STUDY OF CHALLENGES IN SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH OF AGRITOURIST CENTRES IN WESTERN MAHARASHTRA

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ABSTRACT

Agritourism is another concept of tourism. The objective of agritourism is to get closer to nature. The infrastructure of the agritourism centre is completely different compared to the luxury Hotels. Agritourism centres do not have a great ambiance or many facilities. Most of these centres have average ambiance and limited facilities. In these centres, tourists can take active participation in activities related to farming. Activities such as sowing, farm animal rearing, bird watching, harvest demonstration, bullock cart ride etc. The objective of the research is to identify the challenges of agritourism centres. Majorly there are two types of challenges, first is financial challenges and second is labor challenges. An exploratory research method is applied to identify the challenges faced by the agritourism centres. Research also compares the challenges of agritourism centres in Pune and in the Satara districts. Research is based on primary data. There are total 33 centres in Western Maharashtra that have completed more than 5 years, of which 27 agritourism centres are considered for the study. Data is collected by a personal visit by the researcher to every agritourism centre. For the processing of primary data, SPSS software is used. Descriptive as well as inferential statistics is applied. The expected outcome of the research is there are significant challenges in both areas, financial as well labor, which affect the sustainability and growth of agritourism centres.

Keywords: Agritourism, Financial challenges, Labour challenges, Sustainability, Growth

INTRODUCTION

Agritourism is defined as tourism where guests stay in accommodation on a working farm and may also participate in farming operations. Agritourism can be defined more broadly as any activity or contact that encourages a traveller to develop a deeper respect and awareness of the land they are visiting as well as the people who live on that property. Either a leisurely lunch eaten on a farm where you can feast on locally grown fresh produce or a day spent touring a winery and tasting its wines can fall under this category. It might involve providing food for animals at an animal nursery or gathering your own food from trees and bushes. The primary contributor to the Indian economy is its agricultural industry. Agriculture is directly or indirectly responsible for the livelihood of around 65 percent of the population. The agricultural industry contributes approximately 13 percentage points to the total GDP. The addition of activities that generate additional income to agriculture that is already in place would

Boost without question the agricultural sector's contribution to the national GDP. This objective will be accomplished through agritourism. The Indian tourism industry has recently begun to embrace a novel concept known as agritourism. It provides the chance to experience the genuine enchantment and genuine connect with actual life. Conceivably, the promotion of agritourism has to converge conceptually with the promotion of rural tourism, health tourism, and adventure tourism. It is often said that tourism is a tool for the creation of jobs, the reduction of poverty, and the promotion of sustainable human development. According to estimates provided by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the travel and tourism sector is expanding at a rate of 4% each year. On the other hand, the tourist business in India is expanding

at a rate of 10.1 percent, which is 2.5 times faster than the rate seen globally. One of the most important economic generators of foreign exchange for the nation is the tourist industry.

One such type of tourism that has only lately begun to develop in Maharashtra is known as agritourism. It is an area that has the capability of expanding. As a rapidly expanding area of study, it undoubtedly comes with its fair share of difficulties and difficulties in terms of management. When planning a new tourism development at a destination, it is essential to consider critical factors such as guest-host relationships, environmental impact, and economic viability. This is especially true in the case of agritourism, which has a direct influence not only on the culture of the host community but also on the rural community as a whole.

Activities at centre: There are different activities as compare to activities in in typical tourist place. Farm tours, rides on tractors and bullock carts, visits to farms that produce grapes, mangoes, and other horticultural products, as well as farms that raise birds and animals, are all examples of activities that fall under the category of "agritourism." This agritourism unit/farm offers its visitors and guests a wide variety of activities, all of which are sure to be enjoyable.

There are a variety of seasonal fruit farms located on the sixty-five acres of horticultural plantations and cultivation that are part of this area's horticultural cultivation, which totals 110 acres and is mostly used for agricultural purposes. The poultry farm, dairy farm, goat farm, and the most visited location silk processing machine are some of the additional attractions that can be found here. In addition, tourists can stop by the gram panchayat village office and school, as well as the village fairs and markets, the neighboring jaggery production unit, the emu bird farm, the sugar factory, the Taluka Milk Collection Centres, as well as some of the oldest religious temples and the Museum.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Krishna D K (2019) The researcher conducted study to analyse challenges and strategies for promotion of agritourism, multidimensionally. The researcher highlighted technical, Financial, Human resource, Marketing challenges and findings of study were: There must be promotion of commercial loans for agritourism. The government must set price policy with respect to tours.

Kimberly L. Jensen (2014) aimed to evaluate how the location, kind, and size of agritourism operations influence future expansion intentions. Workshops had an impact on businesses looking to grow. Attendance at on-farm classes and workshops seems to have a beneficial effect on expansion plans. This might be a sign of an increase in agritourism attractions with educational components. Other agritourism businesses in their county appeared to support growing plans. Agritourism businesses may understand the value of having many points of interest to draw tourists, and the amount of travel spending in their county may have affected expansion goals. Expanders view hiring, training, and managing staff as being more difficult than following regulations. These problems might be addressed through educational initiatives that support corporate expansion.

Vijay M. Kumbhar (2013) Maharashtra has a lot of potential for the growth of agrotourism because of its natural beauty, variety of agricultural goods, rural traditions, and festivals, More than 45% of people wish to experience rural living but live in cities. In Maharashtra, starting an agrotourism company is a smart move. However, Maharashtrian farmers lack financial literacy and a realistic understanding of the industry. Therefore, district agriculture offices and agricultural institutions had to make an effort to offer recommendations and creative concepts for agrotourism. The government ought to make an effort to provide institutional financing and grants to boost agrotourism in Maharashtra. The Bank ought to aid Maharashtra's agrotourism industry. Farmers in Maharashtra and other Indian states must band together to support the network of agricultural tourism.

Priya Rajesh Parkar (2013) However, "Agritourism" is not recognised in India, unlike in Western nations. Support systems are thought of as growth drivers for agritourism. "Agritourism" is not recognised as a business or agro-related activity in India. Clearly, the ambition of rural Ratnagiri agritourism companies is to benefit from the support systems of western nations. The majority of Ratnagiri district's agritourism business owners got their start on their own, with no help from the government. Agriculture and tourism are combined in agritourism. Farmers in the Ratnagiri district recognised two types of support systems: backward connections and forward linkages. Agriculture-related support is referred to as a backward connection, and any policy or concession related to tourism is referred to as a forward linkage.

KRISHNA D. KARJIGI(2019), studied the state of the agritourism industry in Goa and Maharashtra today. According to the author's findings, agritourism businesses have excellent prospects in both states. The author also looked at visitor satisfaction and expectations, and she discovered that there were discrepancies between the two. Accessibility, variety of attractions and activities, rural cuisine, involvement in farming activities, lodging facility, acceptable safety, and opportunities to buy agricultural products were among the features examined. The author also advocated for raising agritourism's profile among both tourists and farmers.

Maryam Mahmoodi (2022) The major goal of this study was to examine the state, potential, and difficulties of agritourism in Iran and Poland in order to better understand the situations in both nations. In order to access the potential articles and comprehend the literature on the development, support policies, problems, and history of agritourism in Iran and Poland, this study adopted the systematic literature review (SLR) as its primary method. Between 2000 and 2022, published papers on entrepreneurship and agritourism in Iran and Poland were evaluated. According to the study's findings, Poland has a longer history and a more developed agritourism industry than Iran, and Iranian authorities need to do more to manage and promote this industry.

Research Methodology: The research is based on primary data. The researcher collected primary data through personal visits to 27 agritourism centres in the Pune district and Satara district. Information related to financial problems and labour problems is collected. Data is analysed using SPSS package. Descriptive as well as inferential statistics is used.

DATA ANALYSIS
Objective 1: To study the financial problems that are causing difficulties in getting financial assistance to the agritourism centres.

Null hypothesis H_{01}: There is no significant difference in the types of financial problems.

Alternate hypothesis H_{11}: There is a significant difference in types of financial problems.

To test the above null hypothesis, Friedman's test is applied. The results are as follows.

Test Statistics(a)	
N	27
Chi-Square	28.478
df	4
p-value	.000
a. Friedman Test	

Interpretation: Above results indicate that the calculated p-value is 0.000. It is less than the standard p-value of 0.05. Therefore, Friedman's test is rejected. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion: There is a significant difference in the types of financial problems.

Findings: To understand the finding of the hypothesis, mean ranks are obtained and presented in the following table.

Ranks	
	Mean Rank
Requirement of documents by bank	3.11
Financial statements	3.57
High rate of interest	3.30
Repayment capacity	3.11
Inadequate loan amount	1.91

The above table indicates the most important financial problem to avail of financial assistance is the financial statements of the agritourism centres. The next important problem is the high rate of interest on the loan amount. The least important financial problem among all is the inadequate loan amount.

Objective 2: To study the financial problems of the agritourism centres in accordance with the districts.

Null hypothesis H$_{02}$: There is no significant difference in financial problems between agritourism centres in Pune and Satara districts.

Alternate hypothesis H$_{12}$: There is a significant difference in financial problems between agritourism centres in Pune and Satara districts.

To test the above null hypothesis, the independent sample t-test is used. The results are as follows.

Independent Samples Test				
	t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	p-value	Mean Difference
Financial Problems	1.192	25	.245	9.17647

Interpretation: Above results indicate that the p-value for financial problems is 0.245. It is greater than the standard p-value of 0.05. Therefore, the independent sample t-test is accepted. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternate hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusion: There is no significant difference in financial problems between agritourism centres in Pune and Satara districts.

Findings: To understand the findings of the hypothesis, mean scores of the financial problems are obtained according to Pune and Satara.

Group Statistics					
	District	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Financial Problems	Pune	10	68.0000	21.49935	6.79869
	Satara	17	58.8235	17.98692	4.36247

The above table indicates that the mean score of the financial problem for 10 agritourism centres in the Pune district is 68.00% and for 17 agritourism centres in the Satara district it is 58.82%. The difference in mean scores of financial problems of the agritourism centres is not significant.

Objective 3: To study the labour problems faced by the agritourism centres.

Null hypothesis H$_{03}$: There is no significant difference in the types of labour problems.

Alternate hypothesis H$_{13}$: There is a significant difference in types of labour problems.

To test the above null hypothesis, Friedman's test is applied. The results are as follows.

Test Statistics(a)	
N	27
Chi-Square	42.421
df	6
p-value	.000
a. Friedman Test	

Interpretation: Above results indicate that the calculated p-value is 0.000. It is less than the standard p-value of 0.05. Therefore, Friedman's test is rejected. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion: There is a significant difference in the types of labour problems.

Findings: To understand the finding of the hypothesis, mean ranks are obtained and presented in the following table.

Ranks	
	Mean Rank
Always a shortage of labour	3.70
Shortage of labour in season	5.74
Attrition of labour is high	3.37
Labour cost is high	4.04
Training to labour is difficult	4.56
Labours are not regular	3.41
Labours are not punctual	3.19

The above table indicates the most important labour problem for the agritourism centres is the shortage of labour in season. The next important problem is the difficulty in training the labours. The least important problem of all is the lack of punctuality among labourers.

Objective 4: To study the labour problems of the agritourism centres in accordance with the districts.

Null hypothesis H$_{04}$: There is no significant difference in labour problems between agritourism centres in Pune and Satara districts.

Alternate hypothesis H$_{14}$: There is a significant difference in labour problems between agritourism centres in Pune and Satara districts.

To test the above null hypothesis, the independent sample t-test is used. The results are as follows.

Independent Samples Test					
		t-test for Equality of Means			
		t	df	p-value	Mean Difference
Labour Problems		-2.896	25	.008	-13.32753

Interpretation: Above results indicate that the p-value for financial problems is 0.008. It is less than the standard p-value of 0.05. Therefore, the independent sample t-test is rejected. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion: There is a significant difference in labour problems between agritourism centres in Pune and Satara districts.

Findings: To understand the findings of the hypothesis, mean scores of the labour problems are obtained according to Pune and Satara.

Group Statistics					
	District	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Labour Problems	Pune	10	45.2860	11.24549	3.55614
	Satara	17	58.6135	11.71294	2.84081

The above table indicates that the mean score of labour problems for 10 agritourism centres in the Pune district is 45.28% and for 17 agritourism centres in the Satara district it is 58.61%. The difference in mean scores of labour problems of the agritourism centres is significant.

Objective 5: To compare the financial problems and labour problems faced by the agritourism centres.

Null Hypothesis H$_{05}$: There is no significant difference in the financial problems and labour problems of the agritourism centres.

Alternate Hypothesis H$_{15}$: There is a significant difference in the financial problems and labour problems of the agritourism centres.

To test the above null hypothesis, the paired sample t-test is used. The results are as follows.

Paired Samples Test					
	Paired Differences				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	p-value
Financial Problems - Labour Problems	8.54481	27.18594	1.633	26	.114

Interpretation: Above results indicate that the p-value of financial challenges and labour challenges of the respondent is 0.114. It is greater than the standard p-value of 0.05. Therefore, the paired sample t-test is accepted. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion: There is no significant difference in the financial problems and labour problems of the agritourism centres.

Findings: To understand the findings of the hypothesis, mean scores of financial problems and labour problems are obtained.

Paired Samples Statistics				
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Financial Problems	62.2222	27	19.48043	3.74901
Labour Problems	53.6774	27	13.08494	2.51820

The above table indicates that the mean score for financial problems is 62.22% and the mean score for labour problems is 53.67%. Hence, the difference between them is not significant.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is observed that agritourism centers are facing financial as well as labour problems. Finding of the research about financial problems is about getting financial assistance from financial institutions. For granting financial assistance banker require proper documentation. The availability of legal documents of land and/or farmhouse is the major problem in getting financial assistance. For disbarment of secured loan

banks require title clear property and it is problem of the agritourism centres. Financial problems are more for agritourism centers of Pune district as compared to Satara district.

Agritourism is a seasonal business. Most of the tourists prefer to visit on long weekends of during vacations. Because of this there is large demand of seasonal labours. The main problem is avalilability of seasonal labour. Labour problem is uniform in both Pune and Satara Districts.

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