

Agro Tourism – A Case Study

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Abstract: Tourism is now well recognised as an engine of growth in various economies in the world. Several countries have transformed their economies by developing their tourism potential. Tourism has great capacity generate large scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled. Recently some new areas of tourism have been emerged like agro tourism. It is an innovative agricultural activity related to tourism and agriculture both. It has the great capacity to create additional source of income and employment opportunities to farmers. Agro tourism is a new face of tourism. It is farm based business that is open to the public. These specialised agro tourism centres generally offer things to see, things to do or produce or gifts to buy and are open to the public. It provides entertainment, education and fulfils activities to urban people. In this paper an attempt has been made to reveal the way of conducting agro tourism. It reveals a case study of 'Mulshi Agro Business' in Mulshi Taluka. The paper is based on primary data collected by visiting the site and conducting interview of the proprietor and the other employees. Secondary data supports the paper.

Keywords: Agro, Tourism, Working, Problems, Growth, plans

Tourism is now well recognised as an engine of growth in various economies in the world. Several countries have transformed their economies by developing their tourism potential. Tourism has great capacity generate large scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled. Recently some new areas of tourism have been emerged like agro tourism. It is an innovative agricultural activity related to tourism and agriculture both. In general, Agri-Tourism is the practice of attracting travellers or visitors to an area or areas used primarily for agricultural purposes. It has the great capacity to create additional source of income and employment opportunities to farmers. Agro tourism is a new face of tourism. It is farm based business that is open to the public. These specialised agro tourism centres generally offer things to see, things to do or produce or gifts to buy and are open to the public. It provides entertainment, education and other activities to urban people. It gives new look for the agro business.

Objectives of the paper:

- To understand the working of Mulshi Agro Tourism
- To identify the problems of agro tourism
- To know various activities carried out in such centres
- To examine the importance of agro tourism

Introduction

Agriculture is the most important occupation in India. But it has become unprofitable today due to irregular monsoon, price fluctuations of agro products and some internal weakness of the agricultural sector. Hence there is need to do some innovative activities in the agriculture, which will help the farmers and rural people. Urban population is increasing day by day and urban people's world is restricted in closed door flats, offices, clubs, video games, spicy fast food, and computer and so on. They can see nature only on computer or television. Moreover some people do not get opportunity to visit villages therefore they wish to enjoy rural life but there is problem of such type of

facilities. Hence this gives an opportunity to farmers for development of agro-tourism centres and serves him and create additional income source.

It is a way of sustainable business development with multi activities in rural areas through which the visitor has the opportunity to get aware with agricultural areas, agricultural occupations, local products, traditional food, and the daily life of rural people, as well as the cultural elements and traditions. This activity brings visitors more closer to the nature and they can participate in rural activities, it entertains them and gives them a feel of pleasure of touring.

Mulshi Taluka is bestowed with lush green farm lands, rivers and mountains, as well as Mulshi Dam, Temghar Dam, sacred groves (devrai) of Kolwan valley and etc Here is a case study which reveals number of facts about an agro business located in Mulshi taluka. The study is base on the Primary Data collected by visiting the spot and conducting in interview of the proprietor, his wife and the employees working on the tourist spot.. Mulshi agro tourism is one of the well known Agro tourism resort in Maharashtra. Mr Ramchandra Bhumkar who has completed masters in social work and his wife have established agro-tourism resort in Ambadwet taluka Mulshi Dist Pune. Initially he was working as farm labour for Rs 50.00 per day along with his agricultural practices. Later on he started plant nursery as a supplementary business with proper training. After visiting agri-tourism regions in Konkan region, he initiated tourism activities in own farm land, with the help of Shri Dayanand Jadhav, agriculture officer, and Shri Sharad Dhamale, MLA, of Mulshi. Mr.Bhumkar and his wife Savita Bhumker received more than 50 awards like Adarsha Krushi Nishtha purskar, Kalpak Shetkari puraskar, from Rotary club Sinhagad, Puraskar from Rashtravadi Mahila Sanghatana, swayamsidha purskar, Mulashi purskar for their wholehearted contribution in Agri - tourism giving employment for local villagers.

About Mulashi Agro Tourism-18.53⁰ N and 73.66⁰ E Mulshi agro tourism is located on Hinjewadi Pirangut road near Ghotawade at Ambadwe village. It is around 15 km from Pimpri Chinchwad and 37 km from Pune station. Total geographical area of Mulshi Tehsil is 1039 sq.km.

It consist 141 villages, Paud being the headquarter. Study area is the leading and the only resort established in the year 2007 in this area which is located near Mula Bridge. Total geographical area of the resort is four acres. It lies in the Eastern part of River Mula. The average annual temperature is 24.3⁰C and average Rain fall is 2841mms.The climate is tropical in Mulshi. Mulshi Agritourism provides a perfect family getaway for those who want enjoying holidays, away from their routine work. At Mulshi Agritourism, you will find typical Maharashtrian Village style and natural (agriculture) environment. Mulshi Agritourism specializes itself in Maharashtrian Food.

Ventures at the spot

- He established a scenic resort with well furnished accommodation facilities With the help of the services of local artisans. In the vicinity of nature along with the activity of agriculture i.e. growing vegetables, there are other activities like boating, cart- riding, swimming, trekking, jaggery processing, 'Shivar Feri' in Bullock cart, weaving, silk making and processing and many other activities. Traditional village food is also served which exhibits the village culture
- He established Suman hi-tech nursery which is the only plant nursery in Mulshi providing employment for ladies from the village; where they prepare seedlings, take care of saplings, and maintenance of plants until they are sold to customers also help for the farming operations.
- Local ladies shoulder the responsibility of cooking various delicious vegetarian and non vegetarian dishes on 'Chulas' which gives utmost satisfaction for the tourist and gives mouth publicity and make the resort popular.
- Tourists are taken for a ride in Mulshi River by self paddling boat escorted by boatman and a field guide gives guidance for bird watching, aurvedic plants and other information. Local people are employed for taking care pf such and other activities.

- Local 'Bachat Gat' ladies provide facility of flour mill for grinding fresh wheat and rice to the resort.
- Local ladies are employed for plucking the flowers like Zarbera, Carnation and Roses which are grown in Polyhouses and then are sold in the city market. These ladies are provided training in this area and they become self sufficient through the earnings they get.
- Library facility is provided to educate people in agro business .For this a local employee is appointed as a librarian in the library who takes responsibility of purchases of books and issuing of books in the resort.
- The resort organizes training programme for ladies for making and sale vermiculture .This engages the rural population, provides them source of income, generates employment , thus thrives for sustainable development. Ladies in bachat gat also sale local variety of rice i.e indrayani rice, pickles, papads, to the tourists and each deposits monthly Rs.100/- in nationalized bank. This promotes the habit of savings thus helping in the economic development of the nation.

Mr.Bhumkar has given inspiration for the farmers in nearby villages in Kashig, Male, Bhadas and Javalga for opening new Agro tourism Resorts for absorbing more employment in Agro tourism.

Facilities given by resort:

- The entire package of Rs, 400/ per person per day- consists breakfast, lunch, site seeing and enjoying the other facilities mentioned.
- The resort rooms are well equipped with all amenities including T V sets
- In a multy facility Hall,Tourists can celebrate birthdays, social functions and corporate groups organize one day seminars and conferences in the vicinity of nature.

- Boating escorted by boatman and tree houses for relaxation
- Rain dance with music and Swimming,
- Sheevar ferry- and cart ride for visiting Shiva temple
- Bird watching
- Purchases of Horticultural farm fresh items like Fruits, Flowers and Aurvedic medicinal plants

Use of natural resources:

- Resort uses and recycles kitchen waste, vegetable waste, foliage and litter and makes compost which is useful for nursery plants and various horticultural plants, like Banana, Papaya, etc.
- As cooking fuel, resort uses the branches and sub branches of Mango , Subabhul, Umber and other trees, which are available in farm itself.
- Twigs of small plants are useful for lighting Laxmi chulas and Gruha Laxmi Chula ,which is helpful for cooking.
- After spending their day in a resort ,tourists can purchase flower plants, decorative plants, fruit plants and other aurvedic medicinal plants from nursery which provides gives handsome earnings to the proprietor.
- If number of tourists increased, number of local employees also ready to give services.
- Tissue culture saplings of Jarbera, Carnation, Agnolium and Banana plants are easily available in nearby areas like Pirangut Krushi Vibhag, Talegaon nurseries and can easily get assistance from Research labs in Pune and from Agricultural college Pune.
- Due to nearness of Mula River, water boating is possible and tourists can enjoy the self paddle boating. Nursery plants,

fruit plants get constant supply of water from Mula river where two water pumps are installed for perennial supply of water.

- Initially from the year 2007 bio-gas plant was functioning as energy resource for cooking, has stopped working due to high cost of maintenance of cattle which resulted in shortage of gobar for the gobar gas plant.

Findings and conclusions:

- The bull cart ride which is in great demand by tourist, is stopped recently due to high prices of cart, bulls, fodder and also maintenance costs are increasing, which can not be recovered by charging Rs 400 per customer as entry fee.
- The influx of tourist is more in April and May due to holidays and reasonable on weekly holidays, national holidays, and festivals. No tourists visit the resort in rainy seasons and week days. Thus there is a large fluctuation in flow of tourists. Business is of seasonal in nature.
- The resort management has to pay salary, provide accommodation, food and other facilities to all its workers even during lean period of business in order to restrict labour turnover. Thus the resort management has to spend large overhead expenses during lean season which becomes expensive
- The resort management is not in a position to give advertisement in Local newspaper due to high rates of advertisement. The resort has to depend entirely on mouth publicity of visiting tourists. Thus there is limitation in publicity of tourist resort to large section of population nearby Hinjewadi I.T. sector and Pune city.
- Because of increasing prices of Bulls and bull carts farmers cannot afford the bull cart rides for tourists which is a main attraction for the tourists in the village areas.

- Due to high maintenance cost farmers could not afford to purchase cattle. Absence of cattle shows unavailability of cow dung and unavailability of dung shows stoppage in functioning of Bio gas plant which was the alternative source for cooking fuel in past few years.
- Due to the nearness of river tourists can enjoy the boating facilities. Plants in nursery get perennial water supply, so this perennial activity generate more earnings. Tourist can enjoy the natural view of water fall and never face any shortage of water problem.
- Motivation and generation of employment- The farmers in the nearby villages like Bhadas, Maale, Kashig and Javalaga have started agri tourism resorts in adjacent areas "Ambadwet" and they also generate employment for the local villagers who were marginal farmers. Mr Bhumkar also guides them for their development.
- Preservation of culture-as it gives an opportunities to exhibit traditional cooking skills, transportation methods etc cultural skills, which is helpful for sustainable development.

Future plans:

Resort owner wants to

- create a museum exhibiting traditional village kitchen items "Ukhal, Chulha, Grinding stones/Jate, Pata varvanta" etc
- construct a conference hall which will accommodate at least 500 participants install solar water heater and street lights for savings in electricity bills and for making eco friendly ambiance.
- restart a biogas plant which was installed in 2007 which is currently not in use.
- Wants to purchase the land from nearby farmers and wants to engage them in same activity on the cooperative basis.

The proprietor is also advertising his venture through website –mulshiagritourism.in-for online bookings, which has resulted in increase in number of visitors. In 2007 no of visitors were 600 and in 2013 this number increased to 3019.The entrepreneur is making use of natural resources, providing employment, striving for development of the people, helping for physical as well as mental relaxation specially for urban people, preserving culture, protecting environment and thus has developed ‘Green Business’ for himself and the society. He is waiting for more rapid development hoping that more incentives and financial assistance will be provided by the government .Also he has to tap nearby IT and other industrial area, communicate about his beauty-spot for prosperity with sustainable development.

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