

Development of Agro-Tourism in Rural Maharashtra: Challenges and Disturbances

A. G. Nimase

Assistant Professor

Department of Geography

Chhatrapati Shivaji College, Satara.

Abstract

Today the concept of traditional tourism has been changed into Agro-Tourism. The paper describes a system dynamics model developed for dynamic analysis of agro-tourism for the agricultural sector in different sources of employment and their potential and problems. Tourism is a socio-economic phenomenon which has become the world largest and fastest growing industry. It is one of the most significant social force in the world. Almost every on the earth is affected by tourism. Agro –tourism is increasingly recognized as an important strategy that can contribute to agricultural development through diversification of farming activities and providing opportunities to rest, relax, enjoy and study about farming for the visitors.

Promotion of tourism would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the people. But, there are some problems in the process of the development of such centres. Hence, the government in the Maharashtra for the rural development and increase income these of the farmers. The farmers should also try to establish their co-operative society for the development of agro-tourism centres. Agro-tourism is business conducted by farmers for the enjoyment or education of the public, to promote the products of the farm the enjoyment or education of the public, to promote the products of the farm and to generate additional farm income. Maharashtra has super potential for development of agro-tourism centres.

Key Words: Employment, income, Potential, Agro-Tourism,

Introduction

Geography is fundamental to the study of tourism, because tourism is geographical in nature. Several countries have transformed their economies by developing their tourism potential. Tourism has great capacity to generate large scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled. Tourism is now well recognized as an engine of growth in the various economies in the world.

Agro-tourism is the practice of attracting travelers or visitors to an area or areas used primary for agricultural purposes. Today the concept of traditional tourism has been changed. Some new areas of the tourism have been emerged like Agro-Tourism. Promotion of tourism would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the people. Agro-tourism is an innovative agricultural activity related to tourism and agriculture both. It has a great capacity to create additional source of income and employment opportunities to the farmers. Maharashtra is one of the major tourist centers in the

India and there is large scope and great potential to develop agro-tourism.

Objectives

The Specific objectives of this research paper is following

1. To examine the importance of agro-tourism development in Rural Maharashtra.
2. To detect the problems of agro-tourism and suggest recommendations for to establishment of agro-tourism.

Importance of the Study

Agriculture is a most important occupation in the India including in the Maharashtra. But, today it has becomes unprofitable due the irregular monsoon, prices fluctuations of Agro-products and some internal weakness of the agriculture sector. Hence, there is need to do some innovative activities in the agriculture, which will help to farmers, rural peoples. Urban population is increasing day by day in the Maharashtra, today the urban people's world is restricted in the closed door flats, offices, clubs, television, video games, spicy fast food, computer, internet, and so on. They can see nature only on

television or screen of the computers. More over some people living in the cities do not have relatives in villages and they never visited or stayed in village. These peoples want enjoy rural life but there is problem of such type of facilities. Hence, it is opportunity to the farmers for development of the agro-tourism centres and serves him and creates additional income source.

Database and Methodology

The study is based on secondary data. The scope of the study is limited to examine the benefits and applicability of agro-tourism business in Maharashtra. The study includes their benefits and problems. As well as it includes appropriate framework regarding to establish the agro-tourism centres in the Maharashtra. The present study was conducted on the agro-tourism is based on secondary data. The data has been furnished from the related articles, research papers, different journals document of the government of India. Some data has furnished from the websites of the government of India and Maharashtra, as well as ministry of agriculture. Some ideas have been taken from the Tourism Development Corporation of Maharashtra.

Concept of Agro-Tourism

Agro-tourism is a commercial enterprise that combines agriculture and tourism on a working farm, rich or other agribusiness operation. A term 'Agro-Tourism' is a new face of tourism. An agro-tourism is farm based business that is open to the public. These specialized agro-tourism destinations generally offer things to see, things to do, and produce or gifts to buy, and are open to the public. Agro-tourism is defined as "Travel that combines agricultural or rural settings with products of agricultural operations—all within a tourism experience". According to Mr. Pandurang Tavare (ATDC, Pune) "Agro Tourism is that Agri-Business activity, when a native farmers or person of the area offers tours to their agriculture economic voices farm to allow a person to view them growing, harvesting, and processing locally grown foods, such as coconuts, pineapple, sugar cane, corn, or any agriculture produce the person would not encounter in their city or home country. Often the farmers would provide a home-stay opportunity and education".

Eco-Tourism and Agro-Tourism are closely related to each other. Eco-Tourism provides by the tour companies but, in the agro-tourism farmers offer tours to their agriculture farm and providing entertainment, education and fun-filled experiences for the urban peoples. Moreover, this activity brings visitors closer to nature and rural activities in which they can participate, be entertained and feel the pleasure. Agro-tourism is a way of sustainable tourist development and multi-activity in rural areas through which the visitor has the opportunity to get aware with agricultural areas, agricultural occupations, local products, traditional food and the daily life of the rural people, as well as the cultural elements and traditions.

Requirements of Agro-Tourism Centres

It is an essential activity to develop an agro-tourism in their farm. The farmer farmers must have basic infrastructure and facilities in their farm as follows:

Infrastructure

- A well or lake or swimming tank for fishing, swimming and accommodation facilities at same place or alliance with nearest hotels.
- Farmhouse, which has the rural look and feel comfortable along with all minimum required facilities.
- Rich resources in agriculture namely water and plants at the place.
- Cooking equipments for cooking food, if tourist have interested.
- Emergency medical care's with first aid box.
- Bullock cart, cattle shade, telephone facilities etc.

Who Can Start Agro-Tourism Centres

The individual farmer, agricultural co-operatives institute, Non-Government organizations, Agricultural Universities, and agricultural colleges may start their centres. Even Grampanchayats can start such centres in their operational areas with the help of villagers and farmers. The individual farmer can also start agro-tourism who have minimum two hector land, farm house, and water resource and is interested to entertain the tourists.

Facilities Should Provide

- Offer an opportunity to part icipate in the rural games to the tourist

- Provide information them about the culture, dress, arts, crafts, festivals, rural traditions and also give possible demonstration of some arts.
- Offer bullock cart for riding and horse riding, buffalo ride in the Water, fishing facility in your pounds or nearest lake.
- Offer authentic rural Indian / Maharashtra food for breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- Farmers should offer to see and participate in the agricultural activities.
- Offer fruits, corns, groundnuts, sugarcane and other agro-products as per availability.
- Show local birds, animals and waterfalls etc and give authentic information about them.
- Must provide safety to tourists' with the support of alliance hospitals.
- Arrange folk dance programme, She kotifolk songs bhajan, kirtana, lezim dance, dhangari gaja,etc.
- Available some agro-product to purchase to the tourist

Location for the Agro-Tourism Centre

The place of agro-tourism centre must need easy accessible by roads and railways. Location is most important factor for success in the agro-tourism. The location of the centre must easy to arrive and have a good natural background. Urban tourists are interested into enjoying the nature and rural life. So, farmers should develop their centre in the rural areas only which have a beautiful natural background to attract urban tourist in your farm. Tourists want to enjoy some historical and natural tourist places along with the agro-tourism. Hence, the centre should be developed near of these tourist places. It is more beneficial to both tourist and farmers. The places which are already tourist centres like Mahabaleswara, Panchgani, Nashik, Jotiba, Narshinghadi, Pandharpur, Akkalkot, Konkan etc. These are the better places for the development of agro-tourism. Other than these places farmer can develop their centres in any affordable places.

Benefits of Agro-Tourism Centres

Agro-Tourism has the potential to change the economic face of traditional agriculture. Agro-Tourism is diversifying the farm and adding value to produce already produced on farms. Agro-tourism

for a new generation is appearing on the more intensive manner. The benefits of agro-tourism development are manifold. It would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the farmers and rural people. Some of the benefits are following:

- Benefits to the urban peoples, they can understand about the rural life and know about the agricultural activities.
- It support for rural and agricultural development process.
- Help to the reduce burden on the other traditional tourist centres.
- Employment opportunities to the farmers including farm family members and youth.
- Additional income source for the farmers to protest against income fluctuation.
- Cultural transformation between urban and rural peoples including social moral values.
- Farmers can improve their standard of living due to the contacts with urban peoples.

Agro-Tourism Potential in Maharashtra

Maharashtra has diversified agro-centres because it is the result of climatic diversifications .Maharashtra is the third largest state of India, both in area and population. It is located on the west coast of India with a 720 km long coastline along the green Konkan region. Nestled in the Western Ghats and the Sahyadri mountain range are several hill stations and water reservoirs with semi-evergreen and deciduous forests. Although, Maharashtra has a total 22368 thousand hacter area under the agriculture and 36122 thosaunds of livestock (cow, bafelows, goats etc.). Principal crops include rice, Jowar, Bajra, wheat, pulses, turmeric, onions, cotton, sugarcane and several oil seeds including groundnut, sunflower and soyabean. The state has huge areas, under fruit cultivation of which mangoes, bananas, grapes, and oranges etc. Maharashtra is blessed with a rich and diversified cultural heritage. There are many tourist centres in Maharashtra which are the supporting natural environment for the agro-tourism centres in Maharashtra. The state has several communities belonging to different religions, and a number of festivities colours the culture of Maharashtra with the spirit of exuberance. Some of the popular festivals that are celebrated in Maharashtra are Diwali, Ganesh Chaturthi, Gudhi Padwa, Dasara, Nag

Panchami, Gokul Ashtmi, Narali Pournima, Pola, Makar Sankranti, Banganga Festival and Holi etc. More than 4.11 (43 percent of total) core populations is living the urban areas of the Maharashtra, which will can becomes a customers' of the agro-tourist centres are located in the rural areas. Other than nature and culture there is an enough road and rail connectivity in urban rural areas to travel in rural Maharashtra. Maharashtra abounds in numerous tourist attractions ranging from ancient cave temples, unspoiled beaches, ancient forts and monuments, forests and wildlife, unique hill stations, pilgrimage, centres, and a rich tradition of festivals, art and culture. About 25 more such locations have been identified in Maharashtra as rural agro-tourist destinations. Thus all the districts of Maharashtra have a tourism potential. Some following notable factors are helpful to the agro-tourism in Maharashtra.

- There are an increasing number of tourists preferring non-urban tourist spots
- Maharashtra has diverse Agro-climatic conditions, diverse crops, people, deserts, mountains, which provide scope for promotion of all season, multi-location agro-tourism.
- Some of the popular folk dances in rural Maharashtra are Lavni, Dhangari Gaja, Povadas, Koli dance and Tamasha and Dindi are the religious folk dances. Culture of Maharashtra is very glorious with a great variety. It gives a unique identity to the rural Maharashtra.
- Tourist places are already exist to support Agro-Tourism
- Green house cultivation of long stem cut flowers, vegetables, fruits etc.
State has 13 lakh hact. area under horticulture Maharashtra now is a major horticulture state.
- Maharashtra is already established as one of the top tourist destination in the world
- Maharashtra has major producer of fruit, spices, medicinal and aromatic plant allowed under horticulture in India.
- Good communication and transport facilities

Role of ATDC

ATDC stand for agriculture tourism Development Corporation –is promoting to agriculture tourism for achieving income, employment and economic stability in rural areas. Help boosting a range of activities, services and amenities, provided by farmers and rural people to attract urban tourists to their area thus providing opportunity to urban people to get back to the rural roots". ATDC is now providing following facilities to the farmers of Maharashtra;

- Conduct seminars and conferences on agro tourism business Conduct lectures of the successful National and International Farmers in agro tourism business.
- Provide sales and marketing support.
- Arrange National as well as International Agro Tourism Center study tours.
- Prepare Agro Tourism project report and business plan of the each applicant agriculture farm.
- Help facilitate the financial support from Nationalize Banks, Institutes and Government Agencies to built Agro and Rural Tourism facilities and infrastructure like accommodation, sanitation, approach road etc.
- Conduct Agro Tourism Business Training Program.
- Conduct and coordinate tours from urban areas to the farms.

Problems of the Agro-Tourism in Maharashtra

In last fifteen years of 20th centaury the term agro-tourism appeared in international literature. Agro-Tourism is a style of vocation that is normally spent on farms. It is also referred as 'Entertainment Farming'. Today in the Maharashtra has a greater potential of thedevelopment of the agro-tourism centres due to the good natural and climatic conditions. But there are some Constraints and disturbances in the process of agro-tourism development in the state. Major challenges and problems are follows;

- Lake of perfect knowledge about the agro-tourism
- Weak communication skill and lake of commercial approach of the small farmers

- Ignorance of the farmers regarding to the type of activities
- Presence of unorganized sector in the Agro-Tourism industry.
- Ensuring hygiene and basic requirements considering urban visitors
- 148 of the 355 Taluka in the state are consistently drought prone.
- Lakhs of farmers have small size holding, low quality land and little or no access to credit or irrigation. Have to negotiate with consistent drought.
- Lack of capital to develop basic infrastructure for the agro-tourism.

Some Techniques for Success in Agro-Tourism

For the better success in the agro-tourism we should follow the following things;

- Develop our website and update time to time for attract foreign tourist
- Take their feedback and comments about the service and suggestions to more development and modification.
- Develop a good relationship with the tourist for future business and chain publicity.
- Develop different agro-tour packages of for different type of tourist and their expectations.
- Preserve address book and comments of the visited tourists for future tourism business
- Behave sincerely with the tourists and participate with them/him.
- Small farmers can develop their agro-tourism centres on the basis of cooperative society.
- Give a wide publicity of your tourism centre by new papers, television etc Use all possible advertisement means.
- Develop contacts with the schools, colleges, NGOs, clubs, unions, organizations etc.
- Train your staff or family members for reception and hospitality.
- Understand about the customer's wants and their expectations and serve.
- Charge optimum rent and charges for the facilities/services on the commercial base.
- Do the artificially use local resources for the entertain/ serve to tourist.

Conclusion

Maharashtra is not the bustle of industrial and agricultural activity or the frenzied pursuit of wealth and progress alone. It is very much a part of the everyday scene anywhere in the state, signs of its great religious, cultural, historical and martial heritage. Maharashtra has a great potential to the development of agro-tourism, because of natural conditions and different types of agro products as well as variety of rural traditions, festivals. More than 45 percent of population is live in the urban areas and they want enjoy rural life and to know about the rural life. It is a good opportunity to develop an agro-tourism business in Maharashtra. But there is a problem of low awareness about this business in the farmer and problem of the finance and proper view in the farmers of the Maharashtra. Hence, the agriculture departments of the districts', Agriculture Universities should try to give orientation about it and provide some innovative ideas regarding to the Agro-Tourism. Bank should provide optimum financial help for the agro-tourism activities in the Maharashtra. Union of the agro-tourism service providers is also another need of these farmers which helps to the agricultural tourism network in the India including Maharashtra. The government should try to provide optimum financial aids to the agro-tourism activities in the Maharashtra by the grants and institutional finance.

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