



Agritourism as a Strategy for the Development of Rural Areas Case Study of Dungrajya Village, Southeast Rajasthan, India

Dr. SURABHI SRIVASTAVA

Post Doctoral Scholar- Tourism University of Kota, Kota Rajasthan, India

Received 20 July, 2016; Accepted 30 July, 2016 © The author(s) 2016. Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

ABSTRACT: *Agritourism is a concept of developing and preparing villagers for creating an alternative source of earning and sustaining their heritages. This kind of tourism develops where agricultural activities and tourist interacts. It involves various agricultural activities, animal rides and stay at rural surroundings with natural and fresh cuisines. Basically it develops as niche tourism in different parts of world. It could be a source of developing rural areas of developing countries like India. Realising this fact the researcher visited one village of southeast Rajasthan, Dungrajya. The villagers are completely dependent on agriculture. As agriculture demands only few seasons engagement so they doesn't have anything else to do in offseason. Under this study for the first time in Hadoti region of Rajasthan, foreigner's visited the village and enjoyed various agricultural activities, rural sports and rural cuisines. The study had given a path to the youth to protect their intangible heritages and earn money with their own people. The present paper evaluates, analyses and provides a strategy as an alternative source of income to the farmers and youth of villagers at their own doorstep.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the backbone of most developing economies, particularly India. Green revolution and smaller plot holdings as witnessed by the Asian countries has led to rapid forward strides being made in the agriculture in the last few years. In spite of this India faces several challenges arising from socio-economic, demographic and institutional sectors that affect its basic survival. In India, 85 % of the population is directly or indirectly dependent upon agriculture and a vast majority is based in the rural belt. Tourism is a very significant contributor to the GDP of any country and is a crucial tool for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable rural development. India basically being a rural economy, rural tourism and agri tourism hold an important place in facilitating development.

As per the census 2011 data, population of India is 1.21 billion. It means it has increased by 870 million since independence. India's accounts for 17.5 % of the world's population, whereas it has an area of 3,287,240 sq. km i.e. only 2.4 % of the total surface area of the world. The Agricultural land is getting divided and subdivided per generation which has increased the number of marginal farmers and low land holders (Agriculture Census Report 2005-06). Because of globalization and industrialization the existence of agriculture is threatening. This forces farmers to look for additional income via job or business so as to sustain their household income.

The 12th Five Year Plan prepared by the Planning Commission highlights "*pro-poor tourism*" for increasing net benefits to the poor and ensuring that tourism growth contributes to poverty reduction. The Planning Commission has identified tourism as the second largest sector in the country in providing employment opportunities for low-skilled workers.

Agritourism is the incorporation of tourism with agriculture. It promotes agriculture and allied activities as a tourism product. Agri-tourism is a rural enterprise which incorporates an operational farm along with a commercial tourism element. It has been practiced since many centuries but it was theoretically conceptualised in the last few decades. This concept was initiated and developed in Europe and North America, then to spread in many countries. In India it was initiated in 2005 at Malegaon village, near Baramati, Maharashtra by Agri Tourism Development Company (ATDC). The ATDC is promoting agritourism centres as well as initiating the development of concept of agritourism in India. It also caters to the needs of farmers by providing them training regarding skills and technical knowledge required to start and manage this venture at their farms.

II. OBJECTIVES

The present study is an experiment for the development of rural areas which are not rich with historical or natural wealth. Being an agricultural land, most of the farmers are bound to depend on the seasons. This thought or an idea will create an alternative source of income, engagement and pride. Following are the objectives of present research;

1. To create or develop a strategy for agri tourism on agricultural land of India.
2. To train the villagers to treat the foreigners as their source of income and pride.
3. To develop a relation between the tour operators and the youth of villagers.
4. To understand and evaluate the socio economic contribution of agri-tourism in a developing economy like India.
5. To analyse the agri-tourism as a resource to the dwindling growth rate in the agricultural sector.

III. INTRODUCTION OF AGRITOURISM

Agritourism gives people the chance to breathe fresh air, learn about rural environment, ride horses, pick fruits, feed animals, milk cows and participate in actual work of farm and buy produce directly from a farm. Agritourism is a form of niche tourism in which farms are used as tour destinations for educational and/or recreational purposes. Agritourism as, “the practice of attracting travellers or visitors to rural areas which are used primarily for agricultural purposes”.

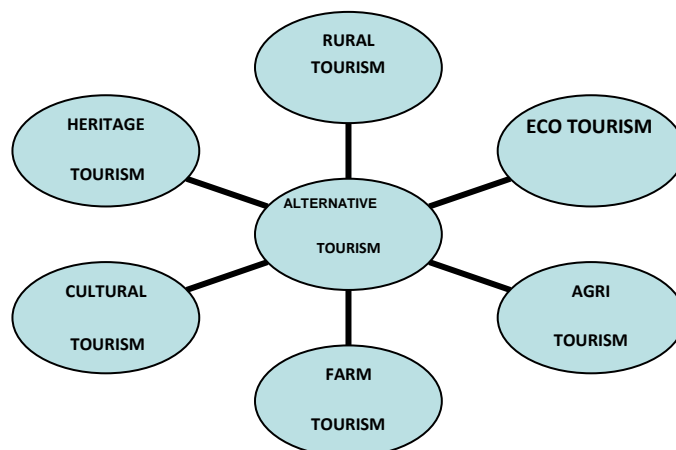
Agritourism center is the location where tourists from the urban areas can come and spend their weekends or holidays in a village with agricultural atmosphere at a very economical cost; it is the home away from home giving a personal feel of harmony with rural culture. It integrates agriculture with pleasure and gives the benefit of agriculture and tourism activities to the tourists that deliver economic benefit to concerned farmer and villagers.

Rationale of the study

Agritourism can rejuvenate the conventional concepts and views on tourism, and is bringing in a new dimension in the sustainable development. As stated by Fariborz Aref (2009) rural tourism development has become a top priority of the economic agenda of all the countries.

The urban population which is having roots in villages always has the curiosity to learn about rural life regarding sources of food, plants, animals, handicrafts, languages, culture, tradition, dresses and rural lifestyle. Agritourism has the capacity to satisfy the curiosity of this segment of population.

Agri tourism has the capacity to create a win win situation for both the farmers as well as the tourists. The farmers benefit by deriving additional source of income and tourist hunger natural environment is satisfied. Rural Tourism’ covers “a range of activities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their area in order to generate extra income for their business.” Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural 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 experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated, it is predominantly in natural environment, it meshes with seasonality and local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and traditions.



Tourism forms a significant aspect of the service sector which contributes largely to the Indian economic development. Indian tourism industry is growing at the rate of 10 %, which is two and a half times more than the growth rate at global level. The scope of tourism has varied branches very often depending upon the purpose and circumstances under which the activity is being taken up. In India of late the unique tourism arteries that have gained momentum are health tourism (medical tourism), religious tourism, sports tourism, educational tourism etc. Agri tourism is now an additional artery of the tourism sector in India. Though at present it is in nascent stage, with proper government incubation it can gain flight. There by introducing agritourism concept all over India not only the present growth rate can be sustained but it is also a value addition and can accelerate further growth.

This research study introduces the Agritourism concept which links the agriculture and tourism and discusses on current status of this business practiced by farmers. Linking the tourism sector to agriculture has the ability to rejuvenate and inject resources for both sectors. Farmers used Agritourism business for diversifying farm products and developing new market for generating supplementary income. In many cases, Agritourism also helped farmers' children to remain in agricultural activities. These centers have also generated good employment opportunities for villagers. It has been seen that number of temporary workers is more than the number of permanent ones.

Case Analysis Of Dungrajya Village

This village is situated around 32 km. from Kota, a district of southeast Rajasthan. Total population of the village is 15,000-20,000. Main occupation of the villagers is agriculture. To know more about the village, the researcher visited the area and found just two sites of tourists' interest. Firstly there is a small lake with lots of lotus and at the centre of lake a temple is there. We visited there and found 5 to 8 people sitting outside the temple. We went there chat with them as they were seems elder and mature people of the village. They told us that our tourism minister already sanctioned lakhs of rupees for the beautification of sarovar.

There we came to know that the temple inside the sarovar had a tradition to celebrate its foundation with some puja (sunderkand/ramayan) for 20 years on 20 january, 2016. They told us that they don't have any staying place/ dharamshala for any visitors.

When we asked about the heritage or any customs/ handicrafts, they refused that the youths and oldies are only engaged with agricultural activities. There is no other source of earning. They told us about the 150 years old temple and a bavari. We visited that site and found that renovation work has done and the temple is in good shape.

After visiting these sites we met Sarpanch of that village. She was innocent and ignorant about the prospects and problems of the village. The previous Sarpanch was mature and experienced. He told us about the only school, medical facilities and other services of that village. They all looks very much satisfied with their entire livelihood. The females of the village are confined to only household works.

IV. FINDINGS

1. **Kamal Sarovar** has the potential to attract tourists. Beautification work had already done. Cleanliness is required around the pond.
2. There is no other source of income other than agriculture.
3. They have no peculiar traditions or cultures but people are very warmth in nature. They welcome their guest with full respect and love.
4. Older people were claiming about the heritage temple that it is older than 150 years but they don't have any 'patta', pillar or any other written manuscript which may proof its heritage value.
5. They are good in agriculture practices.

Scope of Agri-Tourism:

1. An inexpensive gateway: The cost of food, accommodation, recreation and travel and tourism is low, widening the scope of tourism.
2. Curiosity for the urban about farming industry and life style: Agri-tourism, which involves villages and agriculture, has the capacity to satisfy the curiosity of the urban segment by providing scope for re-discovering the rural life, which is rich in diversity.
3. Strong family oriented recreational activities: through rural games, festivals, food, dress.
4. Finding solace with nature friendly life style: Peace and tranquility are in-built in Agri-tourism.
5. Nostalgia for their roots on the farm: For tourists it is like returning back to their roots.
6. Educational value of Agri-Tourism spreading knowledge about Agriculture science where urban students are moving with the pace of technology.

Realising all the facts the researcher talked to the famous tour operator of Kota. She insisted to visit the village and bring few of the tourists to that village where theywill get the complete ethnic and natural rural

atmosphere. After defeating all tribulations the tour operator ready to bring tourists to that village just for 4-5 hours. It was a major challenge for the researcher. She accompanied with the tourism students of Kota University, visited Sarpanh house and convince her to welcome tourist in a traditional manner. All villagers were so enthusiastic to welcome German people at their village. They all were ready to welcome in different manner. Finally two trips were arranged. Both were from Germany. First on was elderly family with only three people. They were welcome with Indian traditions like tika, aarti, Saha and traditional welcome song by villagers. Then they visited the temple at sarovar and finally they took part in agricultural activities. They enjoyed and love to visit the village on bullock cart. Finally they took pure rajasthani food in their lunch at sarpanch house. The complete memorable event for tourists and for the villagers.

Next visit was of 17 young Germans. Same way they welcomed in Indian traditional style. For them villagers arranged few agricultural games like gulli danda, Rassakashi (tug of war), artistic mehndi and delicious traditional food.

Whole village participated on their own way. They all trying to influence the foreigners by telling about their traditions and customs. Tourists were also overwhelmed by this affection and love.

V. CONCLUSION

It was just an experiment to judge that whether agritourism will be successful in small villages or not. Tourists experience at village were great. Many tourists revert mail and send many thanks to the villagers and tour operator for giving such a wonderful experience.

University students helped the villagers to tackle the tourists at different times. There is a need to train them morally, ethically and culturally. Making them realize that they are their source of earning.



