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Farmers Perception towards Development of Agri-Tourism in Kerala

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Abstract
The study drives at a pro-poor approach and aims at developing eco-agri-rural tourism not only for tourists but also for local farmers who will recognize the importance of farms and farming. This paper examines the Agri tourism in India with reference to Kerala, which is known as God’s own country, where not much importance is given to the people. Agri tourism is the focus of this study, because it is considered as an important tool in the development of rural community. The main objectives of the study are to identify different factors influencing the agri tourism and to assess the perception level of farmers on agri tourism. The study was conducted in the state of Kerala; data were collected from farmers using survey method. Observation and questionnaires methods were used for collecting data. The study reveals that more than fifty percent of the respondents had awareness about agri tourism. The respondents generally agreed that the existence of agri tourism in their area brings in many benefits to locals as a whole. However, farmers in the rural areas argued that they only experienced indirect benefits.

Citation:

1. Introduction

Today the idea of conventional tourism has been changed. Busy urban population is leaning towards nature. Peace is beyond cities and Resorts while natural environment is always away from busy life. Agri tourism in Kerala is being developed as a relatively new tourism product. Kerala, being an agricultural dominated state, has tremendous potential for developing Agri Tourism is a big way without much additional investment. Agri tourism as a tourism business, however it is different from the basic tourism on the grounds that it has a base of agriculture and rural lifestyle. Agri tourism will change the farm into something that is more than just a place for food Production – it can also become a place for education and recreation. Agri tourism intends to obtain higher standards of living for rural communities especially through increased income for people who work in agriculture.

There are five main forms of rural tourism which bring benefits both for tourists and for the local community.
• Natural tourism, which is mainly preferred for its recreational value.
• Cultural tourism, which is mainly related to culture, history and archeology of the area destination.
• Ecotourism, as a form of tourism that presents natural resources while maintaining the values and local population welfare.
• Village tourism, where visitors live and enjoy the various activities of peasant life.
• Agro tourism, in which tourists see and participate in traditional agricultural practices without destroying the ecosystems, the host bases.

1.1 Agri-tourism and Rural Tourism
Agri tourism is the process of attracting visitors and travellers to agricultural areas, generally for educational and recreational purposes (Lamb, 2008; Veeck et al. 2006). American Farm Bureau
Federation (2004) makes a definition of the concept as: Agri-tourism refers to an enterprise at a working farm, ranch or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates income for the owner. Agricultural tourism refers to the act of visiting a working farm or any horticultural or agricultural operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation that also adds to economic viability of the site. Rural tourism is the act of leaving the urban environment and traveling into the rural regions, for the purpose of experiencing and enjoying the natural beauty, the agricultural diversity, the quaintness of small towns, the cultural richness; and to escape the pressures of urban lifestyles in order to have pleasurable experiences and improve the quality of life.

### 1.2 Farm Tourism Activities
Farm tourism is a new generation activity. Today’s farmers offer various services to attract tourists to the agricultural field. Following are the activities involved in farm tourism:

- Staying on a farm
- Educational visits
- Wine tours
- Outdoor sports
- Participation in the rural life style and local community
- Enjoyment of natural environment
- Rural heritage
- Enjoy truly locally produced food
- Gift shop
- Processing and production tour
- Cultural activities
- Multi-cuisine restaurant
- Tree house
- Underground house
- Boating, hunting, fishing and trekking

### 1.3 Basic Principles of 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 etc.
3. Have something for visitors to buy: Rural crafts, dress materials, farm fresh processed food are few items.

Three important factors, which contribute to the success of Agri Tourism as service:

1. Farmer: Majority cases farmer is less educated, less exposed and innocent for him outsider as guest is (like god) and is treated warmly 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.

For the success of any agri tourism venture, the following factors play a major role

1. Connectivity
2. Attractions
3. Accommodation
4. Outdoor recreational activities
5. Entertainment programs
6. Meals for tourists
7. Safety and security aspects
8. Medical facilities
9. Risk and liability in case of accidents

### 2. Materials and Methods

#### 2.1 Review of Literature
Maetzold (2002), defined agritourism as an alternative enterprise. “a set of activities that occur when people link travel with products, services and experiences of agriculture” but it has also a commercial tourism component (Weaver, Fennel 1997; Cheet al., 2005) state that “agritourism is another consumptive use of farmland and may help preserve farms”. But other authors suggest that agritourism is not necessarily a solution to the problems facing rural areas (Gannon, 1994; Sharpley, 2002) and the farm has multiple reasons for diversifying into agritourism (Ollenburg, Buckley, 2007). According to Griver, (2009), agricultural tourism is a global trend which provides city dwellers an opportunity to escape from urban concrete environment and re-discover their roots in rural areas with farming. Furthermore, visiting farmers, agronomists and other agricultural experts can evaluate worldwide developments in agriculture which have been highly influenced by modern agricultural technology and management (School of Travel Industry Management, 2007). Agritourism and ecotourism are closely related, but, in reality agritourism is farm attractions, which visitors are encouraged to partake in farming and agricultural activities, while ecotourism seems to have been green washed by the tour companies (Crete, 2009).

S. H. P. Malkanthiand J. K. Routry(2011) in the study on Potential For Agro-Tourism Development: Evidence from Sir Lanka revealed that there are several possibilities for the establishment of agritourism in the country. However, there are few problems militate against the success of the agritourism development. Provision of solutions for these main problems related to; infrastructure development, relevant training and education for the farmers, access to farm credit, proper measures to waste management as well as suitable environment.
development strategy. NedaTiraieyari and AzimiHamzoh (2012), in the study on “Agri-
tourism: Potential Opportunities for Farmers and Local Communities in Malaysia” reveals that
Agricultural areas in this country have many tourist
attractions which can form the basis for relaxation,
enjoyment and education of tourist. Although this
country has existing base of agritourism attractions,
its potential for agri-tourism is far greater. It is
suggested that to improve the economic, social and
environmental situation of rural communities in
Malaysia, the department of agriculture as well as
universities should give orientation towards agri-
tourism by providing some innovative ideas
suitable for each region. It is also recommended
that tourism industry should make stronger links
with agriculture to make agri-tourism continue the
tourism trend in Malaysia. Suvarna Sathe (2012)
in the study on “Management approach towards
Agro Tourism with special reference to potential
challenges development and growth in Western
Maharashtra” observed the overall development of
tourism scenario in India.

Based on the above literature, agritourism is an
important alternative for rural farmers including
small-scale farmers in many countries of the world,
as an extra source of income. There should be basic
facilities to start and operate an agritourism
destination and it has ability to generate lots of
benefits for the owner and the surrounding
community. However, as the economic, socio-
cultural, environmental, geographical conditions
are varying country to country, country wise
analysis of the feasibility of agritourism
development is an important attempt to understand
the reality of application of agritourism in Kerala.
Placing a premium on the concept of the multi-
functionality of agriculture can certainly contribute
to the diversification of agriculture regarding both
the lines of products and the activities linked to it
such as restaurants, sampling typical products made
on the farm, hospitality, the organisation of
cultural, and educational and recreational events.

2.2 Significance of the Study
Kerala, the state with network of azure backwaters,
rivers and streams, boasts of an agrarian economy.
Rice, coconut, tapioca, spices, tea, coffee, cashew,
pulses, areca nut, ginger and rubber are major
agricultural products of the state. Farm tourism in
Kerala is being developed as a relatively new
tourism product. Kerala, being an agricultural
dominated state, has tremendous potential for
developing farm tourism in a big way without
much additional investment. There is a possibility
of converting potential cropped areas of the state as
tourist attractions with minimum intervention to
transfer the benefits of tourism directly to the
farmers. The various schemes underway are
intended to prepare the farms/plantations of Kerala
to receive tourists by presenting a positive image of
the farm end of agriculture sector of Kerala through
tourism. The government decision to allow 5% of
the farm area for tourism purpose has been an
encouraging factor for the tourism industry.
Numerous projects are being planned by the state
to prepare the farms of Kerala to receive tourists by
presenting a positive image of the farm and of
agriculture as a whole, in view of revitalizing the
agriculture sector through tourism and increasing
tourist traffic to the state.

2.3 Statement of the Problem
India is known as “Land of villages”. More than 77
crore farmers live in 5.5 lakhs of village.
Agriculture sector’s contribution towards GDP is
decreasing; more than 80 percentage of population
still depends on agriculture. Hence Agriculture is
not the mere business, but is still the “True Culture
of India”. As Tourism as an industry it offers many
products to its consumers. Kerala with its luxuriant,
green homestead farms, plantations and paddylands
is an ideal location for Agri- tourism in Kerala,
being an agricultural dominated state, has
tremendous potential for developing Agri-Tourism
is a big way without much additional investment.
Even though Kerala has abundant opportunities for
developing agri tourism very small portion of the
farmers have the awareness about this and only
few of them are engaged this business. The
study attempts to determine the factors that
influence farmer’s involvement in tourism
activities. Realizing the potential of agri tourism
and existence of a clearer knowledge gap the
present study will investigate and measure the
farmer’s awareness and perception on agri tourism.

2.4 Research Question and Objectives:
There have been limited studies, which attempt to
focus on measurement scales and factors, which
influence the perception of the farmer towards agri
tourism. To bridge this knowledge gap, the present
study will investigate and measure the farmers’
perception of agri tourism. In other words, this
study attempts to determine the factors that
influence farmers’ involvement in tourism
activities. Realizing the potential of agro tourism
and the existence of a clearer knowledge gap, this
research outlines two specific objectives:
The main objectives of the study are as follows;
1. To identify the factors that influence farmer’s
perception towards tourism activities.
2. To assess the farmers awareness and perception
towards agri tourism.
2.5 Scope of the Study
a) Geographical: The geographical area is limited to the state of Kerala in India.
b) Period of study: The period of study is limited to 6 months (January to June 2017).

2.6 Research Design
The present study is descriptive in nature. Two basic techniques are used for research, i.e., observation method and survey method. Both primary and secondary data are required for the study. Secondary data were collected from the Department of Tourism (DoT), KTDC (Kerala Tourism Development Corporation), DTPC (District Tourism Promotional Council), Agriculture Departments, Agriculture Universities, periodicals, websites etc. Primary data may be collected from the owner operated farms from different districts in Kerala using survey method. The samples are selected on the basis of convenience sampling. A literature survey was first conducted to identify the domains and to find out the items to be generalized for the study. Questionnaires and personal interviews were the tools for data collection.

2.7 Limitation of Study
Time constraint was the main limitation of this study. The project relied mainly on primary data, which can be biased. The data collected from farmers are qualitative in nature. This study was confined to Kerala state alone. The accuracy of the results depends upon the information provided by the respondents. Because of the small size of the sample the study cannot be generalized.

3. Results and Discussions

Table 1: Distribution of Sample on the Basis Demographic Profile of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above 45</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Members</td>
<td>1 to 3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 to 5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above 5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of Residence</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Non Matriculate</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matriculate</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency on Agriculture</td>
<td>Main</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subsidiary</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Holding Possession type</td>
<td>Owned</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leased</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both Owned and Leased</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of land</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data

Table No.1 shows the demographic profile of the sample farmers. The huge gender imbalance of respondents caused by the higher number of male farmers. The significant proportion (54%) of sample farmers were above the age of 45 and the remaining were below 45 years of age. The 80% of the respondents are belongs to Hindu religion. Most of the farmers have 3-5 family members. Maximum respondents 72% had their school education. 76% of the respondents are fully depended on agriculture for livelihood and 38% of sample farmers considered agriculture as subsidiary income generating activity. Majority of respondents 52% in study owns their own land. 40% of the respondents are having the small size of land holdings.
Table 2: Awareness and Source of Awareness of Agri Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Aware</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper/TV/Radio</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow farmers</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agri Department Officials</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of the above</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data

Table No.2 shows that 76% of the farmers were aware about agri tourism concept through various sources such as Newspapers, TV, Radio, fellow farmers and Agri Department Officials. So we can infer that most of the farmers have high knowledge about the environment in which they live, even though their education level is below matriculation.

Following are the different factors influencing the perception level of farmers towards agri tourism.

Table 3: Factors Influencing the Perception Level of Farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor 1 - Environmental factors:</th>
<th>Factor 2 - Accessibility:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air pollution</td>
<td>Slope of the road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More pollution</td>
<td>Width of the road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperature</td>
<td>Farm distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass development</td>
<td>Condition of the road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesticide &amp; fertilizer</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor 3 - Economic factors:</th>
<th>Factor 4 - Entrepreneurial Knowledge:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toursists visit</td>
<td>Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generates more income</td>
<td>Land value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land value</td>
<td>Additional income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional income</td>
<td>Factor 5 - Socio-cultural Benefits:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local economy</td>
<td>Generates more income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job opportunities</td>
<td>Economic factors:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>Land value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factor 6 - Crowding:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crowding and congestion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic jam</td>
<td>Based on agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 8 - Constraints:</td>
<td>Traffic jam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of the land</td>
<td>Natural environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime and vandalism rate</td>
<td>Visit the farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction</td>
<td>Factor 9 - Land size:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonality</td>
<td>Limited land size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily life schedule</td>
<td>Size of land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data

Table 4: Factor 1 - Environmental Impact:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>*SDA</th>
<th>*D</th>
<th>*N</th>
<th>*A</th>
<th>*SA</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land development for agro tourism will cause more, pollution.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that mass development will increase temperatures and spoil the agriculture business.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think agricultural pesticides and fertilizers will cause pollution to the environment.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data *Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

All the variables loaded in are directly related to environmental problems. Since the variables clearly describe the effects of agro tourism to the environment, among the different statements highest percentage of strongly agreeableness (mean score-4.42) is shown on the use of agricultural pesticides and fertilizers causes pollution to the environment.
Table 5: Factor 2 - Accessibility:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>*SDA</th>
<th>*D</th>
<th>*N</th>
<th>*A</th>
<th>*SA</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think that the steep slope of the road will affect tourist’s access to my farm.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that the width of the road will affect tourist’s access to my farm.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think my farm’s location, far from the main road, will stop tourists from coming.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the road is the biggest constraint that stops tourists coming to my farm.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data *Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

Similar to the previous factor, all four variables loaded in this factor, have a direct relationship with the accessibility. The common characteristic, found amongst the variables, is the problem regarding road access to farms, that they are either inappropriate or far from the main road. The farmers show their agreeableness towards all the different statements regarding accessibility.

Table 6: Factor 3 - Economic Benefit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>*SDA</th>
<th>*D</th>
<th>*N</th>
<th>*A</th>
<th>*SA</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agro tourism generates more income for farm</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agro tourism increases my land value</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the agro tourism business will bring additional income.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agro tourism strengthens the local economy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agro tourism provides enough good jobs to the local community.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data *Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

Factor 3 is titled economic benefit, because all the variables either directly or indirectly, are related to economic benefit. The farmers have disagreements towards most of these statements like, more income, additional income, strengthening local economy and job opportunity, directly contribute to local economic development, because it has the mean score below 3.

Table 7: Factor 4 - Entrepreneurial Knowledge:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>*SDA</th>
<th>*D</th>
<th>*N</th>
<th>*A</th>
<th>*SA</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think enough experience is required to run an agro tourism business.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I have enough knowledge to run an agro tourism business.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data *Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

Both variables loaded into this factor measure the extent of experience and knowledge possessed by the respondents. Experience and knowledge is the important factor for running the agri tourism business.

Table 8: Factor 5 - Socio-cultural factors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>*SDA</th>
<th>*D</th>
<th>*N</th>
<th>*A</th>
<th>*SA</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like learning about tourists’ countries and cultures.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love interacting with tourists</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data *Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
The communication process of the farmers with the tourists provides positive socio-cultural impacts, when the local community learns new values, brought from outside environments to their community. But most of the respondents are not interested inculcate the foreign cultures.

Table 9: Factor 6 - Crowding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>*SDA</th>
<th>*D</th>
<th>*N</th>
<th>*A</th>
<th>*S A</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourism causes crowding and congestion in this area.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism increases traffic jams.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data *Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

This factor is titled crowding, because both of these negative impacts of tourism are directly related to the congestion and carrying capacity problem which can lead to the disturbance of the farmers’ daily schedule, most of the farmers perceived that tourism caused crowding and congestion in the rural area.

Table 10: Factor 7 - Awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>*SDA</th>
<th>*D</th>
<th>*N</th>
<th>*A</th>
<th>*S A</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think that agro tourism is a business based on agriculture.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think agro tourism needs a natural environment.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that agro tourism is an activity where tourists visit farms.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data *Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

‘Awareness’ is a suitable title for this factor, because the three variables are directly related to the understanding of agro tourism (based on agriculture, natural environment, tourist visits). Most of the respondents are strongly agree with the above three statements related with awareness.

Table 11: Factor 8 - Constraints:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>*SDA</th>
<th>*D</th>
<th>*N</th>
<th>*A</th>
<th>*S A</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think that the destruction, by the visitors to the plants in my farm, is one of the constraints in agro tourism.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonality of tourist arrival stops me from being involved in agro tourism.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that tourists visiting my farm will disturb my daily life schedule.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data *Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

All the variables loaded are directly related to the obstacles that may be faced by the farmers, if they are involved in agro tourism. More than 50% of the respondents are strongly agree with all the statements related with different constraints like destruction to the plant, seasonality of tourist and disturbance of daily life schedule.

Table 12: Factor 9 - Land Issues:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>*SDA</th>
<th>*D</th>
<th>*N</th>
<th>*A</th>
<th>*S A</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think that limited land size will stop tourists coming to my farm.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the size of my land is too small to run an agro tourism business.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data *Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

Th size of the land influences the tourist coming to the farm on an average more than 50% of the respondents agree with these statements. As the extension of the statements, the farmers believe that the limited size of the land has one of the big constraints for doing agri tourism business.
Findings

1. Most of the farmers have awareness towards the agri tourism concept, even though they have no high qualification they are familiar with the changes in the economy as well as their related field.
2. The study has identified different factors such as environmental factors, economic factors, accessibility, entrepreneurial knowledge, socio cultural factors, crowding, constraints etc. which directly influences the perception level of farmers towards agri tourism.
3. The support of the local government and entrepreneurs are required for agri-tourism development because small communities usually cannot afford to hire experts.

Recommendations

I propose to make the following recommendations.

1. Publicity: Print media and electronic media also should promote eco agri rural Tourism as a way to create awareness among farmers
2. Effective Training Programmes for Farmers: Value added agri processing businesses like sericulture, apiculture, fruit and vegetables preservations and bi-products, milk and milk products, plant nursery, training should be given to entrepreneurs
3. Supportive Financial Assistance: It was found that most of the farmers in Kerala require financial assistance. Financial assistance should be given to these farmers to develop their farms for tourist through financial institutes like NABARD, Nationalized Banks, Ministry of Agriculture and Tourism, Cooperative banks. It should be a motivation to involve in agri tourism activities.
4. Public Private Partnership: Strong community – private sector partnership should be sought. Adoption of villages in every district by tourism industry, state tourism department private sector should be done to encourage agri rural tourism.
5. Expert Assistance: Expert assistance should be offered to the farmers. Well renowned agriculturists and rural tourism experts should assist the farmers.
6. There needs to be a proper business model to promote and propagate the concept of agritourism as an easily adoptable and implementable venture for farmers in India.

Conclusion

Development of agri-tourism in Kerala rural areas is in its nascent stage. Kerala has perfect Opportunities to enhance its agri-tourism offer and it also represent one of the few states, which unify different climates, natural characteristics and socio-cultural entities. Though there has not been much initiative by the state government for agri-tourism development, it has been successfully initiated through the farmers’ efforts. Agri tourism brings major primary sector Agriculture closer to major service sector tourism to create win-win situation for both the sectors. Tourism sector has the potential to enlarge and Agriculture sector has the capacity to absorb expansion in Tourism sector. Thus if properly promoted and positioned, ‘Agri-tourism can become a promising financial alternative for the farmers and can be helpful in improving their livelihood.

Scope for Further Research:

This research article covers only the farmer’s perception towards agri tourism in Kerala. There a scope for systematic study of agri tourism centre and also the tourist attitude and perception towards these kinds of establishments. It can also possible to measure the profitability of these centres and how it would revitalise the agriculture sector.

Research Highlights

The study focused on the farmer’s awareness about agri tourism in Kerala as it is innovative concept combining the features of both tourism and agriculture.

It has identified the different factors related with perception of farmers towards agri tourism and their level of agreeableness; the factors are Environment factors, Accessibility, Economic benefits, Entrepreneurial Knowledge, socio cultural factors etc.

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