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Study on significance & constraints faced by farmers operating agro tourism business at Thejaswini eco farm of cherupuzha in Kannur District, Kerala

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Abstract

Agro tourism is an activity done on a farm or agricultural land where a small section is reserved for the recreation of visitors to do education or activities through which farmers can earn extra money. Agriculture and tourism may be connected through agro tourism. This study investigates the significance of agro tourism and the constraints faced by farmers operating agro tourism. The current study is based on primary information gathered from 40 farmers. Thejaswini eco farm in Cherupuzha grama panchayat of Kerala's Kannur district was specifically chosen for the current study. The information was gathered through in-person interviews using meticulously planned interview schedule and Likert scale. The majority of respondents concurred that agro tourism is important in a variety of ways, including protecting farmland, raising living standards, generating additional revenue, etc. However, they also acknowledged that they confront a number of challenges in running their agro tourism businesses.

Keywords: Agro tourism, Significance, Constraints, Thejaswini eco farm, Kerala

Introduction

Agro tourism is the practice of leisure, recreation, or educational travel to an area where agriculture is being actively practiced. (Tew & Barbieri, 2012) [3]. The process of drawing tourists and travellers to rural areas for educational and recreational purposes with the goal of raising the standard of living there by boosting income. (Lamb, 2008; Veeck *et al.* 2006) [2, 4] According to Deroi (1983) [1], agro tourism prevents the next generation of farmers in rural areas from relocating to urban areas, giving farmers more economic benefits.

Sampling methodology

The research was conducted in Cherupuzha gram panchayat of Kannur District in Kerala because it is a significant agro tourism site with 6514 Ha cropped land (Krishibhavan, Cherupuzha). Thejaswini Eco-Farm Tourism Society, the area's first of its kind, was specifically chosen for a thorough investigation. In 2010, some prospective farmers from Cherupuzha formed the Thejaswini Eco Farm Tourism Group and launched several initiatives under the umbrella of the society. The study included 40 farmers, as well as members of the tourism society and tourism hosts.

Data collection

To achieve the study's goal, primary data was gathered. Each of the chosen respondents was approached personally in order to collect relevant data. The significance of agro tourism and the constraints farmers face were determined using Likert scale.

Results and discussion

The current study was conducted at Thejaswini eco farm in Cherupuzha gram panchayat, Kannur District, Kerala. For the study, 40 farmers were chosen, including members of the tourism society and hosts. The necessary data was gathered using a pre-planned questionnaire and Likert scale.

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Age distribution of respondents

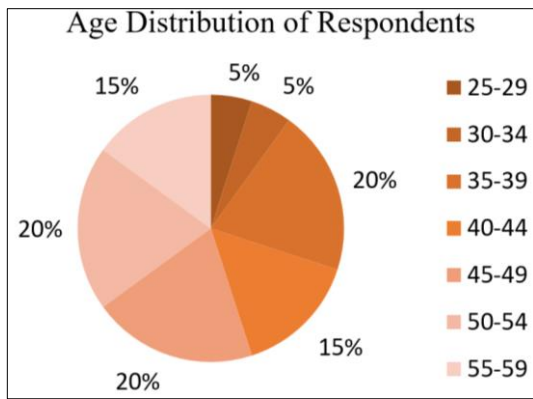


Fig 1: Age wise distribution of farmers

Figure 1 depicts the age distribution of farmers who engaged in agro tourism. According to the results, 20% of respondents are between the ages of 35 and 39, 20% are between the ages of 45 and 49, 20% are between the ages of 50 and 54, 15% are between the ages of 40 and 44, 15% are between the ages of 55 and 59, and 5% are between the ages of 30-34 and 25-29.

Educational background of farmers

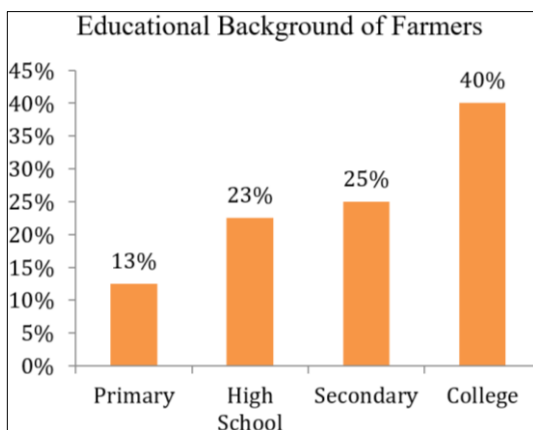


Fig 2: Educational background of farmers

Figure 2 provides information on the level of education of the farmers who took part in the survey. Forty percent of the farmers who responded to the survey had a college degree, 25 percent had finished their secondary education, 22.5 percent had completed high school, and 12.5 percent had only completed their elementary education.

Activities offered at the farm

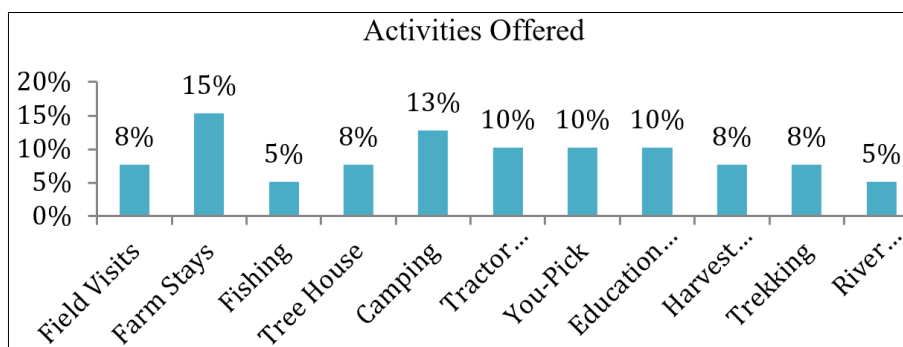


Fig 5: Activities offered at Thejaswini eco farm

Agricultural produce grown/reared at farm

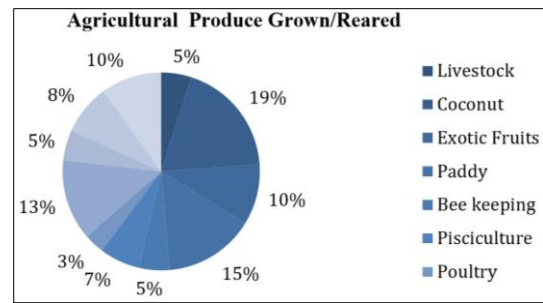


Fig 3: Agricultural Produce Grown/Reared

When asked about the agricultural produce cultivated and raised on their farm, various farmers provided a variety of comments. 19% of farmers reported growing coconut as their primary crop, while 15% of farmers reported growing paddy. 13% of respondents produced rubber, 10% produced pepper, 10% grew exotic fruits, 8% produced arecanuts, 7% performed pisciculture, five percent kept bees, five percent kept livestock, five percent grew coffee, and three percent kept poultry.

Marketing methods used by farmers

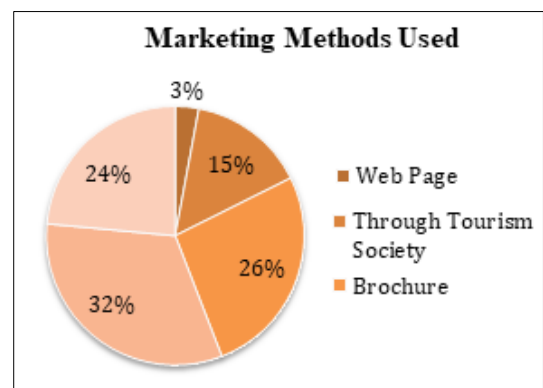


Fig 4: Marketing Methods used by farmers

Figure 4 shows the marketing methods used by farmers at Thejaswini Eco Farm. Marketing methods used by 32% of respondents are leaflets, followed by brochures used by 26% of respondents, direct mail to potential customers used by 24% of respondents, 15% of respondents market their agro-tourism products through the tourism society, and 3% of respondents use a web page as a marketing method.

Figure 5 shows that the majority of respondents (15%) offer farm stay facilities, followed by camping (13%), tractor rides (10%), you-pick (10%), and educational tours (10%). Field visits, Tree houses, Harvest festivals, and Trekking are all

provided by 8% of respondents. Fishing services are provided by 5% of respondents, and river rafting is provided by 5% of respondents.

Significance of agro tourism according to farmers

Table 1: Significance of Agro Tourism According to Farmers

Significances	Total	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Total
To conserve Farmland	40	32%	46%	20%	2%	100%
To increase farmers' standards of living	36	36%	47%	17%	0%	100%
to preserve rural traditions, heritage, and customs	39	5%	56%	31%	8%	100%
to generate additional income for farmers/ landowners	38	39%	50%	11%	0%	100%
to educate the visitors about agriculture	38	11%	34%	37%	18%	100%
To create employment opportunities in rural areas	39	13%	72%	15%	0%	100%
To provide quality local products	40	25%	58%	15%	3%	100%
Decrease fluctuations in farm revenue	39	13%	72%	15%	0%	100%
Increase direct sale of farm produce	39	44%	56%	0%	0%	100%
Employ family members	40	0%	60%	25%	15%	100%
keep yourself active	37	8%	84%	8%	0%	100%
better utilization of farm resources	38	47%	50%	3%	0%	100%

The importance of agro tourism from the perspective of farmers has been identified. Forty six percent and 32 percent of respondents, respectively, agree and strongly agree that agro tourism plays an important role in farmland conservation, while 20 percent gave neutral feedback and 2 percent disagreed. Out of the total respondents, 47 percent agreed that agro tourism helps farmers improve their standard of living, 36 percent strongly agreed, and 17 percent were neutral. Fifty-six percent of respondents said agro tourism contributes to the preservation of rural traditions, heritage, and customs, while only 5% strongly agreed, 31% were neutral, and 8% disagreed. Agro tourism is important in generating additional income for farmers; approximately 50% of respondents agreed, 39% strongly agreed, and 11% gave neutral feedback. 34 percent of respondents agreed that agro tourism activities play an important role in educating visitors about agriculture, 11 percent strongly agreed, 37 percent were neutral, and 18 percent disagreed. 72 percent of respondents agreed that agro tourism creates job opportunities in rural

areas, 31 percent strongly agreed, 15 percent were neutral, and 3 percent disagreed. 58 percent of respondents agreed that agro tourism aids in the production of high-quality products, 25 percent strongly agreed, 15 percent were neutral, and 3 percent disagreed. 72 percent of respondents agreed that agro tourism is important in reducing fluctuations in farm revenue, 13 percent strongly agreed, and 15 percent were neutral. 56 percent and 44 percent of farmers agreed or strongly agreed that it helps increase direct sales of their farm produce, respectively. 60 percent of respondents agreed that agro tourism provides employment for family members, while 25 percent were neutral and 15 percent disagreed. Eighty-four percent of respondents agree that agro tourism keeps them active, eight percent strongly agree, and eight percent are neutral. 50% of respondents believe that agro tourism plays an important role in improving farm resource utilization. It was strongly agreed upon by 47 percent of respondents, while 3 percent were unsure.

Constraints faced by farmers practicing agro tourism business

Table 2: Constraints faced by farmers practicing agro tourism business

Constraints	Total	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Total
Difficulty in attracting	33	12%	64%	12%	12%	100%
Lack of proper knowledge to manage promotional activities	32	16%	59%	16%	9%	100%
Difficulty in identifying customers	33	9%	67%	12%	12%	100%
Availability of Funds from financial institutions	31	16%	71%	13%	0%	100%
Lack of suitable employees	40	8%	62%	10%	20%	100%
Training and managing employees	36	25%	58%	17%	0%	100%
Difficulty in understanding customer's requirement	40	28%	64%	8%	0%	100%
Service-related problems	36	0%	31%	22%	47%	100%
Co-operation from family	36	0%	28%	16%	56%	100%
Difficulty to obtain permission from local authorities	35	17%	54%	20%	9%	100%

Sixty-four percent of respondents agree that they have difficulty attracting customers, 12 percent strongly agree, 12 percent are neutral, and 12 percent disagree. Fifty-nine percent of respondents agree that they lack the necessary knowledge to manage promotional activities, while sixteen

percent strongly agree, sixteen percent are neutral, and nine percent disagree. Sixty-seven percent of farmers responded that they have difficulty identifying customers, with 9 percent strongly agreeing, 12 percent neutral, and 12 percent disagreeing. Seventy-one percent of respondents agree they

are having difficulty obtaining funds from financial institutions to expand recreational activities, 16 percent strongly agree, and 13 percent are neutral. Sixty-two percent agree they lack suitable employees, eight percent strongly agree, ten percent are neutral, and twenty percent disagree. While 58 percent of respondents agree that it is difficult to train and manage existing employees, 25 percent strongly agree, and 17 percent are neutral. Difficulty in understanding the customer's requirement: 64% agree, 28% strongly agree, and 8% gave neutral feedback. When asked if they had service-related problems, 47 percent of farmers disagreed, 22 percent were neutral, and 31 percent agreed they did. Fifty-six percent of respondents said they get full cooperation from their family, 28 percent said they don't, and 16 percent were neutral. 54 percent of all respondents agree that obtaining permission and paper clearances from local authorities is difficult, 17 percent strongly agreed, 20 percent were neutral, and 9 percent disagreed.

Summary and conclusion

Agro tourism, according to the majority of respondents, will help to conserve farmland by making better use of farm resources. It also improves farmers' living conditions while preserving traditions and customs. It provides farmers with additional income while also educating visitors about agriculture, creating job opportunities, and allowing farmers to sell farm produce directly to customers. When asked about the challenges that farmers who operate agro tourism face, the majority of respondents agreed that it is difficult to attract customers and that they lack the necessary knowledge to manage promotional activities. Finding funds to implement and execute farm operations and expand tourism facilities is difficult. Farmers agreed that they have a shortage of qualified workers in the field and that training and managing existing workers is difficult. The majority of respondents agreed that they have trouble understanding their customers' needs.

Suggestions

It can be used to implement adventure tourism as well as cultural tourism, which can be offered in addition to agro tourism amenities to attract a broader range of travellers. Furthermore, investing in marketing will aid in attracting potential clients from all over the world. Electricity, water, roads, and sanitation must all be improved by the government and panchayat administration. Offering Packaged Tours It is usually preferable to offer customers a packaged tour. The visitor may benefit from knowing what services and benefits they will receive for their money. It will be simple for the farmers to plan and provide all services for the visitors on time.

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