THE IMPORTANCE OF AGRO-TOURISM AND HORTI-TOURISM IN NEW TOURISM STRATEGIES

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INTRODUCTION

Agro-tourism is generally defined as tourism in village houses located in areas where direct agricultural activities are used, such as farms, instead of hotels or guesthouses as accommodation venues. The concept of Agro-Tourism emerged with people's sense of depletion of resources and longing for natural life. This concept also appears as tourism that uses existing resources by protecting them and without damaging agricultural areas (Figure 1). Agro-Tourism studies, which contribute significantly to the development of rural areas, help spread tourism to 12 months of the year, unlike mass tourism (Civelek et al., 2014).

With Agro-Tourism;

- Increasing economic diversity by creating additional income through tourism in addition to agriculture, which is the basic income of people living in rural areas,
- Increasing the income level of people in rural areas and increasing their socio-cultural development,
- Travels of people living in cities contribute to rural development by integrating with new cultures, acquiring language skills, learning new and modern agricultural techniques, and learning the use of renewable energy resources.

What are the Agro Tourism Conditions?

Agro tourism is based on participants carrying out animal husbandry, agriculture, fishing and similar activities, especially in rural areas. In this way, agro-tourists can experience natural life and make their trips. Local businesses that want to engage in agro-tourism and make development plans must comply with certain conditions in order to make the participants' embrace of natural life the healthiest and most efficient. We can consider the conditions as follows:

- The areas of Agro Tourism activities should be environmentally friendly and their natural beauty should be preserved.
- The local business must take care of the health of tourists and ensure all necessary hygiene rules.
- Food and beverage activities required for the accommodation of tourists should be handled meticulously, and where necessary, rest and entertainment environments should be provided for tourists to rest.
- In order for agro tourism activities to take place in a healthy way, the necessary facilities and equipment related to agriculture, animal



Figure1. Different type of Agro-Tourism activities.

husbandry and fishing should be provided to the participants to introduce rural life.

- All necessary precautions must be taken for the safety of the participants.
- In order to protect natural areas, participants should be given the necessary training and everyone should be helped to do activities compatible with nature.
- Businesses should get help from local people when necessary and explain the traditions and culture to tourists with their support.
- One of the most important conditions is to be able to carry out agro tourism activities within certain regulations. Businesses must act in accordance with the law and health rules.

It is possible to come across practices for this purpose in different countries and cities around the world. One of them is located in Mumbai, India. Mumbai is one of the exemplary cities where Agro-Tourism is actively carried out. Tours to agricultural areas are organized for incoming tourists, where agricultural practices are explained and they are given the opportunity to practice their knowledge by doing agriculture. Tourists are directed to fishing areas and provided with the opportunity to experience fishing. In addition, regional tours are organized with bison and horses, and many activities such as accommodation in village houses are organized, allowing people to meet nature and different cultures. Thanks to the activities organized for tourists, additional income is generated for people living in rural areas and their socio-economic levels are increased (Mumbai Agro-Tourism, 2024).

Horti-Tourism

Horti-Tourism has started to emerge in recent years as a sub-branch of Agro-Tourism. Horti-Tourism is a promising approach that combines horticulture and tourism in a commercial enterprise. This approach is entirely new in the most of the world and also gaining momentum in many countries. It refers to visiting horticulture farms, i.e., fruit orchards, vegetable gardens, or flower gardens, for recreation, research, enjoyment, and/or involvement in cultivation practices like harvesting, planting, and so on

(Figure 2, 3, and 4).

Horti-Tourism aims to develop orchards, nurseries, pocket areas, and farms to a new touristic destination with a dual aim of increasing economic benefits from horticulture and tourism from the same work field. Horti-Tourism can also be referred to as "Entertainment Farming" which requires strong public relations and skills

This approach arises due to the perception of urban people who get bored with their busy life, city pollution, and stress, and seek peace and enjoyment in a natural greenery environment. Furthermore, horticulture can be an important asset for luring domestic and international tourists subsequently leading to community development and economic up liftment of rural people

The Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) had been out broken in Wuhan, China in late December 2019 and then transmitted all over the world. The global hit of the coronavirus not only had health impacts but also a serious economic crisis due to the lockdown that was emphasized to control the spread of the pandemic. Due to this lockdown, the agriculture and tourism sectors were severely affected. After the sudden global hit of the Covid-19 virus, the most of the tourism activities was postponed and almost every tourism sector was shut down.

In this regard, there arises a necessity to bring out a new concept that can both promote the tourism, horticulture sectors and ultimately improve the economic condition of farmers at the same time after the Covid-19 pandemic



Figure 3. Harvesting grapes from vineyards in Turkey with visitors within the scope of Horti-Tourism

(Gyawali et al., 2022).

Experts explained that horti-tourism primarily centers on educating visitors about various aspects of plantations while also providing them with the opportunity to pick their own fruits and vegetables. Dr.Suresha (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Agriculture) say that the purpose of horti-tourism is to involve more people in agriculture while broadening their exposure in farming and related activities.

Horti-Tourism is a commercial enterprise that combines horticulture and tourism on a working farm, ranch, or other agribusiness operation. Horti-Tourism can be defined as "the act of visiting a working horticultural farm (fruit orchard or vegetable garden or ornamental garden) or horti-business operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education, recreation or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation". It can be also referred to as "entertainment farming" or "horti-tourism" and is a means of diversifying the farm and adding value (i.e., the farm experience) to products already produced on the farm. This is a hospitality business that requires strong public relations and skills. It also necessitates the cooperation of the entire farm family. Briefly, people are taking more and shorter trips, doing more traveling by car, combining business travel with vacations, looking for new experiences, adding diversity to their experiences, traveling as a family, and looking to "get back to their roots". In most cases, one family member has a grandparent who grew up on a farm/ ranch or in a rural community. These are the "roots" tourists want to visit (James, 2002).

Spreading of cities and certain definite income are driving reasons for migration of people to bigger cities and where farming is miserable. Horti-Tourism concept may help farmers and give additional returns before harvest apart from farm products.

Site Selection and Buildings

Reaching the remote horti-tourism spots is the greatest challenge due to lack of approach roads and poor transportation facilities in rural areas in many countries. Transport facilities enable frequent visits by tourists. When they

discuss with the neighbors about the trip and transport facilities, itself gives promotion of the farm. In the orchard or farm, buildings should be constructed away from farm animals and crop. Construction of buildings or small huts with straw, wood and stone creates a rural environment. The orchard or farm should have wide or diversified varieties of crops. Vegetables that can be grown in all the seasons in small areas (supplies vegetables for kitchen), flowers and turfing to add aesthetic value to farm or orchards and suitable horticultural crop that can be grown in that region on large area. Kitchen may be supplied with milk from cattle for morning tea or coffee. Continuous supply of vegetables to kitchen for breakfast, lunch and dinner can be made from farm.

Sanitation and Hygiene

Cattle and other animals like sheep, poultry birds (of local origin) should not enter in to the farm. Toilets and necessary provisions should be provided for farm labour and tourists separately. Proper sanitation and hygiene, supply of clean water, prevents contamination and helps tourists to visit frequently.

ADDING VALUES

For most of the farmers, income is a critical component as the fruit orchards gain economic yields after 3-5 years of age. Growing of different vegetables as intercrops in young orchards can meet the requirement of cuisine for tourists. Horti-tourism may provide an income stream to overcome the family property and provide opportunities for succeeding generations. Providing basic amenities what tourism requires, farmers can be profited with good returns as it does not require huge investments. In fact, horti-tourism is a less expensive entrepreneurship to start with and may end with profitable returns. The cost of food, accommodation and travel is less in tourism point of view.

Education

Indian farmers are basically not well educated but he knows to give hospitality for a guest since every tourist is a guest as he comes from distant place. People residing in cities especially students in present era are not well experienced with rural life. Tourists gain knowledge about cultural, rural and farm operations by involving with farmers. This provides unique opportunity for education through recreation where learning is fun effective and easy. Seeing is believing and doing is learning. In the process of interacting with people and sharing the experiences with tourists, farmers will gain knowledge.

Information and Promotion

Information and promotion are the two important aspects for horti-tourism and they are critical for enterprise a marketing strategy. Before the starting the nature enterprise promotional activities should be done well before. Good relations with neighbours, local businessmen and community members are essential to the success of horti-tourism. Creating a logo or catchy slogan can give better promotion of enterprise (George, 2011). Copies of recipes and news of upcoming crops can be made in a pamphlet and distributed along with business cards to tourists and visitors. In addition, the health and environment aspects can be highlighted by choosing global gap and organic production methods.

Tourism

Cities are growing at the cost of villages. Villagers are migrating to cities in search of jobs and to seek the comforts of modern life. Hence, yesterday's villagers are today's urbanites. Deep in the heart of urbanites lies the love and respect for their ancestors and villages. Hence, visit to villages satisfies their desire. This is also expressed through the hatred of urbanites to flat culture and love for farmhouses located in the outskirts of cities. Any opportunity to visit villages and spend time with family is dream of any urbanite. But, minimum decent facilities are always problem. Horti-tourism attempts to overcome this problem.

Marketing Strategies

Different marketing strategies can be developed regarding horti-tourism. Fruits, vegetables

and flowers can be sold fresh or processed by encouraging visitors using different marketing strategies (such as organic, global gap, conventional). After a pleasant stay and participating in farm activities, tourists can pay to get a product as a symbol of memory of their visit.

CONCLUSION

Especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, people's perspective on agriculture all over the world has changed. People have better understood that agriculture is one of the main issues in the existence of humanity rather than a simple production model. Taking advantage of these developments, interest in agro-tourism, especially hort-tourism, is increasing. By taking advantage of this interest, our farmers, especially those with low income levels, may have the opportunity to earn additional income. However, it has a high potential to become a branch of tourism with higher added value by determining the necessary regulation and quality standards. As a result, the formation of a tourism model that can meet the expectations of visitors, especially around a production model that is friendly to the environment and human health, will benefit everyone.

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Figure 4. Tea harvest in South Africa within the scope of Horti-Tourism