

## **Agricultural and Rural Tourism in India :** **Scopes in Current Environmental Changing Scenario**

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### **Abstract**

*The present concern for sustainable development and environmental protection poses questions for tourism developers and the managers of destinations about the values which are afforded the environment of tourism. Times are changing, so that demands and expectations of the 'new' traveler are change. The search for different experiences, different adventures, and different lifestyles has paved the way for this concept called the 'Agricultural and Rural tourism'. India is a fastest developing economy of the world but still if we look at India, a major part of population of India is still living in villages in majority, with the growing rate of population and increasing demand of basic amenities. In Agricultural and Rural parts generally following kinds of products are available viz. historical, heritage, natural based, medication based, religious based, cultural based and man made, which have got a great potential with respect development of tourism. All of them religious and historical type of Agricultural and Rural Tourism products are give much space for rural development. This paper examines the key issues involved in the development of Rural and Agri-tourism in India and the challenges faced by Rural and Agri-tourism industry.*

**Key-words:** Agri-tourism, diversity, new tourism phenomenon, eco tourism, adventuresome, learning Experience, tourism product, new tourism, new tourist

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### **Introduction**

In 19th century, travel for recreation was only undertaken by the elite. With the advent of rail, mass travel was available for the first time and destinations such as Brighton, UK and Coney Island, NY developed. Status was then defined by the mode of travel. In 20th century status was revealed by the nature of the destinations. Travel and tourism has been going on since time immemorial, and for the 'twentieth century tourist, the world has become one large department store of countryside and cities'. By 21st century, travel became a new economy - **tourism** - available to all with enough money. This new tourism phenomenon is not only influenced by economic factors but also by new cultures and a new generation of tourists.

### **Tourism in India**

- JBIC ranked India as the fifth most attractive investment destinations.
- Conde Nast Traveler, one of the world's most celebrated travel magazines ranked India amongst the top tourist destinations of the world.
- Tourism is one of the third largest net earner of foreign exchange for the country and also one of the sectors, which employs the largest number of manpower.
- India has significant potential for becoming a major global tourist destination.

### **Tourism in India – Figures**

1. 0.8% share of world market
2. Tourists (2008)
  - 4.6 million (International)
  - 382 million (domestic)
3. Employment
  - Direct - 10.7 million
  - Indirect – 24.4 million
4. Export earnings ~ US \$ 9.6 bn 2008
5. Contribution to GDP
  - Direct 2%
  - Overall 5.9%

### **Tourism growth in India**

- According to *World Tourism Organization* estimates, India will lead in South Asia with 8.9 million arrivals by 2020
- India is poised to emerge as the 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest growing (8.8%) tourism economy in the world over 2005-14 according to the *World Travel & Tourism*

### **The Indian Agriculture and Tourism Industry Scenario**

India is known as “Land of villages”. More than 77 crore farmers live in 5.5 lakhs of village (2001). Agriculture contributed about 18.5% of the national income (2006-07) as compared to a high 50% in 1950. 85% of population of India still depends on Agriculture hence Agriculture is not mere business, but is still the “True Culture of India”.

### **Agricultural and Rural tourism**

1. **Agri-Tourism:** Tourism on the farms enables farmers to diversify their activities while enhancing the value of their products and property. Farm tourism also helps to reconcile farming interests and environmental protection through integrated land management in which farmers continue to play a key role.

Tourists who choose farm accommodation rather than other kinds of accommodation facilities look for genuine Agricultural and Rural atmosphere where they can share intimacy of the household they live in, learn traditional crafts and skills with their hosts, make friends which is a quality, modern times have almost forgotten and above all enjoy home made food and drinks. Some specific food labels can help consumers establish a local produce and can be used as a selling point to tourist who want to taste home grown quality food and drink.

2. **Heritage and cultural Tourism** in Agricultural and Rural areas comes in a wide range of forms most of which are unique to an individual local and a valuable component of the Agricultural and Rural tourism product. Heritage and cultural tourism includes temples, rural buildings but may be extended to local features of interest including war remnants, monuments to famous literary, artistic or scientific people, historic remains, archeological sites, traditional parkland etc.

3. **Eco Tourism:** Many tourists visit Agricultural and Rural areas for the purpose of bird and animal watching and learning about local flora and fauna. Agricultural and Rural tourist destination as a product is definitely very fragile in ecological, social and cultural sense. Its development requires very specific approach that could help it remain sustainable in the long term.

Agricultural and Rural Tourist Destination. There are some critical factors responsible in the evaluation and development of agricultural and Rural tourism as a product. Some of these are –

- Changes in the preferences and needs of visitors.
- Destination of the natural and manmade environment.
- Change or disappearance of those attractions, which brought tourists to the area.
- Identification of potential consumer.
- Understanding the Agricultural and Rural tourists buying behavior.

To be competitive Agricultural and Rural tourism destination must possess basic tourist requirements

- Such as hygienic accommodation and catering.
- It should be connected with the farm accommodation.

### **Defining Agri Tourism**

Agri Tourism is defined as travel, which combines agricultural or rural settings with products of agricultural operations all within a tourism experience. The product can be “experience itself”. Rural and Agri-Tourism can be defined as “A range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourist to their area in order to generate extra income for their businesses”.

**Status of Rural and Agri-Tourism Internationally with specific focus on Europe** Most of the European countries pay lots of attention to Agricultural and Rural tourism. The growth of Agricultural and Rural tourism is difficult to quantify because few countries collect statistics in a way, which separates purely Agricultural and Rural from other forms of tourism. The concept of Rural and Agri-Tourism developed in 80's in Europe, the participating farms have doubled in countries like Italy, the United Kingdom, and France. The number of Rural and Agri-Tourism accommodation units exceeds 600.00. In the middle of the 90s, 12 European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Great Britain, Italy, Austria, France and Germany had more than 100.00 farm enterprises involve with different tourism activities. It is obvious that most of the European countries have positive attitude towards Agricultural and Rural tourism development because of the advantages this strategy has on Agricultural and Rural areas and their overall development.

### **Rural and Agri-Tourism in India: Innovative Income generating activity for Enterprising Farmers**

Agriculture is backbone of Indian economy. This sector's contribution towards GDP is decreasing and farmers are finding it difficult to carry the agricultural activities without an additional income. Whereas tourism is termed as an instrument for employment generation, poverty alleviation and development, Rural and Agri-Tourism brings in together the declining and booming sector. Advantages of Rural and Agri-Tourism:

1. It brings major primary sector Agriculture closer to major service sector tourism expected to create win-win situation for both the sectors.
2. Tourism sector has the potential to enlarge.
3. Agriculture sector has the capacity to absorb expansion in Tourism sector.

### **Scope of Rural and 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: Rural and 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 Rural and Agri-Tourism.
5. Nostalgia for their roots on the farm: For tourists it is like returning back to their roots.
6. Educational value of Rural and Agri-Tourism spreading knowledge about Agriculture science where urban students are moving with the pace of technology.

### **Basic Principles of Rural and Agri-Tourism**

1. Have something for visitors to see: Animals, birds, farms, culture of the village, dress and festivals.
2. Have something for visitors to do: Participating in agricultural operations, riding camel, buffalo, cooking and participating in the rural games i.e. gillidanda, gotti (marble etc.).
3. Have something for visitors to buy: Rural crafts, dress materials, farm gate fresh processed food are few items. Three important factors, which contribute to the success of Rural and Agri-Tourism as service:

Detailed discussions with various knowledgeable persons indicated the following three factors:

1. **Farmer:** Majority cases farmer is less educated, less exposed and innocent for him outsider as guest is (like god) and is treated wholeheartedly without any commercial motive. He entertains the guest while entertaining himself in the process he fills all the service gaps. This makes him a natural businessman.
2. **Village:** Village being located far from the city lacks urban facilities but is rich in natural resources. The investment is the natural resources itself.
3. **Agriculture field:** Each field is unique which adds to the attraction of the urban population. This is the incentive wealth of the rural people.

### **ATDC's Role in Rural and Agri-Tourism**

- Prepare Agri Tourism project report and business plan for each applicant agriculture farm.
- Help to facilitate the financial support from Nationalize banks, institutes and government agencies to built agri and rural tourism facilities and infrastructure like accommodation, sanitation, approach road etc.
- Conduct Agri Tourism Business Training Program.
- Conduct Seminars and conferences on Rural and Agri-Tourism business.
- Provide sales and marketing support.
- Co-ordinate tours from urban areas to the farms.

This survey promoted to experiment Rural and Agri-Tourism in the 110 acre model farm of the agriculture development trust.

### **Rural tourism in India**

Tourism being a very developing prospective area in India has also got impetus and tourism in India has started growing with considerable pace. India is being fabulous country offering almost all the tourism products available under a single roof (destination). From marvelous beaches to exotic hills, from historic past to challenging future and oldest civilization to the youngest paradigm shift (change in culture attitude, approach and behavior), from still existing barter system to highly developed system market every thing in available in India and this industry of tourism is really offering challenging and very bright future to the People of India.

In rural parts generally following kinds of products are available viz. historical, heritage, natural based, medication based, religious based, cultural based and man made. Which have got a great potential with respect development of tourism, also if certain constraint are removed this could be developed to their fullest excellent and there are certain great examples and certainly few countries where will showing public and political will these things have been made possible. All of them religious and historical type of rural tourism products are give much space for rural development.

### **The New Tourist**

The traveling consumer of today (let alone in the future) is very different from any other time in history. The most successful businesses in the travel industry are those that respond to the challenge through the use of technology, innovative marketing programs, better training of staff and by developing closeness and understanding of its customers/guests. The differences in travel patterns in the next century will be more related to what consumers are seeking in a travel experience than in how they travel.

Today's traveler, the well-heeled or footloose back-packer, is usually informed, educated, and more often than not, fully aware of what he or she wants from their travels. For them the optimization of time and money is the key and they prepare for their trip by researching their destination through the Web and the experiences of friends and fellow travelers. Mass media has responded to this shift and further fuelled the search for experiences through the promotion of a vast range of lifestyle/adventure programs which have evolved more recently into experiential voyeuristic docudramas referred to as reality programmes. Attention is being turned to exploring new frontiers or daring to go where traditional thought did not allow.

"New" tourists however, are increasingly being seen to be environmentally sensitive, displaying respect for the culture of host nations and looking to experience and learn rather than merely stand back and gaze. "New" tourists are participators not spectators. Things that would never appear on the list of the "mass" tourist such as adventure, getting of the beaten track and mingling with the locals are now the foundations of the new tourist experiences. Typically these tourists are turning away from travel and prefer to have a high level of involvement in the organization of their trip.

Travel is no longer a novelty to the new tourist. Studies support what industry executives have been noticing for the last few years. People expect more out of their vacations than they used to and they are more adventuresome. Surveys done by the Canadian Tourism Research Institute indicate a high degree of interest in getaway vacations, ecotourism, cultural tourism and combining a business trip with a pleasure trip.

Over the next ten years, tourism products and attractions will have to cater to visitors who are more demanding and discriminating, as well as more active and more purposeful in their choice of destination. There will be a shift in emphasis from passive fun to active learning, and the quality and genuineness of visitor experiences will be crucial to future success in a competitive market.

An Acronym that is relevant to describe the 'new' tourist is REAL, which stands for:

**-Rewarding      - Enriching      - Adventuresome - Learning Experience**

A key underpinning concept for REAL tourism is authenticity of experience, which is often related to the environment and culture and seen to be unaffected by "mass" tourism. The New Tourists prefer to be regarded as travelers and not tourists. Some specific points which need to be kept in mind while dealing with the New Tourist are: This type of traveler requires a completely different marketing approach. They avoid conventional glossy marketing mechanisms and prefer to use reliable sources such as **word of mouth referrals**, their own independent research and trusted publications; They desire **experiences** as opposed to products and services; They can be called **experiential traveler**s, they extend across all age groups and traditional market segments;

### **New Tourism for the New Tourist**

To enable new tourism attractions to stand the test of time and satisfy the demanding requirements of the evolving 'new' tourist, the following criteria should be applied to existing and proposed attractions:

- That the attraction offers a distinct, unique experience that cannot easily be replicated by competitors;
- That the attraction is value added through 'best practice' interpretation, which preferably utilizes a 'human element' such as interpretive guides, seasoned veterans and/or local characters;
- That, where possible, the experience is externalized within the natural/actual setting rather than internalized within a false/reproduced setting;
- That the attraction offers an exciting, authentic, interactive and educational experience;
- That 'comfort' should not compromise the authenticity of the experience;
- That the attraction adheres to ecologically sustainable development principles;
- That the attraction avoids the over reliance on technological interpretive devices that will become quickly outdated; and
- That the attraction offers a choice in the form of interpretation offered.

Responding to the shift in market dynamics towards a "New" style of tourist, a number of initiatives need to be taken so as to fuel the growth of experiential tourism these include:

- Network tourism initiatives;
- The development of interpretive highways;
- The explosion of interpretive centers
- The latest trend towards regional base camps.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations**

For any Rural and Agri-Tourism venture to be successful some important pre-conditions need to be fulfilled. These are:

- A complete tourism package can be provided through initiation by the local government bodies of activities such as beautification campaigns, sponsorship of special events that tie in with local tourist attractions and participation of all businesses in the area.
- Good community leadership; Successful tourism promotion and development requires good leadership by open minded and enthusiastic persons from local government, community groups, the business community and non-profit organisations such as chamber of commerce and convention and visitor bureaus.
- Support and participation of local government; The role of local government is especially important in the following areas; funding for tourism development and promotion, creating and maintenance of infrastructure necessary for tourism, zoning and maintenance of the community so that it looks clean and appealing to tourists and educational support for farmers.
- Sufficient funds for tourism development; Most of the rural communities depend on public funds that are very often insufficient to cover all the needs of the rural community; private funds are something that most often can't be reached since local people do not have sufficient incomes by themselves to invest; therefore it is very important to explore for other sources of funding and assistance.
- Strategic planning; Planning is fundamental for the efficient and effective use of resources and funds, especially in rural areas that have few funds and resources. Good planning for tourism development and promotion can help develop and support local businesses connected to tourism. Planning for tourism development should be integrated into a community's overall economic strategy because of the interdependence of the community and key aspects of tourism development and promotion. Hence, planning for tourism requires the involvement of various stakeholders in the community.
- Coordination and cooperation between businesspersons and local leadership; for tourism development and planning to work, coordination and cooperation between local government and entrepreneurs is crucial. While strength of rural communities is their strong personnel networks, coordination and cooperation between local government and the business community do not always occur easily, if at all.
- Coordination and cooperation between rural tourism entrepreneurs; Tourism requires different types of businesses to work together because, by its nature; tourism has intertwined relations between different types of business such as shops, accommodation facilities, restaurants and tourist attractions. They may create different types of networks, both formal and informal. Tourism

network allows for a standardized, yet high quality, business management, which small enterprises lack. Strategic planning and tactical decisions such as pricing, product differentiation and yield management can be handled much better by a qualified management. A tourism network can substantially improve small tourism business performance by transforming their sporadically scattered products into a one-stop-shop selling a wide variety of functionally interrelated tourism products.

- Information and technical assistance for tourism development and promotion; Different types of information for tourism development and promotion are especially important to Rural and Agri-Tourism development because small communities usually cannot afford to hire experts. To this end the role of the above explained networks is also of the utmost importance.
- Widespread community support for tourism; Community support for tourism development and the attitudes and hospitality of local tourism workers are important for successful tourism. It is obvious that management and marketing of tourism often require a community effort because of the nature of tourism; the community as a whole and its image must be marketed, not just one attraction.

### **Conclusion**

Development of Rural and Agri-Tourism in Indian rural areas is still in its nascent stage. India has perfect opportunities to enhance its Rural and Agri-Tourism offer and it also represents one of the few states, which unifies different climates, natural characteristics and socio-cultural entities. Though there has not been much initiative by the state government for Rural and Agri-Tourism development, it has been successfully initiated through the farmers' efforts. For the Agri tourism to succeed, it is imperative that the tourists must have:

1. Something to see: Animals, birds, farms, culture of the village, dress and festivals.
2. Something to do: Participating in agricultural operations, riding camel, buffalo, cooking and participating in the rural games i.e. gillidanda, gotti (marble etc.).
3. Something to buy: Rural crafts, dress materials, farm gate fresh processed food are few items.

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## Appendix I: India: An emerging superpower



## Appendix II: Comparison of Old and New Tourists:

Old Tourists	New Tourists
Search for the sun	Experience something different
Follow the masses	Want to be in charge
Here today, gone tomorrow	See and enjoy but not destroy
Just to show that you had been	Just for the fun of it
Having	Being
Superiority	Understanding
Like attractions	Like sports
Precautions	Adventurous
Eat in hotel	Try local fare
Homogeneous	Hybrid

**Source:** *Tourism, Technology and Competitive Strategies*, Auliana Poon.

## Appendix III: SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities	Threats
Different Variants of Tourism	Inadequate Infrastructure	Fast Expansions	Terrorism
International Cooperation	Accomadation	Fast Expansions	Recession
Average Length of Stay	Basic amenities	Rapidly Growing Middle class	Inflation
	Lack of Professional Management		Deflation