



Agro tourism and Socio-economic development in rural area of Pune district, Maharashtra.

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ABSTRACT:

The multiple option of income sources are becoming important in rural areas since agriculture alone is unable to meet rural people's needs. So to preserve the cultural heritage of Pune region and to develop the socio-economic status, strategic scientific planning of Agro tourism as a form of Rural Tourism is a need of hour. Aiming to assess the role of livelihoods strategies in rural development and poverty alleviation in selected areas in Pune district, the present study discusses the role of agro tourism centre ATC's income diversification in poverty reduction and income inequality. Primary data is collected through questionnaires and interviews. The results revealed that, the focus should be given on infrastructure development schemes coupled with anti-poverty fund schemes for increasing income and employment opportunities.

KEYWORDS: Socio-Economic development, Agro tourism, livelihood strategies, Rural tourism.

Introduction:

There are varieties of terms used to describe tourism in rural areas including Farm Tourism, Agro-Tourism, Soft Tourism and Eco-Tourism (Beeton, 2006). India basically being a rural economy, rural tourism and agro tourism hold an important place in facilitating development. A term Agro-tourism is a new face of tourism. An Agro tourism is farm based business that is open to the public. Agro-tourism means Agricultural tourism. It refers to the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agri business operation of the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. According to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), rural tourism is defined as tourism taking place in the countryside (Riechel et al., 2000). Rural tourism is located in agricultural landscapes and is characterized by enjoyment of a tamed nature or highly modified landscapes. It is about the land uses and human cultures that the interaction between humans and the land have created. It positions agriculture and farms as the foundation upon which the attraction is built (Knowd, 2001). Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural location, there by benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience termed as rural tourism.

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. Agro 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.

Results are obtained by an exploratory survey conducted among farms or ATC of a rural region with the aim to understand if and how farmers and rural actors, exploit agro tourism potentials as a means to revitalize the rural community. Moreover, it was aimed to highlight the presence of agro tourism rural networks in the surveyed region where rural actors operate together with agro tourism farms for the socio- economic development of the rural area in Pune district.

Study area:

Pune district lies between 18° 32" North latitude and 73° 51" East longitude. It lies on the foothills of Sahyadri Mountains. The landscape of Pune district is distributed triangularly in western Maharashtra at the foothills of the Sahyadri Mountains and is divided into three parts: "Ghatmatha",

“Maval” and “Desh”. Pune district forms a part of the tropical monsoon land and therefore shows a significant seasonal variation in temperature as well as rainfall conditions. Pune district have 14 Taluka's namely Haveli, Pune city, Maval, Mulshi, Shirur, Baramati, Indapur, Daund, Bhore, Velha, Purandar, Khed, Junnar and Ambegaon. Nine of the district's 15 talukas are identified as drought-prone, covering a total area of 1,562,000 hectares (6,030 sq mi) and a cropped area of 1,095,000 hectares (4,230 sq mi). Of the cropped area, only 116,000 hectares (450 sq mi) are irrigated—nearly half by wells and tanks, and 40 percent by government canals. The district had a population of 4.2 million in 1991, of which 52 percent was rural. There were 1,530 villages in the district. Its average rainfall is 600 to 700 millimetres (24 to 28 in), most of which falls during the monsoon months (July to October). The area adjacent to the Western Ghats gets more rain than areas further east. The Daund and Indapur talukas experience more-frequent droughts than Maval, on the district's western edge. Temperatures are moderate and rainfall is unpredictable, in tune with the Indian monsoon.

Following Agro Tourism Centre (ATCs) were taken for the study:

- 1- Parashar Agri Tourism, Rajuri, Junnar
- 2- Anand Agri tourism, Morachi Chincholi, Shirur
- 3- Baramati Agri Tourism Development Centre, Palshiwadi, Baramati
- 4- Agriculture Development Trust's Agri and Eco Tourism, Baramati
- 5- Mulashi Agro tourism centre, Ambatved, Mulashi.

Objectives:

1. To assess the role of livelihoods strategies in rural development and poverty alleviation in selected areas in Pune district.
2. To develop a relation between the ATC (Agro Tourism Centre) and the tourist in rural area.
3. To understand and evaluate the socio economic contribution of agro-tourism in a developing economy like India.

Data and Methodology:

The present study based on the primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from rural people who are involved in agro tourism field. The questionnaire survey has been carried out to collect the features of agro tourism activities. The interviews were performed to obtain key information. The secondary data has been collected from the related articles, research papers, reports, and some data has been furnished from the website of Ministry of Agricultural and Tourism Development Corporation of Maharashtra as well as obtained from the reports published by the government of India and Maharashtra. Some data has been furnished from the website of agro tourism.

Agrotourism for socio-economic development:

In the last 25 years of the 20th century, the term Agro tourism appeared in international literature. There exists parallel word Agrotourism. The two terms have the same meaning. Both terms consist of two parts agri or agro and tourism. The prefix agri derives from the Latin term ager which means field while agro comes from the Greek term agros, which means soil, while tourism is a form of active recreation away from one's place of residence that is inspired by cognitive, recreational and sports need. The combination of prefix agri with norm tourism resulted in the formation of new word that means human tourist activity whose aim is to familiarize oneself with farming activity and recreation in an agricultural environment. Agrotourism can be defined as a “range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their area in order to generate extra income for their business”. “Agrotourism is that agri-business activity, when native farmers or persons of the area offer tours to their agriculture farm to allow a person to view them growing, harvesting and processing locally grown foods, such as coconuts, pineapple, sugarcane, corn or any agriculture produce the person would not encounter in their city or home country, often the farmers would provide a home stay opportunity and education” (Taware, 2008).

Agrotourism:

Main features that differentiate Agrotourism from conventional tourism.

- Possibility to satisfy human needs with practical participation in the process of food production in the life of a rural family and in a rural community.
- Agrotourism gives a chance to learn about the lives of rural people their culture and customs.
- Possibility to satisfy emotional needs which is the willingness to have direct contact with domestic animals, plants and animal products and processed products and need to experience the idyllic countryside.
- A key factor in the growing interest of city inhabitants in where food comes from and how it is produced.

Agro-tourism in the context of rural development:

- Agro-tourism benefits the entire rural community in terms of total revenue generation.
- Rural culture is the key component under agrotourism.

The emergence of agro tourism is helping to boost a wide range of activities, services and amenities to attract tourists to generate extra income by creating entrepreneurial opportunities. Agrotourism is run essentially as a community-based initiative. It is beneficial for income and employment generation and development of rural arts and crafts. It is directly helpful for infrastructure development and preservation of heritage. The feasibility of enhancing agrotourism in our country can be determined under the following major considerations.

- Potentiality at the rural section in attracting inbound and outbound tourists.
- The level of tourism and general infrastructural development.

Functions of agrotourism:

Functions of agrotourism can be broadly classified as follows:

- Socio-psychological function: Socio-psychological functions include gaining new skills, meeting new people, reviving rural traditions and education. These functions are connected with increased respect for the rural community, the intermingling of rural and urban cultures and an opportunity to enjoy contact with the traditional lifestyle of the rural community.
- Economic functions: Economic function consists of additional source of income, income for communes, overcoming economic recession and promotion of socio-economic development which concern the stimulation of development of agricultural, horticultural or animal breeding farms, generation of additional sources of income both for rural households and for local or regional governments and communes.
- Spatial and environment: Agrotourism is the process of development uses elements of the natural environment, transforming them, spatial and environment functions include the consequences of the development of agrotourism for the natural and anthropogenic environments. In short it gives tremendous economic impetus to a region in the form of creational employment avenues and increases the standard of living of the under developed host community and it conserves the traditional cultural values with subtenants exposure to the world community and at the same time, it provides security and advancement to the agro tourism in a region.

Tourism potential in Maharashtra:

Maharashtra is the third largest state of India, both in area and population. It is located on the West Coast of India with a 720 km long coastline along, with its dense forests is home to several wild life sanctuaries and nature parks. Maharashtra abounds in numerous tourist attractions ranging from ancient cave, temples, unspoiled beaches, ancient forts and monuments, forest and wild life, unique hill stations, pilgrimage centres, a rich tradition of festivals, art and culture. The tourism market in Maharashtra is estimated to be around 250 million domestic tourists in 2005 (Source: ATDC – Pune).

Agro tourism centres in Maharashtra

Pune	74
Satara	15
Kolhapur	02
Solapur	07
Ahamadnagar	05
Thane	16
Nashik	06
Sangali	02
Vidharb	08
Marathwada	11
Konkan	32
Total	178

Source: www.mart.com

Survey of one of the agro tourism development and promotion agency, conducted for the year 2015 – 16, has produced the month wise details of tourists arrival and generated revenue. These results are of all the most popular 127 agro tourism centres located in different districts of Maharashtra, and not only of Pune district's centres. Although, out of these 127 centres, 35 belong to the Pune district. Below table shows the compilation of this data.

Month-wise Tourist arrival and Revenue Generated at Agro tourism centres of Maharashtra

Sl. No.	Month	Tourist Arrival	Revenue Generated (In Lakhs)
1	April	5715	17.14
2	May	8225	24.67
3	June	9523	30.48
4	July	9525	28.57
5	August	10160	42.48
6	September	8124	56.34
7	October	33020	132.08
8	November	46355	185.42
9	December	56515	226.06
10	January	61595	246.38
11	February	41305	185.42
12	March	34925	139.70
Total		330674	1314.74

Although agro tourism is mainly a weekend activity, which implies in the low impact of the seasonality factor, various variables such as temperature, weather condition, festive season, school exams season, school vacation season impacts heavily on the tourist inflow. The data presented in Table 3.2 clearly show the months of high and low tourist arrival. March to June can be termed as a comparatively lean period for tourists arrival, mainly because of the scorching summer season. Whereas July to October receives a high number of tourists. November to February can be clearly seen as the peak season for agro tourism, receiving almost ten times the number of tourists than the low season.

Potential for development of agro-tourism in Pune region:

Pune district abounds in numerous tourists attractions ranging from ancient temples, ancient forts and monuments, forests and wildlife, unique hill station, pilgrimage centres and rich tradition of festivals, art and culture. Pune district has a rich historical and cultural heritage, which has been under explored by the tourism industry and the government agencies. Pune district has a great potential to the development of agro-tourism, because of natural conditions and different types of agricultural products as well as variety of rural traditions and festivals. It is a good opportunity to develop an agro-tourism business in Pune district. But there is a problem of low awareness about this business in the farmer and problem of the finance and proper view in the farmers of the Pune. 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. Though the hurdles seem many the potential for economic growth along with environmental protection is highly acceptable. Pune is the Information technology Hub of India hence it can also be agro-tourism tourism hub of India. It can utilise and implement technological tools to improve effectiveness and efficiency of agro-tourism (Online booking, services etc). There is a need for required support from local community and government for a sustainable growth in this sector as opportunities need to be exploited in strategically planed manner. The Pune region has a tremendous potential with a variety of cultural aspects and production systems. This variety is sufficient to attract tourists in its original forms. It has seen substantial growth in tourism in the past few years, but this growth is clustered and unorganized. Agrotourism development in Pune region can be successful only when the development progress is linked with local communities who provide physical assets as tourism products. This is essential for two reasons: – The concerned rural stake holders must be benefited socially and commercially from their own assets. – There is need for active participation of rural community for maintaining eco-biodiversity and originality of traditional value.

Agro tourism centres in Pune district

Tahsil	No. of ATC
Mulshi	18
Shirur	07
Bhor	17
Haveli	08
Junner	07
Baramati	04
Daund	07
Velhe	08
Purandar	05
Khed	03
Pune city	00
Ambegaon	01
Maval	16
Indapur	01
Total	102

Source: ATDC

Socio-economic development of Pune region:

For socio-economic development of Pune region, the tourism plays an important role, as earlier we saw that different forms of tourism but Pune region has the potential to develop agrotourism and effective implementation of agro tourism in Pune region leads to community development Rural tourism has many potential benefits for rural areas (Federick, 1992). Rural tourism can be an important source of jobs for local communities and important for developing disadvantaged rural area. Tourism can certainly be an important component of a sound development plan. Bontron and Lasnier (1997) noted that the rural tourism impact varied greatly among rural regions and depended on a host of factors including work force characteristics and seasonality issues. According to the study of Beeton's (2006) model of rural tourism, it is understood that the community is central to this process and in many ways cannot be separated from any element on the map. Rural areas having various problems like unemployment, lack of services, lack of facilities and lack of awareness at the same time, these areas having various potential attributes like natural environment, agriculture and ambience. So, according to this model, it is cleared that besides agriculture and migration for external employment if we select tourism aspect, then the central point of this model that is community is benefited greatly through effective planning, promotion and marketing. This model can be effectively implemented in rural areas of Pune region through agrotourism concept, but Agro tourism in Pune region is at its infancy stage. Therefore, there is an urgent need to initiate the process of incubating the entrepreneurship for overall development of Pune region. In the present context, the rural communities cannot be expected to perform the task of promoting agro-tourism exclusively. The role of Maharashtra Tourism Development Conversation (MTDC). Agro Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) and other national level organizations like Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) are important for providing right direction in near future.

Conclusion:

Pune region has the potential to develop agrotourism but to achieve overall socio-economic development, the implementation is necessary. The Pune region is having key points for agrotourism

destination like scenery, mountains, rivers, cropping pattern, pollution free, natural and peaceful environments, which attract greatly the urban population. But the knowledge of development of these points is necessary to circulate among the rural people. Only awareness about the tourism is not the key factor of success but the role of supporting organization and financial organization is also important. Then and then only the process of the “Business incubation” is started. It includes the property development / management as well as small business development. This can be done by conserving entrepreneurs and precious resources like time and money through cost sharing and capital conserving access to space services.

This can be done by all flexible and timely ways developed as per the requirements of entrepreneurs needs:

- Helping entrepreneurs to overcome barriers like lack of information and lack of access to capital etc.
- Giving ready access for entrepreneurs to learning resources on design and management of various tourism related activities
- There is immediate need to develop public private partnership programme for active participation of people.
- Financial institutions especially nationalized banks play a major role by supplying much needed capital to the tourism based entrepreneurs at special concessional rates. Uncontrolled conventional tourism may pose potential threats to many natural areas in Pune region.

If the above stated strategy is followed then the agrotourism industry can be developed in the Pune region. Agrotourism is a form of alternative tourism but the overall impact of the agrotourism industry is pose on the community. So, scientific and strategic development of agrotourism leads to development in socio-economic status of the Pune region.

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