

Role of Agritourism in Financial Well-Being of Farmers

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to examine how different parties involved in agrotourism see its effects. A total of 45 agri-tourism centres (ATCs) and 200 tourists were chosen at random from the city of Chandrapur. The effect was evaluated using metrics like the number of working days and how people felt about the economy as a whole. The average number of working days in Chandrapur climbed from 149 to 202 in 2016 and from 117 to 208 in 2017. In Chandrapur, a new irrigation system and recreational facilities for farm workers and their families have been installed, and in ATC farms, processing and post-harvest facilities and recreational facilities for workers and their families have also been upgraded. Social involvement, number of outside connections, number of prizes, and recognition all increased significantly among ATC hosts. The advantages of learning about nature, reflecting on one's ideals, remembering happy events from one's past, and taking a break from one's regular routine were shown to differ significantly as reported by visitors.

Keywords – Agritourism, Employment, ATC, Irrigation system, Recreational Facilities

Introduction

Attracting tourists to rural or agricultural regions for sightseeing, learning, or other non-work-related activities is known as "agri-tourism." Farmers, locals, visitors, and the planet all stand to benefit or suffer from this type of tourism. Some potential outcomes of agri-tourism are discussed below. Farmers: Agri-tourism may be lucrative for farmers by giving them another way to make money off of their land. Profits may be made in the agricultural industry through activities like farm tours, pick-your-own vegetables, and overnight stays on the farm. Reduced reliance on time-consuming and labor-intensive conventional farming methods might be one of the many benefits of agri-tourism for farmers.

Farmers are able to raise public awareness and understanding of farming, food security, and sustainability through their interactions with tourists. Regional Groups: By bringing in tourists who spend money at area businesses and hotels, agri-tourism may help boost the economy. Opportunities for employment in the hotel, catering, and tour guiding industries may arise as a result of the growth of agri-tourism. Interactions between visitors and locals provide a wonderful opportunity for both parties to learn about and appreciate one another's cultures.

Tourists: Tourists that partake in agri-tourism are afforded the unique chance to immerse themselves in agricultural education, rural culture, and outdoor enjoyment. The opportunity to spend time in nature and learn more about the origins of their food is something that many tourists may find rewarding. Some of the most memorable moments of an agritourism trip are those spent sampling the local food. Environment: The conservation of farmland and natural ecosystems are two examples of how agri-tourism might help protect the planet. Agri-tourism businesses may play a role in encouraging environmentally responsible behaviour by using sustainable practises. Depending on the management techniques used, more human activity in rural regions may have either beneficial or negative consequences on native species.

Local and Central Government: Government oversight and encouragement may be necessary to guarantee that agritourism operations are safe, secure, and compliant with any applicable zoning, safety, or environmental regulations. Support for Local Development and Visitor Attraction Agri-tourism may be a part of a larger plan to promote and revitalise rural communities. The scale of operations, the activities provided, and the degree of community engagement are only a few of the variables that might affect the outcomes of agri-tourism. Positive results for all parties are more probable from sustainable, well-managed agri-tourism projects.

Literature review

Agriculture and its connected activities are on the edge of a transformation for both the producers as well as consumers. Travelling to a farm as a tourist attraction is one example of

this type of activity. "rural enterprise which incorporates both a working farm environment and a commercial tourism component" (Fennel and Weaver, 1997; McGehee, 2007) is one definition of agri-tourism. Agri-tourism, as defined by Barbieri and Mshenga (2008), is "any practise adapted on a working farm to attract tourists." The emerging subset of the tourist market is agri-tourism. Indian states including Maharashtra, Kerala, Rajasthan, Goa, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh have all effectively adopted the idea. Slathia et al. (2015) found that women's empowerment and socioeconomic uplift, household decision making, greater engagement in educational activity, and family income were all bolstered by rural tourist activities.

Farmers in the country now have a new way to supplement their income. Trail visits, farm stays, and other off-the-beaten-path excursions are gaining popularity as a way for guests to get a taste of a region beyond the usual tourist traps. Many things on the farm and in the hosts' personal lives have changed as a result. According to McCool and Martin (1994), locals often see tourism as a way to improve their community's social and cultural life. According to research by Chadda and Bhakare (2012), agri-tourism benefits both farmers and visitors.

Both the farmers and the tourists who are looking for a more tranquil setting profit from this arrangement. It goes from once a year to once a week in terms of how often money is made. Employment options in a wide range of associated activities, such as Emu, organic, and dairy farming, help to eliminate gender inequality in the workplace. Tourist activity in rural areas has been shown to increase both employment opportunities and household income (Yavaranani, 2013).

As an addition to their agricultural revenue, the villagers will be able to give their kids a better chance at life by giving them access to better nutrition and education. Traditional values and ideas held by the rural populace can be overturned with the help of modern culture (Afroz et al., 2017).

Objectives of the study

The present study focuses at measuring and quantifying the socio-economic changes as experienced by different stakeholders.

Research methodology

The research was done in Chandrapur, a city chosen on purpose, between 2019–20 and 2021–22 using a quasi-experimental research methodology based on the notion of before–and–after investigations. Forty-five agri-tourism centres located in the city of Chandrapur made up the study's sample population. There will be room for 200 agritourists. The societal impact was evaluated by looking at how many jobs were created and how things like farm material ownership, spending patterns, farm modifications, living standards, operator's economics, and social engagement shifted. The year 2019 was used as a baseline for this investigation. In this context, "after" information refers to developments after 2019, whereas "before" information refers to the three years before to 2021. The study discovered that after 2021, the area of agritourism had considerable growth and development after consulting with professionals and agencies operating in the industry. Some of the ATCs in the sample were even founded this year. The number of mandays worked for a year on the farm of the responder agri-tourism host served as the indicator of employment generation. It was determined whether or not there was a change (increase/decrease) in employment generation on account of adoption by comparing the total number of man-days used on the respondent agri-tourism host's farm in the year before adoption to the number of man-days used three years after adoption. The change was assessed individually for ATCs of Chandrapur. A t-test was used to determine whether or not the increase in job creation was statistically significant. The McNemar test was used to examine before-and-after studies, as well as the more conventional paired and case-control designs. Tourists in both states rated the perceived personal benefit on a five-point scale ranging from no benefit at all to extremely positive. Mann-Whitney The U test was used to analyse the differences between Chandrapur visitors' expectations and experiences at agri-tourism centres. In order to acquire the necessary information, a schedule of semi-structured interviews with pertinent questions was drafted. Individual interviews and

focus groups were employed to compile the data. The statistical analysis was done with SPSS Version 23, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

Data Analysis and interpretation

The presence of jobs in a certain industry is a sign of that industry's vitality. Here, information was gathered from 45 ATCs across both states and sorted into "before" (2019-2020) and "after" (2021-22) categories according to the timeframe. Impact of agri-tourism on the generation of employment is presented in table 1 shows that average number of employment days in Chandrapur has grown from 151 to 200 man-days/year after 2019. According to the t-test, the annual rise in working days was statistically significant. Being a labor-intensive industry, agriculture relies on the economic benefit of employment. It is obvious that the significant rise in the number of jobs created in the agri-tourism sector is attributable to this sector's expansion and maturation. This data implies a beneficial effect on job creation in the sampled area. Farmers, their families, and other young people in the community may all benefit from the growing industry of agritourism. With the help of agri-tourism, India's farmland can be used more efficiently, farmers can make more money, and more people can find jobs.

Table1. Employment opportunities and their evolution as a result of agri-tourism

S. N	Descriptive statistics	Before	After
1.	Mean	151.2	200.1
2.	SE	11.01	10.41
3.	SD	64.01	65.99
4.	CV	0.53	0.43
5.	Skewness	1.42	0.82
6.	Range	249.00	241.00
7.	Minimum	69.00	111.00
8.	Maximum	327.00	351.00

t-test results for change in employment

t-stat	P(T<=t)two-tail	Level of Significance
7.101	<0.005	0.001

The total socio-economic impact of agri-tourism on hosts/operators was conceptualised as a mix of characteristics such as material changes, changes in expenditure pattern, overall farm changes, changes in standard of life, changes in financial position and change in social engagement. Some parameters were examined in discrete groups, while others were assessed along a gradient. Table 2 shows that due to the idea of agri-tourism, there were substantial changes in the adoption of innovative technologies by ATCs, such as the installation of drip irrigation and modern structures for tourism and entertainment. Since bore well and other vehicles were already present with them, however, no noticeable shifts in their ownership pattern were noticed. Although substantial capital outlay is necessary to launch an agribusiness, once the company reaches profitability, the proprietor will enjoy tangible benefits from the ensuing returns.

Changes in spending patterns examined over a continuum showed that education funding has grown substantially. This was because they invested in their own and their families' futures by paying for college with the money they saved from ATC. The effects of agritourism on farmers have been widespread, with many farmers upgrading and diversifying their farming systems and leasing out additional farmland. Given the high expectations of agri-tourists, it was found that most farms tended to specialise on only one or two crops. Farmers also thought they couldn't compete in the market without consistent land improvement. The steady profits over the years are another incentive for farmers to invest in their property and promote agritourism.

Analysis of how their level of life has changed over time shows that agri-tourism has not had a profound effect on their standard of living. Chandrapuragri-tourism centres showed a considerable improvement in their financial standing as seen by their increased capacity to repay old debts, their increased desire to save, and their increased investment in other

ventures. The rate at which losses and debts were incurred did not significantly vary. Although the majority of agri-tourism operators did not get direct sales from this activity, they regard it as crucial for the continuing functioning of their farm. It was also thought that agri-tourism would increase revenue for farms. Agri-tourism has altered their level of community involvement in recent years. Higher levels of social engagement were attributed to an increase in exposure to new people, achievements, and accolades.

New processing and post-harvest equipment, as well as sophisticated structures for tourism and entertainment, were extensively installed by ATCs, marking a dramatic shift towards the realisation of the agri-tourism idea. Drip irrigation has seen major modification in recent years as a result of agri-tourism. However, since bore well and other vehicles were already part of their stable, no noticeable shifts in their ownership pattern were found. These findings show that farmers' health and attitudes towards new technology were both improved by the enterprise. They were keener to implement technological improvements, both as a tourist attraction and to boost food yields.

The second factor, shifts in spending habits, showed no major shifts with the exception of a new trend towards spending more on social gatherings. This was because they invested in community events and celebrations, to which their visitors were invited, with money saved from their increased ATC revenue. Therefore, agri-tourism is a plus for attracting all kinds of travellers, not only those looking for fun.

Third, the socioeconomic effects of agri-tourism on operators showed that they made substantial improvements to their farms in order to better care for their existing property. All others were seen as not so dramatically transformed in recent years merely because of agri-tourism. In contrast to Chandrapur, they are unable to often alter the crop rotation. They installed a cutting-edge irrigation system, enhanced health and sanitation, and flattened undulating barren terrain to display produce.

According to the data we have on how their level of life has changed, agri-tourism has not had a noticeable impact on their standard of living. Analysis of how their finances have changed over time shows that no major shifts have occurred. This is because ATCs were formerly successful farms that have just lately begun to include agri-tourism into their operations. As a result, the agri-tourism enterprise has not resulted in any appreciable monetary change but has rather resulted in changes in proprietors' attitudes and practises. Although a majority of agri-tourism operators do not get direct revenue from this activity, they consider it as crucial for the continuous operation of their farm for promotion of Ayurveda and naturopathy.

A significant aspect of agri-tourism's societal and economic impact is the way it influences people's propensity to get involved in their communities. The findings showed that thanks in large part to agri-tourism, their level of social engagement has increased significantly in recent years. Increased exposure to new people and ideas, enhanced connection with hosts, magazine subscriptions focused on agriculture, and public acknowledgement were all seen as major contributors to increased social engagement. This was noted owing to concentration on agriculture coupled with other entertainment components. A evidence of the good influence of agritourism on the owners in recent years is the increased number of people who now subscribe to agricultural periodicals.

Mann-Whitney By a significant margin, visitors to the ATCs in Chandrapur ranked "thinking about their personal values" as the most valuable perk. They also like "remembering good times from the past and experiencing solitude." The scenario was different, with the advantage of a break from routine being the most highly valued by the tourists, followed by the benefit of learning about the natural world. At the 5% significance level, we observed that the four visitor advantages varied considerably between states. Visitors to Chandrapur often sought out outdoor activities to get away from the city and reconnect with nature. The former state's reputation as a "final destination of entertainment" and its abundance of natural attractions may account for this trend. In the same vein, visitors to Chandrapur preferred the advantage of reflecting on personal ideals and fond memories. They may have formed these

believes after visiting an agri-tourism farm in their former state, which was located quite close to major cities but nevertheless offered visitors a taste of rural life.

Conclusion

Even though the effect evaluation is relative and relatively quantitative yet it indicated obvious changes in the sampled locations. Agri-tourism is a growing industry that now requires policy and research support, such as institutional interventions and government plans and ideas. Intense research and case studies might lead to the introduction of low-cost building materials, reducing the significant initial expenditure and making the enterprise feasible for even medium and small-scale farmers. Young, aspiring farmers would be encouraged to take up farming if loans are made available through PACS or commercial banks under the MUDRA or startup plan. Subsidising farms that cater to agritourists at lower prices would help the industry grow. This would not only increase the business's bottom line by attracting more clients from metropolitan areas, but it would also help those visitors connect with their heritage.

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