diffusion channels the Gites de France have managed to introduce a highly positive environmental development model, helping in impeding depopulation, protecting the rural patrimony, and most of all, have facilitated the unobtrusive reception of tourists into the truly rural areas of France (Wrathall, 1983:52).
Egypt Rural Communities between limitation and potentialities

Unlike, the Gites de France where the rural community is formed of a number of farms each farm is owned cultivated and managed by a family that lives at the same farm and at the centre of the community there is the church and a few basic shops. Egypt rural communities have a unique social characteristics all the houses are gathered in a central area to the village know as the residential core area, in the middle of which there is the mosque, the church and the required service shops. On the borders of village residential core are the cultivated lands. Every family own a house and lives in the form of large family where they used to share the revenues and to cooperate to satisfy their living needs as a reproductive economic node. Also, the rural Egyptian community is a very highly socially sensitive community that requires the highest privacy level. The norms and values of the community are so high and significant forming a challenge and an advantage at the same time.

The challenge lies on the ‘do how’ of dealing with a unique community with the concept of developing the community while preserving its unique elements of diversity. At the same time such unique socio-cultural package is not a tourism package that can be offered a lot where the opportunities of meeting and living with such indigenous communities is still among the wants of many tourists markets beside the famous inclination of back to nature and escaping from civilization. The Egyptian rural communities beside its socio-cultural uniqueness have unique elements and features of diversification that if right utilised can compose a successful tourism product, one that can be easily marketed among the eco and rural tourists markets.

The Egyptian Rural Communities 6P’s

The Egyptian rural tourism package is far beyond the simple rural tourism packages offering a green escape to nature and a getting to know experience with indigenous cultures. Among the most dominant attractiveness that can be offered by the Egyptian rural communities are: the desert adventures; Nile glare; amazing sea coasts and beaches; natural and archaeological sites; the green rural attractiveness; and an indigenous culture experience forming together the six potentialities of the rural Egyptian tourism ‘the 6P’s’. Figure 5, presents us with a geographical presentation of the Egyptian rural communities (villages) and the elements of potentialities that are expected to be offered in the corresponding regions. The study proposed a grading of P’s scale where on the minimum we find the 1P regions offering the green escape to nature and socio-cultural experience. On the top of the scale we can find villages offering the 5P’s at the same time.

The study based on Egypt’s current development constrains, limitations and deficiencies recommends the total preservation of villages offering only the 1 or
P's product, which means that the tourism would have to be developed on

Figure 5, 6P's
(Source: Researcher)

Green Farms
Beaches
Desert
Nile Valley
Indigenous culture Exp
Archeological & scenic sites
highly rated agricultural lands. At the same time the study recommends the best areas for applying the model ‘the honey pot areas’ are the villages that comprises as part of its tourism product the desert hinterlands. Finally, the study presents the village of Abydos (figure, 6 & 7) as one of the recommended case study village for applying the development model presented by the paper (point for further research).

Abydos is rated according to proposed model as 5P's village offering a tourism product that comprise: green farms, Nile valley, indigenous culture, archaeological and scenic sites, and deserts adventure and hinterland.

A Preliminary Proposed Diffusion System

Based on a number of meetings with rural community representative figures a number of diffusion channels were defined that have the ability to insure the maximum possible reliability of the model, such as:

Governmental commitment level

- The government should initiate the proposed model in the form of development in one or two village as entrepreneurs’ projects to encourage and to prove the applicability of the model.
The marketing issues of the rural tourism product should be considered on the national level.

The government commitment and role is through offering loans and incentives that would encourage handicrafts industries and other activities that would contribute to the reviving of the rural traditions and norms.

A simple and effective system that would allow continuous monitoring of the model and offering encouragement in from of incentives to encourage the process.

Community-led Channels (locality)

The ownership of the tourism facilities (accommodation units and property’s) should be:

- a general property to the whole rural community in the form of shares in order to insure a direct and maximum filtration of the tourism revenues to the village community.
- The tourists units should be build by the local community, using local building materials, decorations and designs.
- Build, owned, serviced and managed by the village community.
- Hundred of aristocratic palaces are scattered in most of the Egyptian villages, such palaces can be rehabilitated to provide a unique historical tourists accommodation units.

The involvement of the whole community will empower the host and guest vision between the tourists and the native people.

The tourists’ necessities, such as food, drinks and amenities should be locally provided through utilising all the resources of the community especially the inactive roles of the women and the houses as productive unites.

All these procedures should ensure the minimisation of the tourism revenues leakage and maximisation of the multiplier effect to the village community.

Findings and Conclusions

The paper presents a practical attempt to define the appropriate form of sustainable tourism that is to better suits that of the Egyptian rural communities’ circumstances being highly socially packed while locally and traditionally oriented. Developing and proposing an innovative proactive action oriented development model for rejuvenating the development process of the Egyptian rural communities as presented in figure 8, defined as SERTD model.
The hazard of promoting a shallow form of sustainable tourism is defined in the model. Such a situation that would lead on the long run to the depletion of the tourism assets in the destination in an irreversible manner thus damaging the chances to sustainable develop such communities. The red zone in figure 8, presents a vision of the scenario that could take place in promoting such type of tourism. Where deceptive progress and revenues can be gained at the first however, it would not last as it is gained on the price of consuming the natural resources and socio-cultural heritage of the community.

**Sustainable Eco-Rural Tourism Development Model**

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 8, Proposed Development Model**
(Source: Researcher)

The paper proved the Egyptian rural communities to bare great sources of potentialities for the stability and the future of development in Egypt, through the ability to develop and promote various forms of sustainable deep eco-rural tourism. One that has no limits for its revenues as it is built on the continuous development and enhancement of the tourism product assets itself including: the environmental, socio-cultural heritage and the economic sector.
There is a need for an entrepreneur project that would attempt to implement the finding of the paper. Such a project has to be initiated by the government in order to attract the tourism industry and to encourage the participation of the local communities.

The paper stresses on the need to define priority development regions (figure 9) on the regional scale based on the paper 6P’s model. The selection of the rural tourism development villages should be carefully done in order to minimise the development impacts. The villages offering 1P’s or 2P’s only; originate mostly in the Delta Region and adjacent to the Nile shores; should be preserved in order to diminish the conflict of interest that might occurs and results in consuming cultivation land for the interest of the tourism development.

Finally the scale of the development should be small easy to fit in the native community and to interact with the indigenous cultures. The idea of utilising the abandoned palaces of the former Egyptian social class known as ‘pasha’ as the tourism accommodation centres is a valid idea for further studies.
References


