International Multidisciplinary Research Journal





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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

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ISSN No.2231-5063

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Golden Research Thoughts



AGRITOURISM: FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN KONKAN REGION OF MAHARASHTRA.

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ABSTRACT:

ndia is a country of villages and about 50% of the villages have very poor socio-economic conditions. According to 2011 Census 70% population is living in rural areas in villages. Since the dawn of independence, concerted efforts have been made to ameliorate the living standard of rural masses. Individuals in provincial regions ought to have an indistinguishable personal satisfaction from is appreciated by individuals living in sub urban and urban zones. Facilitate there are falling impacts of neediness, unemployment, poor and deficient foundation in rustic ranges on urban focuses bringing on ghettos and weighty social and financial pressures showing in monetary hardship and urban destitution. Henceforth supportable Rural Development which is worried with monetary



development and social equity, change in the expectation for everyday comforts of the country individuals by giving satisfactory and quality social administrations and least fundamental needs gets to be distinctly basic. The present technique of country *improvement predominantly* concentrates on inventive projects of wage and independent work. Tourism in rural areas is a very important factor, which can positively influence regional development. Tourism is an important sector of the economy and contributes significantly in the country's GDP as well as Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE). Tourism has the potential to not only be the economy driver, but also become an effective tool for poverty alleviation and ensuring growth with equity. Tourism has great capacity to generate large scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled. Today the concept of Conventional tourism has been changed. Some new forms of the tourism have been emerged. Agro-Tourism is one of the form of Rural Tourism which is 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 framers. Agro-Tourism however must be supported and conditions for its positive development have to be created, its strategic management and strategies of individual entrepreneurs in rural tourism are very important.

Key Words: Agro-Tourism, Employment,

Available online at www.lsrj.in

Rural Tourism, Rural Areas, Sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

"India lives in its towns" - Mahatma Gandhi. Truly and from the social, monetary and political points of view the announcement is legitimate even today. As per 2011 Census 70% populace is living in country regions. India is a nation of towns and around half of the towns have exceptionally poor financial conditions. Since the beginning of freedom, purposeful endeavors have been made to enhance the expectation for everyday comforts of provincial masses. Individuals in country regions ought to have an indistinguishable personal satisfaction from is delighted in by individuals living in sub urban and urban territories. Encourage there are falling impacts of destitution, unemployment, poor and insufficient framework in country territories on urban focuses bringing on ghettos and weighty social and financial pressures showing in monetary hardship and urban neediness. Subsequently manageable Rural Development which is worried with monetary development and social equity, change in the expectation for everyday comforts of the provincial individuals by giving satisfactory and quality social administrations and least fundamental needs gets to be distinctly basic. The present procedure of country advancement for the most part spotlights on neediness lightening, better occupation openings, arrangement of fundamental luxuries and foundation offices through imaginative projects of wage and independent work.

Sustainable development is based on three pillars i.e. sustainable economic growth, social growth and environmental protection. Goals for the development of the region are set on productivity and competitiveness with the use of proactive, planned and strategic realization. Strategic development of rural area is one of the basic task. Strategic planning is therefore the main tool for the social-economic development. The plan is a key document and there are many issues that positively or negatively influence such strategic plan. Besides strategic planning, extremely important is the support of small and medium size enterprises as well as the possibility of networking of such entrepreneurs. They create and stabilize new jobs and by this they influence prosperity and living standard of regions. Such subjects can be also entrepreneurs in tourism. Tourism in rural areas is a very important factor, which can positively influence regional development.

"Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" (UNWTO Definition). Tourism is an important sector of the economy and contributes significantly in the country's GDP as well as Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE). With its backward and forward linkages with other sectors of the economy, like transport, construction, handicrafts, manufacturing, horticulture, agriculture, etc., tourism has the potential to not only be the economy driver, but also become an effective tool for poverty alleviation and ensuring growth with equity. Tourism has great capacity to generate large scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled. Today the concept of Conventional tourism has been changed. Some new forms of the tourism have been emerged which are classified under Alternative Tourism. Agro-Tourism is one of the form of Alternative Tourism which is 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 framers. Agro-Tourism however must be supported and conditions for its positive development have to be created, its strategic management and strategies of individual entrepreneurs in rural tourism are very important.

OBJECTIVES:

This paper is based on the following main objectives.

1.To understand the concept of Agro-Tourism as a specialized form of rural tourism.

2.To study impact of Agro-Tourism on farm families and rural area for sustainable development.

3.To understand the strength and opportunities for agritourism in rural environment of konkan region.

METHODOLOGY:

The scope of the study is limited to understand the concept and applicability of Agro-Tourism for sustainable development of rural area. The study includes the benefits and problems as well as it includes appropriate framework for the development of Agro-Tourism and SWOT analysis of the Agro-Tourism business. The present study on Agro-Tourism was based on Secondary data. The data collected from related articles, research papers, reports and 11th Plan Document of the Government of India. The data also collected from different websites related to the Tourism development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

While measuring the role of Agro-Tourism for sustainable rural development it is necessary that, the concept of such kind of business should be known by the masses. For this purpose it is very important to elaborate the concept of Agro-Tourism over the conventional form of tourism.

AGRO-TOURISM AS A FORM OF RURAL TOURISM.

Tourism is combined from mass and option tourism. Mass tourism is described by expansive number of individuals looking for pertinent to their way of life occasions in well known resort goals. Elective tourism is some of the time alluded to as "unique intrigue tourism" or "mindful tourism" and generally interpreted as meaning option types of tourism. Elective Tourism is a type of tourism that are reliable with common, social and group qualities and which permit both hosts and visitors to appreciate positive and advantageous cooperation and shared encounters (Eadington and Smith 1992).

There are three influential drivers of the movement to find alternative forms of tourism.

• The first is the recognition of the negative impacts of conventional tourism on the environmental and socio-culture of the destinations.

• The second is the appearance of development ideologies, which mostly see the disadvantages of 'growth oriented development', modernization, urbanization and capitalism.

• The last is humanitarian considerations and the recognition of the rights of local populations to manage changes in their communities.

Alternative tourism can be seen both as a vision of the future and as an adaptation to mass tourism. Using these criteria, alternative tourism exceeds purely a concern for the physical environment that typifies Agro-Tourism, to include including economic, social and cultural considerations. Thus alternative tourism can be viewed as being synonymous with the concept of sustainable tourism development (Holden, 2000). Forms of Alternative Tourism aim to shift away from mainstream tourism and towards Responsible and Sustainable forms of tourism.

Rural tourism is essentially an activity which takes place in the countryside. It is multi-faceted and may entail farm/agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism, and eco-tourism. As against conventional tourism, rural tourism has certain typical characteristics like; it is an experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated, it is predominantly in the natural environment, it meshes with seasonality and local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and traditions. Rural tourism has many potential benefits for rural areas (Frederick, 1992).

CONCEPT OF AGRO-TOURISM:

In the most recent 25 years of the twentieth century the term Agritourism showed up in worldwide writing. There exists a parallel word Agro-Tourism. The two terms have a similar importance. Both terms comprises of two sections agri or agro and tourism. The prefix agri gets from the Latin expression ager which implies field while agro originates from the Greek expression agros, which implies soil, while tourism is a type of dynamic entertainment far from ones place of habitation that is enlivened by intellectual, recreational and sports require. The mix of prefix agri with noum tourism brought about the arrangement of new word Agro-Tourism/Agri-Tourism, that implies human visitor action whose point is to acclimate oneself with cultivating action and amusement in a farming domain.

Agrotourism can be characterized as a "scope of exercises, administrations and courtesies gave by agriculturists and country individuals to pull in traveler to their region so as to create additional salary for their business".

Virginia law defines agritourism as "any activity car¬ried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farm¬ing, wineries, ranching, historical, cultural, harvest-your-own activities, or natural activities and attractions. An activity is an agritourism activity whether or not the participant paid to participate in the activity" (Code of Virginia).

Agro-Tourism is a specific form of rural tourism with close relation to nature and country side of rural areas and direct relationship to agricultural activities. The differentiation between the Agro-Tourism and rural tourism is crucial. In the areas where farming production is divided and highly specialized and where it is possible to observe the close relations in the rural community, it is advisable to use the term rural tourism to Agro-Tourism. Agro-Tourism is a way of Responsible and Sustainable tourism development. This innovative activity helps to boost up the socio-economic condition of the rural area by providing employment and creating the markets for the rural products.

IMPACT OF AGRO-TOURISM ON FARM FAMILIES AND RURAL AREA:

Agro-Tourism is very important for the communities both urban and rural. It can have several positive impacts on rural community.

1) Positive Economic impact:

1.Extension of accommodation facilities, maintenance of existing production, sales of certain farm produce; contribute to the formation and development of additional markets for foodstuffs and different types of local services, such as crafts, handicraft products, and artistic metalwork.

2. Creation of employment and reduction of unemployment rates.

3.Obtaining additional sources of income for farmers (increased revenue for farmers, and thus income, may be allocated to investment outlays, e.g. construction or renovation works), which results in reduced dependence on farming, diversification of local economy, which in this way becomes less vulnerable to market fluctuations.

4.Obtaining additional income for business, communes, and local governments of a given town, associations of communes or the region.

5.Overcoming economic recession, additionally tourism is a revival factor in rural areas and the revitalization of the rural community by offering possibilities of social and economic advancement.

6.Promotion of the socio-economic development of underprivileged areas, diversification of economic activity in rural areas, creating conditions and opportunities for the development of other types of activity in rural areas.

2) Positive Social impact:

1.Gaining new skills, experiences and professions, learning foreign languages, gaining entrepreneurial skills, actualization of the rural community, formation of new capacities in tourist services, broadening one's knowledge or leaning more about one's local area, its history and attractions, encouragement of social initiatives or new opportunities for rural women.

2.Meeting new people, a possibility to make new contacts and social ties, exchange of experiences or attitudes, on the part of farmers and their guests, increased tolerance in relation to different attitudes, behavior or opinions, broadening of knowledge on the world and other people on the part of farm owners, encouragement to develop hobbies and interests.

3.A possibility to revive rural traditions, promoting respect and revival of folk traditions and culture, the development of culture in rural areas, fuller utilization and revival of certain objects in villages (community centers, sports facilities, etc.)

4.Educational functions of agritourism are connected with learning about the real world (nature, cultural heritage), which modifies specific attitudes in relation to different aspects of reality (the host and guest, a group of tourists, family); agritorurism is also a medium to express one's feeling (learning about and respect for farmers and farm produce); agritourism offers an opportunity for tourists to be creative (participation in farm work, learning a folk craft, etc.), contributes to good health (climatic conditions, food, exercise).

3) Positive Spatial and Environment impact: Since agritourism in the process of development uses elements of the natural environment, transforming them, spatial and environmental functions include the consequences of the development of agritourism for the natural and anthropogenic environments. 1.Enhanced care for the environment, nature protection, creating a friendlier environment for guests and visitors.

2.The development of local infrastructure (water supply, sewage systems, sewage treatment plants, roads, public transport, recreation facilities), which makes life in the country easier and improves the standard of living for rural populations.

3.Improved aesthetic value of houses and areas in their vicinity, care for the aesthetic value of village, houses, streets and other public spaces – aesthetic enhancement of villages.

4. The utilization of old, frequently derelict buildings (rarely used rooms, attics, whole uninhabited buildings, parts of households, farm buildings, windmills, restaurants, shops, castles, palaces, manor houses, etc.), which may contribute to the preservation of the rural cultural heritage.

5.Countering mass migration from rural areas (mainly of young and educated people) and the depopulation of rural areas.

AGRO-TOURISM RESOURCE ASSESSMENT:

The first step in starting agritourism business is to inventory agritourism assets on the farm. To set up a plan for agritourism, it is needed to know what already have that is of value. This section uses the term "assets" generically to mean resources that have potential or immediate cash value. In business, assets may be divided into two primary categories: financial assets, which refer to money in the form of cash and savings; and real assets, which refer to the value of land, equipment, machinery, labour and livestock. Among both of these are liquid assets, which are those that are likely to sell within a year. Human assets refer to the people who will offer a helping hand as paid or un-paid employees.

Farm Management specialist point out that in general each farm by its nature has free resources which are not used in the process of agricultural production such resources are free rooms, own food, free manpower resources, free space and environmental resources like landscape, clean air, water

reservoir etc, when used they give farmers an additional income. These resources can be effectively used in the Agro-Tourism. While developing Agro-Tourism at the basic level consideration of the different features of agricultural enterprise and ways they can be used for Agro-Tourism is necessary. These can be classified as natural, physical, heritage or combination of the three. Natural assets are features that occur naturally. Physical assets are tangible features or materials. Many times these assets have multiple uses. Heritage assets have some type of historical, cultural, artistic or educational significance.

STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN FOR THE AGRO-TOURISM:

As with other parts of agricultural business, it is needed to anticipate the future of agritourism business. Anticipating the future is exactly what planning is all about. The first and most essential step is a business and finance plan. Once the evaluation of assets and have a better idea of possible agritourism activities, it will need to determine where agritourism will fit into overall farm plan. Basically Agritourism is s additional income generating activity for the farmer. Deciding the role agritourism will play in farm operation will help to begin structuring business plan. As begin with the business planning process, the following fundamental questions are important:

- What service or product Agro-Tourism business provide and what needs does it fill?
- Who are the potential customers for Agro-Tourism product or service and why will they purchase it?
- How to reach potential customers?
- Where to get the financial resources to start business?

SWOT ANALYSIS OF AGRO-TOURISM BUSINESS:

Agro-Tourism is additional income generating activity for the farmer. As discussed earlier such kind of activity has a direct, indirect influence on rural community and rural area which leads to sustainable development at overall level. If proper policy frame work is designed then this Agro-Tourism activity will act as a main business for the farmers. So by considering the Agro-Tourism as a vast increasing agribusiness the SWOT analysis of rural environment is presented herewith.

Strengths:

1.Un-polluted environment;

2. Presence of protected areas;

3. High quality of natural attraction and suitable Agro-Tourism areas Rich cultural heritage and historical background (archaeological and architectural remains, handcrafts, traditional dance and music, traditional food, authentic/traditional agricultural products, custom, myths and legends, festivals and musical events etc);

4. Favorable climate conditions that extend the tourist season up to 12 months;

5. The richness of flora and fauna (birds, turtles, wild donkeys):

6.Low-density of population in the majority of the countryside a sound basis for setting-up relaxoriented rural vacations;

7. Hospitality of the inhabitants.

8. Number of the newly established micro and small enterprises is gradually increasing;

9. Pilot experiences for the re-vitalization of old villages positively carried out;

10. Advantages of the short transporting distances;

11.Good price/value of rural produce and catering (food/drinks) (VFM-Value For Money);

12. Existence of Government Scheme to encourage Village livelihoods.

Opportunities:

1. Development of Agro-Tourism destinations and creation of Agro-Tourism products;

2. Agro-Tourism as a tool for branding local, organic and traditional products;

3. Diversification of tourism sector in the country as well as repositioning of its tourism offer;

4.A state financial support (credits, grants, subvention) may enable many new entrepreneurs of enter in this sector;

5. Availability of substantial new funding for rural development activities from international aid;

6. Develop "tourist character "in key villages with traditional houses and/or traditional events;

7.An increasing demand for this kind of tourism products. (General trend for healthy and quality lifestyle "back to roots" concept);

8. Creation of new jobs in rural areas;

9. Integration of mass tourism and rural tourism offers new market opportunities;

10. Creation of sustainable environment;

11. Development of entrepreneurship in rural areas

12.The high tourism potential.

As rural environment is having the positive strength to develop this agri-allied enterprise some weaknesses also their which needs to be overcome to implement this additional income generating activity.

Weaknesses:

1. Poor infrastructure in some rural areas (especially electricity and water);

2. Neglected and sometimes damaged natural and cultural heritage;

3.Lack of financial resources for investments;

4. No standards for rural accommodation / services;

5.Lack of awareness and vision among national/local stakeholders (this sector is not yet being taken seriously as a business);

6.Lack of professional and skilled human capacities (especially lack of training in product development and marketing);

7.Lack of knowledge about new "know how" related to the sector (event management, customer service, sales);

8. Unsatisfactory strategy/coordination about tourism and Agro-Tourism;

9. Poor offer of rural tourism in overall country tourism product and lack of product image;

10.Lack of tools for marketing and branding high quality/typical rural produce;

11. Traditional craft/souvenirs often not well organized nor promoted;

12.Very limited amount of organic and traditional food products;

13. Lack of public transportation facility in rural areas

14.Lack of land planning;

Threats:

1. Increasing pressure on the environment (quarries, water pollution, new Modern-style houses next to traditional ones, garbage waste);

2. Dominating development of mass tourism products in many areas;

3.Lack of pro-active approaches and dependence on "outside" action (e.g. donors) as well as investment opportunities;

4.Lack of intermediate structures at regional level able to foster co-operation between key players for Agro-Tourism development;

5. Tourism competition for this kind of tourism;

6.Long time needed to build a "critical mass" in the Agro-Tourism offer;

7.Underestimation of the potential of Agro-Tourism as revenue/employment generator both at national/local level;

8. Training and awareness needs to be addressed in a very short timeframe;

9. Because of the isolations, not having direct transporting opportunities;

10. The financial isolations is creating insufficient credit opportunities;

CONCLUSION:

If a proper strategic planning is done for Agro-Tourism, it could bring lot of benefit to our society. It could be a sustainable revenue generating project for rural development. It can help inflow to resources from urban to the rural economy. It can prevent migration of rural people to urban. Both short term and long term planning, implementing and monitoring are vital in avoiding damage to rural areas. Environmental management, local involvement, sound legislation, sustainable marketing and realistic planning are crucial for development of Agro-Tourism. Agro-Tourism is emerging as an important instrument for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation, employment generation, environmental regeneration and development of remote areas and advancement of woman and other disadvantaged groups in the country apart from promoting social integration and international understanding. The government should promote Agro-Tourism to ensure sustainable economic development and positive social change.

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