

Rural Tourism in Haryana: An assessment of Facilities at Rural Tourism Destinations

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Abstract

As decreasing share of agriculture in GDP has badly affected many rural communities (Cromartie, 2000) and farming is becoming financially unviable. This has forced many farmers to look for new sources of income without disturbing their agriculture base and with comparatively less investment. Rickard (1983) established that in rural areas, particularly where opportunities in agriculture are declining, tourism can play an important role in diversifying and increasing the income of the farmer and to reinforce and stabilize the rural economy; and it also doesn't compete with the agriculture in the use of farm resources and labour. It has ability to bring in money, generate jobs (Wilson, Fesenmaier, Fesenmaier and Van Es, 2001) and provide more diverse economic and development options (Davis and Morais, 2004). Haryana is among the first states in introducing various types of tourism in India with launching of first highway hotels in 1967 at Pinjore. Likewise, the concept of farm tourism was initiated on Sept 23, 2003. It aimed at involving the farmers/farm house owners, who have agricultural land attached, based on public private partnership to provide facilities like hygienic accommodation and food; show of agricultural practices such as floriculture, harvesting, bee keeping, dairying etc.; introducing tourists to the village way of life through various participatory activities such as attending a panchayat meeting, exposure of local songs, food, dances, art and craft; playing village games e.g. wrestling, guli-danda, kite flying, bullock cart and tractor ride etc; and also seeing important fairs and festivals being organized in these areas along with important monuments, havelies and historical sites (Guidelines for Farm Tourism, Haryana Tourism, 2003). The main aim of the study is to critically evaluate various facilities provided at the various rural tourism destinations to the tourists.

Introduction

As decreasing share of agriculture in GDP has badly affected many rural communities (Cromartie, 2000) and farming is becoming financially unviable. This has forced many farmers to look for new sources of income without disturbing their agriculture base and with comparatively less investment. Rickard (1983) established that in rural areas, particularly where opportunities in agriculture are declining, tourism can play an important role in diversifying and increasing the income of the farmer and to reinforce and stabilize the rural economy; and it also doesn't compete with the agriculture in the use of farm resources and labour. It has ability to bring in money, generate jobs (Wilson, Fesenmaier, Fesenmaier and Van Es, 2001) and provide more diverse

economic and development options (Davis and Morais, 2004). Haryana is among the first states in introducing various types of tourism in India with launching of first highway hotels in 1967 at Pinjore. Likewise, the concept of farm tourism was initiated on Sept 23, 2003. It aimed at involving the farmers/farm house owners, who have agricultural land attached, based on public private partnership to provide facilities like hygienic accommodation and food; show of agricultural practices such as floriculture, harvesting, bee keeping, dairying etc.; introducing tourists to the village way of life through various participatory activities such as attending a panchayat meeting, exposure of local songs, food, dances, art and craft; playing village games e.g. wrestling, guli-danda, kite flying, bullock cart and tractor ride etc; and also seeing important fairs and festivals being organized in these areas along with important monuments, havelies and historical sites (Guidelines for Farm Tourism, Haryana Tourism, 2003).

Review of Literature

Alberta Tourism and Small Business Administration (1980) defined rural tourism as a vacation or a holiday in which a vacationer occupies a large portion of his time engaged in recreational activities on a farm, ranch or country home and its environs. Swinnerton (1982), Gilbert and Tung (1990); and Robinson (1990) established that rural tourism enterprises are small scale, traditionally operated and relatively geographically isolated, and their individuality gives them a sense of place.

Hill, Sunderland, O’Cathain, and Daly (1996) defined rural tourism as ‘the natural life tourism, through which the customer may access the natural environment as opposed to commercially developed tourist activities and locations’. Rural tourism has been initiated to satisfy tourists who are seeking healthy, active, relaxing and culturally valid experiences to escape urban crowds and stressful workplaces.

Fleischer and Pizam (1997) concluded that it is based on natural amenities, rural way of life; and bed and breakfast (B&B) and self-catering units as the main elements in rural tourism.

Page and Getz (1997) and Schroeder (2003) portrayed it as involving access to the wilderness and capitalizing on the advantages of rural areas, namely nature and open space.

It constituted nature-based activities, sport, health (spa), hunting and fishing, the arts, and culture and heritage products and services in rural tourism (Alexander and McKenna, 1998). Clarke (1999) termed rural tourism as the tourism activities conducted on a working farm where the working environment forms part of the product from the perspective of the consumer.

Roberts and Hall (2001) propounded that rural tourism involves five categories of tourism i.e. farm, eco-, cultural, adventure and activity tourism. So farm tourism is a sub-sector of rural tourism (Oppermann, 1996; and Coomber and Lim, 2004).

Cox, Murray and Kereluik (2004) defined it as a group of activities which can be classified as eco-tourism and agri-tourism. The tourism that occurs in rural areas can be termed as rural tourism, at a very basic level;

and there is great diversity of businesses it involves which are beyond eco-tourism and agri-tourism (Siemens, 2007).

Che, Veeck, & Veeck (2006) described that agritourism is an increasingly important segment of the \$3 trillion worldwide tourism industry. Demographic trends such as the aging of America favor future growth of the agritourism market. Seniors are a key market for agritourism, given their disposable income and leisure time. Pazek & Rozman (2010) found that the service quality of rural tourism suppliers is a decisive factor considered by customers/consumers when choosing a farm to visit/stay on. Therefore, there is a clear need for evaluation of service quality.

Medojevic, Milosavljevic, & Punisic (2011) explored the rural tourism in Serbia and found that rural regions in Serbia differ considerably in social, economic and demographic characteristics. Basic problems and trends almost all the rural regions share are migrations, poor diversification of economic activities, extensive agriculture, high level of unemployment, lack of employment possibilities, poor and underdeveloped infrastructure, low GDP per capita in comparison to the urban regions and unpolluted environment faced with potential threats.

Zenelaj & Prifti (2013) developed a model of sustainable tourism based on rural development for Albania and elaborated that today's tourists realize that the most important thing is freeing from the stress and that it is impossible to achieve on the places where the everyday experiences are repeating. This shows completely other type tourists and tourism which will surely change the theory and the behavior in that sector in the future.

Statement of Problem

Though, in India, Haryana has been a pioneer in the field of highway hospitality, but over the years the performance and standards have gone down. Although the sector's contribution in state's GDP is increasing but it is mainly due to increase in number of private players. The funds allocated in budget to this sector in comparison to its input to GDP are very marginal; this shows a clear lack of long term vision on the part of govt. This necessitated pursuing a research to assess the facilities at rural tourism destinations in Haryana.

Data Collection and Analysis

Haryana is divided into 22 districts for administrative purposes. The district-wise list of approved farm tourism venues is presented in the Table No. 1.

Sr. No.	District	Total Number of Farm Tourism Venues
1.	Ambala	0
2.	Bhiwani	0
3.	Faridabad	2
4.	Fatehabad	0

5.	Gurgaon	10
6.	Hisar	0
7.	Jhajjar	2
8.	Jind	0
9.	Kaithal	0
10.	Karnal	2
11.	Kurukshetra	0
12.	Mahendragarh	0
13.	Mewat	1
14.	Palwal	0
15.	Panchkula	0
16.	Panipat	0
17.	Rewari	0
18.	Rohtak	1
19.	Sirsa	0
20.	Sonipat	0
21.	Yamunanagar	0
22.	Charkhi Dadri	0

Source: <http://www.haryanaturism.gov.in/>

Gurgaon has maximum number of rural tourism resorts i.e. 10; Faridabad, Karnal and Jhajjar has 2 resorts, each, whereas Rohtak has 1; and none is registered in remaining 17 districts. These resorts cater to various needs of the guests. A brief synopsis of the size and facilities present at these destinations is discussed in subsequent sections of the paper.

Size of the farm resorts: As per the data available on the official website of Haryana Tourism, the land size of various resorts is given below in Table No 2.

Sr. No.	Name of Farm Tourism Spot	Size of Resort (in Acres)
1.	Laksh Farm	12

2.	Awesome Farms	20
3.	Vedic Gram	Not available
4.	Surjivan Farm	50
5.	Golden Creeper	45
6.	The Botanix Nature Farm	30
7.	Thakran Farm	19
8.	Kotrwarra farm	Not available
9.	Golden Turtle	Not available
10.	Aranya Greens Farm	Not available
11.	Ariisse Farm	Not available
12.	AnugrahVatika	1
13.	Pratapgarh Farm	4.5
14.	Rattan Grah Farm	Not available
15.	BanniKhera Farm	10
16.	Lake View Farm	Not available
17.	Lush Green	Not available
18.	The PeepalKothi Farm	Not available

Source: <http://www.haryanatourism.gov.in/>

There is huge variation in the size of farm resorts as shown in Table No. 4.3. Surjivan Farm is the largest in area, 50 acres, whereas AnugrahVatika is smallest with an area of one acre. A large number of resorts have not provided details of their landholding.

Rooms Available for Sale: Accommodation is the basic element of tourism activities. Total number of rooms available for sale at each rural tourism spot is shown in Table No. 3.

Sr. No.	Name of Farm Tourism Spot	Rooms Available
1.	Laksh Farm	6
2.	Awesome Farms	5 (Presidential Suites, Cottage & Deluxe)
3.	Vedic Gram	6

4.	Surjivan Farm	13 Rooms
5.	Golden Creeper	5
6.	The Botanix Nature Farm	Not available
7.	Thakran Farm	Not available
8.	Kotrwarra farm	4 AC rooms
9.	Golden Turtle	Not available
10.	Aranya Greens Farm	Not available
11.	Ariisse Farm	Not available
12.	AnugrahVatika	3
13.	Pratapgarh Farm	2
14.	Rattan Grah Farm	Not available
15.	BanniKhera Farm	1 Suite + 9 AC Room
16.	Lake View Farm	Not available
17.	Lush Green	4 AC and 2 Non-AC Rooms
18.	The PeepalKothi Farm	3 independent cottages

Source: <http://www.haryanatourism.gov.in/>

Activities offered: These organizations offer a large number of activities for the recreation of guests which are given in Table No. 4. Most of the recreational activities tendered by the resorts are free of charge. The nature and number of activities depend on the area of the farm. Surjivan farm offers maximum number of activities.

Table No. 4 Activities Offered by Different Rural Tourism Spots

Sr. No.	Name of Farm Tourism Spot	Recreational facilities offered
1.	Laksh Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milking and feeding of cows • Weeding • Pruning • Watering and fertilizing the crops • Making of vermicompost and leaf compost • Tractor and Donkey cart rides
2.	Awesome Farms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gym • Lawn Tennis • Volley Ball • Basket Ball

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table Tennis • Pool Table • Badminton • Swings • Organic farming • Organic vegetable garden • Cow, Dairy (Goshala) • Vermi-compost • Tractor ride for children • Seasonal fruits one can pick and eat • Olive plantation • Lot of varieties of fruit trees
3.	Vedic Gram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healing spa at Vedic Gram is based on the concept that simple living in harmony with nature is the secret of good health.
4.	Surjivan Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Indian games: GilliDanda, Pitthu, Lattoo (top), Kanchey (marbles), TeerAndazee (bow & arrow), Rassa-Kashi (Tug of war) and MatkaPhor, live snake and ladder, hop, scotch etc. • Outdoor games & sports: cricket, football, colleyball, badminton, croquet, Indian bowling and putting etc. • Indoor games: Tambola, chess, carrom, darts, card games, lucky seven etc. • Water activities: ChhapaakTaal (fresh water slash pool). • Amusement & diversions: Visit herbal garden with medicinal and aromatic plants like KalpVriksh, NakshatraVatika, orchard, cattle-feeding/cow milking, solar energy unit, organic farming tour, star gazing through telescope, bird watching etc. • Adventure activites: Rappelling, rock climbing, zorbing, para sailing, hot air balloon, river crossing, archery, gun shooting • Activities on request: Camel cart, village safari on tractor, fresh water mud pool, team building activities • Army assault course: Enjoy action-packed, thrilling and adrenaline pumping activities like Commando Net, Burma Bridge, Tarzan Swing, Double Rope Bridge, Monkey Crawl, Mowgli Walk, Rope Ladder, Cat Walk in the Air, Zig-Zag Beam Balance, Rope Climb, Hop-Scotch, Tyre Balance, Commando Crawl, Rope Descent, Tyre Jump etc
5.	Golden Creeper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potter • Riders • Cow milking • Poultry farm
6.	The Botanix Nature Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature trekking • Bullock cart rides • Village visits • Kite flying • Tractor rides • Vegetable gardening • Bonsai sessions • Horticulture sessions • Flora & sauna education

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick-your-own vegetables • Village art & craft • Nature games
7.	Thakran Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Golghar • Bonfire- SikanKa • 3 Lush Green Lawns • 100 Cars Parking • Gated Security • Vatika- Dine in Open • Hedge Maze- Bhoorbhuliya • Theme Gardens • Team Building Activities • Lush Green Farmlands • Traditional Indian Village Theme • Acres of Landscaped Gardens • Jhula • Bamboo Golghar • Walkpath among Poplar Trees • Herbal Garden • Medicinal Plants • Village Safari on Tractor Trolley • Ancestral Farm
8.	Kotrwarra farm	-----
9.	Golden Turtle	-----
10.	Aranya Greens Farm	-----
11.	Ariisse Farm	-----
12.	Anugrah Vatika	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kite flying • Badminton
13.	Pratapgarh Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rides: Camel cart ride, tractor ride, horse ride, bullock cart ride • Rural Games: Shoting- Gulel, darts, airgun, archery, pithoo, gillidanda, kanchegoli, lattoo, kite flying, tug of war, wrestling and kabbadi • Fun activities: Burma bridge, mud bath & tube-well bath (with attached changing room) and trampoline • Domestic activities: Panihari Chaal (balancing water pails), mud daubing and frescoes, matka painting, rural kitchen cooking, pounding grain, grinding atta, making ghee and butter milk, spinning the yarn on charkhas and working on potter's wheel. • Dairy activities: Milking goats and tending cows, buffaloes and goats, also ploughing, sowing & reaping. • Visit to Farm: Dairy farm, poultry farm, biogas plant, vermi-composting plant, herb garden, NakshatraVatika, NavgrihaVatika, TriphlaKunj, Panchvati, Bodh Vatika and sugarcane farm
14.	Rattan Garh Farm	-----
15.	BanniKhera Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boating

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gunsports • Fishing • Horse riding • Cart riding • Tractor riding • Cycling on field tracks inside village • Outdoor games • Library • Massage & yoga on demand • Golf putting hole • Village kitchen • Local games & sports, like wrestling • Kabaddi • Gulidanda
16.	Lake View farm	-----
17.	Lush Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rides : Horse ride, Camel cart ride, Tractor ride • Games :Gulel, Pithoo, Gili-Danda, KanchaGoli, Wrestling,Tug of war • Dairy Activities : Milking cow and buffalo, Ploughing,Sowing and reaping • Visits : Dairy farm, Poultry Farm, Indo-Israel farm,Kala-amb, Lodhi Tomb, Bu Ali Shah Kalander and Dargah
18.	The PeepalKothi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Golf . • Croquet, badminton and • Board games. • art of Indian pottery • art of making local breads, butter and buttermilk.

Source: <http://www.haryanatourism.gov.in/>

Findings and Suggestions

Researchers were able to draw following findings:

1. Special efforts should be made by the Government to help owners to attract more and more guests. Providing better infrastructure can be one such way
2. There is acute shortage of qualified and trained manpower. For farm tourism, an employee should be trained in two areas i.e. the local rural knowledge i.e. the employees learn more about customs, the villages and allusions, farming skills, so that they prompt the visitors' interest for the tourism destination; and second, to offer all kinds of training courses such as cooking dishes, food hygiene, etiquette reception, environmental layout and so on (Yahui, -----).
3. Being a highly seasonal business, it involve high amount of risk. Authorities should help farmers to get advance information about the weather so that he can plan activities in a better way.
4. Owners feel that Govt should help them in better management of their facilities and services in good condition round the year. However, it is debatable that whether full-time and full-space commercial activities i.e. running like a hotel must be allowed or not for these farms.

5. Safety and security from different types of risks e.g. visible and invisible of both the employees and guests is very vital concern for the owners. There is urgent and strong requirement regulations and guidelines for the purpose.
6. There seems to be a huge disconnect of these farms with marketing policy of the Haryana Tourism Department. The biggest challenge is to identify whether marketing for these facility should be level specific i.e. national, regional or local or product centric or an amalgamation of both.
7. The activities at most of farms are suitable only for younger generations. the biggest challenge is to create attractions that are suitable for a wider clientele and can be run around the year.
8. These types of organizations are part of tourism activities which in turn is considered as an entertainment industry in India. So they have to obtain various licenses and pay taxes which very costly; hence very difficult for farmers to get.
9. These farms have commodified the culture and local environment to suit their guests' needs. But this requires more attention and exploration. As certain aspects of culture i.e. heritage buildings and architecture, folklore, history, festivals etc are offered to visitors to enjoy. On the other hand, values, beliefs, integrity, freedom of locals etc. are sacred part of a community's culture that needs to be protected and preserved.
10. Deficiency of finance is a big hurdle in the development and propagation of the concept in the state. As these kind of facilities require massive investments which may not be available with the proprietors at times. The state Govt should provide inducement to farmers to promote this type of hospitality.
11. A hard core farmer may not have knowledge of managerial skills which are necessary to run a tourist business, so Govt should provide necessary training to these entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

The rural tourism is still in its infancy stage in Haryana. It has a long way to go. The state can learn from various rural tourism models prevailing in the world. These can help us in identifying our strengths and weaknesses and act accordingly. The greatest challenge is to clearly identify the commercial and 'not for sale' aspects of culture to practice sustainable and profitable rural tourism activities. The challenge for local communities involved in rural tourism is to offer the traditional lifestyle with comfortable accommodation and high-level of services (Drzewiecki, 2001). However in any case, there is need to increase the guests' and owners' satisfaction and to fully trap the state's potential in the area of farm hospitality from farm resorts; it must be noted that all the stakeholders such as the owner, society and Government has to work in close coordination to make the farm hospitality a success story. This kind of research would be beneficial for policy planners, stake holders and other interested people. Further this would open new vistas for other researchers to pursue the research ahead and contribute to the domain. In all, it seems to be purposeful and beneficial to the society in whole and specifically Tourism and Hospitality for the State of Haryana.

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