

Agro Tourism: Scope and Opportunities in Maharashtra

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Abstract:

Tourism is now known as an engine of growth within the various countries worldwide. Several countries have transformed their economies by developing their tourism potential. Tourism has a great capacity to get large-scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled personnel. Today the concept of old fashion tourism has been changed. Some new areas of tourism are emerged, like Agro Tourism. The promotion of tourism would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the people. Agro-tourism may be a way of sustainable tourism development and multi-activity in rural areas. The visitor has the chance to urge aware of agricultural areas, agricultural occupations, local products, traditional food, and therefore the rural people's lifestyle, also because of the cultural elements and traditions. Moreover, this activity brings visitors closer to nature and rural activities during which they will participate, be entertained and feel the pleasure of touring. Agro-Tourism is helpful to both farmers and concrete people. It has provided an additional income source to the farmers and employment opportunities for family members and rural youth. However, there are some problems within the process of the event of such centres. Hence, the government and other related authorities should attempt to support these activities in Maharashtra for agricultural development and increase the income level of the farmers. The farmers should also attempt to establish their co-operative society for the development of agro-tourism centres. The agro-tourism may become a crop for the farmers in Maharashtra and an instrument of the agricultural employment generation.

Keywords: *Tourism, Agro Tourism, Agro Tourism Centre*

Introduction:

Tourism is now well recognised as an engine of growth within the various economies in the world. Several countries have transformed their economies by developing their tourism potential. Tourism

has a great capacity to get large-scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled. Today the concept of traditional tourism has been changed. Some new areas of the tourism are 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 an excellent capacity to make additional sources of income and employment opportunities to the farmers. Maharashtra is one of the main tourist centres in India and there's large scope and great potential to develop agro-tourism.

Aims and Objectivises:

The basic aim of the study is to identify the gap between traditional and new ways of income to the farmers through the agro-tourism business. It will achieve through the following objectives:

1. To spot the issues of agro-tourism and make suggestions to the establishment and operations of agro-tourism.
2. To look at the importance of agro tourism development in Maharashtra.
3. To define an appropriate framework for agro-tourism centres within the view of marginal and small farmers.

Hypotheses:

The hypotheses of the study are:

1. The agro-tourism is an additional co-activity for the farmers, which generate an additional income for the farmers.
2. It provides additional income sources and employment opportunities to the farmers and rural people.

Methodology of the Study:

The scope of the study is restricted to look at the advantages and applicability of the agritourism business in Maharashtra. The study includes their benefits and problems, as well as it includes an appropriate framework regarding determining the agro-tourism centres within Maharashtra. The present study was conducted on agro-tourism is predicated on secondary data. The data has been furnished from the related articles, research papers, reports and 11th plan document of the government of India. Some data has been furnished from the websites of the government of India and Maharashtra, also as ministry of agriculture. Some ideas have been taken from the Tourism Development Corporation of Maharashtra.

Review of Literature:

Shiv Dabhade and et. al. (2020) describe that the tourism industry changes the face of cities. However, there is a problem of that everyone is concern about the development and its significance. However, no one is concern about the impacts of tourists on social, cultural and environmental activities, and if the impacts are studied, then the best solution and proposal can be beneficial in all sectors of development.

Dr. Vasant Boraste (2015), elaborate that, agro-tourism is one of the new and emerging facets of the tourism industry. Further, he explains that there is scope for the development of the agro-tourism business in Nashik. This business can become an additional income generator for the farmers.

Importance of the Study:

Agriculture is that the most vital occupation within India, including within Maharashtra. However, today it becomes unprofitable due to the irregular monsoon, prices fluctuations of Agro-products and a few internal weaknesses of the agriculture sector. Hence, there's got to do some innovative activities within the agriculture, which can help to farmers, rural people. Urban population is increasing day by day within Maharashtra, today the urban people's world is restricted within the closed-door flats, offices, clubs, television, video games, spicy nutriment, computer, internet, and so on. They can see nature only on television or the screen of computers. Moreover, some people living within the cities don't have relatives in villages and that they never visited or stayed in the village. These people want to enjoy rural life, but there's a problem of such sort of facilities. Hence, it is an opportunity to the farmers for the event of the agro-tourism centres, and it serves him and makes additional income source.

Concept of Agro- Tourism:

The term 'Agro-Tourism' may be 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 ascertain, try to, producing or gifting to shop for, and are hospitable to the general public. Agritourism defined as "Travel that mixes agricultural or rural settings with products of agricultural operations – all within a tourism experience". According to Mr. Pandurang Taware (ATDC, Pune) - "Agro-Tourism is that Agri-Business activity, when a native farmers or person of the world offers tours to their agriculture farm to permit a person to look at 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 offer a home-stay opportunity and education". Agro-Tourism and Eco-Tourism are closely associated with each other. The tour companies provide Eco-Tourism but, within the agro-tourism, farmers offer tours to their agriculture farm and providing entertainment, education and fun-filled experiences for the urban people. Agro-tourism may be a way of sustainable tourism development and multi-activity in rural areas through which the visitor has the chance to urge aware with agricultural areas, agricultural occupations, local products, traditional food and therefore the lifestyle of the rural people, also because the cultural elements and traditions. Moreover, this activity brings visitors closer to nature and rural activities during which they will participate, be entertained and feel the pleasure of touring.

Who can start agro-tourism centres:

The individual farmer can start agro-tourism with a minimum of two-hector land, farmhouse, and water resources and is interested in entertaining tourists. Apart from the individual farmer, agricultural co-operatives institute, Non-Government organisations, Agricultural Universities, and agricultural colleges may start their centres. Even Grampanchayats can start such centres in their operational areas with the assistance of villagers and farmers.

Requirements for agro-tourism centres:

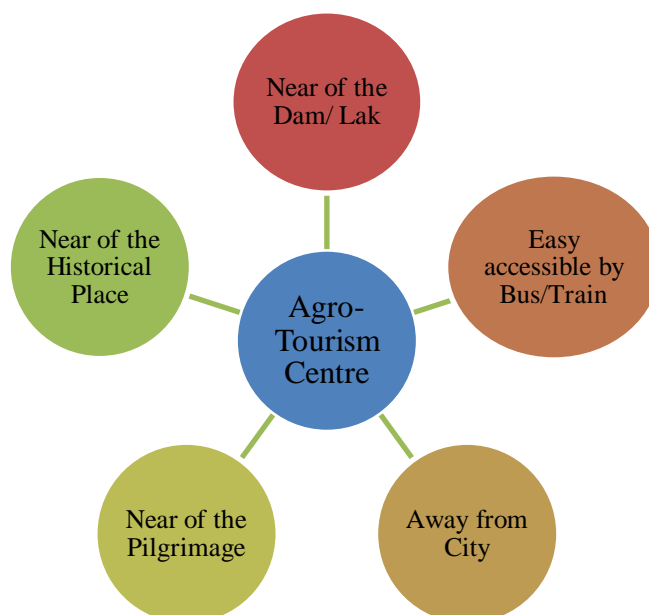
The researcher has identified the minimum requirements for the agro-tourism centre. To develop an agro-tourism in their farm, the farmer/ farmers must have basic infrastructure and facilities in their farm as follows:

Infrastructure Facilities:

1. Accommodation facilities at same place or alliance with nearest hotels.
2. Farmhouse, which has an agricultural look and feels comfortable alongside all minimum required facilities.
3. Rich resources in agriculture, namely water and plants at the place.
4. Cooking equipment for cooking food, if tourists have interested.
5. Emergency medical care's with care box.
6. The well or lake or swimming tank for fishing, swimming
7. Bullock cart, cattle shade, telephone facilities etc.
8. Goat farm, Emu (Ostrich bird) farm, sericulture farm, greenhouse, etc.

Location for the agro-tourism centre:

Location is most the crucial factor for fulfilment within agro-tourism. The location of the centre must easy to arrive and have an honest, natural background. Urban tourists are interested in enjoying nature and rural life. Therefore, farmers should develop their centre in the rural areas only, which have a gorgeous natural background to draw in urban tourists to farm.



The place of agro-tourism centre must be easily accessible by roads and railways. Tourists want to enjoy some historical and natural tourist places alongside agro-tourism. Hence, the centre should be developing near those tourist places. It is more beneficial to both tourist and farmers. The places which are already tourist centres like Mahabaleswara, Panchgani, Nashik, Jotiba, Narshingh vadi, Pandharpur, Akkalkot, Konkan etc. These are the better places for the event of agro-tourism. Aside from these places, farmer can develop their centres in any affordable places.

Benefits of agro-tourism centres:

Agro-Tourism has the potential to vary the economic face of traditional agriculture. The advantages of agro-tourism development are manifold. It might bring many direct and indirect benefits to the farmers and rural people. a number of the advantages are following:-

1. Farmers can improve their standard of living thanks to the contacts with urban people.
2. Employment opportunities to the farmers, including farm relations and youth
3. It supports the rural and agricultural development process.

4. Benefits to the urban people, they will understand about the agricultural life and realize the agricultural activities.
5. Additional income source for the farmers to protest against income fluctuation.
6. The cultural transformation between urban and rural people, including social, moral values can help to the reduce burden on the opposite traditional tourist centres.

Agro-tourism and traditional tourism:

Agro-tourism is also a tourism business but it is different from the normal tourism because it is a base of agriculture and rural lifestyle. Generally, tourism has provided to see and luxuriate in the natural places as some heritages. However, agro-tourism features a tourism with include experience, education and cultural transformation. It varies special from general tourism within the following manner:

1. It provides pollution and noise free sites for travel and tourism at rural background.
2. The value of food, accommodation, recreation and travel is minimum in agro tourism.
3. Agro-tourism can satisfy the curiosity of urban peoples about sources of food, plants, animals, and industrial agro-raw materials.
4. It provides information about the agricultural handicrafts, languages, culture, tradition, dresses and lifestyle. A family environment at the tourist place is one among the foremost vital characteristics within the agro-tourism
5. Within the agro-tour, tourists see and watch agriculture farms and participate in the agricultural activities and knowledge the farming.
6. It provides natural situations for watching birds, animals, water bodies etc.
7. Agro-tourism creates awareness about rural life and knowledge about agriculture.
8. It also provides an opportunity for education through farming experience and knowledge about agricultural life, including entertainment. Agro-tourism is an instrument of urban-rural connectivity through the tours.

Why to market agro-tourism in Maharashtra:

The Agriculture business is becoming more unsecured in Maharashtra thanks to the irregular monsoon, unsecured product prices. Many farmers cannot afford it and have a problem of indebtedness. Thanks to the agricultural problems, some farmers are committing suicide in various districts of Maharashtra. Quite 29,000 farmers committed suicide between 1997 and 2005 within Maharashtra, official data show, no other state comes on the brink of that total. Hence, there is a

need to start any allied agri-business to support their farming and make allied income sources from the farm to encourage farmers to determine small and viable agro-business activity, like agro-tourism. It offers several potential benefits to farm operators. It can help supplement income generation activity while providing a chance to more fully employ assets, including farm household members. Maharashtra features a great potential of agro-tourism thanks to the gorgeous natural site and basic infrastructures.

Agro-tourism potential in Maharashtra:

Maharashtra is that 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 within the Western Ghats and therefore, the Sahyadri mountain ranges have several hill stations and water reservoirs with semi-evergreen and deciduous forests. There are many tourist centres in Maharashtra that support the natural environment for the agrotourism centres in Maharashtra. However, Maharashtra features 22368thousand-hacter areas under agriculture and 36122 thousand of livestock (cow, buffalo's, goats etc.). Principal crops include rice, Jowar, Bajra, wheat, pulses, turmeric, onions, cotton, sugarcane, and other oilseeds, including groundnut, sunflower, and soyabean. The state has huge areas under fruit cultivation: mangoes, bananas, grapes, oranges, etc.

Maharashtra is blessed with an upscale and diversified cultural heritage. The state has several communities belonging to different religions, and a variety of festivities colours the culture of Maharashtra with the spirit of exuberance. A number of the favoured festivals that are celebrated in Maharashtra are Diwali, Ganesh Chaturthi, GudhiPadwa, Dasara, Nag Panchami, GokulAshtmi, NaraliPournima, Pola, MakarSankranti, Banganga Festival and Holi etc. More than 4.11 core (43 % of total) population lives within the urban areas of Maharashtra, which can become a customer of the agro-tourist centres in rural areas. Aside from nature and culture, there is enough road and rail connectivity in urban, rural areas to travel in rural Maharashtra.

Maps



(Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/zKeEZvVBGAFTw1x89>)

Maharashtra abounds in numerous tourist attractions, including ancient cave temples, unspoiled beaches, ancient forts and monuments, forests and wildlife, unique hill stations, pilgrimage centres, and an upscale tradition of festivals, art, and culture. About 25 such locations are identified by ATDC in Maharashtra as rural agro-tourism destinations.

Thus, all the districts in Maharashtra have tourism potential. Some following notable factors are helpful to the agro-tourism in Maharashtra.

1. Tourist places exist already to support Agro-Tourism.
2. Good communication and transport facilities
3. The state has 13-lakh hectares area under horticulture. Maharashtra now is a serious horticulture state.
4. Maharashtra is already established together of the highest tourist destination within the world
5. Maharashtra is a major producer of fruit, spices, medicinal and aromatic plant allowed under horticulture in India.