

OPINION OF TOURISTS' ABOUT RURAL-AGRI TOURISM CENTERS

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Abstract: Tourism is contributing nine per cent to the country's GDP and India is ranked as the seventh largest tourism economy in the world. Tourism contributes to the economy by way of employment generation, enterprise promotion and for the overall economic development of the country. In recent times rural-agri tourism is an emerging segment of the Indian tourism industry. This industry shows cases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural location. The present study on "Rural -agri Tourism: A perspective study" has been conducted in the three purposively selected rural-agri tourism centers *i.e* Agadi thota, Eco-Village and Dharwad adventure base. From each center 40 tourists were selected, making a sample of 120. The personal interview method was used to collect the data and suitable statistical tools were used for analyzing the same. The study revealed that most tourists were aged between 35-50 years, were graduates, job holders, from nuclear medium sized families. The income ranged between ₹ 1,32,000 – 5,72,000. Most of the tourists were from within the state. Who got information about the tourist centers through friends/ relatives. Leisure & recreation was the purpose of their visit. Regarding the opinion of the tourists it could be seen that, most of the tourists belonged to favorable & highly favorable opinion (98.44%). Tourists expressed that the most important criteria for choosing to visit the tourist centre was experiencing nature, rural life/ agricultural activities. Cost and availability of healthy & good food are some other criteria. The study revealed that education had a positive significant relationship with opinion of tourists.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism involves travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific object of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects (both past and present) found in these areas (Ziffer 1986). Tourism by far is one of the fastest growing sectors of the Indian economy.

Tourism is contributing nine per cent to the country's GDP and India is ranked as the seventh largest tourism economy in the world. Tourism contributes to the economy by way of employment generation, enterprise promotion and for the overall economic development of the country. In the recent times, rural-agri tourism is an emerging segment of the Indian tourism industry which shows cases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural location. Rural agri tourism can create

employment for the local people and demand for many more industries, including improvement of infrastructure in rural areas. It can revive local art forms & handicrafts and give a fillip to traditional local foods. On the other hand for the urban tourist who live in concrete jungles such tourism centers are a boon as a get-away from the hustle and bustle of city life.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the profile of tourists visiting rural-agri tourism centers
2. To know the opinion of the tourists visiting rural-agri tourism centers

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Dharwad and Haveri districts of Karnataka during the year 2018-19. Dharwad and Haveri districts were purposively

selected for the study because there are six rural- agri tourism centers located in Dharwad and Haveri. The three rural-agri tourism centers namely Eco-Village, Dharwad adventure base and Agadi thota were selected for the study because the three rural-agri tourism centers were better established than the others. From each of the three selected tourism centers, 40 tourists who visited the tourist centers were selected as the sample for the study, making a total sample of 120 respondents and pre-structured interview schedule was used to collect the data. Frequency, percentage and index was used to analyze the data.

$$\text{Opinion index} = \frac{\text{Scores obtained}}{\text{Obtainable scores}} \times 100$$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age

It is seen that among tourists who visited rural-agri tourism centers, 41.66 per cent belonged to middle age group (35-50 years), Forty per cent of them belonged to young age (>35 years) and remaining 18.33 per cent of the tourists were in the old age (< 50 years) group.

The reason might be the youth of today like to hang out with friends, they wish to experience nature and participate in recreational & entertainment activities. They want to try out the rural and traditional games like gilli dandu, lagori etc. They like to enjoy a swim in the pond or dance in the rain. Adventure activities like rope games and boating have attracted the youth less than 35 years. The youth were also interested in bullock cart rides, camel ride, tractor ride in which they actively participate for sheer enjoyment and recreation. However, those in the 35-50 years age (41.66 %) visited for experiencing the rural environment to enjoy nature, spend time with environment and enjoy the good food as well as recreation with their family members. With better health this age group also enjoy the adventure based activities. There were few tourists (18.33 %) aged above 50 who had accompanied their children and grand children for rest and relaxation. The results are in accordance with the findings Malkanthi and Routry (2013), Berini *et al.* (2015) and Tan *et al.* (2017)

Gender

With respect to the gender, it can be seen that 55.83 per cent of the tourists were female and 44.17 per cent of them were male.

There were more women visiting the centers than men because women want to experience culture, art and heritage. Moreover for women it is a change in the routine work when she does not have to cook. It is also fact that for such outings with children the women take the lead, while men may avoid taking the children by themselves. So, we see a higher per cent of women visiting the centers. The results are in conformity with the findings Aliman *et al.* (2014). But were not in consance of in the findings of Bagari & Kalal (2015) and Gok & Sayin (2015) where there were more male tourists than female.

Education

It could be seen that, 45.00 per cent of the tourists were degree holders, 18.33 per cent had completed PUC/ diploma, 16.67 per cent were masters degree holders, 13.33 per cent had completed high school education, 5.00 per cent were Ph.D degree holders and only 1.67 had received higher primary education.

The reason might be education plays an important role in predicting awareness and knowledge. Most urban educated have their roots in rural areas, they wish to experience rural life and moreover educated have better financial status and so, they are in a position to visit these centers. They are also aware of the importance of conservation of local art, culture and heritage and wish to experience the same. The results are in accordance with the findings of Berini *et al.* (2015), Aliman (2014), Gok and Sayin (2015) and Tan *et al.* (2017).

Occupation

Regarding occupation of the tourists it could be seen that, 28.33 per cent of the tourists were government job holders followed by private job (26.67 %). About 14.00 per cent women were housewives and 13.33 per cent were business men. Nearly nine per cent were students and 8.33 per cent were agriculturists by occupation.

Tourists from all occupations were visiting the tourist centers, irrespective of whether they

are government or private job holders or even housewives. Most of them however were from urban background. Due to stress and work load in day-to-day life people are searching for change in their daily environment. So, they wish to spend time with nature & environment and for rest & relaxation.

The results are in line with Zoto *et al* (2012) and Singla (2014)

Income

About half of the tourists (52.50%) belonged to medium level of income (₹ 1,32,000 to ₹ 5,72,000), 27.50 per cent and 20.00 per cent belonged to low level (₹ <1,32,000) and high income level (₹ >5,72,000) respectively.

This is because most of the tourists were educated/ graduates and job holders with sound financial background. They are in a position to spend ₹ 500-700/ day for entertainment & recreation. Although with low income some of them may have visited the centers with their friends to enjoy & experience the new type of tourism *i.e* rural-agri tourism. Since it is once- a-while spending, they do not mind doing so. The results are line with Aksu (2010), Singla (2014) and Gok & Sayin (2015)

Family Type

A majority (67.50 %) of the tourists were from nuclear families, while 32.50 per cent were from joint families.

Family Size

It was noticed that, half of the tourists (51.66%) belonged to medium size family (5-8 members), 35.00 per cent were from small size families (1-4 members) and 13.33 per cent of them were from large size families (9 and more members).

It could be seen that, a majority of the tourists were from nuclear family (67.50%). Nuclear families are increasingly becoming the norms of the day. With only the parents and siblings at home they wish to go out and enjoy their weekends and holidays. With visits to relatives & friends houses becoming scare, they were visiting these tourist centers. Nuclear families usually have a planned and economic way of spending. Thus, they are spending a part of their

money on recreation and entertainment purpose. The results are in conformity with the findings of Boram & Hansheng (2013) and Wong (2013).

Source of Information about the rural-agri tourism centers

Table 2 indicates the source of information about rural-agri tourism centers. A majority (70.83%) of the tourists' heard about the tourist destination from friends & relatives, while 11.67 per cent got to know from mass media (*i.e* Television and news paper) followed by advertisements (8.33%) like bill boards, 6.67 per cent got information browsed the internet for information and only 2.50 per cent were told about the tourist centers by travel agencies.

This is because publicity by word of mouth is the most common source of information and people who experience new things have the habit of sharing with their friends and relatives. Although the details of the centers are available on the internet, people like to hear from relatives & friends who have visited the centers, as it is based on firsthand experience.

The findings of the present study agree with the findings of Gok & Sayin (2015) and Bagri & Kala (2015)

Purpose of visit to rural-agri tourism centers

The purpose of visit is revealed in table 3. It could be seen that a majority (72.50 %) of the tourists expressed leisure & recreation as the purpose of visit, 18.33 per cent came to experience rural life, five per cent visited for educational purpose, 2.50 per cent for knowledge and only 1.67 per cent for business purpose.

The reason for the purpose of visit presented in table 3 show that, a majority (72.50 %) of the tourists expressed that leisure & recreation was the main reason for visiting for the tourist centers. People visit tourism centers to take a break from their routine life, so they are looking out for recreation & games, as well as rest & relaxation. Many activities and events like folk songs & dances are organized by the tourist centers for tourists. About 18.00 per cent of tourists visited the centers to experience rural life. Most of the urban tourists have their roots in rural areas, where they were born and brought

up. Such people visit the visit the centers for nostalgic purpose which revive their childhood memories. Due to stress and work load in the city they wish for a change in their daily life. Five per cent visited because of educational purpose, 2.50 per cent for knowledge and only 1.67 per cent for business purpose respectively. The reason is that tourists were interested to know and learn about environment conservation, sustainable models as well as rural life styles.

Companions during visit to the rural-agri tourism centers

Table 4 indicates that, 70.00 per cent of the tourists visited tourist centers with friends & family, while 15.00 per cent and 11.67 per cent visited with relatives and office colleagues respectively. Only 3.33 per cent visited with others *i.e* school children, etc.

The data in table 4 indicates that a majority (70.00 %) of the tourists visited tourist centers with friends & family and 15.00 per cent with the relatives. Friends and family & relatives are the primary groups, where the group members are concerned about one another and share activities and culture. It is therefore natural that most of the tourist had visited with family & friends where they enjoy at the best. In smaller numbers were the office goes who visited with their colleagues (11.67 %) and a few (3.33 %) were teachers who took students for a visit.

Tourists' opinion about rural-agri tourism centers

Tourists' opinion about different components of rural-agri tourism centers

Table 5 indicates the tourists' opinion about rural-agri tourism which was studied on eight aspects namely; about tourist center, services & facilities, cleanliness & sanitation, food & beverages/ cuisine, nature & environment, participation & experience, self development and environment/ community benefits.

Fifty five per cent of the tourists had a favorable opinion with regard to tourist centers. About 34.00 per cent had a highly favorable opinion and only 10.83 per cent had a less favorable opinion about tourist centers.

The index for this aspect was 62.91 indicating favorableness to the extent of 63.00 per cent.

Regarding service & facilities, a majority (64.16 %) of the tourists had a favorable opinion, 31.67 per cent had highly favorable opinion and only a small per cent (4.17 %) had a less favorable opinion. Overall index of service and facilities was 64.51 which indicated that, tourists had favorable opinion about service and facilities provided in the rural-agri tourism centers to the extent of 65.00 per cent.

About 49.00 per cent had a highly favorable opinion, 47.50 per cent had a favorable opinion and only 4.17 per cent had a less favorable opinion about cleanliness & sanitation. The index of 77.81 indicated favourableness to the extent of 78.00 per cent.

Regarding food & beverages, a majority (78.33 %) of the tourists expressed a highly favorable opinion while, 21.67 per cent of them had a favorable opinion. The index on this aspect was 79.93.

With respect to nature & environment nearly, 48.00 per cent of the tourists had a favorable opinion, 45.83 per cent had a highly favorable opinion and only 6.67 per cent of them had a less favorable opinion with an index of 77.08.

Regarding participation & experience, 70.00 per cent of the tourists had a highly favorable opinion, 29.16 per cent had a favorable opinion and less than one per cent (0.83%) had a less favorable opinion. Overall index for participation & experience was 74.32 indicating an above average favorable opinion to the extent of 74.00 per cent.

About 56 per cent of the tourists had a favorable opinion, 40.83 per cent had a favorable opinion and only 2.50 per cent had a less favorable opinion about self development. The index for this aspect indicates a favourable opinion to the extent of 82.18 per cent.

Regarding environment/ community benefits, 55 per cent of them had a favorable opinion, 44.17 per cent had a highly favorable opinion and less than one per cent (0.83%) had a less favorable opinion. The index for this aspect indicated that favorable opinion was to the extent of 78.12

The overall index was 73.89 indicating favorableness to the extent of 74 per cent. The highest index was for self development (82.18) while, other aspects were having indices between 77.00 to 80.00. Regarding, about tourist destination and services & facilities indices were 62.91 and 64.51 respectively.

According to common usage "It is a view or belief about something which is not necessarily based on fact. In the present study opinion of tourists about rural-agri tourism centers was studied on a set of items, where the acceptance or rejection of each one will imply a definite degree of favourable or unfavourable opinion towards rural-agri tourism centers.

The highest index was for self development (82.18) as the activities and events organized in the tourist center revived childhood memories. Participation in activities & events helped to experience agriculture and rural life style and gain knowledge about the life in rural India. It is also helped them to understand the importance of conservation of nature & environment, art, culture and heritage. They also became aware of the sustainable models (*i.e* solar energy, wind energy, waste management and low cost refrigerator) which they were actually able to see for themselves. About tourist center/ tourist destination had the lower index 62.91. This is because tourists felt that Agadi thota and Dharwad adventure base tourist centers gave more importance to organizing activities & events rather than maintenance of nature and environment. While, Eco-village has stressed more on conserving nature and sustainability.

Overall tourists' opinion about rural-agri tourism centers

Table 6 indicates the overall tourists' opinion about rural-agri tourism centers. A majority (62.50 %) of the tourists had a highly favorable opinion, 35.83 per cent had a favorable opinion and only 1.66 per cent had a less favorable opinion about rural-agri tourism centers. The overall opinion index was 73.89 indicating most of the tourists had favorable opinion.

With regard to overall opinion of tourists (Table 6) rural-agri tourism centers it could be seen that, a majority of (62.50 %) of the tourists

had highly favourable opinion, 35.83 per cent had favourable opinion and only 1.66 per cent had less favourable opinion. This is because the three tourist centers are providing good services & facilities to the tourists. The staff is well mannered with good communication skill. Availability of healthy & good food was appreciated by most tourists. The recreational & entertainment and experiencing rural life has impressed the tourists. Tourists also felt that the centers are providing job opportunities for rural communities and that they are conserving of local arts, culture and heritage. Tourists had a favourable opinion to the extent of 74.00 per cent (73.89) indicating a good opinion about the centers.

Center wise tourists' opinion about rural-agri tourism centers

Table 6a shows center wise opinion about rural-agri tourism centers. The three rural-agri tourism centers selected for the study were Agadi thota, Eco-Village and Dharwad adventure base.

Tourists' opinion about Agadi thota revealed that, 72.50 per cent had a highly favorable opinion, 27.50 per cent had a favorable opinion and none of the tourists had a less favorable opinion.

Regarding Eco-Village three fourth of the tourists had a highly favorable opinion, 25.00 per cent had a favorable opinion and none of the tourists had a less favorable opinion.

Tourists' opinion about Dharwad adventure base, showed that a majority (72.50 %) of the tourists had a favorable opinion, 22.50 per cent had a highly favorable opinion and only 5.00 per cent had a less favorable opinion.

When opinion was considered centre wise (Table 7a) most of the tourists had favorable opinion about Agadi thota and Eco- Village while, none of them had less favorable opinion. This is because both tourist centers are providing best service and facilities. Activities and events are enjoyable to the tourists and both tourist centers are giving importance to showcasing art and culture along with good food. However the less favorable opinion for Dharwad adventure base is because it is a new venture started only in 2018 and so is in a developing stage with

mainly recreational activities. Eco-Village gives much importance to conservation of nature and environment. In general opinion of Eco-Village was most favorable because eco- village, which is situated at the fringe of the Western Ghats, has a beautiful environment with natural flora and fauna of the Western Ghats. The activities like bird watching and nature conservation are very different from the two other centers. People are increasingly becoming conscious of the degrading environment and effects of climate change, they are very impressed by the eco-friendly activities of Eco-Village.

Factors influencing choice of the tourism destination

The Garret ranking applied to the data regarding the factors considered while choosing tourist destination (table 7) shows that, experiencing natural/rural life/agriculture activities was ranked first (I) followed by the cost involved (II), availability of healthy and good food (III), nature and its beauty (IV), entertainment and recreational activities (V), convenient to reach the place (VI) and local culture (VII) in that order.

The data in table 7 indicates the factors considered while choosing tourist destination.

Table 1: Profile of tourists visiting rural-agri tourism centers (N=120)

| Sl no. | Tourists profile | F | % |
|--------|-----------------------------------|-----|-------|
| | Age | | |
| | Young age (> 35 years) | 48 | 40.00 |
| | Middle age (35- 50 years) | 50 | 41.67 |
| | Old age (< 50 years) | 22 | 18.33 |
| | Gender | | |
| | Male | 53 | 44.17 |
| | Female | 67 | 55.83 |
| | Education | | |
| | Higher primary | 02 | 01.67 |
| | High school | 16 | 13.33 |
| | Puc/ diploma | 22 | 18.33 |
| | Degree | 54 | 45.00 |
| | Master degree | 20 | 16.67 |
| | Ph.d | 06 | 05.00 |
| | Occupation | | |
| | Government job | 34 | 28.33 |
| | Private job | 32 | 26.67 |
| | Business | 16 | 13.33 |
| | Agriculture | 10 | 08.33 |
| | Housewife | 17 | 14.17 |
| | Student | 11 | 09.17 |
| | Income | | |
| | Low (upto ₹ 1,32,000) | 33 | 27.50 |
| | Medium (₹ 1,32,000 to ₹ 5,72,000) | 63 | 52.50 |
| | High (< ₹ 5,72,000) | 24 | 20.00 |
| | Family type | | |
| | Joint | 39 | 32.50 |
| | Nuclear | 81 | 67.50 |
| | Family size | | |
| | Small (1-4 members) | 42 | 35.00 |
| | Medium 5-8 members) | 62 | 51.66 |
| | Large (9 and more) | 16 | 13.33 |
| 8. | Locality | | |
| | Intrastate | 115 | 95.83 |
| | Intra district | 54 | 45.00 |
| | Inter district | 61 | 50.83 |
| | Interstate | 05 | 04.17 |

Table 2: Source of information about the rural-agri tourism centers (n=120)

| Source of information | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Friends / relatives | 85 | 70.83 |
| Mass media | 14 | 11.67 |
| Advertisements' | 10 | 08.33 |
| Internet | 08 | 06.67 |
| Travel agency | 03 | 02.50 |

Table 3: Purpose of visit to the rural-agri tourism centers (n=120)

| Purpose of visit | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Leisure & recreation | 87 | 72.50 |
| To experience rural life | 22 | 18.33 |
| Education | 06 | 05.00 |
| Knowledge | 03 | 02.50 |
| Business | 02 | 01.67 |

Table 4: Companions during visits to rural-agri tourism centers (n=120)

| Accompany | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Friends & family | 84 | 70.00 |
| Relatives | 18 | 15.00 |
| Office colleagues | 14 | 11.67 |
| Other (school children, etc.) | 04 | 03.33 |

Table 5: Tourists' opinion about different components of rural-agri tourism centers

(n=120)

| Statements | Highly favorable | | Favorable | | Less favorable | | Index |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------|-----------|-------|----------------|-------|-------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | |
| About tourist Centre | 41 | 34.17 | 66 | 55.00 | 13 | 10.83 | 62.91 |
| Services and facilities | 38 | 31.67 | 77 | 64.16 | 5 | 04.17 | 64.51 |
| Cleanliness and Sanitation | 58 | 48.33 | 57 | 47.50 | 05 | 04.17 | 77.81 |
| Food & beverages / cuisine | 94 | 78.33 | 26 | 21.67 | - | - | 79.93 |
| Nature and environment | 55 | 45.83 | 57 | 47.50 | 08 | 06.67 | 77.08 |
| Participation and experience | 84 | 70.00 | 35 | 29.16 | 1 | 0.83 | 74.32 |
| Self development | 68 | 56.67 | 49 | 40.83 | 03 | 02.50 | 82.18 |
| Environment /Community benefits | 53 | 44.17 | 66 | 55.00 | 01 | 0.83 | 78.12 |
| Tourists opinion index | | | 73.89 | | | | |

Table 6: Overall tourists' opinion about rural-agri tourism centers

(n=120)

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Less favorable (< 28) | 02 | 01.66 |
| Favorable (28 - 56) | 43 | 35.83 |
| Highly favorable (> 56) | 75 | 62.50 |

Table 6a: Center wise tourists' opinion about rural-agri tourism centers

| Category | Agadi Thota (n1 =40) | | Eco village (n2 =40) | | Dharwad Adventure Base (n3 =40) | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|---------------------------------|-------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Less favorable (< 28) | - | - | - | - | 02 | 5.00 |
| Favorable (28 - 56) | 11 | 27.50 | 10 | 25.00 | 29 | 72.50 |
| Highly favorable (> 56) | 29 | 72.50 | 30 | 75.00 | 09 | 22.50 |

Table 7: Factors influencing choice of the tourist destination

(n=120)

| Parameters | Mean | Garret ranking |
|--|-------|----------------|
| Convenient to reach the place | 52.71 | VI |
| Nature and its beauty | 58.57 | IV |
| Local culture | 28.80 | VII |
| Entertainment and recreational activities | 54.76 | V |
| Availability of healthy & good food | 59.13 | III |
| Experiencing natural/ rural life / agricultural activities | 68.92 | I |
| Cost /Expenses | 68.33 | II |

Table 8: Relationship between personal characteristics and opinion about tourism centers

(n=120)

| Sl No | Independent variable | Opinion |
|-------|----------------------|---------|
| | | 'r' |
| | Age | 0.175 |
| | Education | 0.239** |
| | Income | 0.157 |
| | Family composition | -0.099 |

NS=Non-significant **significant at 1% *significant at 5%

Experiencing nature/rural life/agricultural activities was ranked first followed by cost (II), availability of healthy & good food (III), nature and its beauty (IV), entertainment & recreational activities (V), convenient to reach the place (VI) and local areas (VII). The reason is that most of the tourists from urban areas, have lost contact with rural areas and due to urbanization, stress and workload in day-to-day life, they are searching for change in their routine jobs. They want to spend money on experience which are worth of the amount spent *i.e* they expect value for the money on recreation & entertainment activities. Food is the basic need and availability of healthy and good food was a very important factor. Tourists wish to spend more time in a tourist center than in travelling long distance so, convenience in reaching the place is also important. Tourists like to enjoy and participate in entertainment & recreational activities. Tourists like to enjoy and participate in entertainment & recreational activities than experiencing local culture.

Relationship between tourists' profile and opinion

Table 8 shows relationship between personal characteristics and tourists opinion. It could be seen that, the education of the respondents had a positive and highly significant relationship with tourists' opinion.

Opinion was found to positively and significantly related with education of the tourists (Table 8). This is because education broadens the outlook of the person. An educated person understands the important of experiencing nature for a stress free life. No other variables influenced opinion of the tourists.

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