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AGRO- TOURISM : AN OVERVIEW

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Objectives of the study :

Following are the main objectives of the Study.

1. To Study the significance of Agro- Tourism.
2. To understand the development of Agro- Tourism.
3. To evaluate the components of Agro- Tourism.

Research methodology:

The information and data were connected from the secondary like academic Journals, Reference books, Periodicals, Internet and similar authorized publications.

Introduction:

Tourism is termed as an instrument for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable development. During 1999-2000 direct employment created by tourism was 15.5 million. Besides tourism also promotes national integration, understanding and supports local handicrafts and cultural activities.

Agriculture is the largest economic sector and plays a significant role in the overall socio-economic development of India. Innovative income-generating activity for enterprising farmers, agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy. This sector's contribution toward GDP is decreasing and farmers are finding it difficult to carry the agriculture activities without additional income. Whereas tourism is termed as an instrument for employment generation, poverty alleviation and development. Agro – Tourism, brings in to gather the declining and booming sector.

What Agro- Tourism ?

Agro- Tourism means it is about unravelling various facets of village life. This includes opening up farms to tourists from cities and abroad and letting them spend some time in the lap of nature. Apart from telling them about the various crops and how they are sown and harvested, Agro –Tourism exposes tourists to authentic food, handicraft, dress, Culture, Music, and language. In short, tourists get to indulge in rural activities such as bullock – cart rides, milking cows and goats and picking farm – fresh fruits and vegetables. In this way, the activities may vary from village to village as a country as diverse as India has so many different experiences to offer. Agro- Tourism activities can help generate more jobs in rural areas from villages to cities.

Significance of Development of Tourism in India

Tourism is a multi-sectoral activity characterized by multiple sectors provided by a range of suppliers. It is the largest service industry in the country. Its importance lies in being an instrument for economic development and employment generation, particularly in remote and backward areas. It contributes toward overall socio-economic benefit flow into the economy through growth of tourism in the shape of increased state and national revenues, business income, employment wages and salary income.

Over the last few years, the tourism industry has to face with a series of unprecedented challenges. International events such as terrorism and SARS, swine flu and economic turbulence have led to significant changes in tourism demand. At the same time, international events such as increase in information and booking facilities made available over the internet, consumer desire to travel more frequently, stronger branding of tourism destinations have acted as a catalyst. More and more governments have started to realize that they can not leave the growth of tourism industry to chance. Therefore, this emerging global consciousness represents a great opportunity for this industry.

Table No 1 shows the contribution of Travel and Tourism Industry in GDP and Employment in 2007

Sr.No	Particulars	India(%)	World Average (%)	World Average % estimated in 2007

1	Contribution Travel and Tourism economy in GDP	5.4	10.4	10.7
2	Contribution Travel and Tourism Industry to GDP	2.0	3.6	3.4
3	Contribution Travel and Tourism economy to employment	5.5	8.3	8.3
4	Contribution Travel and Tourism industry of employment	2.3	2.7	2.8

Reference : WTTC (World Travel & Tourism Council)

Development of agro- tourism :

The development of Agro- Tourism is a consequence of following factors .

- Promotion and development of new forms of tourism like adventure tourism, eco tourism and Agro- Tourism identifying the market demand.
- Realization by government the importance of tourism as an industry.
- Allocating funds to develop rural areas from tourism point of view.
- **Incorporating the tourism industry in national developments plans and policies.**
- Overall increases in travel and tourism industry is as a result of globalization economic with customer.
- Deciding objectives and strategies for sustainable development of tourism.

At local levels the farmers are more conscious about their choice to enter into tourism activity. They have realized the potential of agro tourism and would like to extend the farm product in a contorted environment. Special Interest Tourism (SIT) targeting niche market is a recent trend and agro- tourism is one of the STJ product.

Three Key Factors for the success of Agro –Tourism :

1. **Farmer :** Majority of the cases farmer is less educated less exposed and innocent For farmer, any outsider is a guest and treated wholeheartedly without any entertains the guest while entertaining himself in the process. He is no like an exploitative natured businessman which itself facilitate a clean tourism atmosphere.
2. **Village:** Village, which is located far from the city lacks urban facilities but blessed with natural resources. The investments is made by nature in the form if water bodies, fields forest mountains desters and islands. Community is more homogenous and treating a guest is part of their culture rather than a profession leading to natural environment required for urban tourist.
3. **Agriculture:** Rich resources in agriculture namely land water and plants are unique from place to place bringing diversity and creating curiosity. Each field is unique which adds to the attraction of tourists. The way of cultivation and the products are great attraction to the urban population. Indigenous knowledge of rural people is wealth, which adds to novelty and curiosity of urban population.

In this way combination of farmer, village and agriculture create a wonderful situation which provides unlimited satisfaction to the tourist specially from urban areas.

Components of Agro-Tourism :

"Seeing is doing believing doing is learning ,this experience based concept is the nerve of Agri-tourism. Agricultural environment around farmers and the entire production process could create curiosity among urban life. Agro tourism is a knowledge intensive sustainable way of tourism which combines the pleasure of tourism along with experiences of areas of agricultural aspects. Agro tourism includes having people pay to visit of stay one the farm to experience the rural life and learn about different farming activities places of agricultural importance like highest crop yielding farm, highest animal yielding farm processing units, farms where innovation trial add attraction on to the tourists.

As a result of this agriatmosphere in the villages, there is scope to develop. Agro-tourism. areas like agri-shopping,culinary tourism, pick and own your tree or plot biodiversity park, various models of watershed development, models of soil water conservation rain water harvesting nursery management and medicinal fruit crop vegetable) For better enjoyment group of members can spend some time on the farm while lodging and champing programmers for special purpose and be arranged under the sole theme as follows.

- Youth camp
- Skill
- Music flestivals
- Holiday Celebrations

- Harvest Festivals
- Comptive
- Rural festivals (Jatra)
- Farm vacation
- Farm vacation
- Wedding, receptions and honeymoons

Daily activities in the Agro tourism

- Animal feeding
- Guided crop / vegetables / fruits farm visit and tours.
- Agricultural education program , now to grow cereals ,fruits vegetables etc.
- Watching domestic animals and how to care for cattle.
- Agricultural education programs how to grow cereals fruits vegetables.
- Watching domestic animals and how to care for cattle.

Off the farm visits

- Farmers markets at tahsil place
- Tahsil milk collection centers
- Roadside produce stands
- Religious Temples visit

Free Facilities

Rural Games Bicycle Rides, Bullock cart Ride, Tractor Ride farm tours , Bird Watching and jungle , trek, local site seeing , Evening Entertainment programs like rural folk dance, music compfire and lot of fun filled games.

Economic Impact

Income from entrance fees and direct payment for access right.

- Income from associated value added services.
- Development of related economic sector
- e.g. Sustainabel agriculture and forestry.
- Increase local land values
- Increase foreign exchange where tourism is dominated by foreign national.

Social Impact

- Training and skills development for provision of economic services.
- Education primary schools or environmental education.
- Healthcare – clinics /visiting doctors nurses offered by tour operators.
- Improved local infrastructure communications or transport.
- Increased social capital-building local organizational and managerial capacity.

Environmental Impact

- Protection and conservation of environment.
- Improved resource management practices.
- Increased multi-stake holders will to conserve at landscape level.
- Conservation of Biodiversity.

Conclusion

Considering the above development strategies adopted by agro tourism it can be concluded that ,Agri tourism can be an effective tool and technique to educate consumers about local agriculture .Agri tourism also show cases the diversity and uniqueness of local agriculture, thereby increasing the visibility and the appeal of locally grown products. He the opportunities in this sector can boost the rural economy. Promotion of Agro tourism requires conceptual convergence like other tourism . e.g. Rural tourism,eoc-tourism,adventure tourism for better growth.

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