
A study on growth and future scope of Agri-tourism projects in Nagpur District

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ABSTRACT

Agritourism is a tour to a working farm providing a fresh and live experience of various farm activities and agricultural background. It includes food, fun and farming apart from bullock cart rides and exposure to the rural set up. Agri-tourism could become a good support for additional and regular revenue to the local farmers and could also contribute to the social development through rural employment. In fact it is more a need for Vidarbha farmers than western Maharashtra farmers. If the venture of agri-tourism works successfully in Vidarbha, it could lead to economic stability to the rural population and reduce the social unrest to a greater extent. It is obvious that Nagpur as an emerging city and smart city would attract more tourists and would grow demographically as well. This is a positive indicator for the growth of rural tourism initiatives around Nagpur city. This research paper studies the existing scenario, growth and future possibilities as well limitations for agri tourism ventures in Nagpur district.

Keywords : Agri-tourism, Vidarbha, Nagpur , Farm activities, Agriculture

Introduction

Sunil Mankikar, a farmer in Wardha and Nagpur district of Maharashtra, earned Rs 27 lakh last year only through agri tourism. Farmers are increasingly taking up agri tourism, along with farming, to increase their income. They are now building cottages on their farms and keeping these open for guests who want to experience rural life.

Another farmer, Ganpat Parthe, who is into cultivation of strawberries, mulberries and raspberries, from Bhilar district in Maharashtra, has also tried his hand at agri tourism, and it has proved profitable for him, as well. Parthe has two cottages on his farm, which he rents out to groups/families at Rs 700 per head for a day, including food. He takes tourists around the farm to give them a glimpse into a farmer's life, and offers them food devoid of extravagance.

“My income has gone up by 20-30 per cent in the last couple of years due to agri tourism. It helps me cover losses incurred sometimes from farming,” Parthe added.

Some farmers have moved a step further and provide tourists with additional activities such as rock climbing and jungle safari. Tourists are also taken to the village river for a swim and local food processing centres. (Sharleen DSouza, 2011)

When interviewed Mr. Sunil Mankikar during a short interaction on 5 February 2016, he informed that he has sustained and further expanded his business from 2011 and now launched two more setups, one near Saoner and another near Katol, both in Nagpur district.

The growth and future scope for Agri-tourism in Nagpur district is thus carried out to find scope and challenges in carrying out and expanding this venture further.

Agritourism

Agri-tourism is the form of tourism which capitalizes on rural culture as a tourist attraction. It has gained a new dimension as a potential income and job generating activity. The symbiosis between tourism and agriculture that can be found in agro-tourism is a key element of an environmentally and socially responsible tourism. Travel and tourism are human-resource intensive, employing directly and indirectly 8 per cent of the global workforce. It is estimated that one job in the core tourism industry creates about one and a half additional or indirect jobs in the tourism-related economy.

Accepted definition of Agritourism by Maharashtra Agricultural and Rural Tourism Federation (MART), is —It is the holidays concept of visiting farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation.

Agritourism center is the location where tourists from the urban areas can come and spend their weekends or holidays in a village with agricultural atmosphere at a very economical cost; it is the home away from home giving a personal feel of harmony with rural culture. Agritourism integrates agriculture with pleasure and gives the benefit of agriculture and tourism activities to the tourists that deliver economic benefit to concerned farmer and villagers. (Walke S.G. 2013)

Rationale of Study

In agri-tourism sector increasing the involvement of local communities, especially the poor, in the tourism value chain can contribute to the development of local economy and poverty reduction. This can include the local supply of products, labour, and tourism services. There is increasing evidence that more sustainable tourism in rural areas can lead to more positive poverty-reducing effects. Nowadays more and more travellers are found to favour environmentally-friendly tourism and be willing to pay for related experiences. Traditional mass tourism has reached a stage of steady growth. In contrast, agro-eco-tourism, nature, heritage, cultural, and “soft adventure” tourism are taking the lead and are predicted to grow rapidly over the next two decades. (Barbuddhe and N.P. Singh, 2014)

Objectives of study

1. Find out growth possibilities for Agri-tourism in Nagpur district
2. Find out existing scenario and scope in Agri-tourism project from secondary research
3. To find out location and price expectations of consumers in Nagpur by conducting survey.

Research Methodology

Though the main research for this paper is secondary research, some primary inputs are also added. For this Primary (Survey) research is carried out with sample size of 100. These 100 respondents are the representatives of family groups, associations, informal groups and business organizations. A small test questionnaire was used to collect answers about preferred distance for travelling and preferred price per person for a day tour to Agri tourism project.

Secondary research was done by reviewing journals, research papers, newspaper articles, official websites of ICAR, ATDC and MTDC, etc.

Methods used for statistical calculations of primary data were central tendency such as arithmetic mean and mode. Data is also represented graphically. Chi Square test was conducted for studying independence of categories in selecting various choices of location.

Literature Review and findings

“This concept has not yet developed in India. We (MTDC) want to promote this activity, as it is in the interest of farmers. We will help them if they register on our website. We will give them a platform to increase their visibility. It will also help tourists understand the kinds of crops that are grown in Maharashtra. This will also help bridge the gap between urban and rural India and help tourists connect with rural life,” Kinalekar, manager, MTDC, said. (Sharleen DSouza, 2011)

“This will help farmers to transcend to the next level of development and give them an insight into the requirements on how to start a business as well as a comprehensive knowledge of the latest practices,” Anjali Parasnis, fellow & coordinator of TERI (The Energy and Resources Institute) said. (Sharleen DSouza, 2011)

“Agro-eco-tourism offers an opportunity to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with the rural life, taste the local genuine food and get familiar with the various farming tasks. It also provides the welcome escape from the daily hectic life in the peaceful rural environment and to relax and revitalize in the pure natural environment, surrounded by magnificent landscape. Agro-eco-tourism can contribute towards a green economy transition through investments leading to energy and water efficiency, waste reduction, biodiversity and cultural heritage conservation, and the strengthening of linkages with local communities.” DR. Ashok Sikka, DGM(NRM) of Indian Council of Agricultural research mentions in his editorial forward. (Barbuddhe and N.P. Singh, 2014)

“We hope to bring the farmers together and help them understand agri tourism better. This will increase their income levels and the entrepreneur-based activities,” D Ranjit, assistant general manager of Nabard, said. (Sharleen DSouza, 2011)

Pandurang Taware (2008) said about Agritourism scope, “The urban population which is having roots in villages always has the curiosity to learn about rural life regarding sources of food, plants, animals, handicrafts, languages, culture, tradition, dresses and rural lifestyle. Agritourism has the capacity to satisfy the curiosity of this segment of population.”

Following Agri-tourism projects are merging in and around Nagpur (in Nagpur district):

1, Mahajan Vavar, Karli(Khapari) Tal-Kalmeshvar, Dist-Nagpur, 2.Ranwara Agri-tourism, A/P-Ghorpad,Tal-Katol,Dist-Nagpur 3. Madlekar Farms(Arundhati Agri-tourism) , Pardi Kalmeshvar-katol Road, 4. Kinkhede Agri Tourism, A/P-Pipala,Kinkhede,Tal-Kalmeshvar,Dist-Nagpur, 5. Shiv Priya Agri Tourism, A/P-Ketapar,Tal-Kalmeshvar,Dist-Nagpur, 6. Mankikar’s Farms 1 , Near Saoner, 7. Mankikar’s farm 2, Near katol 8. Sunderban Agri tourism, Pench (26 km from Nagpur) and Nirmal Agritourism, Kelzar which is in Wardha District but only 45 Km from Nagpur.

Though there are almost 8 projects emerging up fast, the populated district on Nagpur can easily accommodate many more such projects and need for such excursion projects is ever rising.

Data Analysis

When a survey of 100 respondents (people who represent a family, a group, an association or an organization) was done in Nagpur city to find out the location. Following questions were asked and responses were tabulated.

Sample distribution was: Family groups: 81, Business organizations: 5, Associations: 14.

1. At how much distance you prefer the location of agri-tourism farm?

Respondents	less than 20 km	20-40 km	more than 40 km	Total
Family Groups	9	40	32	81
Associations	1		11	2
Business Organizations	0	2	3	5
	10	53	37	100

Applying Chi-square test to find independence of categories in making choice.

	less than 20 km	20 to 40 km	more than 40 km	Row Totals
family	9 (8.14) [0.09]	40 (44.75) [0.17]	32 (30.11) [0.12]	83
Assoications	1 (1.37) [0.10]	11 (7.55) [1.58]	2 (5.08) [1.87]	14
Organizations	0 (0.49) [0.49]	2 (2.70) [0.18]	3 (1.81) [0.78]	5
Column Totals	10	55	37	100 (Grand Total)

The chi-square statistic is 5.3706. The p-value is 0.251345. The result is not significant at $p < 0.05$. Thus the independent categories do not make any significant impact on choice at this sample size.

Interpretation: It is found that irrespective of type of group, preference is more to the locations beyond 40 km from Nagpur. This is mainly because, groups consider this as a picnic excursion, they prefer to travel a longer distance as travel is equally an important element like destination

2. How much price per person you would be ready to pay for day tour of agri-tourism farm?

Respondents	
Family Groups	872.82
Business Organizations	1100
Associations	1000
Overall Average	902

Interpretation: Expected affordable price as indicated by various groups lies between Rs. 870 and Rs. 1100 with a mean value of Rs. 902/- When discussed with few selected agritourism experts and also reviewed on internet, day tour prices are found in the range of RS. 600 to Rs. 800 per person with a minimum group of 10 to 15 people.

Conclusion

From the secondary research, views of eminent professionals in various institutes linked with Agriculture and Agri-tourism were studied. These institutions were ICAR, NABARD, TERI, ATDC and MTDC. We have also studied the case of Mr. Mankikar, a farmer in Wardha and Nagpur district who has expanded his Agri-tourism business from one project in Wardha District to two more projects in Saoner and Katol. There were eight prominent Agri-tourism

projects currently operative in Nagpur district. But if we see the demographics of Nagpur district, it has registered 19.21 % growth in population over 2001 Census in the 2011 Census. Population of Nagpur District is 46.53 Lakhs in 2011 Census. Population of Nagpur City has been recorded as 24 Lakhs. Considering these factors and fast growth of the city, eight Agri-tourism projects cannot be sufficient to cater the need of tourists. Thus there is a wide scope for growth. Moreover, maximum Agri-tourism projects are found to be in Saoner-Katol-Kalmeshwar belt. Thus there is wide scope for such projects in other emerging Tehsils like Umred (considering the new Karhandla Tiger park near Umred) , Hingna, Ramtek, Narkhed, Bhiwapur, etc. There are 14 Tehsils in Nagpur district out of which around 10 Tehsils are left untapped. There is definitely wide scope in these Tehsils.

Primary study used to support the secondary study revealed that people are ready to travel 40 km or even more from the city to visit such projects. The price perception of these potential consumers also lies within the range of actual prices charged by the Agri-tourism service providers. Thus if properly promoted and positioned , Agri-tourism can become a promising financial alternative for the farmers and can be helpful in improving their livelihood.

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