



Rise of Agritourism in India: A Scoping Review

S. Sinha ^{a++*} and Md. H. Ali ^{b#}

^a Department of Agricultural Economics, School of Agricultural Sciences, Sister Nivedita University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India.

^b Department of Agricultural Economics, Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya, Mohanpur, Dist. Nadia, West Bengal, India.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Agrotourism also known as agritourism, is a form of tourism that involves visiting rural areas to explore agricultural or farm-based activities, as well as to experience the culture and traditions of rural communities. This type of tourism mostly takes many forms, including farm stays, vineyard tours, rural bed and breakfasts, and other farm-based accommodations. Agritourism is a new phenomenon for Indian tourists (Eco India, 2017) department and hence has a great scope for tourists to explore and experience authentic Indian tradition and farmers and also can fetch extra income through their regular activities. Above 70% of the population are living in more than 6 million villages (Incredible India, 2017). The current study aims to understand the demand and supply pattern of budding agritourism sector of India. Through understanding limitation, farmer's

⁺⁺Assistant Professor;

[#]Professor;

^{*}Corresponding author: E-mail: shalini5621@gmail.com;

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determination and perception, the research study also provides strategies to overcome the problems in order to conduct agritourism. This research paper begins with literature review which is followed by introductions to tourism in India and the study area. The qualitative research methodology is used (Semi-structured online questionnaire and interview) followed by analysis and the findings are discussed before conclusion.

Keywords: Agritourism; demand and supply; SWOT analysis.

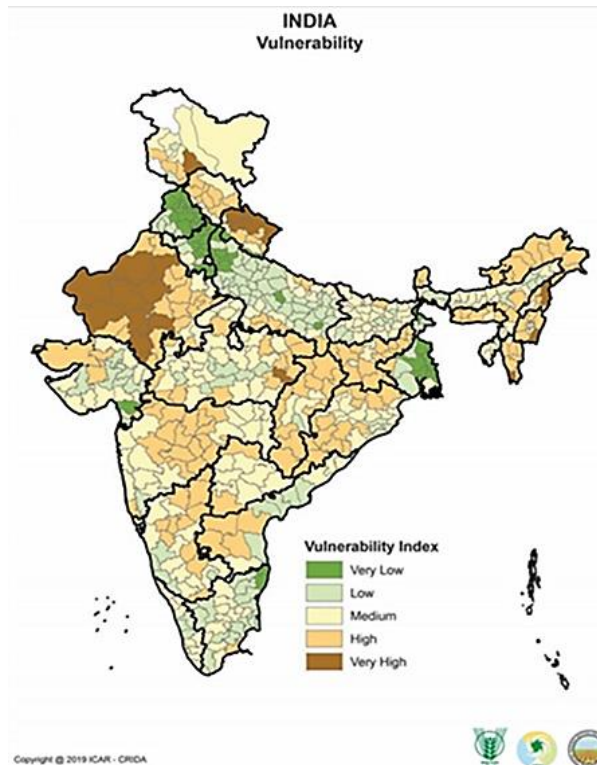
1. INTRODUCTION

“Agriculture is the main sector of Indian Economy. Around 65 percent of the population is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture. Out of total GDP around 18.3 percent of it comes from the agriculture sector” (<https://www.pib.gov.in>. 2022-23). “Providing additional income generating activities to existing agriculture would certainly increase the contribution of agriculture to national GDP” [1].

“Today, Indian agricultural sector has crossed various milestones through introduction of green revolution, white revolution, yellow revolution and blue revolution” [1]. “People in Indian villages are earning their livelihood through agriculture, animal husbandry and handicrafts” [2] (Ibef.org, 2018). On the other hand, there are various

problems faced by farmers such as: climatic uncertainty, growing families and heavy investments on agriculture [2]. Consequently, income generated through agriculture and handicrafts are not adequate to maintain their families. Therefore, farmers from rural areas are migrating to urban areas to earn their livelihood [1].

To overcome this present situation the study focuses on the concept of ‘agritourism’ as a source of additional income to the farmers. Domestic tourism in India is more dominant (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017). According to Indian Tourism Statistics, (2015) India has achieved great success and has attracted 8.03 million international tourists and 1,432 million domestic tourists to various touristic destinations.



Map 1. Study Map

Source: *Vulnerability of Indian agriculture to Climate Change (2021-2050)*

“Agritourism is one of the latest concepts in the Indian Tourism industry. It gives an opportunity to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with real life. Promotion of Agritourism needs conceptual convergence with rural tourism, health tourism and adventure tourism” [3].

“The term Agritourism is defined most broadly involving any agricultural activities that bring tourists to a farm. Some of the scholars have defined this term in different ways. Sometimes it refers to farm stage as it includes a wide variety of activities including buying produce direct from a farm stand, navigating a corn maze, slopping hogs, picking fruits, feeding animals or staying at a bed and breakfast on a farm. Moreover, Agritourism is a form of niche tourism that is considered as a growing industry in developing countries like India. It is an assumed fact that Agritourism is an instrument for employment generation, poverty elevation and sustainable women development in rural India. But we need to bring awareness among rural population to make agritourism more attractive. Today Agritourism is emerging as a popular destination for tourists across the country” [3].

2. A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is a plethora of literature on rural tourism in India as well as in abroad. A lot of research work has been done in this field and most of the suggestions made by the researchers indicate a great potentiality of the development of Agrotourism in India. Actually, Ago-tourism is not a new field of research and many researches has well stated the term ‘Agrotourism’ as any practice developed on a working farm with the purpose of attracting visitors. The study showed how it is helping residents and tourists to live a sustainable life and protect the environment from any kind of degradation in the rural areas.

P. Singh and Manoj Kumar [4] in their study have stated that “Agrotourism is a supportive system to the agricultural activities in India. Moreover, it is an Innovative practice which can be utilized by the famer and farm owners to harvest this opportunity, through a diversified approach in the core areas of agriculture sector in India”.

Azimi Hamzah et. al. [5] in their study have discussed “about the potential socio-economic benefits that can be offered by the agritourism activities to progressive fishing”.

Vijay M. Kumbhar [6] in his study of Maharashtra has pointed out that “tourism is now well recognized as an engine of growth in the various economies in the world. Therefore, tourism has great capacity to generate large-scale employment and additional income sources to the skilled and unskilled. Today the concept of traditional tourism has been changed and some new areas of the tourism have been emerged like Agrotourism. Consequently, the promotion of Agrotourism would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the local people by generating new job opportunities in rural areas in the farming sector”.

N. G. McGehee, et. al. [7] in their study has explained “Agritourism as rural enterprises which incorporate both a working farm environment and a commercial tourism component”.

Marques [8] in his study has pointed out “agrotourism as a specific type of rural tourism in which the hosting house must be integrated into an agricultural estate, inhabited by the proprietor, allowing visitors to take part in agricultural or complementary activities on the property”.

Sonnino [9] in his study has stated that “all activities of hospitality performed by agricultural entrepreneurs and their family members that must remain connected and complementary to farming activities”. Likewise, Sandra, L. [10] in the research have “revealed the fact that tourism products which are directly connected with the agrarian environment, agrarian products or agrarian stays”.

3. AGRITOURISM IN INDIA

“Agriculture is the backbone of Indian economy and agritourism is one of the latest concepts in tourism Industry. There are some farm stays in India which has attracted the tourists and contributed to combat poverty and unemployment from some parts of rural India as under” [3]:

Dewalokam Farmstay Retreat, Kerala: “It is the organic ancestral farm of a welcoming Syrian Christian family named as paradise which is located in Karimanoor, Kerala and a convenient located drive from Kochi Airport bounded by a tranquil river and natural beauty. Some of the major activities on this farm are to grow fruit, vegetables, spices, milk and honey and there is a range of activities for guests such as spice walks,

bamboo rafting, temple visits and cow milking including yoga and Ayurveda activities” [3].

Dudhsagar Plantation and Farmstay, Goa: “It is located at the foothills of the western Ghats mountains in sedate south Goa which was started in 1985. It has a vast variety of organic fruit trees, spices, medicinal plants, herbs and flowers. The farm stay has two basics, clean and cozy cottages in the midst of a tropical palm garden” [3].

Destiny Farmstay, Ooty: “It is a lovely destination for kids secluded away around 25km from the hill station of Ooty. There is a stable full of horses, cows, sheep, guinea pigs and geese. A huge range of Agro products is grown here such as coffee, spices, fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers. There is also a luxury spa for adults with 35 guest rooms” [3].

Green Dreams Farmstay, Coorg, Karnataka: “It is a popular destination for tourists in the coffee region of Coorg, in Karnataka. It belongs to a local coffee connoisseur and trader which is very peaceful destination with five eco friendly best cottages suitable for a family tour” [3].

Prakarti Farm and Citrus County in Punjab: “Prakarti farm is a non-profitable organic farm located in Roopnagar in Punjab. It has a much rustier feeling surrounded by the natural environment. Likewise Citrus County is one of the biggest farm stays in Punjab located on the way to Amritsar with four rooms and nine luxury tents with a swimming pool, café and bar. It is named because citrus fruit is grown on a 70 acres land here and tourist can enjoy the activities like fruit pecking, explore local villages, visit a dairy farm, and to cook Punjabi food” [3].

Tathagata Farm, Darjeeling, West Bengal: “it is a favorite destination for tourists, which offers an opportunity to go back to nature on a tea estate up in the hills. The farm grows cardamom, ginger, vegetables, orange including the major activities of tea production. This farm includes the activities like plantation tours, trekking, nature trails fishing, birding etc” [3].

The Goat Village, Uttarakhand: “This destination is located in the greenery of hills and it is an initiative to augmentation local income and increase markets for organic products by farming activity. It offers an opportunity for the villagers to provide hospitality and cooking delicious local cuisine, exploring the local way of life for guests” [3].

The Country Retreat Farmstay, Pali, Rajasthan: It is located in Pali, Rajasthan which comprises 130 acres of farmlands and it offers a vast variety of agricultural activities and some other popular activities including bird watching, animal herding, photography, farm tours and cooking lessons.

Agri Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) has always been putting its efforts as per the changing needs of the section of the social fabric; and shall continue to do the same. Some facts which provide the outcome of the effort are as follows: In last 4 years more than 500 farmers trained under ATDC Agri Tourism training program and 52 farmers from nearby villages of Maharashtra have started their own agri-tourism activity on their farms to enhance the agriculture income.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Globally agritourism is showing growth. This research paper aims to provide new knowledge on it, assessing the potential demand and supply and considering the role of agritourism as one of the tools for rural economic development in India. The research study is also aimed at studying the farmer’s willingness to operate agritourism business in near future and the strategies adopted to combat the various obstacles they face while providing touristic services. The present research paper includes the following objectives:

- To study the potential demand and supply of agritourism in India.
- To perform SWOT analysis to understand the scope of agritourism development in India.
- To study the challenges and recommended strategies of agritourism industry.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the present research primary and secondary data were utilized to attain objective of the study. Secondary data has collected from various publications including official reports. The researcher has collected the secondary data from the reputed books, journals and official websites of the tourism department and department and tourism boards of different states as well as of tourism ministry of India. To pace the study, the researcher has also used some observational facts. In this research study has conducted to find two different aspects.

- **Supply side:** First study is conducted to understand farmer's interest to operate agritourism business. Researcher has adopted semi-structured interviews. To conduct survey interviewers were appointed (due to language barriers) to conduct interviews with farmers to gain knowledge. Interviewee needed to answer 10 questions. The sample size targeted to use for this study was 500. The sample is selected randomly and the respondents were interviewed one by one.
- **Demand side:** Then research study focused on the tourist's willingness to perform agritourism by members of public. Semi- structured online questionnaire to collect public opinion regarding their willingness to participate in agritourism. Survey consists of 10 questions. The sample size targeted to use for this study was 500. The researcher has utilized social media and email as a source to gather information from random public.

Indian sub-continent, 421 (80%) participants are male and 103 (20%) females as a result of which agriculture sector is dominated by the head of the family. All the respondents are mostly involved in agriculture for the last 15 years. Research has been conducted in various parts of India. The data shows more number (52 each) of participants are from Chhattisgarh and Karnataka (state wise participants).

- **Knowledge about agritourism:** Out of all the respondents 467 (89%) never heard about agritourism only 57 (11%) has been informed through their friends and family who live abroad or have read about agritourism in some articles, that farmers are hosting tourists and providing them food & accommodation in their farms.
- **Willing to be entrepreneurs:** Even though agritourism is a new concept for the farmers, most of them are interested to start this business and every respondent has enquired how agritourism can complement agriculture. After listening to the merits and demerits of agritourism, 285 (54%) are willing to start business without any doubt. 166 (32%) farmers are willing to perform if they get proper training and financial support (bank Loans and subsidies) form government. 73 (14%) farmers are not interested.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Findings on Supply Side

Respondents are being selected randomly with the help of NGO's. The research study has have found out of 524 farmers of various locations of

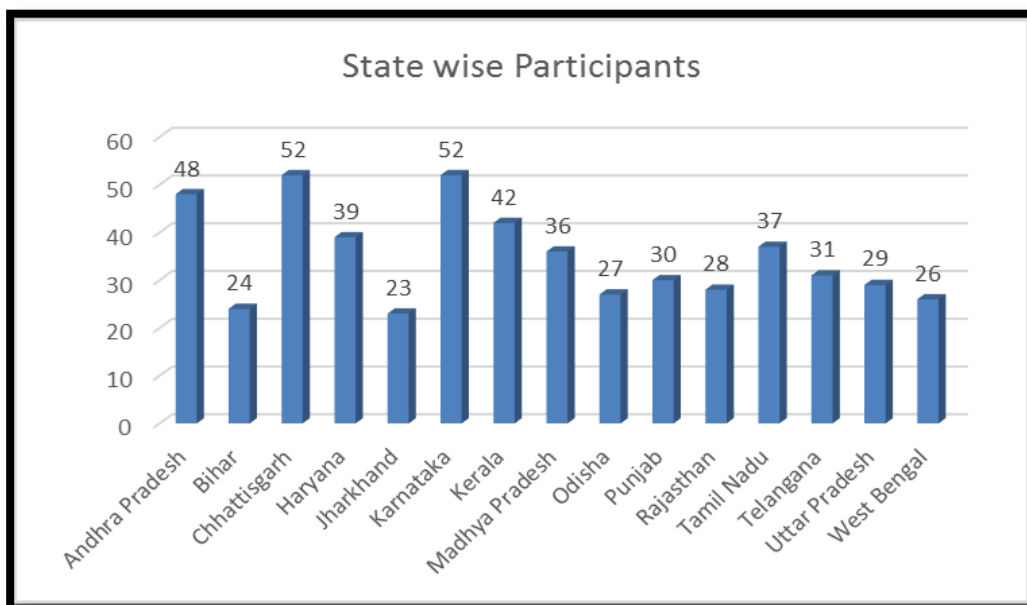


Fig. 1. State wise participants

Source: Author

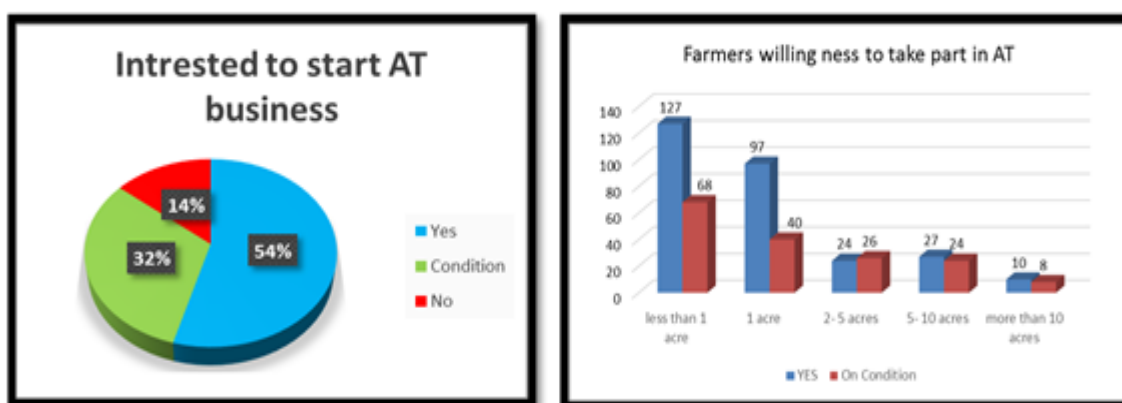


Fig. 2. Willingness of farmer to taking part in AT business

Source: Author

5.2 Findings on Demand Side

Researcher has utilized web survey to perform this part of research. Author has sent this survey link to various organizations all over India with the help of social media, emails, and took the help of human resource managers of various multinational organizations in India to circulate questionnaire within the organizations. Researcher has received 1000 responses. In this research 400 (40%) are women and 600 (60%) are male participated. Only 101 (9.69%) are unemployed or not specified their profession out of which 27 (26.73%) are students and 53(52.47%) are homemakers.

Awareness about Agritourism: In this research 622 (60%) male and 420 (40%) female respondents have provided them feedbacks regarding Agritourism. 798 (77%) of the respondents have heard and very few (11 people) told that they have visited Agritourism farms in Maharashtra, India and their visit was satisfactory. 244 (23%) respondents never heard about Agritourism before.

Public interest to take part in Agritourism

Activity: The researcher understands that 984 (94%) respondents are interested in participating in agritourism at least once in their life time. According to the research (53.96%) respondents has thinking to spend in between 2 days to a week at the destination and wish to spend for accommodation in between INR 800 to INR 1000 per night per family. Out of the respondents 84 (8%) are willing to stay for a month yearly and they mentioned that they can spend up to INR 100,000 and surprisingly all these respondents

are working for Information Technology industry. Most of the people are willing to go along with friends, family or with friends and family but only 26 (2.64%) wanted to perform on their own.

Researcher has observed that respondents are willing to spend from INR 150 to INR2000 per person per night. 351 (34%) respondents answered that they can spend in between INR800 to INR1200 per family per night on accommodation.

Attractive activities: 981 respondents have answered that they are interested to perform various activities of those most popular activity is Tasting Local Food 852 (86.58%), followed by Relaxing and Learning Local Culture & Tradition 721 (73.27%) each, then 584 (59.34%) respondents are attracted to participate in Farming activity followed by Participating in manufacture of Local Handicrafts and Artifacts 51%, then after Sightseeing, Campfires and sporting activities are mentioned by less than 50% of the respondents.

Challenges of Agritourism in India:

Agritourism centers can be developed more easily in India because of the better natural and climatic conditions that make it more conducive to the development of agritourism centers. In spite of this, there are some problems that are associated with the development of agritourism are the following:

- Lack of quality of the services given to the tourists.
- Poor infrastructural facilities in rural areas.
- Low literacy rate of the farmers and farm owners.

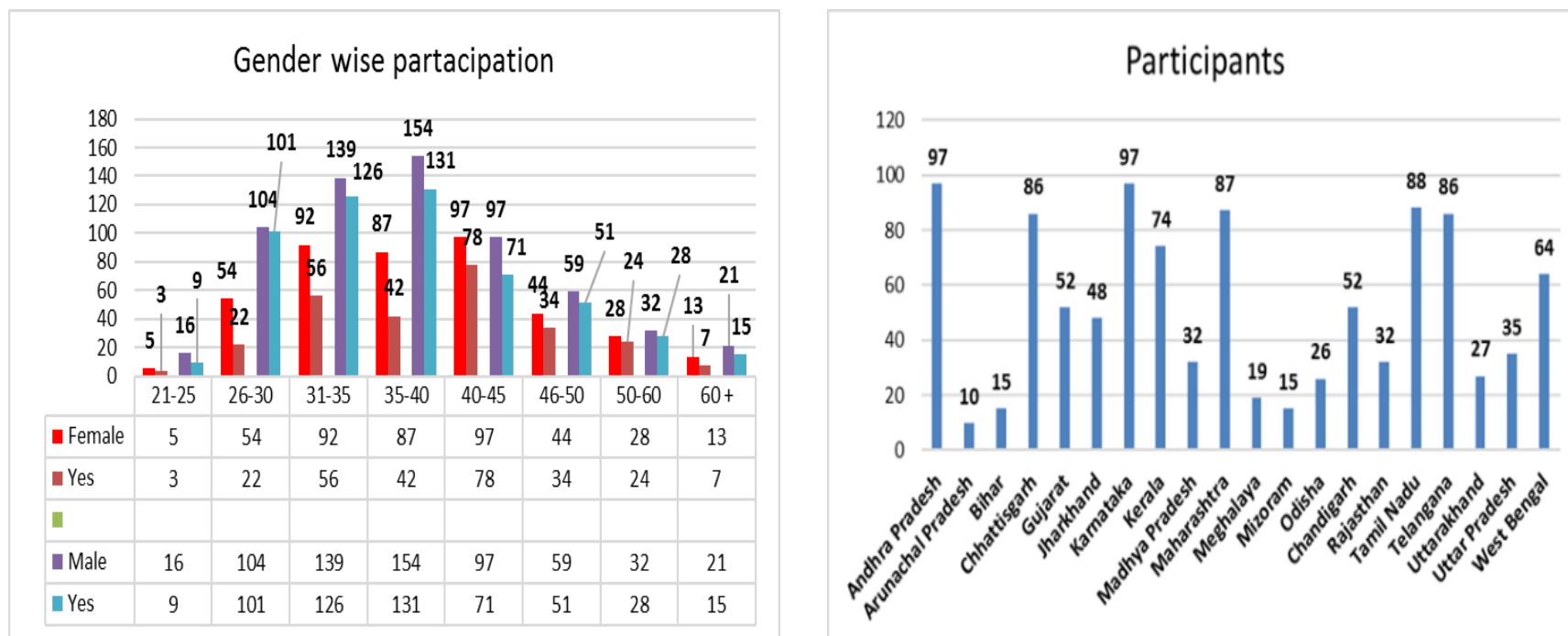


Fig. 3. Gender wise ratio of participants

Source: Author

- Inadequate information about the farms and farming life.
- Lack of government support and identification of problems faced by the tourists.
- Lack of effective agrotourism resource centers.
- Lack of proper marketing strategy for agrotourism.
- Inadequate risk management programs and techniques.

Government’s Strategies to Combat the Challenges:

1. Nationalized banks and cooperative banks provide loans for agritourism at subsidized rates because NABARD has recognized it as an emerging business.
2. Local players involved in agricultural tourism will be encouraged to standardize their activities with additional incentives under the Maharashtra Tourism Policy of 2016. The Haryana Tourism Policy has

3. pioneered introduction of the concept of farm or agricultural tourism.
4. According to the Punjab Farm Tourism Scheme 2013, farm house owners should serve as hosts and guides to tourists visiting their farms.
5. Tourism in Kerala has been greatly boosted by the government allowing 5% of farmland to be used for tourism.
6. Agricultural tourism projects taken up by farmers can be financed by Karnataka Vikas Grameen Bank (KVGB) with up to 75% of the project costs and at 12.5% interest rate.
7. In Uttarakhand, the state government plans to introduce 'Agritourism' in the near future to boost tourism like European vineyards and Japanese strawberries.
8. Agricultural and Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation (MART) has urged the Maharashtra state government to ensure that agricultural loans are also subsidized [11-16].

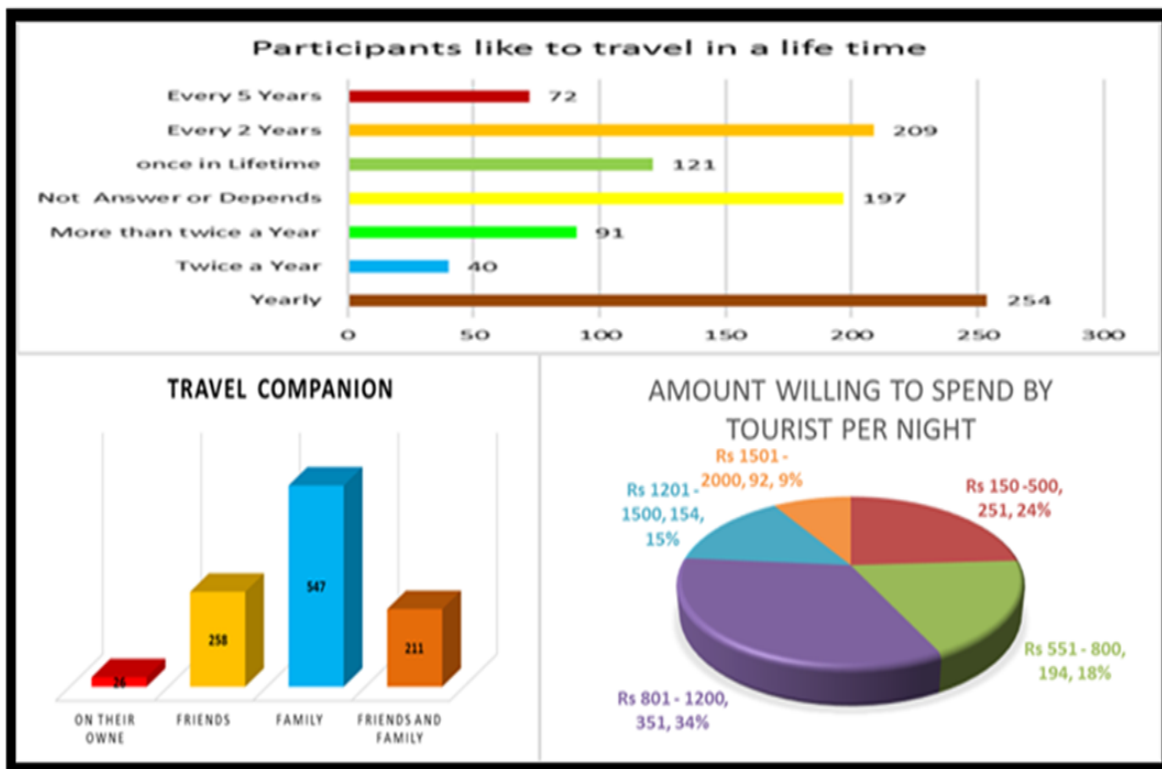


Fig. 4. Graphical presentation showing willingness of participants to travel in a lifetime
 Source: Author



Fig. 5. Graphical presentation showing different reasons for travelling of participants

Source: Author

Tasting local food (TLF), Learning local cooking, learning local culture and tradition (LLCT), participating in manufacturing or local handicrafts or artefacts (PM)

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of agritourism in India is enumerated in the matrix

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ A strong source of income for farm families. ❖ Generate employment. ❖ Enhance the rural areas. | <p>Weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Growth of agritourism is slower than industry sector. ❖ Most of the farmers are less educated hence they need training. ❖ Lack of government support in the form of subsidies. ❖ Very less agritourism training centres available in India. ❖ Lack of publicity and popularity. |
| <p>Opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ As a new branch it has immense potential. ❖ Many farm families can be benefitted. ❖ Support from the government can increase agritourism. ❖ State land can be cultivated and increase and converted to facilitate agritourism. | <p>Threat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Adverse climatic conditions. ❖ Rampant shift of farmers to the industrial sector. |

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study shows agritourism has great scope in Indian market as every province is diversified by culture, tradition, climate, history, landscape and agriculture technique. It can support farmers to generate additional income as well as provides rural employment through which one can hope migration from rural India can be controlled partially. The study reveals the tourists in India are also looking forward to taking part in agritourism as it provides different services. But agrotourism in India is facing many problems and Indian farmers need to cater the concept of agrotourism as diversifying their operation and hence it need a creative strategy for the

betterment and need to implement a well-defined strategy for the development of agrotourism at national and state level. In this regard, a proper recognition of agrotourism industry, government supported policy structure of agrotourism, education of the farmer and farm owner, proper financing solution for its enhancement, liability and risk management programs, product and service quality improvement for its growth.

In addition to experiencing rural life, tourists can taste traditional cuisine and live in a peaceful environment. The study reveals that at first, Agri Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) operated one agritourism center, but today it has become 152. Agri-tourism services are

currently provided by few agripreneurs, agriculture, tourism departments at the national and state levels, and farmers are required to support agri-tourism promotion. Commercially operated agritourism centers are few and far between.

Agri-tourism needs to be promoted in order to attract farmers to participate. It is essential that farmers understand the maintenance of facilities, hospitality, and public relations aspects of this industry. To boost this concept, agri-tourism providers need to provide safe and clean accommodation, clean water, and hygienic food to urban customers. Television and radio can be used to increase awareness among urban customers. Farmers, government agencies, farmer's cooperatives, and non-governmental organizations should be consulted in order to promote the services.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declares that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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