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**“AGRO-TOURISM: A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN  
MAHARASHTRA - A CASE STUDY OF VILLAGE INN AGRO  
TOURISM (WARDHA)”**

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**Abstract:**

Indian economy is largely agro- based. Tourism is a recent phenomenon occurring and widely now recognized as a major industry contributing to G.D.P. Tourism not only brings the economic growth and development in the state, but it also has socio-cultural and environmental impacts; which may be positive as well as negative. The recent boom in tourism at specific destinations in India and abroad has shown devastating impacts of mass tourism on ecology, and environment of the region.

As a major towards avoiding such ill-effects the government has already implemented measures like restricted season in wildlife sanctuaries, strict pollution control measures on islands (e.g.: Andaman- Nikobar).

On one hand tourism as a sole revenue earning source for some regions and overuse of non-regenerating resource at destination, tourism development balance is a difficult task to be achieved. Concept of sustainable tourism development is need of an hour.

Development of Special Interest Tourism is a step towards this. Eco tourism, adventure tourism, Agro-tourism is some of the forms of tourism emerging as trend setters in the industry.

Due to the efforts of NGOs like Agri-tourism Development Corporation (ATDC), MART (Maharashtra State Agro-tourism & Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation Ltd.), Konkan Bhumi Krushi Paryatan Sanstha, in Maharashtra many farmers are getting substantial amount of guidance and promotion for their agro-tourism projects. Thanks to persistent efforts by all these NGOs that the state government is now giving attention to the need promotion and development of agro-tourism.

As mostly agro-tourism is developed in the rural areas, the effects of tourism development on the life, cultural and environment are inevitable. Managing the tourist flow without negative impacts of tourism is a great skill.

The agro-tourism destination Village inn Agro-tourism at Wardha is one such Agro-tourism destination which is skillfully managed to achieve sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Agro Tourism Development, Economic Feasibility, Sustainability.

## Introduction:

India is one of the world's oldest living civilizations and also the world's largest democracy, which has made stupendous progress among developing nations. It is a land where temple elephants exist amicably with the micro-chips.

India's impressive variety of history and culture, from ancient Gangetic Kingdoms to the present state, harmoniously blend to form a unique atmosphere in more than a million square kilometers of scenic sights. Placid backwaters and lagoons, bays and rough – lava rocked seas, lush green paddy fields, palm fringed shores..... India has them all.

Tourism Industry is a composite of service providers from private, as well as public sectors. Left to itself, the industry will develop naturally, but not necessary optimally on a sustainable basis. If the industry is properly planned, developed and managed at all levels of government, in partnership with private sector, it will strengthen country's cultural heritage, natural treasure and lead to positive economic results including enhanced employment and income opportunities, especially in rural areas.

The potential for domestic tourism in India is vast. Domestic tourism is as old as the Indian society. According to the available statistics, domestic tourism has grown sustainably during the one decade as shown in table below.

**Table No.1**

### Domestic Tourist Arrivals in India

Year	Domestic tourists Arrivals in India
1998	167 million
1990	64 million

**Table No. 2**

### Domestic Tourist Arrivals in Maharashtra

Year	Domestic Tourist Arrivals
2004	13392212
2005	14329667
2006	16880348

(Reference: state/U.T. Tourism Dept.)

In recent years the concept of mass-tourism seems to be on the verge of decline. The leisure time and increase in the disposable income has led to "Niche Tourism" amongst the tourist worldwide.

This phenomenon has given rise to new and innovative types of tourism like ethnic tourism, adventure tourism (e.g. river rafting), under water tourism, eco-tourism (olive riddle turtles nesting sites in Konkan) wine tourism (Nasik), spiritual tourism (yoga and meditation), food tourism, garden tourism and so on.

The niche categories of tourism mentioned above are highly popular amongst the tourists who would want an exposure and experience different than tourism popular amongst mass tourists. They would certainly not want “a touristic bubble” to carry with them. The growth in number of such tourists has been a motivating force in the development of “niche tourism”.

“Agro-tourism” is one such form of tourism which is gaining popularity amongst the non-conventional tourists. In a progressive state like Maharashtra where farmers are ready to experiment, agro-tourism is spreading slowly but steadily. There are 638, 691 villages in India as per the Census Report 2001 and the rural population is 741,660,293. Some villages are near to big cities and towns. Most of the villages have scenic beauty due to availability of lakes, rivers, hills, mountains, paddy fields, fruit orchards. Rural community has the potential, resources and ability to exploit the growing tourism industry. The scenic beauty, historical monuments, serenity and nature always appeal to urban tourists, caught-up in today’s fast pace of life.

Apart from this agro-tourism is a sustainable form of tourism which can be developed without degrading the destination. The ill-effects of unplanned tourism development can be seen at many places in India, for e.g. Goa (drug padding, casino culture), Lakshadweep (degradation of coral reefs due to water pollution). The uncontrolled number of tourists and their ever growing needs consume most of the resources at a tourist destination. It creates a social tension and sometimes hostility towards the guests by the host population.

#### **Development of agro-tourism is desirable as**

- 1) It is a sustainable form of tourism.
- 2) Where there is little scope of extra earnings for family depending on agriculture, agro-tourism serves as additional source of income for the farmers.
- 3) It gives prestige to rural life, creates jobs at local levels.
- 4) It gives opportunity to urban tourist to escape from his hectic routine and allows him to go back to his roots.
- 5) It can enhance the quality of life for local residence.
- 6) It gives the tourists glimpse of village ambience, local cuisine, culture and art.

7) It expects the active participation from the tourist, rather than a passive spectator, hence a bond between guest-host is strengthen.

Rural tourism” is a farm tourism and non-farm tourism in rural areas and communities, but does not include activities in the outdoor recreation areas such as national parks or wilderness areas.”(Oppermann 1996)

“Agro tourism is tourism activities carried out in non-urban regions by individuals mainly employed in the primary and secondary sector of the economy.”(Lakovidou et al., 1995)

Compared to the development of Agro-Tourism in foreign countries like U.K. Spain, Australia, in India the development of Agro-Tourism is a very recent phenomenon. Particularly in Maharashtra, the development has occurred in last five years so a systematic record of growth and development of Agro-tourism is still at its nascent stage. There is very less systematic information gathering available in this field. So an effort is made to gather systematic information through this research paper.

**Table No. 3**

<b>Old and New Tourists Compared</b>	
<b>Old Tourism</b>	<b>New Tourism</b>
Search for the Sun	Experience something different
Follow masses	Want to be in charge
Here today, gone tomorrow	See and enjoy but not destroy
Just to show that you had been having	Just for the fun of it
Superiority	Understanding
Like attractions	Like sports
Precautions	Adventurous
Prefer to eat in Hotels	Try local fare
Homogenous	Hybrid

Reference: ANNEXURE ‘C’ Tourism Policy of Maharashtra 2005.

**Action Plan related to Product Development and Promotion:**

**The tourist traffic to some of the centers has even exceeded the carrying capacity with the attendant problems of environmental degradation. It has, therefore, become necessary to go beyond the beaten tracks and to facilitate direct visit of tourists to new destinations.** However, the choice of such new destinations for development will have to be based on their intrinsic attractions, **potential for development** and the **carrying capacity** as

well as **availability of resources**. Such development will be guided by well conceived master plans, and executed by specific Tourism Development Authorities. Adequate backward and forward linkages will also be established to ensure adequate flow of benefits to the local community.

As mentioned in India's National Tourism Policy "tourist traffic to few chosen destinations" has degraded those destinations. So alternative forms of tourism which could diversify tourist traffic to other unexplored destinations. The concept of SIT (Special Interest Tourism) has emerged out of this need. Agro tourism is one of the SIT products.

### **Agro Tourism Development**

Thus it can be said that the development of agro tourism is a consequence of following factors:-

- Overall increase in travel and tourism industry is as a result of globalization, economic development, more disposable time and income available with customers.
- Realization by government the importance of tourism as an industry.
- Incorporating the tourism industry in national development plans and policies.
- Deciding objectives and strategies for sustainable development of tourism.
- Allocating funds to develop rural areas from tourism point of view.
- Promotion and development of new forms of tourism like adventure tourism, eco-tourism and agro-tourism identifying the market demands.

At local levels the farmers are more conscious about their choice to enter into tourism activity. They have realized the potential of agro tourism and would like to extend the farm product in a controlled environment. The ill-effects of mass tourism at many popular destinations have been evident and some has been the factor behind tourists notice to choose alternative forms of tourism. The emergence of SIT (Special Interest Tourism) targeting niche market is a recent trend and agro tourism is one of the SIT products.

Agro tourism which is based on agricultural activities with a subtle underline and touch of rural culture is one such form of SIT. One cannot easily imagine a farm being a reason to travel for a tourist. But the attraction can be created by adding value to the product. One must view "agro tourism" concept in totality. It is not just visiting a farm growing crops and vegetables; it is giving an opportunity to the tourist to interact with a culture. It provides tourist with an experience of being part of our rural culture. Observing and experiencing a lifestyle different from urban routine. It offers some "meaning" to the tourist at the destination along with a sense of pleasure away from routine activities.

Agro tourism being offbeat activity diverse kinds of market segments and tourism product matching to these market segments can be developed. While planning agro tourism destination for tourism purpose one has to understand that all destinations have their own limitations in terms of offering tourism related services both physical limitations and limitations relating to infrastructural facilities. Considering these limitations one has to see how growth and development of agro-tourism is best achieved.

Following points need to be considered.

- 1) Interest component is always a key determinant. As in case of agro tourism it needs to be generated amongst tourist. It is not a conventional destination by choice of large number of tourists.
- 2) The tourist is seeking experience (an authentic one) which should be fulfilled.

### **Objectives:**

1. To study the development and management of agro-tourism at Village inn Agro-tourism at Wardha.
2. To find out the impact of tourism development on socio-cultural and Environmental aspects of the region.
3. To find out sustainability of the destination in the long run.
4. To find out economic feasibility of the project.

### **Research Methodology:**

#### **Collection of Primary Data Through -**

- 1) Site visit at Village Inn Agro tourism center, Wardha
- 2) Interview with Mr. Sunil Mankikar - Owner of village inn Agro-tourism.

#### **Collection of Secondary Data Through -**

- 1) Books
- 2) Research papers
- 3) International journals
- 4) E- journals
- 5) Internet

### **Primary Data Collection**

#### **Observations from the interview**

#### **Village Inn Agri Tourism**



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iculties (AARF)

nal e-Journal - Included in the International Serial Directories.

- **About the Owner:** Mr. Sunil Mankikar was not a farmer by profession. His project is a combination of dairy tourism, medico tourism and agro tourism. He was working with Income Tax Department for 25 years and after the retirement he bought a farm of 30 acres near Wardha and settled down in a village. The project started in the year 2008. Being a progressive farmer he does not hesitate to experiment and help other in developing new ideas. He has developed a “Black Variety” of guava. He got idea of starting agro tourism after watching a CD based on it.
  - Mr. Sunil Mankikar (Progressive Farmer)
  - Name of the Farm: Village in Agri Tourism
  - Address: Sr.No. 256 Umri (Meghe) Zadgaon Road, Wardha (M.S.)442001
  - Mobile: 9371519750/8275039534
  - Email: [sunilmankikar@yahoo.com](mailto:sunilmankikar@yahoo.com)
  - **Local Scenario:** Though he was an outsider settled in the Umri village, his helpful nature is welcomed by the villager. His genuinity in efforts and love for agriculture has earned him respect. Many farmers from the nearby villages come to him for agro tourism project consultancy.
  - **Economic Implications:** As agriculture is at the base of all the activities he has experimented a lot on agriculture. His innovative ideas are major attraction for the tourists. He has gulkand processing unit at the farm. A diary unit consisting of 40 cows produces various milk products like mawa and curds. Medicinal plants also are major attraction. Major income is earned from agricultural activities. All the people working at the farm; processing plant and agro tourism are local so they also get trained.
  - **Seasonality:** Summers are pretty extreme and tourists hesitate to come in the month of April and May leaving these two months rest of the year the tourist flow is pretty steady.
  - **Guest Facilities:** Ozone zone created by planting. Tulsi plants in half acre. Visitors can enjoy organic fruits and vegetables grown at the plant. Traditional rural games like lagori, Vittidandu, and bhovra can be enjoyed. Also there is 2 acres of play ground where football can be played. Boating in the river and campfire at the night is arranged. Simple home cooked food and clean, neat accommodation can be offered to the guest. A special package for family of 4 is designed at Rs. 5000/- for overnight stay including meals, accommodation and transport to the farm from Wardha railway station. It is well connected by road and railway. Water and electricity supply is available.
- Places of interest like Tadoba Wildlife sanctuary (Tiger Reserve), Mahatma Gandhi Sevagram and Anandwan (Baba Amte) can be visited by the tourist.

- **Marketing Strategy:** Would like to explore new market segments by offering new product. For example he is trying to attract Ayurveda college students to study medicinal plants he has planted in the farm. Both day and overnight visitors are aimed at. Families, senior citizens, school trips are majorly targeted. He is a member of MART. So appears on the list of MARTs website. But does not want aggressive marketing.
- **Guest Segments Aimed:** Families, senior citizens, school and college children. Only male groups are not encouraged.
- His project is a profitable venture and farmers around the region do come for guidance to Mr. Mankikar.
  - Support of family members is required for success.
- **Major Motto behind Starting the Project:** To set the trend of agro tourism in Vidharbha region. In today's complex and hectic life style has taken peace away from people. People have to go back to their roots and connect themselves to traditional village life style. Urbanization has made nature and serenity a luxury which agro tourism provides to the tourists.
- **Location Advantage:** Located on Zadgaon Road at Umri (Meghe), Wardha. It is About 5 kilometers from Wardha Railway station and just 2 kilometers from Mumbai Highway.



**Places of interest around are,**

1. Mahatma Gandhi's Residence "Sevagram" 16 kilometers.
2. Vinoba Bhave's Famous Pavnar Aashram 12 kilometers.
3. Geetai Mandir 7 kilometers.
4. Shanti Stup 7 kilometers.
5. Magan Sangrahalaya 4.5 kilometers.
6. Hindi Vishvavidyalaya 4 kilometers.
7. Tadoba wildlife Sanctuary (Project Tiger) and,
8. Anandvan ( Baba Amte)

Facilities like Drinking Water, Electricity, Road transport etc. are available.

Umri (Meghe) village at just 2 kilometers away from the farm.

## Analysis of Primary Data Collection

Is the agricultural activity totally dependent on traditional water sources and monsoon?

**Table No. 4**

Survey location of Farm	Traditional	Modern	Only monsoon
Wardha	Canal Water	Drip irrigation	No

Farm crops, fruits and any special attractions offered to the guests at the farm?

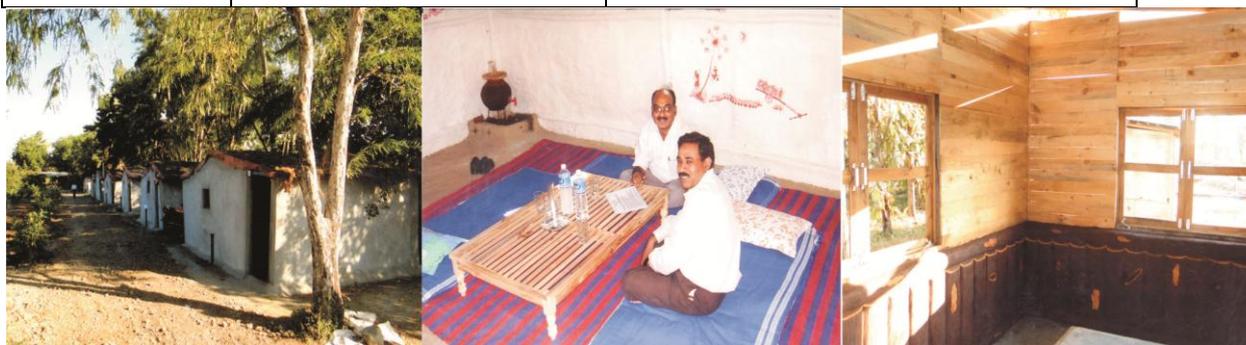
**Table No. 5**

Core agriculture products	Allied agriculture activities	Value addition. Any other attraction
Fruit and vegetables (organic farming)	Dairy, tulsi plantation, Gulkand Processing Plant	Tadoba wildlife sanctuary, river for boating, Anandwan (Baba Amte)

Year of establishment of the project, number of guests accommodated and owners' background.

**Table No. 6**

Year of establishment	Number of guests that can be accommodated	Owners background
2008 * Member of MART	30 people for overnight stay. Build rooms	Mr. Sunil Mankikar worked in income tax dept., for 25 years and then entered into farming



Is it economically viable?

**Table No. 7**

<b>Number of Family Members</b>	<b>Number of family members depending on agriculture</b>	<b>Any other occupation</b>
6	4	Son is an engineer

In village inn agro tourism, if one family hires a shank which fetches revenue of (Rs.500 rent for shank, food Rs 150/- per head, entertainment and allied activity Rs. 50/- per head) Rs. 1300 to Rs. 1500 for a family of 4. In season at least 3-4 families visit in a day, which gives revenue of Rs. 5000/- per day. Also the guests buy fresh farm products which add to the revenue. In the year 2009-10 the revenue generated was Rs. 18, 60,000/-. Excluding the salaries, maintenance, food bills and other expenses of Rs. 9,00,000/- in a year the profit earned was Rs. 9,60,000/-.

In the year 2010-11 he is aiming a revenue of Rs. 25, 00,000/-.

#### **Other economic implication in the region due to tourism and reasons**

- Though major income is earned from agriculture the innovative ways of the owner like gulkand processing, dairy (and dairy products) adds to the income as well as tourist attraction.
- Local people are employed for all farm activities and are also trained to operate dairy and other processing units at the farm.

**Table No. 8**

<b>Training for local people in various skills</b>	<b>Owner benefits</b>	<b>Training in agro tourism activity</b>
yes	yes	yes

**Development of other agro tourism projects in the vicinity of the surveys and help by the owner to the other farmers to develop such projects.**

**Table No. 9**

<b>Did the owner guide other farmers to start agro tourism</b>	<b>If not guiding reasons</b>
Farmers around the vicinity come to Mr. Mankikar for guidance	-----

**What is the guest segments aimed? Criteria for guest segment selection?**

**Table No. 10**

Guest segments catered			Criteria for guest segment selection		
Families, senior citizens, school and college children. Also trying to attract Ayurveda college students through botanical garden			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only male groups are not encouraged.</li> <li>• Guests should not cause nuisance to local people.</li> </ul>		
Senior Citizen	Families	Segments Ladies	Aimed School/ College Children	Any Other	Banned segment
√	√	-	√	Ayurveda College Students	Only Male group

**What is the marketing strategy followed by agro tourism farm owners? How do they get repeat customers?**

**Table No. 11**

Marketing Strategy	Reason	How do they get repeat customers?
Member of MART. So gets booking through MART. Also would like to explore new and varied guest segments. But not doing aggressive marketing.	Does not want tourists to hinder agriculture activity.	Gets repeat customers through services provided.

\* MART: Maharashtra State Agro and Rural Tourism Development Corporation Ltd.

**How does seasonality affect agro tourism? How do farmers cope up with it? Which are peak and low seasons?**

**Table No. 12**

Agro Tourism Peak Season	Low season	Strategy to cope with season and seasonality
June to March	April – May	Located in Nagpur region the summers are extremely hot and people hesitate to come in summer. Leaving the summer months which is low season tourist traffic is uniform. Does not bother about seasonality.

## **Conclusion:**

In today's complex and hectic urban life style has taken peace away from life. People need to go back to their roots and connect themselves to traditional village lifestyle. Everybody likes to be close to nature but opportunities are few. Visiting a tourist destination does not give immediate contact with the nature. Agro-tourism provides this golden opportunity for the tourists.

In case of Village Inn Agro Tourism the **development is in harmony with the rural and cultural background of the region**. The owner who was not by profession a farmer neither a localite has laid the foundation of agro tourism in Vidharbha region.

The development of agro tourism in the village has encouraged other farmer to start the project. As agriculture is at the base of all the activities planned it is beneficial to the local community directly. Employment generation for local people is seen and skill development is enhanced at local level.

Agro tourism puts less pressure on the local amenities and infrastructure as it is not on a large scale. Also local culture is preserved as the guest becomes a part of the host family for a short duration of his stay. The construction material used and the pattern of guest accommodation are reflecting the harmony with the local life style.

### **The socio -cultural and environmental impact on the destination is positive as**

It does not allow more number of guests at any given time. The capacity of the farm is to accommodate is 30 people. So the guest traffic does not put pressure on the local amenities.

The guest segments aimed are mostly families, school and college children and senior citizens. They are the safe segments as per the owner as they are not nuisance creating guests. Only male guests are strictly banned as they tend to be trouble shooters (Mostly by drinking alcohol). The owner takes care that the local community is not disturbed by the tourism activity at the farm.

Non vegetarian food and alcohol is strictly banned at the farm. Guests are encouraged to participate in the daily activities at the farm. This encourages responsible tourism. Guests are treated as the family members and thus they become a part of the local culture.

Indignity of the crops and vegetables is retained as the guests are interested in buying farm fresh products. The farming is totally organic farming. No pesticides or chemicals are used in growing farm products. Use of plastic is banned at the farm.

This form of tourism also gives economic sustainability to the farmers as the income from the agro tourism supports the farmer in times of agricultural adversities. It also gives farmer a

chance to earn respect for his profession by acquainting the urban tourists about his hard work. It also gives guests a chance to back to their roots and enjoy a nostalgic feeling.

### **Economic feasibility of the project**

In village inn agro tourism, if one family hires a shank which fetches revenue of (Rs.500 rent for shank, food Rs 150/- per head, entertainment and allied activity Rs. 50/- per head) Rs. 1300 to Rs. 1500 for a family of 4. In season at least 3-4 families visit in a day which gives revenue of Rs. 5000/- per day. Also the guests buy fresh farm products which add to the revenue. In the year 2009-10 the revenue generated was Rs. 18, 60,000/-. Excluding the salaries, maintenance, food bills and other expenses of Rs. 9,00,000/- in a year the profit earned was Rs. 9,60,000/-.

In the year 2010-11 he is aiming a revenue of Rs. 25, 00,000/-.

### **Other economic implication in the region due to tourism and reasons**

- Though major income is earned from agriculture the innovative ways of the owner like gulkand processing, dairy (and dairy products) adds to the income as well as tourist attraction.
- Local people are employed for all farm activities and are also trained to operate dairy and other processing units at the farm.

Agro tourism can develop a destination in a sustainable manner. It improves financial condition of farmer by additional income at low investment cost. It also gives farmer a chance to earn respect for his profession.

Hypothesis 1 is accepted based on the conclusion, agro tourism puts less pressure on the local amenities and infrastructure as it is not on a large scale. The capacity of the farm is to accommodate is 30 people. So the guest traffic does not put pressure on the local amenities.

Hypothesis 2 is also accepted based on the conclusion, employment generation for local people is seen and skill development is enhanced at local level. The development of agro tourism in the village has encouraged other farmer to start the project.

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