

Tourists Expectations Regarding Agritourism: Empirical Evidences from Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg District of Konkan (Maharashtra)

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Abstract

Agritourism becomes popular among the urban peoples in worldwide and many farmers are establishing agritourism centre in their farm to create additional income source. As agrarian economy of India there is very significant scope to apply the concept of agritourism in agriculture sector of the India. It creates additional income source, employment opportunities, educational values, cultural exchange etc. However, success of tourism business is depends upon providing tourism service according to the expectations of the tourists. Therefore, the present research was undertaken to know tourist expectations regarding agritourism. Results of the survey indicates that Typically Rural Food, Chance to be involved in the farm, Entertainment Value, Quality water, Peace and Quiet, On-site restrooms, Clean and Green Environment, Countryside Accommodations, Educational Value Attractive Location and Interaction with Service Providers Quality Food, Purchasing opportunities, Security & Trust, Interpersonal Congruency, Participate in Local festivals, Interact with rural people, Continue of relationship with farmer, and Primary health care facilities are important factors in agritourism.

KEYWORDS: agritourism; expectations, tourism, Konkan

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1.0 Introduction

The crisis of mass tourism has led to the necessity for seeking out alternative forms of tourism in worldwide. At the same time, the crisis in intensive agriculture has led to the necessity for seeking out alternative forms of agriculture (Hélène, 2003). Increasing problems in agriculture sector in India creates negative attitude of the farmers regarding agriculture. Hence there is extreme need of create additional source of income using existing agricultural land and agricultural occupation. Many farmers, in addition to normal farming activity, have already turned to agritourism as a source of additional farm income and opportunities. There are numerous benefits from the development of agritourism: it may strengthen local economy, create job opportunities and new businesses; develop and promote training and certification programs to introduce young people to agriculture and environment (Privitera, 2010).

1.1 Objectives

This study is based on followings objectives;

1. To know expectations of tourists regarding agritourism

2. To know preference of expectations regarding agritourism
3. To make suggestions based on empirical results

1.2 Data and Methods

Required data for this study was collected from 120 tourists visited in Konkan regions; especially various tourists' places and destinations in Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg district. Before the collection of data regarding expectations about agritourism researcher has described idea of agritourism who does not having idea about agritourism and then their expectations was recorded. All expectations was recorded based on five point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1= not Important 5= highly important). Collected data was analysed using SPSS 18.0 and identified demographics of respondents as well as their expectations regarding agritourism. All data was combined and mean score of their expectations was extracted to know average importance regarding expectations.

1.3 Review of Literature

In the literature there is a great diversity of terminology of agri-tourism, sometimes it is called as agro-tourism as well as green tourism, farm tourism with different meanings, which makes it difficult to define agri-tourism. The term Agritourism consists of two parts *agri- or agro- and tourism*; the prefix agri is derived from the Latin term, ager which means field, and the term agro has a Greek origin from the word agros which means soil (Raghuandan et, al. 2010). Agritourism refers to those activities that include visiting a working farm or any agricultural operation to enjoy, to be educated or to be involved in what is happening on the operation (Carlos, 2006). Agritourism enterprises offer a wide range of benefits to tourists, such as convenient, secure, educational, and amusing family experiences for visitors who are international, national, and Midwestern residents (Wicks & Merrett, 2003). It is a segment within the larger sector of rural tourism. Rural tourism is based on the rural environment in general whereas agritourism is based on the farm and the farmer (Fleischer and Tchetchik, 2005). Various authors defined agritourism as follows;

- *Maetzold (2002)*, 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"
- *PlaceFirst (2011)* As per the Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 463 on "Agri-tourism in Southern Scotland" agri-tourism is defined for the purposes of the research as: "Tourism on a working farm in which visitors can experience a direct connection with the host farm, rural life and/or the local environment"
- *Che et al. (2005)* mentioned that "agritourism is another consumptive use of farmland and may help preserve farms".
- *Bohuslava B.(2008)* who defines agritourism as a form of rural as well as sustainable tourism. "It refers to the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation."
- *Zdenek (2009)* defined that, "Agritourism is a specific form of local tourism. It allows candidates stay in the agricultural farms and get comfortable with the practical life in the countryside. Visitors can participate in various agricultural activities and learn the traditional rural activities. They can use some of the

frequently offered additional services (horse riding, fishing, cycling, etc.)”.

According to Maetzold (2002), the *organic agritourism* is one of the important types of agritourism in Italy. In the organic agritourism entrepreneurs are using organic techniques like organic farming, following principles of ecotourism, water saving and recycling solutions, Respect traditional culture, Promotion and sale of organic food products and Environmental Management of the farm, provide ecological means of transport for guests etc. According to Kuo, Chiu (2006) *Agro-ecotourism* is also one of the types of agri-tourism; Agro-ecotourism is based on organic agriculture and combines with ecotourism to provide an acceptable recreation opportunity without destroying the natural environment.

1.4 Tourist Expectations Regarding Agri-Tourism

1. **Attractive Location:** It is found that, most of agri-tourism centres in the various countries are located in the *hilly area, traditional tourists' sites, pilgrims, sea sites* etc. According to Maetzold (2002), more than half of agritourism enterprises are situated in hills (51.4%) and more than a third are in the mountains (34.4%) of Italy. (PlaceFirst 2011). According to this report over three quarters of respondents (75%) had been on holiday in a rural location, with just 24% suggesting they had not.
2. **Convenience Location:** Convenience is one of the important aspects in tourism business. People prefer convenient and assessable location. According to (Natthawut Srikatanyoo and Kom Campiranon, 2008) easy to access is important aspect in agritourism most of tourists expect this.
3. **Peace and Quiet:** In the Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 463 on “Agri-tourism in Southern Scotland” mentioned that, rural based location where peace and quiet is best location for the agritourism centre because agritourists expect the peace and quiet, opportunity to stay in a rural location and the access to experience of rural life.
4. **Comfort of Interacting with Service Providers:** Cunningham and Sagas (2006), who investigated the impact of perceived demographic dissimilarity on interaction quality and customer satisfaction. The authors found that perceived demographic dissimilarity was negatively related to the amount of interaction and, subsequently, to customer satisfaction.
5. **Interpersonal Congruency:** A high interpersonal congruence will result in promotion harmonious and productive interactions. When customers trust that the views of a service employee concerning themselves are consistent with their own views about themselves, then they feel a heightened level of coherence and predictability (Swann 1983; Swann, et al, 1992). Interpersonal congruency is achieved by several interpersonal processes; involving mental reconstruction, selective attention, selective evaluation, and self-presentation.
6. **Countryside Accommodations:** The agri-tourists not expect high quality of accommodation facilities like urban style. They expect countryside but well maintained, clean and pollution free accommodation facilities. These accommodations may farm house, cottages etc (Kumbhar, 2010).
7. **Clean and Green Environment:** Agritourism is deferent from traditional or formal tourism therefore tourists or visitors expect clean as well as green environment in the agritourism centre.
8. **Food Image:** Tourists' perceived food image played a significant role in

tourist satisfaction. As per the structural equation modeling (SEM) performed by Chi et al, (2010) there was perceived food image directly influencing food satisfaction and quality of visiting; tourists' behavioural intentions through quality of visiting. According to PlaceFirst (2011) local food is expected by the agri-tourists. Monika Bumbalova, (2007) mentioned in his research quality of drinking water also one of the important factors in tourism service where tourists stay.

9. **Chance to be involved in the farm:** Activities that allow for participation in agricultural activities increases happiness of the tourists. Almost all visitors of agritourism expect that farmers should allow participation in casual agricultural activities (Wicks & Merrett 2003; Boučková ,2008; Carpio,2006).
10. **Educational Value:** According to Wicks & Merrett 2003; Boučková ,2008; Carpio,2006' Bradley (1982; Maetzold 2002; Langworthy et al., 2006; Kumbhar 2009 etc educational value is exclusive characteristics of the agritourism. Service provider should provide information regarding to farming activities, cultivation, pre-harvesting and post-Harvesting activities, applications and usefulness of fruits, vegetables. Agritourism also has the potential for informal agricultural education between the owner/operator and the general population which has little to no direct contact with agriculture (Jolly & Reynolds, 2005).
11. **Entertainment Value:** Entertainment of the tourists is essential in every type of tourism including agritourism. According to Bradley (1982) arrangement of festivals celebration and events based around rural culture, traditions, rural games, folk songs etc increases entertainment value. Therefore, festivals and days organized related to entertainment have been increasing the brand value, and have raised the prestige of service providers (Maetzold 2002; Langworthy et al., 2006). Even Reynolds (2005) and McGehee and Kim, (2004) mentioned that agritourism is businesses conducted by farmers whose working agricultural operations for the enjoyment and education of visitors.
12. **Security & Trust:** Ellen et al, (2011) and Barry and Hellerstein, 2004 mentioned that security regarding to the tourists and trust on service provider plays important role in agritourism services. All male and female tourists expect trusted service and security in agritourism centres.
13. **Adequate Parking facilities:** Most of tourist comes by their own vehicles therefore parking facilities at agritourism centre is required but is not so important factors and expectations of the tourists. However, good and enough parking facilities may increase tourists' perception.
14. **Participation in rural festivals:** Many tourists (urban people) have curiosity regarding to various rural festivals. They want to participate in these festivals but there are no such arrangements for them. Hence, they expect to participate in rural festivals (Maetzold 2002; Langworthy et al., 2006)..
15. **Purchasing opportunities:** Tourists want to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, plants and other agricultural production from farm site. They expect quality of agriculture products and fresh products in lower rates than products available in urban area (Maetzold 2002; Langworthy et al., 2006).
16. **Primary health care:** Tourists expect minimum required primary health care facilities in agritourism centers. Farmer should provide primary health care facilities at farm house or leased service from local hospitals and health care

centers.

17. **Interact with rural people:** There is opportunity to build relations with rural people and tourists visiting to agritourism. Many urban people do not have relations with rural peoples but they want to establish relation with them. Therefore, they want to interact with rural people and agritourism in an opportunity for this.
18. **Continue of relationship with farmer:** Agritourism offers an opportunity to build relationships between tourist and farmers. Many tourists interact with farmers after visiting agritourism centre and ask required information as well as purchase required agricultural products. Agritourism offers an opportunity to build relationships between the agricultural community and the local tourism industry by incorporating tour groups, educating school children and hosting civic events. Therefore, farmers should build relationship with them.

1.5 Demographic of the respondents

Results of demographic analysis shows that there is 25 percent female and 75 percent male tourists were surveyed for understanding their expectations regarding to agritourism. Among these tourists 23.3% were from semi urban area, 56.7% were from urban area and 20% were metropolitan areas. 11.7% were post graduates, 55% were graduates, 24.2% were Passed HSC and 9.2% were either SSC or below than SSC. Profession wise data indicates that 11.7% were employees, 28.3% were industrialist, 32.5% were traders, 18.3% were students and 9.2% were retired persons. Income wise data shows that, 18.3% were dependents, 8.3% were belongs to income group of Rs. 3 to 5 Lakh, 40.0% were belongs to income group of Rs. 5 to 8 Lakh and 33.3% were belongs to income group of Rs. More than 8 Lakh. Age group wise data indicates that, 31.7% were from age of 40-60 years, 40% were from age of 25-40 years, 11.7% were from age of 15-25 years, 7.5% were from age of below than 15 years and only 9.2% were belongs to age group of more than 60 years (Table no 1).

Table no 1: Demographic of the respondents				
Gender				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	90	75.0	75.0	75.0
Female	30	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Residence				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Semi-urban	28	23.3	23.3	23.3
Urban	68	56.7	56.7	80.0
Metropolitan	24	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Education				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SSC & < SSC	11	9.2	9.2	9.2
HSC	29	24.2	24.2	33.3

Graduate	66	55.0	55.0	88.3
Post Graduate	14	11.7	11.7	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Profession				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Employee	14	11.7	11.7	11.7
Industrialists	34	28.3	28.3	40.0
Traders	39	32.5	32.5	72.5
Students	22	18.3	18.3	90.8
Retired Person	11	9.2	9.2	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Income Group				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Dependent	22	18.3	18.3	18.3
Rs. 3 to 5 Lakh	10	8.3	8.3	26.7
Rs. 5 to 8 Lakh	48	40.0	40.0	66.7
> Rs. 8 Lakh	40	33.3	33.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Age Group				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
< 15 Years	9	7.5	7.5	7.5
15 to 25 Years	14	11.7	11.7	19.2
25 to 40 Years	48	40.0	40.0	59.2
40 to 60 Years	38	31.7	31.7	90.8
> 60 Years	11	9.2	9.2	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Ratnagiri & Sindhudurg districts

1.6 Tourists' expectation

Tourists' expectations are most important in the tourism industry. Tour operator should consider the almost expectations which may possible to implement and provide to tourists. Therefore, present research was undertaken for investigate to understand the expectations regarding agritourism. Results indicate that; Typically Rural Food, Chance to be involved in the farm, Entertainment Value, Quality water, Peace and Quiet, On-site restrooms, Clean and Green Environment, Countryside Accommodations, Educational Value

Attractive Location and Interaction with Service Providers are scored 4.53 to 4.00 therefore these are most important factors which should highly consider in the agritourism. Farmers should be serious about these issues (Table no 2).

Quality Food, Purchasing opportunities, Security & Trust, Interpersonal Congruency, Participate in Local festivals, Interact with rural people, Continue of relationship with farmer, and Primary health care facilities scored from 3.98 to 3.45. It indicates that these are second rank factors which may consider after first rank factors in the planning and management of agritourism (Table no 2).

	Executions	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
1st Rank	Typically Rural Food	120	4.53	0.501	0.251
	Chance to be involved in the farm	120	4.53	0.564	0.318
	Entertainment Value	120	4.45	0.563	0.317
	Quality water	120	4.35	0.752	0.566
	Peace and Quiet	120	4.32	0.661	0.437
	On-site restrooms	120	4.27	0.645	0.416
	Clean and Green Environment	120	4.20	0.669	0.447
	Countryside Accommodations	120	4.05	0.849	0.72
	Educational Value	120	4.01	0.825	0.681
	Attractive Location	120	4.00	0.745	0.555
	Interaction with Service Providers	120	4.00	0.85	0.723
2nd Rank	Quality Food	120	3.98	0.845	0.714
	Purchasing opportunities	120	3.87	0.869	0.755
	Security & Trust	120	3.84	0.898	0.807
	Interpersonal Congruency	120	3.78	1.104	1.218
	Participate in Local festivals	120	3.72	0.954	0.911
	Interact with rural people	120	3.67	1.072	1.148
	Continue of relationship with farmer	120	3.60	1.024	1.049
	Primary health care facilities	120	3.45	1.187	1.409
3rd Rank	Convenient Location	120	2.38	0.223	0.497
	Adequate parking	120	2.33	1.421	2.02
	Luxurious Accommodations	120	2.22	1.101	1.213
Based on Five Point Likert scale					

Source: Survey

Convenient Location, Adequate parking and Luxurious Accommodations are less important factors which score ranging from 2.38 to 2.22. These are less important factors than all other expectations regarding agritourism services. It also indicates that, Convenient Location, Adequate parking and Luxurious Accommodations at agritourism is not expected by the tourists want to visit agritourism centre (Table no 2).

Conclusion and Suggestions

Agritourism is new concept for Indian tourists therefore we need to create trust and assurance regarding to the residence of tourist in agritourism centre. However, farm operators should concentrate their efforts for fulfil the significant expectations like; Typically Rural Food, Chance to be involved in the farm, Entertainment Value, Quality water, Peace and Quiet, On-site restrooms, Clean and Green Environment, Countryside Accommodations, Educational Value Attractive Location and Interaction with Service Providers Quality Food, Purchasing opportunities, Security & Trust, Interpersonal Congruency, Participate in Local festivals, Interact with rural people, Continue of relationship with farmer, and Primary health care facilities. Because these factors are most important for tourists want to visit or visiting to agritourism farm.

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