

The Function of Rural Service Center in Tourism Activities

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ABSTRACT

The concentration of facilities in an ordinary service center shows gaps between tourism product and facilities in the area. As a result, some rural service centers are not able to support the tourism activities in the area. The focus of this study is to review the rural service center function whether it offers a comprehensive or limited basic function to tourism activities. Thus, the service centers located on the east coast of Johor and south of Pahang are focussed because of their location in the Special Tourism Zone based on the National Physical Plan. Field observation techniques and estimations using location coefficient analysis were conducted to obtain detailed information about the function and interaction between the service center and tourism activities. Otherwise, opinion and reaction on the tourism provision in catchment area was getting from tourist using interview technique. Preliminary findings show that not all service centers are able to fulfill the tourism activities. As a result, others function like commercial, transportation, financial and others social facilities are still required to keep the tourism function in order to support tourism activities in rural areas.

KEY WORDS: Rural Service Center, Tourism Function, Tourism Facilities

1. INTRODUCTION

Service center (small town) rather as a place that provides certain functions and services to fulfill the basic demands, especially in the local area (Lal, 1989). Generally, rural service center in variant country acting as centers of a demand/market for agricultural produce activities and should provide facilities for people (Katiman, 2001). Rural service center is perceived to play a positive role in such network by offering more service supply points with a variety of services, agricultural inputs and consumer goods to the rural area (Tacoli, 1998). Furthermore, service center should give education opportunities and interaction between rural and urban in economic, social, culture and administration. These basic facilities should be provided to enhance the rural economic growth and job opportunities, especially in backward area. Rural and service centers nowadays are an experiencing rapid change in an economic activity. Many rural and service centers are mobilizing towards tourism as a component of a diversified economic strategy (G. Halseth & C. Meiklejohn, 2009). However, the concentration of facilities in an ordinary service center shows gaps between tourism product and facilities in the area. Most of the rural service center provides a minimum facility supply and limited function in their catchment area (Katiman & Khaw, 1985; Katiman, 2000). As a result, some rural service centers are not able to support the tourism function in the area.

2. RURAL SERVICE CENTER: FUNCTION AND ROLE

Basically, settlement area divides by two types: urban and rural area (Carter, 1990). The two types of settlement have their own characteristics and specification. For examples, agriculture is the main economic activities in rural areas and the rural center just provide limited service. While, non-agriculture is the main economic activities in urban areas and provided a good service and facilities. This paper was focused on the rural service center. According E. Zabardast (2004), the main characteristics of rural service center are as follows:

- A considerable proportion of their labor force has non-agricultural jobs.
- The administrative role of these towns is relatively minimal and they are generally center for low-level facilities and service such as a health center and school.
- Their contribution to regional and national production is relatively small, but they are deemed as an important center for offering goods and services to the residents.
- Via rural service center, the rural population can establish most communication with mass public service.

There is no exact method to determine the rural service center. In principle, we basically emphasize the size of population to determine the hierarchy of town because our information about characteristics and specification are limited and different from variant country. Based on Department of Town and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia (1988), population size of the rural service center area in Malaysia is 10,000 to 100,000 people in intermediate town and less than 10,000 people in small town. This study focused on the intermediate and small town as a study area.

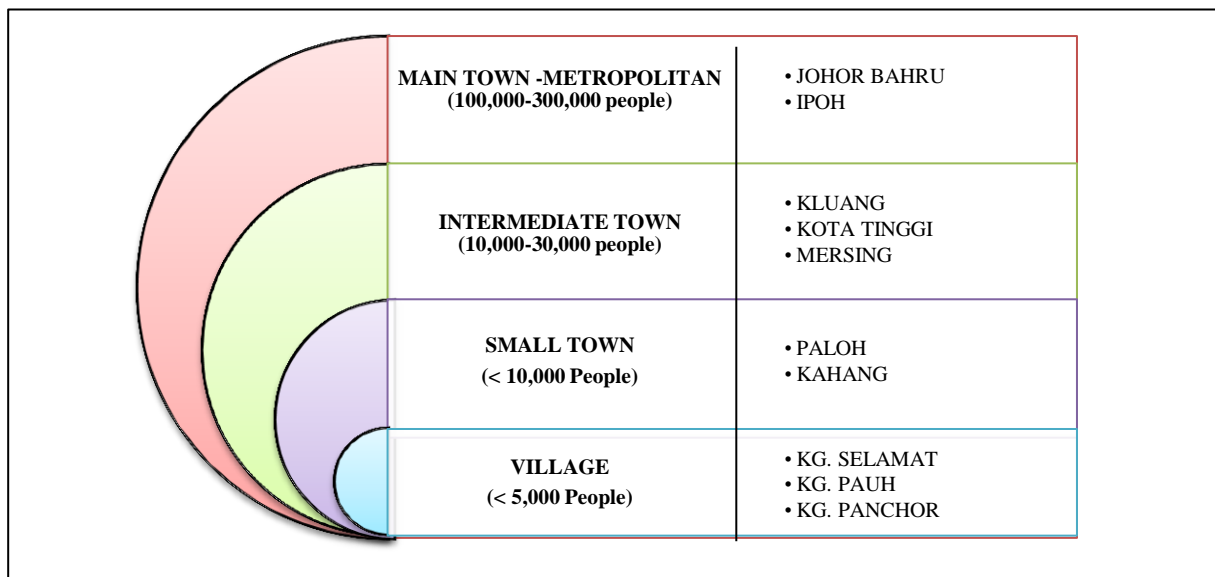


Figure 1: Part of Hierarchy in Malaysia Town

Source: Modified from Department of Town and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia (1998)

Small town plays a very important role as “Rural Development Center” in the growth process of villages and provide service in different field of marketing, providing, agricultural inputs such as fertilizer and agriculture machinery, civic service such as educational facilities, medical care for rural region in their surroundings (Amakichi, 2004). Rural service center actually don't just provides the social facilities like infrastructure, but the center becomes an industrial, business, transportation and financial activities link between rural and urban area.

According to research by Conen, English and Brookfield (1977), Rodinelli (1984), Azman Awang (1984), Baked (1990) and Katiman Rostam (1991), the basic function of the rural service center can be concluded in the **Table 1**. This basic function categorized the service center as “semi-complete”. However, some rural service center provides various and more than the basic functions in the town and we categorized it in “complete center”.

Table 1: The Basic Function of Rural Service Center

No.	Rural Service Center	Description
1.	Administration in Local Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local authorities/Village head office ▪ Government agency office (Branch)
2.	Commercial and Business Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural needs ▪ Grocery store/Market/Supermarket
3.	Small and Intermediate Industry Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resource-based activities
4.	Transportation Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Link between service center and another town, thus to surrounding area
5.	Financial Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Banking and credit services
6.	Social Facilities Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilities on Education, Health, Religious, Recreation and Security.

Source: Conen, English and Brookfield (1977), Rodinelli (1984), Azman Awang (1984), Baked (1990) and Katiman Rostam (1991)

3. TOURISM FUNCTION IN RURAL SERVICE CENTER

As rural service center experience economic and social restructuring, many are pursuing tourism opportunities as one component of a more diversified local economy strategy. In many cases, this change is usually associated with the restructuring of the basic sector industry predominant in each locale. Associated with economic restructuring a concomitant process of social change. This social change is often linked to the out-migration by working age resident, in situ population aging and in cases where new potential economic activities are identified.

Based on Urban Tourism Model by Opperman and Kyle (1997), tourism function can be defined went the town provided the accommodation facilities such as hotel, homestay and guest house. Tourism function for some rural service center appears concomitant tourism development and activities in that area. Furthermore, existences of attractive destination at surrounding area make a high demand in tourism facilities. This factor contributes to influence restructure an economy in the rural service center more on third-tier economy activities. This situation signifies an existing function in the rural service center willing given support the tourism activities.

4. METHODOLOGY

The area of study focus at the service centers located on the east coast of Johor and south of Pahang also included in Special Tourism Zone based on the National Physical Plan. Along that corridor zone, a few rural service centers were selected based on the population and town hierarchy level. **Table 2** and **Figure 3**, show the selected town. Selected town justification is to study the Special Tourism Zone approach in rural service center on providing facilities in tourism activities.

Table 2: Selected Town

No.	Town	Hierarchy	Population Size (people)*
1.	Mersing	Intermediate Town	10,301
2.	Penawar	Intermediate Town	6,145
3.	Endau	Small Town	3,236
4.	Sg. Rengit	Small Town	2,018
5.	Sedili Besar	Small Town	878

*Source: Population and Housing Census of Malaysia (2010)

Field observation and estimation techniques were conducted to obtain detailed information about the function (economy activities) interaction between the rural service center and tourism activities. While, opinion and reaction on the tourism provision in catchment area was getting from tourist using interview technique. Interview sample was chosen randomly and the sample will be representing the tourist's reaction. The boundaries of the town (determined by local authority) become the limitation of this study.

On the other hand, to obtained information about a function in the rural service center, location coefficient analysis was used. This analysis to determine the contribution function either the function dispersed in the area or concentrated in the service center (Katiman & Khaw, 1985). Higher value of location coefficient indicates concentrated function in the rural service center and the signify as the higher order economic activities. Habitually, this higher order activity just offered in certain service center. While the lower value of location coefficient indicates the higher offered function in the settlement area. **Figure 2** below shows the formula to determine location coefficient value.

$$C = \frac{t}{T} \times 100$$

C = Location coefficient (level of concentration)

t = Concentration center (equals with 1)

T = Total function in the study area

Figure 2: Formula to Determine Location Coefficient Value

Source: Modified from Yazid Salleh, Katiman Rostam & Mohd Yusof Hussain (2011)

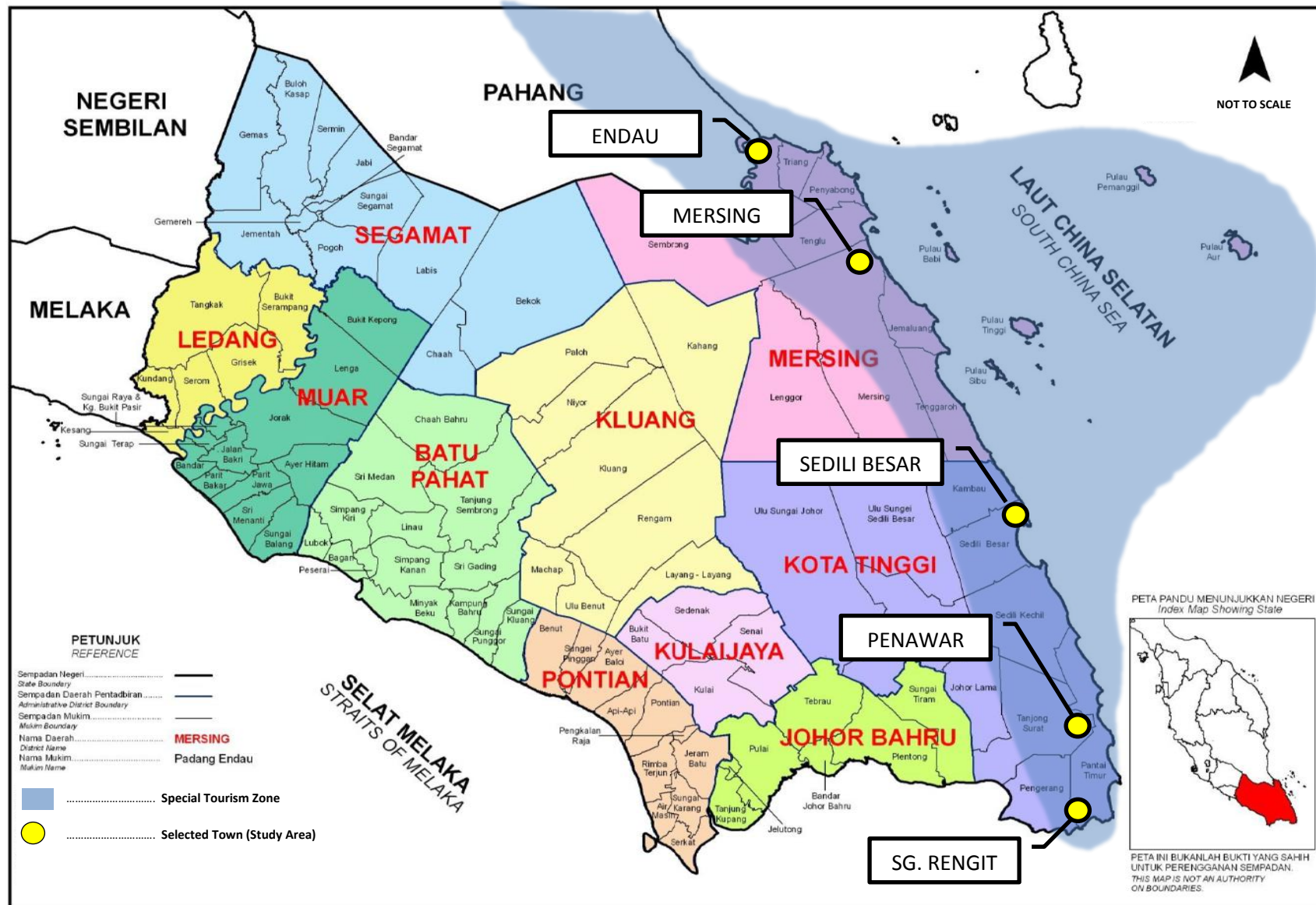


Figure 3: Study Area Location

Source: Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, 2010

5. RESULT AND FINDINGS

The fundamental factor in urban and regional planning/studies is observance of the economic condition of the region or area is being studied. Overall, result from the observation and simple census on 857 commercial premises shown 52 types of function in study areas. From 52 function types, there are contributing to 846 functions in the study areas. Mersing service center is the highest rank with 43 functions among the service center in this study. While Sedili Besar service center become a lower rank with 11 function provide in the area (refer **Table 3**)

Table 3: Function Types, Total Function and Commercial Premises in Study Areas.

Town	Number of Function Types	Total of Function	Number of premises	Total Population
Mersing	43	412	367	10,301
Penawar	40	173	254	6,145
Endau	31	124	135	3,236
Sg. Rengit	23	82	68	2,018
Sedili Besar	11	55	33	878

Source: Site visit, 2014

As the result, **Table 4** and **Figure 4** below show the findings. Mersing and Endau service center provide higher offered in commercial and small industries function while Penawar, Sg.Rengit and Selili Besar higher offered in commercial, social facilities and small industries. This situation showed all service centers already support the tourism activities with commercial and business function. Mersing and Sedili Besar has lowest offered in transportation facilities and others service center was not offered comprehensive function in administration and financial. This situation can be a threat to rural service center, especially for tourism activities.

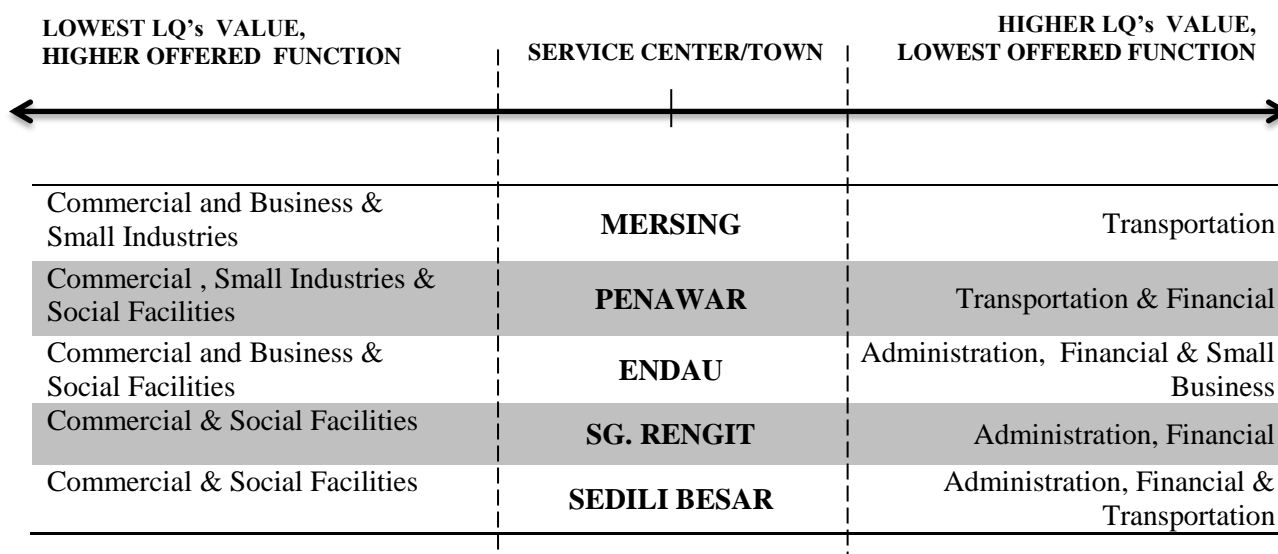


Figure 4: Location Coefficient Analysis Result

Table 4: Location Coefficient for Study Area

Function Types (By Categories) Study Area	Mersing		Penawar		Endau		Sg. Rengit		Sedili Besar	
	Total Function	Location Coefficient	Total Function	Location Coefficient	Total Function	Location Coefficient	Total Function	Location Coefficient	Total Function	Location Coefficient
Administration ▪ Local Authority office ▪ Government office	12	8.33	9	11.10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Commercial and Business ▪ Shop/ Store/Market/Supermarket ▪ Hardware, Agriculture store ▪ Workshops	235	0.43	83	1.20	76	1.30	46	2.17	27	3.70
Small and Intermediate Industry ▪ Resource-based industry (factory)	67	1.49	18	5.60	5	20.00	4	25.00	4	25.00
Transportation ▪ Bus Station, Jetty ▪ Taxi, Rental Car Terminal	6	16.70	4	25.00	2	50.00	2	50.00	1	100.00
Financial ▪ Banking premises ▪ Money exchange	12	8.33	2	50.00	5	20.00	1	100.00	1	100.00
Social Facilities ▪ Health facilities – Clinic, Hospital ▪ Education - School, Collage, University ▪ Safety - Police station, Fire Station ▪ Religion – Mosque, Church, Tample ▪ Recreation - House Club, Gynasium	56	1.79	37	2.70	27	3.70	19	5.26	19	5.30
Tourism Facilities ▪ Hotel, Chalet, Guest House, Homestay	24	4.17	20	5.00	9	11.10	10	10.00	3	33.30

The interview was randomly conducted to tourist to get their opinion and reaction to the rural service center influence to tourism provision. In order to get some opinion and reaction, the same question provided to 25 samples (tourist). The majority (30%) tourist often used commercial and social facilities function in the rural service center, while 12% tourist less used the financial and administrative function. Otherwise, there still hope the financial facilities (banking and money exchanges) can be more easy to access. Tourist also unsatisfied with limited social facilities and lack of transportation function in the study areas (refer **Table 5**).

Table 5: Tourist opinion and reaction in the study areas.

Categories Question	Facilities that are often used in the rural service center (%)	Unsatisfied facilities and need to be improved (%)
Commercial and Business	30	10
Social Facilities	30	30
Transportation	16	30
Financial	12	25
Administration	12	5

6. CONCLUSION

Finally the result confirmed that not all service centers are able to fulfill the tourism activities demand. However, the variance function in every service center contributes to supporting the tourism activities in rural areas. The potential element in supporting tourism activities in rural areas is:

- *The strategic places to stay for tourist in the rural area*

The most importance facilities in tourism is an accommodation. Tourist in urban area usually can access to this facilities anytime and anywhere in term of higher facilities supplies. Otherwise, usually in rural area, accommodation facilities are limited provided because of lowest demand rather than in urban area. For the solution, the rural service center is suitable places to provided the facilities and it can be support with onather function in the center. This situation will create a variety of function in the rural service center

- *As comprehensive transportation hub for tourist*

Major problem in rural tourism facilities is transportation. Transportation development and planning in rural area quite slow compared an urban transportation. Well planning with comprehensive system must be provided such as a clear road map for tourist to visit, create a road tour to attractive product and special bus/taxi for tourism activities in rural areas.

- *As center to fulfill tourist's demand for their needs and goods.*

Concentration is assumed to reduce costs and improve access to a variety of services, both public and private and for both rural households and enterprises. Hence, services include agricultural extension, health and education (and access to other government services), as well as banking, post, services of professionals such as lawyers and accountants and lower order services such as bars and restaurants, and wholesale and retail sales of manufactured goods from within and outside the region.

- *As center financial and credit services for tourist to easy access*

Rural service center must be a center to tourist get easy access for financial and credit services. Otherwise, with this important function nowadays, it can attract more tourist come because of an affectively the financial services and trading.

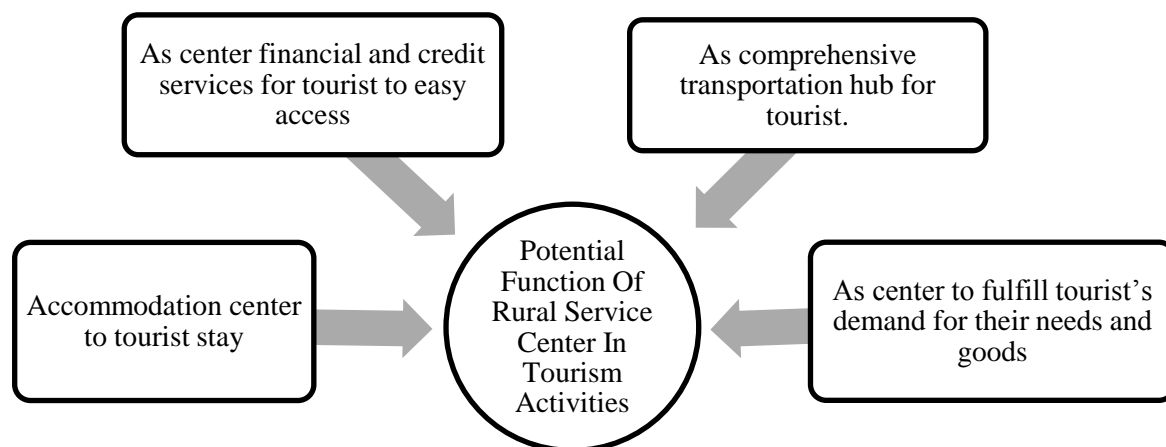


Figure 5: Potential Function of Rural Service Center in Tourism Activities

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