

SCOPE AND CHALLENGES OF AGRITOURISM- LITERATURE REVIEW

Prasanna Shashikant Shembekar¹

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Business Management, Tirpude Institute of Management Education, Nagpur, (RTM Nagpur University).

ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

Agriculture has many challenges in India and other developing nations. In India, major problems faced by agriculture are lack of sufficient irrigation, dependence on monsoon, not having good market rates to the Agri produce and many lacunae in the Agricultural logistics and distribution system. One who ultimately suffers is the farmer. In countries like India where majority of workforce of the nation is engaged in agriculture, the problem gets aggravated. Though this percentage of employment has reduced from 61% in 1994 to 51% in 2016 (World Bank Data, 2016), this figure is still quite big compared to other developing countries like Sri Lanka and average percentage employment of the world (20%). To fight with uncertainties of agriculture, farmers in India should adopt to some secondary and supportive earning methods such as poultry, hatcheries, dairy and livestock business. Agritourism is the concept which is in the phase of "awareness" in its adoption process in India and it has travelled to India from United States of America and western European countries. Agritourism in India has wide scope, a virgin market but at the same time faces many known and hidden challenges. It is found to be emerging fast in certain states like Maharashtra and there are various factors which act as a barrier to entry as well as factors which motivate farmers to venture in to agritourism. Researcher has conducted a secondary research, reviewing the notable literature published across the globe to find out and link the issues Agritourism is facing in the world to the challenges arising in India. Literature review covers basic aspects such as typology, scope and detailed aspects such as sustainability and market attractiveness of Agritourism in India.

KEYWORDS

Agritourism, India, Farm Tourism, Rural Tourism, Agriculture, Agri Marketing.

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BACKGROUND

Introduction and need for Literature Review

Agritourism as a concept does not have a concrete literature which encompasses the entire scope of it from a holistic point of view. Rather there are more specific studies which are either region specific or enlighten a particular part of it such as agritourism destinations or agritourism in a particular place such as a district in Rajasthan or Punjab. Except Michal Sznajder, there is very little literary work which is enough to be presented in the form of a book. In many literal contexts, agritourism is misunderstood and confused with rural tourism. Rural tourism is a bigger concept which also covers cultural and heritage related aspects of a village and in many cases it may not deal with tourism in live farms. In some contexts, visits to farm houses are considered to be a part of agritourism which is again perplexing. Michal Sznajder has a notable contribution to the literature of agritourism but the references and cases discussed are confined to Western Europe. When it comes to Indian contexts, majority of literature seems to concentrate around the agritourism operations in western belt of Maharashtra and the activities of Agri Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC).

Researcher thus felt the need to create a literature review of the so scattered research work around the world with a holistic approach.

There was definitely a research gap which was due to specific research works around the world lacking enough cross referencing and review of classical works. Researcher also felt the need to have a typology for Agritourism. The literature review thus aims at developing a thread which garlands basic concepts, typology and global views of researchers pertaining to agritourism.

Research Methodology

Research work aimed is qualitative and textual research which includes identification, selection, study and analysis of selective research work. Sound secondary research becomes a strong framework for any empirical research in future. Hence the research leaves behind a wide scope for further research of literature as well as primary research of certain aspects of agritourism.

Units of analysis for the research are mainly the research papers and books which throw light upon various facets of the concept. Each research paper, article and book is carefully selected using judgment sampling which is a non-probability sampling. Only those research papers are included which have some further contribution to the previous concepts or which depict another dimensions for the study. APA style referencing method is used for quoting the references. Wherever internet references are used the respective reference links (URL) are mentioned in the citations.

Researcher not just quotes the comments and ideas of research scholars, rather he studies each paper thoroughly and writes an excerpt on that particular research work adding his own views to it. This makes the review more lucid and tries to provide an insight to each attribute studied.

Agritourism: Meaning and Typology-

Agritourism is specifically defined by Manhas as "travel which combines agricultural or rural settings with products of

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Corresponding Author:
 Prasanna Shashikant Shembekar,
 #74, Shiv Shakti Layout,
 New Sonegaon,
 Nagpur-440025.

E-mail: p.shembekar@tirpude.edu.in
shembekarps@gmail.com

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agricultural operations, all within a tourism experience or a range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers". He also calls it "innovative income generating activity for enterprising farmers" (Manhas, 2012).

There are many other notable definitions out of which few are as stated here. "It is an enterprise at a working farm conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates income for the owner."(American Farm Bureau Federation, 2004). "Innovative agricultural activity related to tourism and agriculture both which has capacity to create additional source of income and employment opportunities to the farmers and local communities." (Maruti, 2009). "Agritourism is a type of rural tourism in which the hosting house must be incorporated in to an agricultural estate allowing visitors to participate in agricultural activities." (Marques, 2006). "It is the action of hospitality carried out by agricultural entrepreneurs that must remain connected to farming activities." (Sonnino, 2004). Maetzold defined Agritourism as an alternative enterprise, "It is a set of activities that occur when people link travel with products, services and experiences of agriculture." (Maetzold, 2002).

Thus Agritourism can be comprehensively defined as "the form of rural tourism which involves a combination of education and recreation of the tourists at a working farm by engaging them in to observation, demonstration and participation in farm activities and various allied activities offered in the farm setup". (Author himself). This definition is a summing up of various views keeping focus on the fact that Agritourism has to essentially have a "working farm" as the major object of tourism.

Typology of Agritourism

Sharon Philips and other authors (Sharon Philips et al, 2010) describe the typology of Agritourism. It is stated in the figure given below.

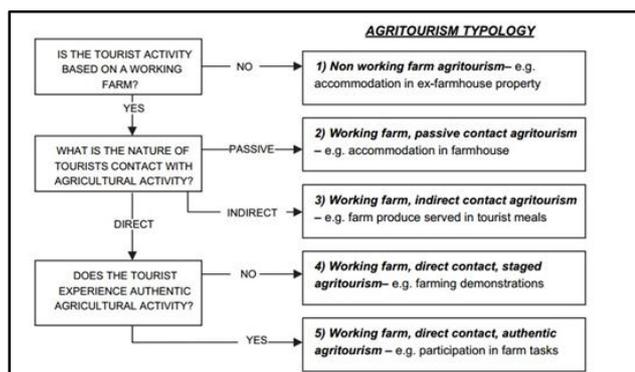


Figure 1. Typology of Agritourism
(Source: Sharon Philips et al (2009))

According to other researchers such as Gladstone and Morris (Gladstone and Morris, 2000), Kizos and Iosifides (Kizos and Iosifides, 2007), Agritourism had to be undertaken in "working farm" setups. Hence, the typology suggested by Sharon Philips and authors (Ibid) needs some modification. Considering the viewpoints of abovementioned researchers, Agritourism on "non-working farms" can be removed from the typology suggested above. Obviously one cannot deny the contribution of Sharon Philips and authors (Ibid) and their research work which has been instrumental in filling the gaps

between various research works across the globe which according to author appear to be insufficient and inconsistent. After considering all viewpoints of researchers including Sznajder (Sznajder, 2009), the modified typology for Agritourism is proposed by the researcher as below:

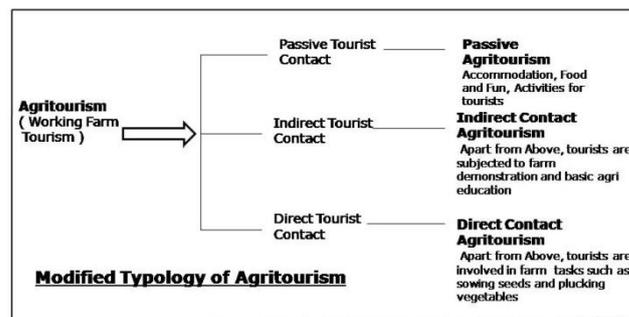


Figure 2. Modified Agritourism Typology
(Source: Author Himself)

As per modified typology, the level of customer engagement as well as the level of customer satisfaction increases from Passive to Direct Agritourism. Direct contact Agritourism can thus be considered as the fullest form of Agritourism product mix which can be offered to the customers. It provides edutainment (education about farming as well as entertainment) and connects the tourists culturally with the farmers and the soil.

Scope of Agritourism in India

Agritourism has a worldwide presence as it originated from United States in 1800s which later on spread in Europe and then in other continents. Now it has distinct presence in various nations in other continents apart from United States and Europe. Sushma Hamilpurkar (Hamilpurkar, 2012) consolidates the presence of Agritourism across the globe in a table which is reproduced in Table 1.

Agritourism as a systematic mode of tourism was introduced in India in years 2002 and 2003. This was different from the old concepts of rural heritage tourism and visiting farmhouses. Agritourism started in western belt of Maharashtra with the initiative of progressive local farmers and visionaries like Mr. Pandurang Taware. Later on Agri Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) was founded by Mr. Pandurang Taware in year 2005. It started with the initial pilot project in the village Baramati in district Pune. Eventually ATDC trained more than 500 farmers and developed more than 150 agritourist locations across Maharashtra.

Agritourism has not spread much across the states of India and is still concentrated in western belt of Maharashtra. Agritourism is still a small scale venture and has low impact on macro economy of India. (Chaddha and Bhakre, 2012). It is slowly growing in some states like Haryana (Devender Kumar et al 2010), Karnataka (Hamilpurkar, Ibid), Punjab (Samjetsabam et al 2014) and Rajasthan (Mehta, 2011). Thus, it can be observed that there is a wide scope for the concept to grow in all agricultural states of India as the market is not at all saturated and is in fact virgin in many of the states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh which are prominently agri-driven states of India.

Country	Kind of Incentive/ help given by different Sources Aimed at Rural/Farm Tourism Development
Belgium	Regional Governments subsidise accommodation facilities up to 30% of the total cost of the project
Denmark	Government subsidies National association for agri-tourism development with a fixed amount of money per year
France	Regional Governments give incentives to the new entrepreneurs in rural areas; they also give professional help in marketing activities and making up feasibility studies; departments, regions and national Government subsidise different rural tourism associations with the fixed annual amounts.
Greece	Rural tourism projects in the region Petra Lesvos have been subsidised by the Government, local authorities and EU
Ireland	Agency for development of tourism in the rural areas "Ballyhoura Failte Society" is financed by the Government, local authorities and the EU
Italy	Agri-tourist association has been financed by the National Government on annual basis
Netherlands	Some associations (such as "Vereniging Recreatie by de Boer") have been financed by their regional Governments
Germany	Incentives aimed at rural tourism development are distributed from different levels; Bayern has been financed by the national Government. Niedersachsen by the regional Government, Baden Wurtemberg – by the regional Government, Rheinland Pfalz- regional and other sources, Schleswig- Holstein- regional Government and other sources
Portugal	General tourist office has developed a system of subsidising initial tourist investments in rural areas
Spain	Galice -Investment subsidising (up to 30% of the total cost of investment), Asturias- 30% of the total cost of investment, Catalogue and Canaries- subventions for the preservation of cultural and ethno heritage in the localities that have less than 2,000 inhabitants, Agrotourism Basque Association has been financed by EU (the level of subsidy has reached 25-50% of the total amount subsidised by the region)
Great Britain	There is a strong involvement of national and regional Governments into development of rural areas, under Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) so called rural "whitepaper" has been introduced with different development schemes that also include rural tourism development
Slovenia	Government has subsidised first phase- implementation of the tourist facilities on farms 9 up to 50% of the total amount of project, while in the second phase, when a farm started to deal with tourism activities, two third of the necessary amount were given by the Government and local communities while the rest has to be secured by an entrepreneur.
Table 1. Incentives and Aids Received by Various State Sources to European Nations (Hamilpurkar, 2012) <i>(Reproduced from the Original Table in the Reference.)</i>	

Agritourism in India- Challenges Faced

Lack of Irrigation

Agriculture in India is mostly monsoon dependent. In 2010, only about 35% of total agricultural land in India was reliably irrigated and remaining subjected to the whims of nature. (World Bank Report, 2013).

Climatic Conditions

Climatic condition in most of the Indian terrain is not supportive to Agritourism throughout the year. During summer, which is a period of 3 to 4 months, there are no crops and the weather is hot and dry in most of the states. During rainy season, tourist may not be able to be ready to access the farms full of mud. This period lasts to at least 2 months. Thus, Agritourism is practically difficult to be operated for six months in a year. (Chadhda & Bhakre, ibid).

Financial Problems of Farmers

Floods, drought, debt, use of genetically modified seed, public health, usage of lower quantity of pesticides due to less investments produce a decreased yield and this makes farmers difficult to repay the interest on loans taken from either Banks or Sahukars. They lose credibility and are unable to get further loans from both. In this scenario, investing in agritourism, may it be a minimum amount, becomes difficult for farmers. (Indian Social Institute, 2011).

Educational Profile of Farmers and Lack of Orientation in Marketing and Customer Communications

Most of the farmers are very less educated, mostly undergraduates and do not know the manners of customer communications (Sanjay Sharma, 2012).

Unawareness about the Concept of Agritourism

Agritourism as a concept is not well promoted and unknown to maximum farmers in India. (Agritourism.in).

Less Cultivable Land and Fragmented Land

Due to inheritance the land of father is divided and distributed to his sons. Thus, the total cultivable land per farmer goes on reducing in each generation. As per survey, 80% farmers have less than 1 hectare land and only 7% farmers in India have more than 2 hectare land. (Rukhmini S, 2016). For agritourism, a farmer should have bare minimum land of 5 acres (equivalent to 2 hectares) so that the farmer can have adequate crops to offer as a tourism product and sufficient land for tourists to rest and recreate. If farmers do not have sufficient land, agritourism project will be a challenge to implement and execute.

Lack of Government Support

These is lack of Government support for agritourism in India (Samjetsabam, Ibid). In tourism policy of Maharashtra Government, there is a mention of rural tourism but no specific mention of Agritourism. The detailing about the provisions and action plan is not in the abovementioned policy document.

(Upadhye, 2015). This discourages farmers from undertaking new ventures like agritourism which are in their favour and source of income generation.

CONCLUSION

It can be observed from the literature review that there are only few states of India where the concept of Agritourism is adopted and taking shape. In Maharashtra, the credit goes to Pandurang Taware and Agri Tourism Development Corporation established by Mr. Taware in 2004. (Borlikar et al, 2015). Jagtap (2010), Kumbhar (2012) and Landge (2015) have previously emphasised the work of Pandurang Taware in their respective research works. In other states, the concept has been spread through training workshops provided by ATDC at Baramati, Maharashtra. Taware himself in his research paper mentions the importance of Agritourism as a supportive activity of income generation for farmers. (Taware, 2012). Thus, it can be said that there is huge scope for agritourism in India and has bright future ahead. Market is new and hence adoption process will take its own time. But successful implementation of ventures in Maharashtra are setting good examples for farmers in other states.

However, there are many challenges ahead for the growth of agritourism in India. Major challenges discussed are financial problems of farmers in India, less education and less marketing orientation of farmers, unawareness about the concept of agritourism, less cultivable and fragmented land and lack of Government support.

There needs to be a proper business model to promote and propagate the concept of agritourism as an easily adoptable and implementable venture for farmers in India. All challenges stated above can have solutions and agritourism can be ventured in gradually step by step. All it depends on the will power of farmers and proper promotional strategies adopted to market the concept in weekend tourists.

It can be understood that success of Agritourism does not depend on how big, how massive and how traffic generating Agritourism venture is created, but on the fact that whether it is operating on live and working farms of farmers and whether it provides direct monetary benefits to the local farmers or not.

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