

ABSTRACT

In the pre Covid-19 period tourism gained recognition as an export industry worldwide and was acknowledged for its contribution to socioeconomic development in many countries. Within this contribution, tourism was also regarded as a tool for rural development, particularly in developing countries. A review of the tourism literature, however, shows that most of the statements on the economic impact of tourism on rural areas are based on economic modeling using available macroeconomic data and are mainly from developed countries. Studies from the developing countries are often qualitative due to data limitations and may not reflect the real impact of tourism in rural development. Macroeconomic data on tourism are not readily available in developing countries and that is a challenging issue. Thus, the main aim of this study is to examine the role of tourism in rural development in developing countries based on a case study of Tajikistan. Recommendations for rural development using tourism in developing countries flow from this approach. The study seeks to rectify the lack of quantitative data by applying a case study strategy using a mixed method and simple supply (analyzing the impact of facility provision) approach. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed using the simple supply approach and the technique of descriptive analysis. A two round questionnaire survey was used to obtain data. The first round of data collection occurred in October-December 2020 and included 120 respondents from the national and local level in Tajikistan. The second survey, conducted in October-December 2021 in 38 districts and towns in Tajikistan, is the main case study of rural area development.

The results of the study indicate that tourism is contributing to rural development in Tajikistan, especially to the development of local infrastructure, the

development of service enterprises, and the creation of employment opportunities, though this is in the early stages of development. The study also outlines the potential and challenges for further rural tourism development in Tajikistan and from these makes recommendations for tourism and rural development policies in similar countries. The findings of the study contribute to knowledge of rural development through tourism, extends the simple supply approach to the use of micro-data and validates its applicability in developing countries with limited data gathering capacity.

Keywords: Tourism, rural development, developing countries, potentials and challenges, Tajikistan.