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A review on agro-tourism: An emerging trend

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Abstract

Agro-tourism is an emerging trend in the field of agriculture as well as Indian tourism industry. Agro-tourism is closely related to rural tourism and eco-tourism. It refers to the set of activities offered to the tourist at agricultural farm such as horse riding, milking etc. which leads to income generation. It has enormous scope in India as major population of India depends on agriculture. It is sustainable way of development. It can also change the economic face of traditional agriculture. Agro-tourism as an enterprise also faces many challenges such as lack of knowledge of farmers, lack of governmental support etc. There are several policy implications suggested to promote agro-tourism i.e., government support, subsidies, expert guidance etc.

Keywords: Agro-tourism, enterprise, income generation, sustainability

Introduction

It is said that tourism is a tool for creating jobs, reducing poverty, and promoting sustainable human development (Kanase and Kanase, 2017) ^[9]. One of the most significant industries, especially in India, is agro-tourism. The definition of agro-tourism must be understood completely. Agro-tourism is a word made up of two significant words. The Latin word ager, which meaning field, is the source of the name "agree." These farmers' needs support the agricultural tourism network in India, particularly Maharashtra. The word "tourism" implies to go there (Jafar, 2022) ^[8]. India is ranked among top 10 tourist destinations in the world by Conde Nast Traveller, a prestigious European travel publication. The most recent idea in tourism sector, which often happens on farms. It provides visitors with the chance to gain truesense of the allure and authenticity of rural life, sample authentic local cuisine, and become familiar with the many farming tasks while they are there. In the unadulterated natural setting, visitors can unwind and rejuvenate (Vasanthi and Padmaja, 2019) ^[24]. Agro-tourism, also known as agro-tourism is a form of tourism that involves visiting agricultural areas or farms for recreational activities, educational and leisure purposes.

Agro-tourism is a form of rural tourism that offers an authentic and serene experience by integrating agricultural activities into tourist attractions, showcasing rural culture as the main allure rather than natural landscapes. Agro-tourism is an important feature that is growing in line with the ideal development of rural tourism and provides an authentic touch in a quiet atmosphere (Khangarot and Sahu, 2019) ^[11]. A convincing definition of agro-tourism comprises activities that take place on the property that produce jobs that are supplementary to the agricultural operations that nonetheless constitute a larger or smaller portion of everyday life on the site (Karthik and Gajanand, 2017) ^[10]. Gaikwad *et al.*, (2017) ^[5] stated that agro-tourism is a style of travel that promotes rural culture as a tourist attraction. It is comparable to ecotourism, but the main attraction is a cultural landscape rather than a natural one.

Tourism that integrates rural or agricultural landscape with agricultural businesses, offering a range of activities and services provided by farmers and rural residents to bring tourists to the farm, enhance revenue for enterprises, and offer chances for recreation, education, and active participation in farming activities is called agro-tourism. Shah *et al.*, (2023) ^[20] described agro-tourism as, tour that combines rural or agricultural settings with agricultural businesses' goods as part of a tourism experience. The interpretation of agro-tourism is "A variety of activities, services, and amenities provided by farmers and rural residents to lure tourists to their area in order to increase revenue for their enterprises". Agricultural tourism is referred to as, visiting a functional farm or other agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness enterprises for the intention of recreation, education, or active participation in the farming activities. Agro-tourism is generally a practice of alluring tourists or visitors to a place or places that are predominantly used for agricultural purposes (Jagtap *et al.*, 2010) ^[7].

Scope of agro-tourism

Agro-tourism has become an important component of rural tourism in India, offering significant economic benefits and serving as an affordable entry point to expand the range of the travel and tourism industry. Agro-tourism has grown as a branch of rural tourism and has enormous scope in India (Karthik and Gajanand, 2017) ^[10]. The economic landscape of conventional agriculture could shift as a result of agro-tourism. Development of agro-tourism has numerous advantages. Due of its affordability, agro-tourism serves as a low-cost entry point into the travel and tourism industry, expanding the scope of tourism (Bose, 2019) ^[2].

Agro-tourism raises awareness of rural living and agricultural science among urban children. It would be an excellent instructional and training tool for agricultural and line department officers. It is a method of giving trainings to future farmers. This delivers a one-of-a-kind educational opportunity in which learning is enjoyable, effective, and simple. "Seeing is believing, doing is learning" (Singh and Mishra, 2016) ^[21]. In comparison to other types of tourism, the expense of lodging, dining, living, and travel is low. Thus, expanding the reach of agro-tourism (Kothari and Parwej, 2021) ^[12, 13]. Additionally, agro-tourism offers a venue for locals to exhibit their handcrafted, organically grown, and other goods to visitors from outside or inside their own country (Kothari and Parwej, 2021) ^[12, 13]. Agro-tourism serves as an effective educational tool, raising awareness of rural living and agricultural science among urban children, providing training for agricultural officers, and offering a unique and enjoyable learning experience, while also being a cost-effective form of tourism that promotes local products and expands its reach.

Sustainable Agro-tourism: Agro-tourism fosters sustainable rural development, benefiting rural communities by increasing income for agricultural workers and promoting economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Agro-tourism is a way of sustainable tourist development and multi-activity in rural areas that strives to improve living standards of rural communities, particularly through increased income for agricultural workers (Mandi *et al.*, 2019) ^[15]. Agro-tourism may assist farmers' livelihoods while also developing new types of tourism for visitors, which advances the economic, social, and environmental facets of sustainability. Agro-tourism influences farmers' attitudes and inclinations towards farming in both positive and negative ways (Dey and Rauniyar, 2022) ^[4].

As here, people from both domestic and foreign countries come to this form of tourism to appreciate the nature and greenery, agro-tourism aids in maintaining the sustainability of resources. These activities include horseback riding, bullock cart rides, and other modes of transportation that do not negatively impact the environment or our ability to sustain our resources in any way. (Kothari and Parwej, 2021) ^[12, 13]. A place can grow through agro-tourism in a sustainable way. By providing farmers with additional income at a cheap cost of investment, it helps their financial situation. Additionally, it offers the farmer an opportunity to gain recognition for his line of work (Sathe and Randhave, 2019) ^[18]. Agro-tourism promotes sustainable tourism by attracting domestic and international visitors to appreciate nature and greenery, offering eco-friendly activities, providing additional income and recognition to farmers, and contributing to the sustainable growth of rural areas.

Benefits of Agro-tourism

Agro-tourism has the potential to transform traditional agriculture's economic landscape. It would provide several advantages directly and indirectly to farmers and rural residents. Farmers can enhance their standard of living by interacting with city dwellers. People living in cities can learn about rural life and agricultural pursuits (Talekar and Potdar, 2012) ^[23]. The growing popularity of agro-tourism is assisting in the expansion of a wide array of activities, services, and amenities to draw tourists in order to generate more money by establishing entrepreneurial possibilities. Agro-tourism is merely an indigenous endeavour. It facilitates the creation of money and employment, as well as the advancement of rural arts and crafts. It directly benefits to both infrastructure development and historical preservation (Patil and Deore, 2020) ^[16]. Agro-tourism offers a variety of benefits, including jobs, organic agricultural goods, ecological harmony, personal and social fulfillment, entertainment, and creative practices. For the younger generation, agro-tourism education is required (Gaikwad *et al.*, 2017) ^[5]. Agro-tourism plays a pivotal role in transforming traditional agriculture, benefiting farmers and rural communities by providing economic opportunities, promoting cultural exchange, supporting local arts and crafts, and fostering sustainability and educational experiences for the younger generation.

The Farmers now have a way to supplement their current revenue from their properties with the help of agro-tourism. In addition, it provides them an opportunity to socialize with a variety of people, enhancing their social position and generally enriching their lives. (Kanse and Kanse, 2017) ^[9]. It produces supplementary benefits for the neighborhood corporations or local businesses because they must provide services to visitors or tourists. The landscape may be developed and protected because farmers need to serve the travelers. Traditions in art and craft that can be observed regionally may be conserved, as they may be able to establish markets if tourism is developed (Pawar, 2021) ^[17]. It delivers pollution-free and noise-free travel and tourism locations in rural areas. It provides natural settings for viewing birds, animals, and water bodies etc. (Bodake and Shinde, 2021) ^[1]. Agro-tourism benefits farmers by supplementing their income, fostering social engagement, and enriching their lives, while also supporting local businesses, preserving traditions, and offering pollution-free and natural tourism experiences in rural areas.

Problems of agro-tourism

Agro-tourism faces challenges related to funding, knowledge gaps, communication, and commercial mind set among farmers, as well as issues with providing for urban visitors' needs and maintaining hygiene. Additionally, limitations in land holdings, soil quality, access to loans and irrigation, marketing, and education further hinder agro-tourism development. (Vishwanath *et al.*, 2022) ^[25] stated that farmers face several major obstacles in the development of agrotourism centres, including insufficient funding to build the necessary infrastructure, incomplete knowledge and unawareness about agro-tourism, poor communication and absence of a business-oriented Mindset among small and remote farmers, and issues related to providing for the basic needs of urban visitors as well as maintaining visitor hygiene. Sawant (2019) ^[19] also pointed out the problems of agro-tourism that most farmers have little land holdings, poor quality soil, and limited or no access to loans and irrigation.

Use of improper marketing and advertising tactics. Farmers receive insufficient education and trainings.

There is a lack of government support and identification of tourism problems. There aren't enough functional agro-tourism resource centres. Agro-tourism marketing plan is lacking (Dangi, 2018) [3]. The majority of respondents concurred that managing promotional activities is tough and that it is difficult to draw in clients. It is challenging to raise money to start and run farm enterprises and increase tourism facilities. Farmers concurred that there is a lack of skilled workers in the field and that managing and training current employees is challenging. The vast part of respondents concurred that they struggle to comprehend the wants of their clients (Surabhi *et al.*, 2022) [2]. Agro-tourism faces challenges due to inadequate government support, lack of functional resource centers, and shortcomings in marketing plans. Difficulties in managing promotional activities, attracting clients, raising funds, and addressing workforce-related issues are also hindering agro-tourism development and understanding customer needs.

Implications

To foster agro-tourism growth, government support, Public-Private Partnerships, financial aid, project consulting, and expert instruction from ATDC and MART are essential for defining a visionary approach and achieving agro-tourism objectives. The government ought to support and recognize agro-tourism. A government should support the development of public-private strategic partnership model. Government should provide prompt financial assistance and project consulting services (Sawant, 2019) [19]. The owner of agro-tourism should create a futuristic approach by defining the company's vision and objective. They ought to receive expert instruction from ATDC and MART (Jafar, 2022) [8].

The government focuses on themed tourism goods to market. According to (Kothari and Parwej, 2021) [12, 13] the government places an emphasis on tourism goods with a particular theme, such as cultural, desert, heritage, wildlife, or spiritual to market Rajasthan as a single destination that offers a wide range of cuisines and is accessible year-round.

To promote agro-tourism, reducing setup costs through low-cost construction materials, offering loans and subsidies, providing guidance from agricultural departments and universities, and establishing support networks for service providers are crucial steps that require government and financial institutions' collaboration and support. Reducing the significant initial investment by introducing low-cost construction materials through intensive research and case studies would bring the setup cost down to a level where even semi-medium and small farmers may contemplate the venture. Young and enthusiastic farmers will be encouraged to undertake this endeavour by the availability of loans from PACS/commercial banks under the MUDRA or startup plan. Subsidies for low-cost agro-tourism farms would help the industry as a whole (Krishna *et al.*, 2020) [14]. The agricultural departments and universities in the districts ought to make an effort to offer guidance and some creative suggestions for agro-tourism. Through grants and institutional finance, the government ought to make every effort to offer the agro-tourism operations in Maharashtra the greatest possible financial support. The best possible financial support should be given by banks to the agro-tourism industry in Maharashtra. The Agro-tourism service providers' union is essential for the farmers, as it supports the Indian agricultural

tourism network, including Maharashtra. (Havale *et al.*, 2022) [6].

Conclusion

Agro-tourism is an upcoming boom in the agriculture sector and current trend in the tourism industry. It serves as an opportunity for farmers to use their own farm for generating income. It also provides chance to urban people to enjoy rural life and activities. Both farmers and tourists benefit from it, making it a win-win situation. Farmers can boost their income by utilizing available resource and tourist can experience village life at reasonable cost. Rural landscape could be preserved by the development of agro-tourism. The enterprise faces many issues which require creative strategies and policy implications for the betterment. In this regard the industry needs proper recognition, government supported policies, subsidies, proper training and guidance to the farmers etc. A Public Private Strategic Partnership Model can be created to raise the agro-tourism sector in India.

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