



A Study on Perception of Farmers In Agri-Tourism in Tamilnadu

Dr. K.Rajesh

M.A., M.Phil., PGDCA, SLET., Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Economics , National College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli-620002

ABSTRACT

Agritourism is not a recent phenomenon; furthermore, it has considerably increased in the past ten years and is projected to continue growing in the future. Despite such growth, there is not a shared understanding of agritourism which is problematic as this creates confusion and lessens its appeal among consumers due to communication and collaboration among stakeholders. Therefore, a study was conducted in 2016 to identify preferred definitional elements and types of agritourism activities across residents, farmers, and extension facility in Tamilnadu. Results showed that "agricultural setting", "entertainment", "farm", and "education" should be included in the definition of agritourism. Respondents also agreed that agritourism includes staged or authentic activities carried out on working agricultural facilities. All stakeholder groups rejected to consider activities offered in non-working farms or where the agricultural setting only serves for background purposes as agritourism. Statistical tests showed significant differences on agritourism different elements and types across groups, results are further discussed. Besides advancing the understanding of the meaning of agritourism, this study carries important implications for the practice of agritourism

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the backbone of Indian Economy. Around 85 percent of the population is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture and almost 26 percent of India's GDP comes from Agriculture. 90 million farmers are dwelling in 6.25 lac villages producing more than 200 MT of food grains feeding the country. More than a profession or a business, agriculture is India's culture. Hence, adding additional income generating activities to existing agriculture would certainly increase contribution of agriculture to the National GDP. Serious efforts need to be made in this direction and Agri – Tourism is one such activity.

There is a great deal of interest in agri tourism as a niche tourism sector for farms. One reason is that people are looking for an authentic experience that might link them to their past or that teaches them something new. Visitors also want to get away from the stress of every day life and experience a seemingly simpler life. Variety of agritourism experiences can be offered such as farm lodging or farm-based recreation hiking or hunting, to pumpkin patches, u-pick farms, farm festivals, wine tasting, farm restaurants, agri-entertainment like corn mazes and more. Visitors are willing to pay for these experiences as long as the price is reasonable and they find value in what is being offered.

Agri tourism provides an additional source of revenue for farms that allows them to keep farming and increase the quality of life for their family. Many farms with large wholesale operations that have struggled with low commodity prices have turned to agri tourism as a way to keep farming and earn a higher return from direct to consumer marketing. Some have reduced their acreages, by growing fewer crops but capturing more income. Agri tourism allows farmers to capture both the consumer's food dollar as well as some of the money spent on entertainment and recreation each year.

To promote domestic tourism, thrust areas identified by Government of India are development of infrastructure, product development and diversification, development of eco-adventure sports, cultural presentations, providing inexpensive accommodation, streamlining facilitation procedures at airports, human resource development, creating awareness and public participation and facilitation of private sector participation. In this process, important stakeholders are State and Central department of tourism, Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, Tourism Development Corporations, foreign embassies, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), Tourists, Transport Operators Association, Indian convention promotion bureau and Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Vijay Kumhar (2009) in the report 'Agro-Tourism: A Cash Crop for Farmers in Maharashtra (India)' discusses about the basics of agro tourism and the reasons for the development of agro tourism. Also

he compares traditional and agro tourism. **Kumbhar VijayMaruti**, (2009) in the article 'Agro-Tourism: Scope And Opportunities For The Farmers In Maharashtra' discuss about the benefits and potential for agro tourism development in Maharashtra. Also he discusses about the problems faced by agro tourism and solutions for the same. **Nicole Häusler and Dörte Kasüske**, in the article 'Back to the Roots: Agritourism in India, International Cases in Sustainable Travel & Tourism' (2011) introduces agro tourism as an approach to tourism which may pave the way for sustainable development in rural areas. It provides a detailed discussion of the concept of agro tourism, including the benefits, constraints and success factors involved, using the example of India, a country where 85% of the population depend on agriculture for their livelihood. A paper contributed by **Pandurang Taware** and published by Confederation of Indian Industry titled 'Basic Principles of Agri – Tourism Situation of Agro tourism by region, elements, scope, of agro tourism. **Azimi Hamzah** and others (2012) in the article 'Socio-economic impact potential of agro tourism activities on *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* community living in Peninsular Malaysia' discuss about the the potential socio-economic benefits that can be offered by the agro-tourism activities to progressive fishing communities in Malaysia. It enhances the understanding the probable potentialities to bring socio economic changes due to agro tourism.

Some of the important advantages of Agri – Tourism are:

1. It brings primary sector agriculture closer to major service sector tourism. This convergence is expected to create win-win situation for both the sectors.
2. Tourism sector has potential to enlarge.
3. Agriculture sector has the capacity to absorb expansion in tourism Sector.

SCOPE OF THE AGRI TOURISM TOURISM

Agri-Tourism has great scope in the present context for the following reasons:

1. An inexpensive gateway - The cost of food, accommodation, an inexpensive gateway, recreation and travel is least in Agri-Tourism. This widens the tourist base. Present concept of travel and tourism is limited to urban and rich class which constitutes only a small portion of the population. However, the concept of Agri-Tourism takes travel and tourism to the larger population, widening the scope of tourism due to its cost effectiveness.

2. Curiosity about the farming industry and life style - The urban population having roots in villages always have had the curiosity to learn about sources of food, plants, animals, raw materials like wood, handicrafts, languages, culture, tradition, dresses and rural lifestyle. Agri-Tourism which revolves around farmers, villages and agriculture has the capacity to satisfy the curiosity of this segment of population.

3. Strong demand for wholesome family oriented recreational activities - Villages provide recreational opportunities to all age groups i.e. children young, middle and old age, male, female, in total to the whole family at a cheaper cost. Rural games, festivals, food, dress and the nature provides variety of entertainment to the entire family.

4. Health consciousness of urban population and finding solace with nature friendly means Modern lifestyle has made friendly means stressful and average life span has come down. Hence, people are in constant search of pro-nature means to make life more peaceful. Ayurveda which is a pro-nature medical approach has roots in villages. Indigenous medical knowledge of villagers is respected. Organic foods are in greater demand in urban areas and foreign countries. In total, health conscious urban population is looking towards pro-nature villages for solutions.

5.Desire for peace and tranquility - Modern life is a Desire for peace and tranquility product of diversified thinking and diversified activities. Every individual attempts to work more, in different directions to earn more money to enjoy modern comforts. Hence, peace is always out of his system. Tourism is a means for searching peaceful location. Peace and tranquility are inbuilt in Agri-Tourism as it is away from urban areas and close to nature.

6. Interest in natural environment - Busy urban population is leaning towards nature. Because, natural environment is always away from busy life. Birds, animals, crops, mountains, water bodies, villages provide totally different atmosphere to urban population in which they can forget their busy urban life.

7. Disillusionment with over crowded resorts and cities - In resorts and cities, over crowded peace seekers disturb each others peace. Hence, peace is beyond cities and resorts. Even though efforts are made to create village atmosphere in the sub urban areas through resorts, farm houses, it looks like a distant replica of the original.

8. Nostalgia for their roots on the farm - Cities are Nostalgia for their roots on the farm growing at the cost of villages. Villagers are migrating to cities in search of jobs and to seek the comforts of modern life. Hence, yesterday's villagers are today's urbanites. Deep in the heart of urbanites lies the love and respect for their ancestors and villages. Hence, visit to villages satisfies their desire. This is also expressed through the hatred of urbanites to flat culture and love for farmhouses located in the outskirts of cities. Any opportunity to visit villages and spend time with family is dream of any urbanite. But, minimum decent facilities are always problem. Agri-Tourism attempts to overcome this problem.

9. Rural recreation - Villages provide variety of Rural recreation to urbanites through festivals and handicrafts. Villagers (farmers) lifestyle, dress, languages, culture / traditions which always add value to the entertainment. Agricultural environment around farmers and the entire production process could create curiosity among urban taught. Places of agricultural importance like highest crop yielding farm, highest animal yielding farm, processing units, farms where innovations tried added attraction to the tourists. Agricultural products like farm gate fresh market, processed foods, organic food could lure the bullock cart riding, camel riding, boating, fishing, herbal walk, rural games and health (ayurvedic) tourism.

10.Educational value of Agri- Educational value of Agri-Tourism – Agri-Tourism could create awareness about rural life and knowledge about agriculture science among urban school children. It provides a best alternative for school picnics which are urban based. It provides opportunity for hands on experience for urban college students in agriculture. It is a means for providing training to future farmers. It would be effectively used as educational and training tool to train agriculture and line department officers. This provides unique opportunity for education through recreation where learning is fun effective and easy. Seeing is believing, doing is learning. This experience based concept is the USP of Agri- Tourism.

Statement of the problem

Since Agritourism business started from the year 2009 in tamilnadu, farmers in the tamilnadu adopted Agritourism as part of a diversifica-

tion strategy to increase income, it is important for farmers to clearly understand Agritourism. Peter Drucker has stated regarding success factors of any business that, "It is the customer who determines what a business is. The customer is the foundation of a business and keeps it in existence." (Drucker P., 1973) Study of tourists' expectation and satisfaction factors is essential to grow this industry in the future. Few researchers who had studied Agritourism business and made conclusions were mostly derived from secondary data. Moreover, studies of tourists' attitude towards this business were not studied.

Objectives of the study

- To study the importance of agritourism for income generations opportunities
- To know the conceptual frame work in eco-friendly and agri-tourism in Tamilnadu.

Scope of the study

It is important from viewpoint of agricultural community i.e. farmers and the government regarding study of Agritourism that if it is to be used as a dominant diversification option for sustaining the viability of the agricultural sector and rural communities. The study is restricted and related to Agritourism business in Tamilnadu. It covers the study of village agricultural information centers in tamilnadu and study of expectations of tourists who visited it. This research study highlights on related concepts of Agritourism , current business status of it, scope and obstacles in development of it in Tamilnadu. All the data collection and research findings are made in the year 2013-2015.

3. Research methodology

Research methodology is a science of studying how research is done scientifically and a way to systematically solve the research problem. in this section the research methodology used for research is described i.e. researcher has noted all the logical sequence of the steps of research process from beginning to completion. Explanation of research methodology is necessary so that everyone who refers this study can understand the significance of what researcher has done and make sense of how it all worked. First part in this chapter gives justification for the methodology used. The second part describes the data collection methods and sampling procedures. The third part deals with the data analysis methods.

Sample

The present study selected 120 farmers who take initiative for agri-tourism in Tamilnadu. The present study adopt convenience sampling technique to select the targeted respondents.

T-Test

There is a significant difference between gender of the respondents and their overall satisfaction of agritourism

Gender	Mean	S.D	Statistical inference
Organic cultivation			
Male (n=63)	1.10	.302	T=30.991 Df=119 .107>0.05 Not Significant
Female (n=57)	1.25	.435	
Highly demand of products			
Male (n=63)	1.17	.378	T=28.723 Df=119 .001>0.05 Significant
Female (n=57)	1.34	.476	
High return			
Male (n=63)	1.30	1.49	T=28.355 f=119 .003>0.05 Significant
Female (n=57)	.461	.502	
Natural and Quality products			
Male (n=63)	1.06	.239	T=34.293 Df=119 .313>0.05 Not Significant
Female (n=57)	1.19	.394	
Overall perception about agritourism			

Male (n=63)	1.20	0.857	T=28.434 Df=119 .000>0.05 Significant
Female (n=57)	1.98	0.369	

The above table reveals that there is a significant difference between gender of the respondents and their overall perception about agritourism. Hence, the calculated value less than table value (.000>0.05).

Research hypothesis

There is a significant difference between gender of the respondents and their overall perception about agritourism.

Null hypothesis

There is no significant difference between gender of the respondents and their overall perception about agritourism.

Statistical test

Student 't' test was used the above hypothesis

Findings

The above table reveals that there is a significant difference between gender of the respondents and their overall perception about agritourism. Hence, the calculated value less than table value (.000>0.05). So the research hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

Findings

Location and distance of Agritourism center from City: Average distance of Agritourism centers from nearest main city was found to be 50 Km. Least distance was 10 KM and highest distance was 300 KM. Most of the Agritourism centers were 20 to 60 KM away from nearest district places.

Land holding pattern by ATCs: All the Agripreneurs operating Agritourism centers are medium or high land holders having on an average 20 acres of land of which maximum land were with irrigation facility.

Source of Idea to start ATC: Most of the ATC owners (11) stated that they have initiated ATCs from their own idea and the training from MART has helped them to grow in the business.

Employment generation By Agritourism Centers: Agritourism centers are run by 1or 2 family members. Each center has generated minimum 2 to maximum 20 employments for villagers.

Conclusion

First the research shows that, since 2009 farmers in the Tamilnadu have started to adopt Agritourism business activities. They continue to modify existing farm activities in response to changing market opportunities to develop the best suitable Agritourism attractions for the Agritourists. Though the farmers of the Tamilnadu are well aware with related diversification there is a problem of low awareness about Agritourism business in the farmers as well as in tourists along with problem of the finance. Secondly, data show that Agritourism is financially beneficial to farmers in Tamilnadu.

Since Agritourism is a type of tourism, it offers a new venue and different dimension to the already saturated travel and tourism market. Linking the tourism sector to agriculture has the ability to rejuvenate and inject resources for both sectors. Farmers used Agritourism business for diversifying farm products and developing new market for generating supplementary income. In many cases, Agritourism also helped farmers' children to remain in agricultural activities.

These centers have also generated good employment opportunities for villagers. It has been seen that number of temporary workers is more than the number of permanent ones. This research study has also concluded that large Agritourism centers became more successful in creating more employment as compared to smaller Agri Truism Centre's (ATCs).

Productivity in Agritourism depends on the quality of the experience, reflected in the perceived satisfaction of the tourists which is a subjective judgment. Taking care of the key parameters associated with agritourists satisfaction is an important issue. For the purpose of effi-

cient production in Agritourism serving and entertaining the tourists from arrival to departure are important and which also contribute in the marketing of quality experiences of Agritourism.

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