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Farm House : A Reflection on the Indian Agri-Tourism

Prof. Dr. Yogesh M. Kulkarni

Head and Assistant Professor,
Department of Business Economics, Sonopant Dandekar Arts,
V.S. Apte Commerce & M.H. Mehta Science College,
Palghar (W), Dist. Palghar-401404 (M.S.).

Abstract :

Tourism is termed as a tool for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development. Farmhouses tourism has brought about new job opportunities for local youth, albeit many jobs that they occupy are at the lower level. It has also encouraged the local youth to retain their traditional culture, environments and handicrafts and to take pride in development of agriculture. Farmhouse tourism has contributed towards reinstating the charm of rural life-styles restoring pride among the villagers. It provides opportunities to the farmers to show their achievements to the outsiders and take pride in it. Thus the concept has not only generated employment but has also imparted a sense of dignity among the villagers thereby arresting their migration to the urban areas.

Keywords : Farm House, Agri-Tourism, Organic foods, Agri-shopping.

Introduction :

Tourism is termed as a tool for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development. Sixty five percent of the population is directly and indirectly dependent on Agriculture; where as 26 percent of GDP comes from Agriculture. One hundred and ten million farmers are dwelling in 6.25 lakhs villages producing more than 200 MT of food grains feeding the country. More than profession, business, agriculture is culture. Hence, adding additional income generating activities to existing Agriculture would certainly increase contribution of Agriculture to national GDP. Serious efforts need to be made in this direction. Agri-Tourism is one such activity. 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, Indian Association of Tour Operators, Tourists, Transport Operators Association, Indian convention promotion bureau and Pacific Asia Travel Association. Promotion of Agri-tourism includes some more important stakeholders namely Ministry of Agriculture and line departments at state and central governments and farmers.

Objective of the Study :

The present study aims to evaluate a reflection on the Indian Agra-tourism for farm house.

Methodology :

The data for the present study has been collected from existing secondary literature, such as books, journals, published and unpublished annual reports, Govt. Manuals/Orders, websites etc.

Conceptual Framework :

The secondary sources to develop a working definition

of agri-tourism, and adopted the following definition from the American Farm Bureau Federation:

“Agri-tourism refers to an enterprise at a working farm, agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates income for the owner. Agricultural tourism refers to the act of visiting a working farm or any horticultural or agricultural operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation that also adds to the economic viability of the site.”

Scope or Advantages of Agri-Tourism :

- It brings major primary sector Agriculture closer to major service sector tourism. The convergence is expected to create win-win situation for both the sectors.
- Tourism sector has potential to enlarge.
- Agriculture sector has the capacity to absorb expansion in Tourism Sector.
- The cost of food, accommodation, recreation and travel is minimum in Agri-Tourism.
- The urban population basically which has roots in villages always has curiosity about sources of food, plants, animals, raw materials like wood, handicrafts, languages, culture, tradition, dresses and lifestyle.
- Village provide recreational opportunities to all age groups i.e. children young, middle and old age, male, female, in total to the whole family at cheaper cost. Rural games, festivals, food, dress and the nature provides variety of entertainment to the whole family.
- Modern lifestyle has made life stressful and the average life span has comedown. Hence

people are in constant search of pro-nature means to make life more peaceful. Ayurveda which is 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.

- 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.
- 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 donkey painted with tiger colour. Artificiality is highlighted and not satisfying.
- Agri-atmosphere in the villages, there is scope or advantage to develop Agri-tourism products like Agri-shopping, culinary tourism, pick and own your tree/plot, bed and breakfast, pick and pay, bullock cart riding, camel riding, boating, fishing, herbal walk, rural games and health (Ayurvedic) tourism.
- Agri-tourism could create awareness about rural life and knowledge about agriculture science among urban school children's. It provides the 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.

Indian Agri-Tourism Opportunities :

Indian tourism industry is growing @10.1 percent. The world Tourism Organization has estimated that the tourism industry is growing at the rate of 4 percent a year and that by the year 2011 there will be more than one billion tourist visit various parts of the world. But Indian tourism industry is growing at the rate of 10 percent which 2.5 times more that the growth rate at global level. By introducing Agri-tourism concept, not only present growth rate is

sustained but also this value addition contributes to further growth.

India has entered amongst the top 10 tourist destinations list (European Travel Magazine). India is already established as one of the top tourist destinations in the world Value addition by introducing novel products like Agri-tourism would only strengthen the competitiveness of Indian tourism industry in global markets.

Top 10 States Share in Domestic Tourist Visits

States	% Share
Uttar Pradesh	24.4
Andhra Pradesh	24.4
Tamil Nadu	11.5
Karnataka	7.4
Rajasthan	4.4
Maharashtra	3.6
West Bengal	3.4
Uttaranchal	3.2
Madhya Pradesh	2.3
Bihar	2.2
Others	13.2
Total	100

Source : European Travel Magazine, 2004-05.

India has diverse culture and geography which provide ample and unlimited scope or advantage for the growth of this business. India has diverse Agro-climatic conditions, diverse crops, people, culture, deserts, mountains, coastal systems and islands which provide scope for promotion of all season. Multi-location tourism products.

There is an increasing number of tourists preferring non-urban tourist spots. Hence, there is scope for promotion of non-urban tourist spots in interior villages by establishing Agri-tourism centres. But, adequate facilities and publicity are must to promote such centres.

Government initiatives and policies in 10th five year plan allocation has been increased from 525 crore to 2900 crores. Increased financial allocation reaffirms the government commitment. The increased financial allocation by six times could be used for capacity building of service provides, creation of infrastructure and publicity.

Farm House Tourism :

The turn of the century is seeing Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujrath, Silvassa etc. Tourism venturing into village and farm tourism. For those who want a holiday in India but are not attracted by the beaches of Goa, natural heritage of Kerala or Scenic beauty of Kashmir, farmhouse tourism of Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujrath, Silvassa etc. is offering the desired alternative. A visit to the much talked about villages of various places is an unconventional choice

for those who have no inclination to spend a holiday by shopping, sightseeing or by cosying up in the warmth of a five star hotel bed and are fed up the hectic city life and its fancy holiday packages. Thus, the farmhouse tourism of various places offers an innovative alternative by offering bucolic pleasures of its village life providing the guests with a unique experience of local food, culture and heritage.

The offer also attracts Indians who want a break from mundane life of cities at cheap rates. Some Indian city dwellers also view this as a learning experience for their children who are ill-acquainted with the village life and do not know about the rural culture of the country. Farm tourism enables domestic as well as foreign tourists to have glimpse of rural life and agricultural practices. The package includes visiting the local artisans, experiencing festive occasions, participating in village games (such as kite flying and guli-danda) and attending a village council meeting. They enjoy the ethnic kitchen where food is cooked slowly in earthen vessels. Watching women in traditional dress, grinding flour on a chakki (flour grinder) has its own unique charm. A bioscope cinema's forefather is quite a hit with the kids, who crowd around to catch glimpses of bollywood stars through the peepholes.

The concept of farm tourism is a part of village tourism and it seeks to take the modern man back to his roots though at a price. The policy is to tap the tourism potential of the much talked about villages in the various states. Its aim is to attract tourists with the concept of village, villager, culture and agriculture and create additional sources of income for the farmers. It was also discovered that these farm house owners could provide an educational experience of farm life, the local food, culture and heritage.

In this novel concept of farm tourism, the state tourism department acts as facilitator and promoter of package tours to farm houses. The owners of the farm houses act as guide and host and provide boarding, lodging, food and other facilities to the tourists. The tourists are also exposed to the socio cultural practices of the rural folk such as Panchayat meetings, local songs, festive occasions such as marriages and local melas, dances, art and craft. Tour of the village includes visits to local artisans like carpenters

and blacksmiths etc.

Conclusion :

It is difficult to provide publicity and network to a remote Agri-tourism unit. Hence, either collective such Agri-tourism operators can provide publicity networking or organizations like ITDC, State tourism development corporations, NGOs, press and tour operators can take up this responsibility. Information technology can play very important role in promotion of Agri-tourism. An interactive website containing all details about Agri-tourism locations and a toll free 24 hours help line can provide necessary information to Agri-tourisms. Government can play important role in creating these facilities namely road transport, medical facilities and telecommunication to remote areas especially where Agri-tourism units are established on priority basis. Safe and clean accommodation is must for Agri-tourism. Farmhouses tourism has brought about new job opportunities for local youth, albeit many jobs that they occupy are at the lower level. It has also encouraged local youth to retain their traditional culture, environment and handicrafts and to take pride in development of agriculture. Farmhouse tourism has contributed towards reinstating the charm of rural life-styles restoring pride among the villagers. It provides opportunities to the farmers to show their achievements to the outsiders and take pride in it. Thus the concept has not only generated employment but has also imparted a sense of dignity among the villagers thereby arresting their migration to the urban areas.

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