

18. Agrotourism and Indian Context

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Abstract:

India has enormous potential for domestic tourism. The history of domestic travel in India predates that of Indian culture. The concept behind agrotourism is easy to understand. Urban tourists visit farmers' homes, live like farmers, participate in farming activities, ride tractors, fly kites, eat authentic food, dress traditionally, learn about the local way of life, enjoy folk music and dance, and purchase fresh farm produce. With a year-round source of income, the farmer greets new visitors, keeps his house and farm clean, and sells his produce for a higher price.

Farmers need to have an entrepreneurial mindset and know a few marketing strategies in order to succeed in Agrotourism, which is a business activity. India's agrotourism industry is growing at a rapid pace. Despite this, there are challenges that prevent agrotourism from growing much further.

Government should create information booths at important places of urban areas like airports, railway stations, bus stand, and many other public places. The agrotourism sector has also evolved into a tool for long-term human development, promoting economic growth, eradicating poverty, improving the environment, maintaining cultural traditions, and creating jobs. All of these factors contribute to overall development.

Keywords:

Agrotourism, Urban tourist, entrepreneurial, marketing strategies.

18.1 Introduction:

India, the largest democracy in the world and one of the oldest living civilizations, has advanced remarkably in comparison to other developing nations. India is known as the "Land of Villages" as only 35 per cent of the population lives in urban areas, whereas the majority, or 65 per cent, residing in rural areas. Some villages are close to towns and major cities. Over a million square kilometers of breathtaking scenery are habitat to India's incredible diversity of history and culture, which runs from the ancient Gangetic Kingdoms to the present day. Due to the presence of lakes, rivers, hills, mountains, paddy fields, and fruit orchards, the majority of the villages have beautiful scenery. Urban tourists, engaged in the hectic lifestyle of today, are always drawn to the natural beauty, historical landmarks, tranquillity, and peaceful surroundings. Therefore, India has enormous potential for domestic tourism. The history of domestic travel in India predates that of Indian culture.

A rural community has the capacity, means, and opportunity to capitalize on the expanding tourism sector. Effective planning, development, and management of the tourism industry at all governmental levels, in collaboration with the private sector, will strengthen the nation's natural treasures and cultural heritage while generating favourable economic outcomes, such as increased employment and income prospects, particularly in rural areas. Agriculture represents the "True Culture of India" not just an agricultural business. Agriculture is the primary sector in rural India. The country's rural areas need to be revitalized through creative agricultural initiatives that will benefit farmers and rural residents. Agrotourism is a sustainable way to develop rural areas where agriculture is boosted by tourism, offering farmers more options to explore and ultimately, rejuvenating rural areas of India. The promotion of agrotourism centers can be a means of providing farmers with an additional source of income. Villagers will have enough alternative opportunities for employment, which might reduce their tendency to leave their native and improve the socioeconomic conditions of rural India.

18.2 Concept of Agrotourism:

The concept behind agrotourism is easy to understand. Agrotourism is a concept made popular in India by Pandurang Taware. The farmers associated with his venture say it has given a boost to their regular income. Urban tourists visit farmer's homes, live like farmers, participate in farming activities, ride tractors, fly kites, eat authentic food, dress traditionally, learn about the local way of life, enjoy folk music and dance, and purchase fresh farm produce. With a year-round source of income, the farmer greets new visitors, keeps his house and farm clean, and sells his produce for a higher price. As the farmer cleans his house, the tourist huts, and his farm to draw in more visitors, a steady improvement in the state of hygiene is apparent. It is a place where one feels at home but still in harmony with the rural way of life. It is difficult to see a farm being the primary attraction for tourists. However, the product's worth can be increased to create the attraction.

The concept of agrotourism must be seen in every aspect. It gives the visitor at the place a sense of meaning in addition to enjoyment from being away from everyday activities. Maintaining an agriculture farm with supplementary enterprises has been the motto at each center.

Certain centers have dairy, poultry, and horticulture farms. Other activities include kite flying, riding a bullock cart, riding a tractor, visiting temples, visiting sugar cane, cashew, and other factories, visiting local museums, bird watching, experiencing traditional clothing, eating ethnic food, making pottery, harvesting, tilling the soil, playing games in the country, learning about crops in the field, organic farming, living in huts with rural-style architecture, being open to the sky at night, buying fresh produce directly from farmers, buying handmade goods from local artisans like bullock carts and Godhadi, taking a nighttime or early morning walk in a nearby village, and enjoying a bonfire, traditional folk songs and artwork display are some of the points of interest at various centers. The tourists gradually develop respect and admiration for the farmers as a result, and after experiencing the vulnerable state brought about by the lack of these resources, they can start using agricultural produce and other basics like water judiciously.



Figure 18.1: Concept of Agrotourism

An innovative form of agriculture that combines tourism with agriculture is called agrotourism. It has a significant potential to give farmers new work options and sources of revenue. The nation's first state to develop and promote agrotourism is Maharashtra. In a nutshell, agrotourism is the meeting point of agriculture and tourism. More precisely put, agrotourism is a type of business venture that combines agricultural production and/or processing with tourism to attract tourists to a farm, ranch, or other agricultural enterprise with the intention of amusing and/or educating them while making money for the farm owner.

Through the introduction of Agriculture Tourism to communities, Agrotourism Development Corporation of India (ATDC) is expanding the scope of traditional tourism strategies. Since its inception in 2005, the ATDC strategy has expanded quickly throughout rural Maharashtra, reaching over 200 villages in the last few years. This has drawn the interest of farmers and tourism professionals in the region. From its inception at the Baramati Agri Tourism Trust to its expansion to the Agri Tourism Centre in *Palshiwadi*

Village and other 700 centres, the initiative has successfully drawn in 80 lac tourists, of which 5 lakhs were foreign visitors from approximately 20 countries. Training and advice were provided to these 700 farmers in Maharashtra so they could begin promoting agritourism on their farms. This gave them more motivation to serve the tourists more effectively and efficiently while also naturally making more of an effort to raise farm productivity. In order to act as an umbrella organization for all of these centers, ATDC plans to expand its base over the next five years to include centers across India. Positive changes will be made to the facilities at each center, and careful implementation of guidance and training programs is required. The primary sector will be seen as the one that contributes the most and creates the most jobs, which will alter how we see our fellow farmers.

18.3 Definition of Agrotourism:

Farmers are looking to diversify and boost profitability, and one area that is gaining prominence is agrotourism. Agritourism, which combines agriculture with tourism, offers new revenue streams to producers but also raises possible issues and regulatory challenges.

Agrotourism is the practice of tourists or visitors coming to a farm to have an intimate and exclusive experience with agriculture (TeamMahuli, 2020).

Farmers can use it as a way to increase and diversify their revenue (ORCA).

Agrotourism includes a broad range of activities, including hospitality, education about agriculture, direct-to-consumer sales, and leisure (Wikipedia, 2023).

18.3.1 Scope of Agri-Tourism:

- 1. An affordable entry point:** Travel, tourism, lodging, and entertainment are all reasonably priced, which expands the potential for tourism.
- 2. Urban people's curiosity with the farming sector and way of life:** Villages and agriculture are integral parts of agri-tourism, which can satiate the curiosity of the urban population by offering opportunities to rediscover the diverse rural lifestyle.
- 3. Resilient family-friendly recreational pursuits:** Through rural festivities, games, cuisine, and attire.
- 4. Finding comfort in a lifestyle that embraces nature:** Agrotourism is naturally peaceful and pleasant.
- 5. A sense of nostalgia for their rural upbringing:** For visitors, visiting the farm feels like going back home.
- 6. Agrotourism's educational value:** It disseminates information on agriculture science.

18.3.2 Significance of Agro Tourism:

1. Agro Tourism provides an alternative revenue stream for farmers in areas where agriculture provides limited opportunity for additional incomes for families.
2. It boosts the status of rural living and generates employment directly.
3. It provides an opportunity for urban tourists to take a break from their busy schedule and reconnect with their roots.

4. It provides visitors an overview of the village atmosphere, regional food, culture, and artwork.
5. It can improve the standard of living for locals.
6. It is a sustainable form of tourism.
7. It strengthens the relationship between the guest and host by expecting active engagement from the visitor rather than a passive observer.

18.3.3 Who Can Set Up Agri-Tourism Centers:

- Individual Farmers
- Organic farmer
- A farmer engaged in any agri-business
- Agricultural Co-operative Societies
- Agricultural Colleges
- Agricultural Universities
- Agricultural Science and Research Centers in the State
- Farmers Partnership Institutions
- *Grampanchayats*
- Non-government organizations,
- Any company

18.4 Requirements of Agro-Tourism Centres:

Researchers have determined what the agro tourism center must have as a minimum requirement. The farmer or farmers must have the following essential amenities and infrastructure on the farm to start agro tourism

➤ **Infrastructure:**

- Accommodations options in the same locations or partnerships with nearby hotels.
- Farmhouse, which provides all needed amenities including a comfortable, natural appearance and feel.
- Abundant resources in the field of agriculture, specifically plants and water.
- Cooking utensils for meal preparation, assuming tourist express interest.
- Emergency health treatment together with a first aid kit.
- The lake, swimming tank, or well for swimming and fishing; additionally, there are bullock carts, cattle shelter, phone facilities, etc.
- Green house, poultry farm, goat farm, emu (Ostrich bird) farm, sericulture farm.

➤ **Amenities should be provided by Agrotourism:**

- Serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner of authentic rural Indian food.
- Inform them about the customs, costumes, festivals, arts and crafts, and country life. You may even conduct a small-scale art presentation.
- Show fauna, other natural flora and waterfalls, while providing accurate information about them.

- Farmers should invite visitors to observe and take part in agricultural activities. They should also give them the chance to play rural games.
- Provide a riding area for bullock carts and horses, a water buffalo ride, and fishing in the nearby lake or ponds.
- Plan a folk-dance performance that includes *Dhangari gaja*, *Kirtana*, *Bhajan*, and other traditional tunes of bonfire.
- Depending on availability, provide fruits, corn, sugarcane, groundnuts, and other agricultural items.
- Certain agricultural goods are offered for sale to visitors.
- Must work with partner hospitals to ensure visitors.

➤ **Other facilities:**

- Provide visitors with a pollution-free atmosphere.
- Make an effort to encourage curiosity about the village's culture in order to grow the tourism industry.
- Introduce the visitors to the residents who live nearby.
- To provide entertainment, hire personnel with proper training or humorous individuals with strong communication skills.
- To provide accurate information about bus and train schedules for the benefit of tourists.

- **Location of the Agrotourism centres:** Location is most the important factor for success in the agro tourism. The location of the centre must be easy to arrive and have a good natural background. Urban tourists are interested into enjoying the nature and rural life. So, farmers should develop their centre in the rural areas which have a beautiful natural background to attract urban tourists in your farm. The place of agro tourism centre must need easily accessible by roads and railways. Tourists want to enjoy some historical and natural tourist places along with the agro tourism. Hence, the centre should be developed near of these tourist places. It is more beneficial to both tourists and farmers.



Figure 18.2: Location of The Agro Tourism Centers

18.5 Benefits to Agrotourism:

- India has enormous potential to grow agritourism because agriculture is the country's primary industry.
- For many small farms to survive, agricultural tourism has become crucial.
- Young people and agricultural family members have employment prospects for farmers.
- Agritourist activities offer a supplementary revenue source and can take place at times of the year when crops may not be in season.
- An additional revenue stream to support farmer's complaints against income volatility.
- Cultural shift involving social moral standards between persons in rural and urban areas
- Farmers who connect with urban people can raise their standard of living.
- It aids in the process of agricultural and rural development.
- Agro tourism businesses frequently help the communities around them by attracting tourists, according to specific studies.
- The travel and tourism business has grown overall as a result of economic development, globalization, and increased consumer discretionary income and time.
- Urban residents benefit from being able to comprehend rural life and agricultural practices.
- Assist in lessening the burden on other conventional tourist destinations
- The agro tourism sector has also evolved into a tool for long-term human development, promoting economic growth, eradicating poverty, improving the environment, maintaining cultural traditions, and creating jobs. All of these factors contribute to overall development.

18.6 The Problems and Challenges of Agro Tourism Industry:

India's agrotourism industry is growing at a rapid pace. Despite this, there are challenges that prevent agrotourism from growing much further.

These are some of them:

- Complexity and quality of services
- Relying on stakeholders engaged in the local and regional development of tourism
- India's entrepreneurial climate
- A general lack of knowledge regarding the idea of agrotourism.
- Inadequate infrastructure, such as inadequate access to energy, clean water, safe and secure transit, medical care, and good connectivity.
- Farmer's poor communication skills.
- Small farmer's lack of a business mindset.
- Farmer's ignorance of new opportunities.
- The risk associated with overusing natural resources.
- A problem with legislation
- Insufficient financial support from the government.
- Inadequately skilled human resources.
- Bad hygiene and inadequate facilities for tourists to cities.

18.7 Key Techniques for Success in Agrotourism:

Farmers need to have an entrepreneurial mindset and know a few marketing strategies in order to succeed in Agro tourism, which is a business activity.

To enhance one's Agro tourism experience, consider the following assistance:

- The most crucial element in the success of agro tourism is location. It ought to have a lovely backdrop of nature.
- Boost access to roadside conveniences and tourist destinations.
- If in a rural setting, it should be within 150 km of an urban center and take two to three hours to drive to.
- The center should be built close to other tourist destinations so that it can become part of the tourism circuit.
- Create gift shops featuring locally made goods and handicrafts.
- Cooperative societies can serve as the foundation for the development of agrotourism centers by small farmers.
- Encourage Public Private partnership
- Develop contacts with the schools, colleges, NGOs, clubs, unions, organisations etc
- Promote Agro-Tourism packages.
- Charge optimum rent and charges for the facilities/services on the commercial base
- Formulate the guidelines for the safety and security of tourists.
- Application of Information technology at destination.
- Develop website and update time to time for attract foreign tourist.
- Develop a good relationship with the tourists for future business and chain publicity.
- Promote publicity and marketing strategies.
- Development of infrastructure at destination.
- Maintain hygiene and cleanliness at the destination.
- Promote cultural programmes at destination.
- Develop family oriented recreational activities at destination.
- Train your staff or family members for reception and hospitality.
- Behave sincerely with the tourists and participate with them.
- Understand about the customers wants and their expectations and serve accordingly.
- Preserve address book and comments of the visited tourists for future tourism business.
- Maintain the feedback and comments from tourist about the service and suggestions to more development and modification.
- Government should create information booths at important places of urban areas like airports, railway stations, bus stand, and many other public places.
- Carry out Training and capacity building programme for farmers.
- Periodical evaluation of government policies and do changes as per local needs.
- Coordination and monitoring between different departments related to tourism.
- Proper Financing Solution from government for tourism enhancement.

18.8 The Government Schemes Related to Agro-Tourism in India:

1. Swadesh Darshan Scheme:

The primary objective of this initiative is to create customized circuits for tourists. Its objective is to provide tourist-friendly infrastructure in rural areas, including agrotourism attractions.

The goal is to promote eco-friendly travel while emphasizing local traditions and culture. (Ministry of Tourism).

1. Prashad Scheme:

Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive is referred to as PRASHAD. While it is primarily focused on pilgrimage sites, the Ministry of Tourism notes that it also benefits agrotourism by improving general infrastructure and connections.

2. Capacity Building for Service Providers (CBSP) Scheme:

This program enhances the abilities of service providers, especially those in agrotourism. In order to improve tourist experiences and service quality, it provides training, capacity-building projects, and workshops. (Ministry of Tourism).

3. Adopt a Heritage- Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan:

Apart from agrotourism, this project promotes public and private entities to embrace heritage properties. Indirect benefits to rural areas might result from the preservation of cultural and natural resources. (Ministry of Tourism).

4. Loan Guarantee Scheme for Covid Affected Tourism Service Sector (LGSCATSS):

This program helps the tourist industry recover from the pandemic, even if it isn't explicitly focused on agrotourism. It provides loan guarantees to travel service providers, even those located in isolated locations. (Ministry of Tourism).

5. Central Financial Assistance to Institutes:

Institutions involved in agrotourism receive financial support to promote capacity building and skill development. (Ministry of Tourism).

6. Market Research Professional Services Scheme:

This program unintentionally promotes agrotourism by offering information and insights into the travel and tourism sector. (Ministry of Tourism).

18.9 Conclusion:

India is known as the "Land of Villages" as only 35 per cent of the population lives in urban areas, whereas the majority, or 65 per cent, residing in rural areas. Some villages are close to towns and major cities. The history of domestic travel in India predates that of Indian culture. Agrotourism is a sustainable way to develop rural areas where agriculture is boosted by tourism, offering farmers more options to explore and ultimately, rejuvenating rural areas of India. The promotion of agrotourism centers can be a means of providing farmers with an additional source of income. Villagers will have enough alternative opportunities for employment, which might reduce their tendency to leave their native and improve the socioeconomic conditions of rural India.

Agrotourism is a concept made popular in India by Pandurang Taware. The farmers associated with his venture say it has given a boost to their regular income. Through the introduction of Agriculture Tourism to communities, Agrotourism Development Corporation of India (ATDC) is expanding the scope of traditional tourism strategies. An innovative form of agriculture that combines tourism with agriculture is called agrotourism. It has a significant potential to give farmers new work options and sources of revenue. The nation's first state to develop and promote agro tourism is Maharashtra.

In a nutshell, agrotourism is the meeting point of agriculture and tourism. More precisely put, agrotourism is a type of business venture that combines agricultural production and/or processing with tourism to attract tourists to a farm, ranch, or other agricultural enterprise with the intention of amusing and/or educating them while making money for the farm owner. Location is most the important factor for success in the agrotourism.

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