



AGRO -TOURISM BUSINESS IN MAHARASHTRA

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Abstract

Agro tourism is complimentary to traditional agricultural activities. It is an opportunity for Farmers to use the available resources in a diversified and innovative way. It creates a win –Situation to farmers as well as tourists. Farmers earn better from innovative use of available Resources and the tourist can enjoy village life and nature in a affordable prices. Not only is that, the Villages also benefited due to the development of agro tourism.

Tourism has great capacity to generate large-scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled. Today the concept of traditional tourism has been changed. Some new areas of the tourism have been emerged like Agro-Tourism. Promotion of tourism would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the people.

In 20th century the concept of agro tourism was developed. With increasing urbanization people need the change in routine life and thus short duration and cheap tourism products are demanded by people. At the same time it is an opportunity for rural people for diversified activities to complement their earnings through farming.

Agro-tourism is an innovative agricultural activity related to tourism and agriculture both. It has a great capacity to create additional source of income and employment opportunities to the farmers. Maharashtra is one of the major tourist centers in the India and there is large scope and great potential to develop agro-tourism.

Key words – Concept of Agro- tourism, Benefits, Potentials, problems and challenges of Agro-tourism.

Introduction

Maharashtra has diverse culture and geography which provide ample and unlimited scope for the growth of Agro tourism business. There are an increasing number of tourists preferring non-urban tourist spot. Hence, there is scope for promotion of non-urban tourist spots in interior villages by establishing Agro tourism centers. Tourism is a pleasure giving activity in which a tourist spent for visiting the place and someone earn money. Tourism consist many innovative concepts like rural tourism, health tourism, eco-tourism, adventure tourism, agro-tourism, religious tourism, monsoon tourism etc. Agro-tourism is the specialized area of tourism. It is related to innovative agriculture and tourism (Service) sector. As per MTDC in the coming years, agro- tourism would evolve as one of the fastest growing segments of service sector of economy. It has great capacity to generate large-scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled farmers especially in Maharashtra.

Objectives of the Study

The present paper discuss the Agro tourism Business with the following objectives-

1. To study the Concept of agro-tourism.
2. To identify Potentials of agro-tourism in Maharashtra.
3. To study the problems and Challenges of agro tourism industry in Maharashtra

Methodology of the Study

The present study is based on the secondary data. The data has been procured from various sources like research paper, newspaper, Paper Articles, websites and books, reports. Some data has been furnished from the website of the Agro tourism. Also the personal observations during visits to agro tourism centers are instrumental in the present study.

Concept of Agro-Tourism

Agro tourism is the latest concept in the Indian tourism industry, which normally occurs on farms. It gives you the opportunity to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with rural life, taste the local genuine food and get familiar with the various farming tasks during the visit. It provides the welcome escape from the daily hectic life in the peaceful rural environment.

Agro Tourism is an innovative agricultural activity related to Tourism and agriculture both. It has great capacity to create additional source of income and employment opportunity to the farmers. Maharashtra is one of the most tourist centers in India and there is large scope and great potential to develop agro tourism.

A term 'Agro-Tourism' is a new face of tourism. An agro-tourism is farm based business that is open to the public. These specialized agro-tourism destinations generally offer things to see, things to do, and produce or gifts to buy, and are open to the public.

Agro-tourism is defined as "Travel that combines agricultural or rural settings with products of agricultural operations – all within a tourism experience".

Agricultural tourism is the holidays concept of visiting working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agri business operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. In general agro-tourism is the practice of attracting travelers or visitors to an area or areas used primarily for agricultural purposes.

Agro- Tourism and Eco-Tourism are closely related to each other. Eco-Tourism provides by the tour companies but, in the agro-tourism farmers offer tours to their agriculture farm and providing entertainment, education and fun-filled experiences for the urban peoples.

Agro-tourism is a way of sustainable tourist development and multi-activity in rural areas through which the visitor has the opportunity to get aware with agricultural areas, agricultural occupations, local products, traditional food and the daily life of the rural people, as well as the cultural elements and traditions. Moreover, this activity brings visitors closer to nature and rural activities in which they can participate, be entertained and feel the pleasure of touring.

Benefits of Agro -Tourism Business Centers

Agro-Tourism has the potential to change the economic face of traditional agriculture. The benefits of agro-tourism development are manifold. It would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the farmers and rural people. Some of the benefits are following:-

1. Employment opportunities to the farmers including farm family members and youth
2. Additional income source for the farmers to protect against income fluctuation.
3. Cultural transformation between urban and rural peoples including social moral values
4. Farmers can improve their standard of living due to the contacts with urban peoples.
5. Benefits to the urban peoples, they can understand about the rural life and know about the agricultural activities.
6. It support for rural and agricultural development process.
7. Help to the reduce burden on the other traditional tourist centers.

Agro -Tourism Business Potential in Maharashtra

Maharashtra is the third largest state of India, both in area and population. It is located on the west coast of India with a 720 km long coastline along the green Konkan region. Nestled in the Western Ghats and the Sahyadri mountain range are several hill stations and water reservoirs with semi-evergreen and deciduous forests. There are many tourist centers in Maharashtra which are the supporting natural environment for the agro-tourism centers in Maharashtra.

Although, Maharashtra has a total 22368 thousand hecter area under the agriculture and 36122 thousands of livestock (cow, beffelows,goats etc.). Principal crops include rice, Jowar, Bajra, wheat, pulses, turmeric, onions, cotton, sugarcane and several oil seeds including groundnut, sunflower and soyabean. The state has huge areas, under fruit cultivation of which mangoes, bananas, grapes, and oranges etc.

Maharashtra is blessed with a rich and diversified cultural heritage. The state has several Communities belonging to different religions, and a number of festivities colours the culture of Maharashtra with the spirit of exuberance. Some of the popular festivals that are celebrated in Maharashtra are Diwali, Ganesh Chaturthi, Gudhi Padwa, Dasara, Nag Panchami, Gokul Ashtmi, Narali Pournima, Pola, Makar Sankranti, Banganga Festival and Holi etc. More than 4.11 (43 percent of total) core populations is living the urban areas of the Maharashtra, which will can becomes a customers' of the agro-tourist centers are located in the rural areas. Maharashtra abounds in numerous tourist attractions ranging from ancient cave temples, unspoiled beaches, ancient forts and monuments, forests and wildlife, unique hill stations, pilgrimage, centers, and a rich tradition of festivals, art and culture. About 25 more such locations have been identified in Maharashtra as rural agro-tourist destinations.

Economic capital of India Mumbai is state capital of Maharashtra. It has connected railheads, roadways and many more state highways. There is an enough road and rail connectivity in urban – rural areas to travel in rural areas. The food served for the lunch in the Maharashtra usually Jowar, Bajari, fish, chapatis, rice, varan, Pithle, papad, lonche bhaji, koshimbeer.etc. Maharashtra region bounds in numerous tourist attraction ranging from ancient temples, Beaches, Waterfalls, ancient forts and monuments, forests, unique hill station and a rich tradition of festivals, art and culture. Various locations have been identified in this region as agro-tourist destination. Some of the popular folk dances in rural Maharashtra are Lavni, Dhangari Gaja, Povadas, Koli dance, and Tamasha. Culture of Maharashtra is very glorious with a great variety. It gives a unique identity to the rural

Maharashtra. This region diverse Agro climate conditions, diverse crops, people deserts, mountains which provide scope for promotion of all season. Thus, Maharashtra region has agro-tourism potential. There is potential to develop three to five centers per thahasil

Some following notable factors are helpful to the agro-tourism in Maharashtra.

- Tourist places are already exist to support Agro-Tourism
- Good communication and transport facilities
- Green house cultivation of long stem cut flowers, vegetables, fruits etc.
- State has 13 lakh ha area under horticulture Maharashtra now is a major horticulture state.
- Maharashtra is already established as one of the top tourist destination in the world
- Maharashtra has major producer of fruit, spices, medicinal and aromatic plant allowed under horticulture in India.
- There are an increasing number of tourists preferring non-urban tourist spots
- Maharashtra has diverse Agro-climatic conditions, diverse crops, people, deserts, mountains, which provide scope for promotion of all season, multi-location agro-tourism.

Problems of Agro-Tourism in Maharashtra

The Maharashtra has a greater potential of the development of the agro-tourism centers due to the good natural and climatic conditions. Agro tourism in Maharashtra is developing very fast in Maharashtra. But there are some problems/challenges in the process of agro-tourism development in the Maharashtra state.

Some problems and challenges are follows;

1. Lake of perfect knowledge about the agro-tourism
2. Weak communication skill and lake of commercial approach of the small farmers
3. Lake of capital to develop basic infrastructure for the agro-tourism
4. Dependence on stake holders involved in tourism development on local and regional level.
5. Ignorance of the farmers regarding to the type of activities
6. Presence of unorganized sector in the Agro-Tourism industry.
6. Ensuring hygiene and basic requirements considering urban visitors
7. Lakhs of farmers have small size holding, low quality land and little or no access to credit or Irrigation. Have to negotiate with consistent drought.
8. Entrepreneurial environment in Maharashtra

9. Quality and complexity of services

CONCLUSIONS

Economic restructuring has created an environment in which economies have to adjust to maintain their social and economic viability. The change forces demand operations at global level that has brought change in the thinking and use of the nature and the rural resources. These changes have generated new ideas as well as approaches to leisure and recreation. These ideas and approaches have paved path towards rural and agro tourism development.

Maharashtra has a great potential to the development of agro-tourism, because of natural conditions and different types of agro products as well as variety of rural traditions, festivals. More than 45 percent of population is live in the urban areas and they want enjoy rural life and to know about the rural life. It is a good opportunity to develop an agro-tourism business in Maharashtra. But there is a problem of low awareness about this business in the farmer and problem of the finance and proper view in the farmers of the Maharashtra.

Hence, the agriculture departments of the districts', Agriculture Universities should try to give orientation about it and provide some innovative ideas regarding to the Agro-Tourism. The government should try to provide optimum financial aids to the agro-tourism activities in the Maharashtra by the grants and institutional finance. Bank should provide optimum financial help for the agro-tourism activities in the Maharashtra. Union of the agro-tourism service providers is also another need of these farmers which helps to the agricultural tourism network in the India including Maharashtra. In spite of growing Agro- tourism, the fact remains that the government support through appropriate and conducive policies for Agro -tourism development is lacking and government should give priority to Agro-tourism business in Maharashtra through appropriate policy measures.

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