

Research  
Paper

## Socio-economic development of rural area of Konkan region of Maharashtra state through agrotourism

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### ABSTRACT

To preserve the natural heritage of Konkan region and to develop the socio-economic status, strategic scientific planning of Agrotourism as a form of Rural Tourism is a need of hour. Therefore, focus should be given on infrastructure development schemes coupled with anti-poverty fund schemes for increasing income and employment opportunities.

Joshi, Paresh V., Bhujbal, Milind and Pable, Satyawar (2011). Socio-economic development of rural area of Konkan region of Maharashtra state through agrotourism, *Internat. Res. J. agric. Eco. & Stat.*, 2 (1) : 103-107.

**Key words :** Rural tourism, Agrotourism, RTBI model

## INTRODUCTION

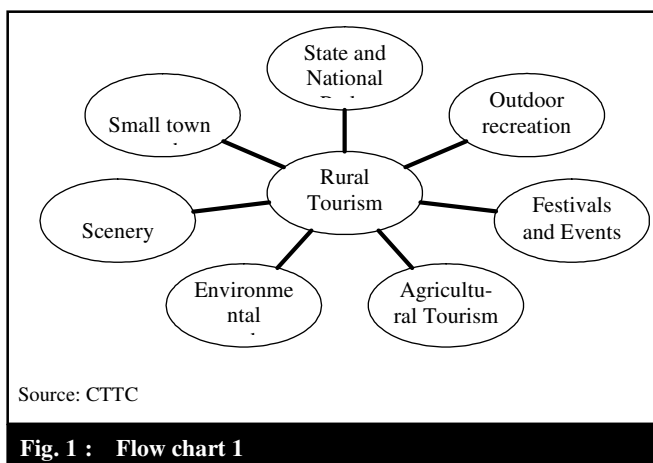
There are varieties of terms used to describe tourism in rural areas including Farm Tourism, Agro-Tourism Soft Tourism and Eco-Tourism (Beeton, 2006)

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, 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 termed as rural tourism.

### Rural tourism demand drivers:

Rural tourism comprises a number of drivers that help to create the demand for rural tourism visitation. These demand drivers working either alone or in conjunction with others help to satisfy the needs of the rural tourism visitor.



Rural tourism is the form of alternative to mass tourism, which takes place in rural areas (Flow Chart 1)

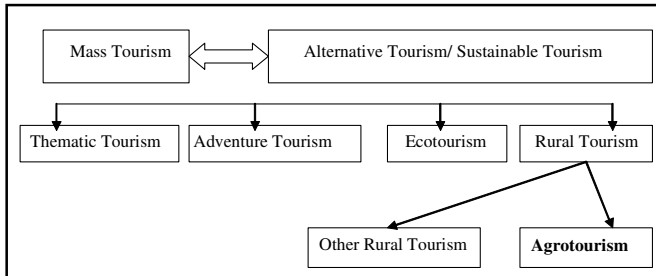


Fig. 2 : Flow chart 2

Rural tourism is a wider concept and Agro tourism is one of the forms of rural tourism.

**Agrotourism instrument for socio-economic development:**

In the last 25 years of the 20th century, the term Agritourism appeared in international literature. There exists a 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 ones place of residence that is inspired by cognitive, recreational and sports need.

The combination of prefix *agri* with noun *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 is a specific form of rural tourism with the following features (Flow Chart 3).

- Close relation to nature and country side of rural areas
- Direct relationship to agricultural activities.

**Agrotourism involves:**

Main features that differentiate Agrotourism from

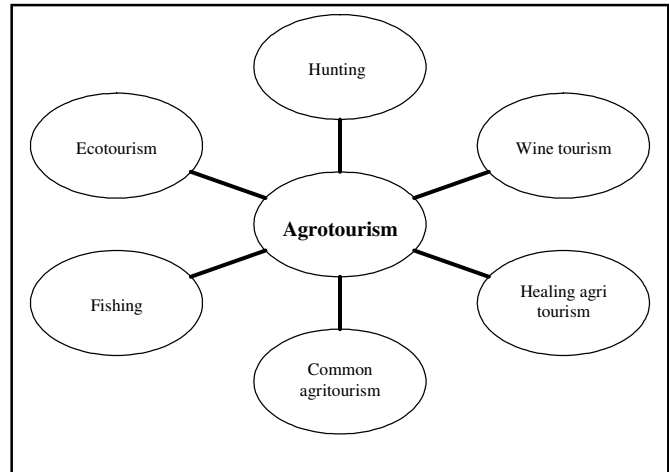


Fig. 3 : Flow chart 3

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.

**Two things are to be noted in this context are:**

- 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 in bound 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 the lush green Konkan region of Maharashtra, 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).

**Potential for development of agro-tourism in Konkan region:**

Surrounded by the Sahyadri hills on the east and the Arabian sea on the west, the coastal strip of Maharashtra is known as the Konkan region. Historically Konkan has been the land with dense forest cover and a landscape fringed with beautiful beaches, picturesque hamlets, paddy fields, coconut grooves and mango orchards.

The Konkan 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 Konkan 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.

**A Model for incubating tourism entrepreneurship for socio-economic development of Konkan region:**

For socio-economic development of Konkan region, the tourism plays an important role, as earlier we saw that different forms of tourism but Konkan region has the potential to develop agrotourism and effective implementation of agrotourism in Konkan 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 Konkan region through agrotourism concept, but Agrotourism in Konkan region is at its infancy stage. Therefore, there is an urgent need to initiate the process of incubating the entrepreneurship for overall development of Konkan 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 Corporation (MTDC), Agro Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) and other national level organizations like Indian Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC) is important for providing right direction in near future.

In accordance with the Beeton model of community development through rural tourism, Dr. Anjan Bhuyan from Meghalaya has prepared model as initial attempt to suggest a strategy for rural development in India. This model is named as Rural Tourism Business Incubator (RTBI). It is a process of developing, nurturing and promoting rural tourism by the rural community for the greater interest of the nation as a whole.

The RTBI works at the grass root level for tourism planning and promotion. It is a sort of nodal agency devoted to the systematic process of enhancing tourism development. The details are presented in Flow chart 4.

**Application of the RTBI model:**

Konkan region has the potential to develop

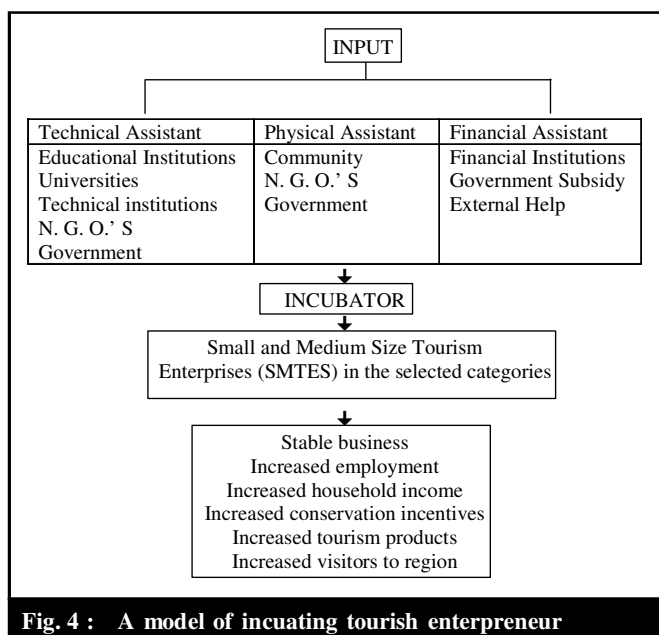


Fig. 4 : A model of incuating tourish entrepreneur

agrotourism but to achieve overall socio-economic development, the implementation of the above model is necessary. According to the RTBI model, it is prior most important to educate or aware the rural people about the hidden potential of the region towards the agrotourism development.

The Konkan region is having key points for agrotourism destination like scenary, mountains, rivers, beaches, 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 Konkan coastal region.

If the above stated strategy is followed then the agrotourism industry can be developed in the Konkan 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 Konkan region.

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