

Original Research Article

Scope and Challenges of Agri-tourism Centers in Konkan Region of Maharashtra State

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ABSTRACT

Agro-tourism is helpful to the both farmers and urban peoples. It has provided an additional income source to the farmers and employment opportunity to the family members and rural youth. But, there are some problems in the process of the development of such centers. Hence, the government and other related authorities should try to support these activities in Maharashtra for the rural development and increase income level of the farmers. The purpose of the study was to examine the challenges faced by the agri-tourism centers in Konkan region. It was observed that, Konkan division is the second-largest division of Maharashtra with 33 agri-tourism centers which was successfully established agri-tourism centers, maximum (42.50 per cent) agri-tourism enterprises were established during 2011-2015, 35.00 per cent of the respondents were registered with the Maharashtra State Agri & Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation LTD (MART), lack of training for agri-tourism (65.00 per cent), weak communication skills (70.00 per cent), lack of co-ordination between agriculture and tourism department (100.00 per cent), low awareness in farmers as well as in tourists regarding agri-tourism (90.00 per cent), low level of entrepreneurial culture (80.00 per cent) and lack of co-operation in rural people (75.00 per cent). A descriptive research methodology was utilized, it included two types of data collection methods - primary and secondary data; primary tools of data collection were the questionnaire and observation. Secondary tools of data collection were journal papers, articles, websites, etc. The survey was conducted among 40 operational agri-tourism centers in the Konkan region of Maharashtra state.

Keywords

Agri-tourism center, Challenges, Konkan, Historical and Perspective

Introduction

According to Manhas as “travel which combines agricultural or rural settings with products of agricultural operations, all within a tourism experience or a range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers”. He also calls it “innovative income generating activity for enterprising farmers” (Manhas, 2012).

There are many other authors’ are define term agri-tourism ar agro-tourism which few are as stated here. “It is an enterprise at a working farm conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates income for the owner.”(American Farm Bureau Federation, 2004). “Agritourism is a type of rural tourism in which the hosting house must be incorporated in to an agricultural estate allowing visitors to participate in agricultural activities” (Marques, 2006). “It is the action

of hospitality carried out by agricultural entrepreneurs that must remain connected to farming activities" (Sonnino, 2004). Maetzold defined Agritourism as an alternative enterprise, "It is a set of activities that occur when people link travel with products, services and experiences of agriculture" (Maetzold, 2002).

Scope of Agri-tourism in India

Agri-tourism has a worldwide presence as it originated from United States in 1800s which later on spread in Europe and then in other continents. Now it has distinct presence in various nations in other continents apart from United States and Europe. Agri-tourism as a systematic mode of tourism was introduced in India in years 2002 and 2003. This was different from the old concepts of rural heritage tourism and visiting farmhouses. Agritourism started in western belt of Maharashtra with the initiative of progressive local farmers and visionaries like Mr. Pandurang Taware. Later on Agri Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) was founded by Mr. Pandurang Taware in year 2005. It started with the initial pilot project in the village Baramati in district Pune. Eventually ATDC trained more than 500 farmers and developed more than 150 agritourist locations across Maharashtra. Agritourism has not spread much across the states of India and is still concentrated in western belt of Maharashtra. Agritourism is still a small scale venture and has low impact on macro economy of India (Deepika Chadda, 2012).

Scope of Agri-tourism in Maharashtra

Maharashtra is blessed with a rich and diversified cultural heritage. The state has several communities belonging to different religions and celebrates many festivities. Maharashtra with the spirit of exuberance. Some of the popular festivals that are

celebrated in Maharashtra are diwali, ganesh chaturthi, gudhi padwa, dashehra, nag panchami, gokul ashtmi, narali pournima, pola, makar sankranti, banganga festival and holi etc. Maharashtra is already established as one of the top tourist destinations in the world. Maharashtra is the major producer of fruit, spices, medicinal and aromatic plants growing as a horticulture crops in India. There are an increasing number of tourists preferring non-urban tourist spots. Maharashtra has diverse agro-climatic conditions, diverse crops, people, deserts, mountains, which provide scope for promotion of all season, multi-location agri-tourism. Some of the popular folk dances in rural Maharashtra are lavni, dhangari gaja, powadas, koli dance and tamasha and dindi as religious folk dances. Culture of Maharashtra is very glorious with a great variety. It gives a unique identity to the rural Maharashtra. Other than nature and culture of Maharashtra, there is an enough road, air and rail connectivity in urban rural areas to travel in rural Maharashtra. Maharashtra abounds in numerous tourist attractions ranging from ancient cave temples, unspoiled beaches, ancient forts and monuments, forests and wildlife, unique hill stations, pilgrimage centers and a rich tradition of festivals, art and culture. About 25 such locations have been identified in Maharashtra as rural agro-tourist destinations. Thus, all the districts of Maharashtra have a tourism potential. Some following notable factors are helpful to the agro-tourism in Maharashtra. Tourist places already exist to support agri-tourism, good communication and transport facilities, green house cultivation for long stem cut flowers, vegetables and fruits etc.

Historical perspective of agri-tourism in Konkan Region

The Konkan region is paradise for tourists. Maharashtra is blessed with a long coastline of about 720 km. There are numerous fishing

villages like Karde, Murud, Harne, Harihareshwar, Achra, Ganpatipule, Tarkarli, that are ideal for a short break away from the demands of modern-day living and its stresses. This proximity to the sea has created beautiful stretches of beaches, which are a main attraction for people. Alibaug, Kihim, Diveagar, Tarkarli, Bhatye beaches are well-known among tourists. In addition, this land, known as the “Land of Parshuram” there is ancient temples that major source of attraction to tourists. Also the original inhabitants, who have migrated elsewhere now, but come to pay respect to their family deities here when they can. Some of these include the ganesh temple at Ganpatipule, the suvarna ganpati at Diveagar, and the kadyavarcha ganpati at Anjarle, kanakaditya sun temple at Kasheli and Mahakali temple at Adivare where ancient customs and traditions are followed till today. Forts like Raigad, Alibaug, Vijaydurg and Suvarnadurga stand as proud sentinels of history and a visit evokes memories of the glorious Maratha Empire. The emerald green coconut palms swaying invitingly in the breeze on the land welcome fishing boats home each evening and morning, laden with the catch of the day. This land has everything, from the seashores to verdant spice and betelnut plantations. The delicious local cuisine comprising of the freshest possible fish and the extremely popular sol kadhi, as well as fruits like mangoes and jackfruit and tales of local favorites like “kuleethpithla” savored with soft rice have attracted many a tourist to this beautiful land. The Sahyadri mountain ranges are a rich source of bio-diversity. Velas, near Dapoli is well-known as the place where female *Olive Ridley* turtles come to lay their eggs, and the little ones, once hatched head for the sea. Malvan is known for its mesmerizing coral reefs so, there is something for every type of tourist. The locals of the Konkan region have been quick to grasp this opportunity and utilize it to

improve the local economy. Homestays have come up, offering rooms with attached bathrooms and local food to the droves of visitors.

Keeping above fact in view, the present study was designed to analyze the ‘SWOT analysis of agri-tourism centers in Konkan region of Maharashtra state’ with the following specific objective.

To study the challenges faced by the agri-tourism centers in Konkan region.

Materials and Methods

Sources of data

The primary data/basic information regarding the study was elicited from the records of Maharashtra State Agri and Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation Limited (MART), Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. (MTDC) and Agri-Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC). An interview schedule was prepared in light with objectives and then agri-tourism center owners were personally interviewed by the investigator.

The secondary data and other relevant information for the study were collected from the following sources:

- i. Published reports, papers and other information from different agriculture agencies.
- ii. Reference books, reports, bulletins, journals and periodicals related to the subject published by different authors and agencies.
- iii. Post graduate and Ph.D. thesis pertaining to the subject.
- iv. Attending training/workshop/seminars related to the subject.

Locale of the study

The present study was conducted in Konkan region of Maharashtra state

Research design

Exploratory research design was selected for study.

Selection of the respondents

Konkan region includes Thane, Palghar, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts. All five districts of Konkan were covered under the study. There are agri-tourism centers registered under Maharashtra State Agri and Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation Limited (MART), Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. (MTDC) and Agri-Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) in the region. In addition, there are also agri-tourism centers operating in the region, without registration under any agency.

Therefore, a pilot survey was carried out in five districts namely Palghar, Ratnagiri, Raigad, Sindhudurg and Thane of the Konkan region, to know the actual operational agri-tourism centers.

With the help of the pilot survey, a list of well operational working agri-tourism centers was prepared and from the list 40 operational agri-tourism centers were selected for the study. The sample was comprised of randomly selected 40 respondents from five districts.

Construction of schedule

The structured interview schedule serves as a tool for collecting data. Keeping in view the objectives of study, an interview schedule was prepared.

Collection of data

Personal interview technique was used for data collection.

Statistical analysis

The data were processed and tabulated by using the parameters like frequency, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

Results and Discussions

Present situation of agri-tourism in Konkan region of Maharashtra

Division wise agri-tourism centers in Maharashtra

Division wise agri-tourism centers in Maharashtra (December, 2019) Registered under Maharashtra State Agricultural and Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation Limited (MART)

A perusal of Table 1 and Fig.1 revealed that, distribution of agri-tourism centers according to division wise in Maharashtra state, slightly more than two-third (68.51 per cent) of the agri-tourism centers were Pune division and 18.23 per cent of the agri-tourism centers were Konkan division those are registered with MART organization. Followed by 4.97 per cent of the agri-tourism centers were Nashik, 3.87 per cent of the agri-tourism centers were Nagpur and 2.21 per cent of the agri-tourism centers were Amravati and Aurangabad division, respectively. Highest number 124 agri-tourism centers operational running in Pune division. Konkan division is the second-largest division of Maharashtra with 33 agri-tourism centers which was successfully established agri-tourism centers.

Year of establishment

The data pertaining to the year of establishment of agri-tourism enterprises are given in Table 2.

It can be observed from Table 2 and Fig. 2, maximum (42.50 per cent) agri-tourism enterprises were established during 2011-2015, 25.00 per cent were established during 2016-2018, 15.00 per cent were established during 2006-2010, while 12.50 per cent and 05.00 per cent agri-tourism enterprises were established during 2001-2005 and 1970-1990, respectively.

It is can be observed that, this enterprise got momentum after the establishment of the Agri-Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) in the year 2005 and Maharashtra State Agri and Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation Limited (MART) in the year 2008, there after agri-tourism concept was started to get popularize because of efforts of federation in both areas, especially in promoting agri-tourism concept in urban area, training to farmers (rural area) regarding agri-tourism business in the state.

Agri-tourism center registered under organization

Maharashtra state is the pioneer state which started the agri-tourism in India. In the Maharashtra state several societies, organization and NGOs are working on agri and rural tourism and officially recognized by the Government of Maharashtra. The distribution of the respondents according to their agri-tourism center registered under organization is shown in Table 3.

A perusal of Table 3 and Fig. 3 revealed that, 35.00 per cent of the respondents were registered with the Agri Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) and 35.00

per cent of the respondents were registered with the Maharashtra State Agri & Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation LTD (MART). Whereas only (30.00 per cent) per cent of the respondents were registered with the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC).

From the above results, it can be concluded that MTDC launched the Mahahraman scheme and ATDC launched Agri Tourism Vistar Yojana under this initiative, farmers have started agri-tourism centers in the Konkan region and across the state. Similarly, MART is working on agricultural and rural tourism line with the main objective to coordinate the activity of planning, financing, marketing and liaison with various state and central governmental agencies.

Challenges faced by the agri-tourism center owner for running agri-tourism center

Some of the major road blocks or hurdles for the proper development of the agri-tourism enterprises are:

It can be seen from Table 4 regarding challenges faced by the agri-tourism center owner for running agri-tourism center were lack of training for agri-tourism (65.00 per cent), weak communication skills (70.00 per cent), lack of co-ordination between agriculture and tourism department (100.00 per cent), low awareness in farmers as well as in tourists regarding agri-tourism (90.00 per cent), low level of entrepreneurial culture (80.00 per cent), lack of co-operation in rural people (75.00 per cent), lack of fund for establishment of agri-tourism center and non availability of insurance policy of tourists (100.00 per cent), high rate of interest on bank loan (100.00 per cent), as an agriculture enterprise high rate of electricity unit bill (90.00 per cent).

These results are in conformity with the results of Jagtap *et al.* (2010), Samjetsabam Pinky (2014), Haque (2015), Upadhye Jayashree (2015), Sengar Priya (2017) and (Shinde, 2019)

Agri-tourism in Konkan region of Maharashtra is developing very fast in Maharashtra. In spite of this fact, there are challenges, which limit the further development of agri-tourism in Maharashtra.

Some of them are as follows: (Prasanna, 2017).

1. Climatic conditions
2. Lack of orientation in marketing and customer communications
3. Less cultivable land and fragmented land
4. Lack of knowledge about government policies and schemes about agriculture
5. Less number of tourists attracted towards agri-tourism center

Table.1 Distribution of the division wise agri-tourism centers in Maharashtra (December, 2019)
Registered under Maharashtra State Agricultural and Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation Limited (MART)

Sl. No.	Division	Agri-tourism center	Percentage
1.	Amravati	04	2.21
2.	Aurangabad	04	2.21
3.	Konkan	33	18.23
4.	Nagpur	07	3.87
5.	Nashik	09	4.97
6.	Pune	124	68.51
Total		181	100.00

(Source: www.martindia.org)

Table.2 Distribution of the agri-tourism centers according to the year of establishment

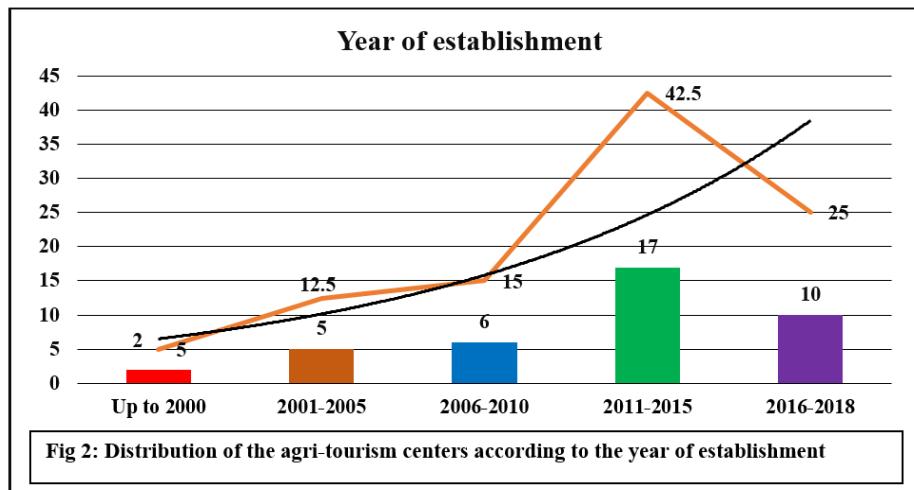
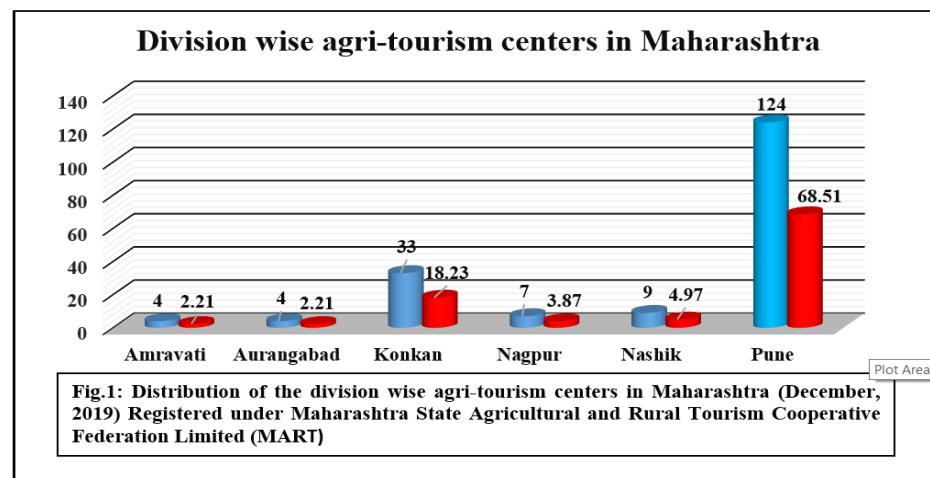
Sl. No.	Year of establishment	Respondents (N= 40)	
		Number	Percentage
1.	Up to 2000	02	05.00
2.	2001-2005	05	12.50
3.	2006-2010	06	15.00
4.	2011-2015	17	42.50
5.	2016-2018	10	25.00
	Total	40	100.00

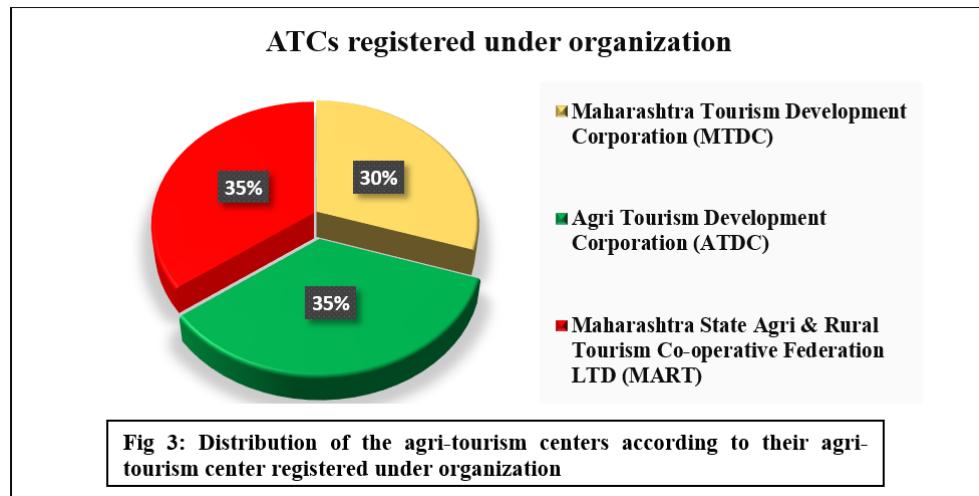
Table.3 Distribution of the agri-tourism centers according to their agri-tourism center registered under organization

Sl. No.	Organization	Respondents (N= 40)	
		Number	Percentage
1.	Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC)	12	30.00
2.	Agri Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC)	14	35.00
3.	Maharashtra State Agri & Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation LTD (MART)	14	35.00
	Total	40	100.00

Table.4 Distribution of the respondents according to their problems faced by the agri-tourism center owner for running agri-tourism center

Sl. No.	Problems	Respondents (N= 40)	
		Number	Percentage
1.	Lack of training for agri-tourism	26	65.00
2.	Weak communication skills	28	70.00
3.	Lack of co-ordination between agriculture and tourism department	40	100
4.	Low awareness among farmers as well as in tourists regarding agri-tourism	36	90.00
5.	Low level of entrepreneurial culture	32	80.00
6.	Lack of cooperation in rural people	30	75.00
7.	Lack of fund for establishment of agri-tourism center	40	100
8.	Non availability of insurance policy of tourists	40	100
9.	High rate of interest on bank loan	40	100
10.	As an agriculture enterprise high rate of electricity unit bill	36	90.00





The finding pertaining challenges faced by the agri-tourism center owner as shown in Table 4.

In conclusion, agri-tourism is complimentary thought traditional to modern agricultural activities. It is an opportunity for farmers to use the available resources in a diversified and innovative way. It creates a win-win situation for farmers as well as tourists. Farmers earn better from the innovative use of available resources and the tourist can enjoy village life and nature at affordable prices. Not only that, but the villages are also benefited due to the development of agri-tourism. Some cases of agri-tourism in Konkan region of Maharashtra dist. Raigad, Ratnagiri, and Sindhudurg have proved that agri-tourism not only brings the development of farmers but to the village as a whole from a social and economic angle. In spite of growing agri-tourism, the fact remains that government support through appropriate and conducive policies for agri-tourism development is lacking and the government should give priority to agri-tourism business in Maharashtra through appropriate policy measures.

There needs to be a proper business model to promote and propagate the concept of

agri-tourism as an easily adaptable and implementable venture for farmers in India. All challenges stated above can have solutions and agri-tourism can be ventured in gradually step by step. All it depends on the will power of farmers and proper promotional strategies adopted to market the concept to weekend tourists.

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