

Farm Stays – An Opportunity or Challenge

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Abstract: Farm tourism helps in framing the country side in a better and flourished manner. There is a great scope of farm tourism in Punjab. On one side, like in other parts of India, farm owners in Punjab are taking Farm Tourism as an opportunity to shoulder their income from crops. On other side, farm owners face a lot of challenges in their day to day operations and thus sometimes demotivated towards farm tourism as a business opportunity. This paper attempts to probe the challenges and opportunities of farm tourism in Punjab. The results of the study clearly demonstrate the opportunities and challenges of Farm Tourism and also provide remedies to face these challenges, bringing a positive social change.

Keywords – Farm Tourism, Rural Development, Farm Stay.

I. INTRODUCTION

The fertile plains of Punjab encompass dramatically varied travel experiences. Farm tourism in Punjab aims to provide adorable experience to both foreign and domestic tourists visiting the lush green beauty of Punjab and also ensuring them adequate exposure to local community life besides enjoying the pure Punjabi cuisine. Rural tourism can be spring up as a catalyst for admissible rural development inclusive of rural people development, poverty reduction, development of remote areas and environmental revivification.

Life on the farm

Tourists can experience a wide range of farm activities such as, ride and drive a tractor, walking, cycling through the fields along with the distinctive life of a farmer, sit under the shade of a tree, pluck fruits, milk cows and buffaloes and also work in the field. Tourists can experience fishing and angling in canals near farm stays. Visiting the farm stay is the best way to understand why Punjab's farmers have earned a reputation for being enterprising and hard-working.

Farm fresh food

Punjab also occupies a place of pride on the nation's culinary map. Throughout the state, tourist find fresh and hearty food served with dollops of butter and ghee. Tourism not only means travelling at a certain place but also include the activities and experiences during the stay. A tourist also relishes the food at farm stays. Food is mean to penetrate the culture in a more profound manner. Food represents the image and uniqueness of the destination. The food served at farm stays is delicious, fresh and home-made and mostly

cooked with ingredients sourced from the fields. Mouth watering cuisine usually consist of supreme Punjabi dishes such as aloo paranthas, sarson ka saag (mustard greens) and makki ki roti (a flatbread made from maize flour) during the winter season and fresh milk and white butter and creamy lassi during summer. Some farm stays host evening barbecues and bonfires in the middle of the fields with displays of the traditional Punjabi dances, bhangra and giddha. The focus on Farm Tourism also brings back the people especially the younger generations of non-resident Indian Punjabi families to the basic Punjabi cultural values.

Guidelines for farm stay registration under the Punjab farm tourism scheme

Under the scheme, a farmhouse owner play host and guide the visitors. Those enrolling under the scheme to provide clean, hygienic environment, equipped with modern facilities that meet the standards defined by the Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board. The farmhouse owner provides home cooked food, comfortable accommodation and tells the visitors about the local agricultural practices like floricultural, harvesting bee-keeping and dairying. Besides the farm experience, visitors are also exposed to local festivals and marriages. The quality of services offered by the farm owners are be verified by the district authority as well as the tourism department. The department also provides mandatory training and technical know-how to the farm owners. Preference is given to farms which have agricultural land attached and only farmhouses with minimum two rooms are registered. The registration of the farm houses under this scheme is valid for five years initially subject to periodic inspection by a committee constituted by the PHTPB. The Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board may cancel

the registration in the event of any serious and justified complaint of any nature particularly about standards of service, cleanliness, courtesy, standards of food served etc. The farm houses registered could not be used for any other purpose except tourism.

Entrepreneurial motives for starting farm stays

Farmers in Punjab are opting Farm Tourism for several reasons like making optimum use of land available, self interest in Farm Tourism, conservation of land and environment, diversifying the agriculture business, developing an additional income source, resuscitating the rich traditional culture and to become an innovative entrepreneur.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Saxena (2012) Rural entrepreneur is a key figure in economic progress of India in terms of removal of rural poverty and integrated rural development. The rural youth need to be motivated to take up entrepreneurship as a career, with training and sustaining support systems providing all necessary assistance with efficient regulated market and government should also lend its helping hand in this context.. As stated by Indolia (2012), if a proper marketing plan is done, Rural tourism, can prevent migration of rural people to urban. Both short-term and long-term planning, implementing and monitoring are vital in avoiding damage to rural areas. Environmental management, local involvement, sound legislation, sustainable marketing, and realistic planning are crucial for development of rural tourism. The government should promote rural tourism to ensure sustainable economic development and positive social change. Furthermore, Clarke (1999) states that better use of the marketing process in rural tourism could help create more sustainable forms of development by reducing provider isolation, utilizing resources more effectively, and allowing rural tourism to connect with international flows of tourists. It acknowledges that marketing activity incorporates more than the promotional function and moves beyond the marketing activities of the individual rural tourism provider to investigate collaborative practice. According to Oppermann, (1996), farm tourism acts as a secondary income .Inexpensive accommodation appears to be a major incentive to choose the region as an excursion base. Farm tourism is a valuable alternative for women which both allows the combination of domestic responsibilities with tourism work and represents an income source that supports continued small-scale farming and conservation of the countryside environment. (Garcia et al., 1995). For some families, tourism is a critical component of income streams to keep the current generation on the family property and provide opportunities for succeeding generations. For others it combines social opportunities with retirement income. (Ollenburg et al., 2007).The tourism industry in particular attracts numerous entrepreneurs with

predominantly lifestyle motives, yet challenges them in specific ways. (Getz and Carlsen 2005). The main market segments in rural tourism are families with children and older couples and farm tourism provides only a small side-income, partly because of legal limitations. (Oppermann 1996). Middle-aged couples are involved in this business. Only one third entrepreneurs with strong motivation to live and work in the countryside are sure about the success of this business and they are also willing to engage their children in their business. (Getz and Carlsen 2000). Furthermore, in words of Frater (1983), the farmer's attitude, government policy and promotion of farms affects the operation and growth of farm stays.

III. RESEARCH GAP

It is evident from the above literature that numerous researches have been conducted on farm stay tourism in India and abroad. The studies conducted on farm stay tourism have focused on the opportunities and challenges of farm stay tourism, the quality of farm stays, impacting the tourism industry and its working. However few studies have been conducted on Farm Stay Tourism in the state of Punjab. In Punjab, various researches have been conducted in context of State Tourism but these studies concentrate mainly on defining the policy and administration of tourism, tourists aspirations, factors affecting satisfaction of tourists, performance of tourism industry, management of heritage sites, management of State Tourism, problems and prospects of Agri Tourism, determinants of satisfaction in E-tourism, assessment on service quality by travel agents, cultural heritage tourism and development, SWOT analysis of Tourism, restoration and revitalization of historic sites and factors affecting tourists satisfaction. Therefore it is apparent that there is hardly any study conducted on Farm Stay Tourism of Punjab. Farm Stay tourism is progressively creating an interface among farming and the travel industry. However, research on farm-tourism entrepreneurs, challenges and opportunities has been scarce. So, it urges a great need to conduct a comprehensive research on Farm Stay Tourism of Punjab.

IV. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In spite of the way that a wide collection of literature of farm stay tourism industry as of now exists, there is a requirement for organized research on particular form of it namely farm stay tourism in Punjab.

V. OBJECTIVES

1. To study the present scenario of Farm Tourism in Punjab.
2. To identify the challenges faced by farm stay owners.
3. To suggest measures to meet the challenges.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling and data collection

This study is based on both primary and secondary data +. Primary data is collected through unstructured and telephonic interviews with farm stay owners. Secondary data was collected from the reports and publications of Punjab Tourism department, online databases like Emerald, Science Direct, Annals of Tourism and Shodhganga@INFLIBNET.

Sampling design and size

The 26 respondents in the sample were selected divided into seven locations as 15 from SAS Nagar, 2 from Amritsar, 1 from Patiala, 1 from SBS Nagar, 2 from Fatehgarh Sahib, 1 from Fazilka, 2 Roopnagar and 2 from Gurdaspur. The samples were selected on the basis of random sampling cum convenience sampling. Basically, where random sampling was not available, convenience sampling method was used.

VII. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. The present scenario

The farm tourism ensures to enjoy the rustic way of life as an experiential tourism. Farm stays have jumped up the whole way across Punjab. Extending from rich bungalows and private houses to all the more unassumingly evaluated ones, they all offer present day luxuries that make for an pleasant stay. A boom has seen in the number of farm stays all across Punjab providing variety of luxurious bungalows and private cottages to more reasonable price with modern amenities that confirms an enjoyable and comfortable stay. Farm owners act as hosts and are pleasant to get involved with the visitors, share reminiscence, and provide an empirical cognizance into the life of countryside.

Categorization of farm stays

Citing the new era of information, communication and technology, farmers in Punjab had stepped into the Farm Tourism Scheme introduced by Punjab Government in 2010. The farm houses are approved by PHTPB on pre-qualification criteria basis. Punjab Tourism Board has three categories as Diamond, Gold and silver of farm stays. The categories vary with the difference of registration fee varying from 3000 to 12000. For Diamond the membership charges are 12000, Gold 7000 and Silver 3000. There are currently 38 farm stay houses approved and registered by PHTB as on August 2018. On the count, there are 17 farm stays in SAS Nagar, 4 in Amritsar, 4 in Roopnagar, 3 in Fatah Garh Sahib, 1 in Patiala, 1 in Anandpur Sahib, 2 in Fazilka, 2 in Gurdaspur, 2 in Hoshiarpur, 1 in SBS Nagar, 1 in Pathankot 1 in Bathinda and 1 in Anandpur Sahib Farm stays as per category and district are listed below:

Sr. No.	Farm Stay Name	District	Category
1	Westonal Farm House	S.A.S.Nagar	Silver
2	Mystic Meaews	S.A.S.Nagar	Gold
3	Master Farms	S.A.S.Nagar	Diamond
4	Casba Farm Retreat	S.A.S.Nagar	Diamond
5	Bans Bagh	S.A.S.Nagar	Gold
6	Virsa -The Heritage Farm	S.A.S.Nagar	Gold
7	Sidhu Farm Stay	S.A.S.Nagar	Silver
8	Mejie's Farm Stay	S.A.S.Nagar	Diamond
9	Gul E Punjab	S.A.S.Nagar	Diamond
10	Inderjit Farm stay	S.A.S.Nagar	Diamond
11	Baag E Fursat	S.A.S.Nagar	Diamond
12	Tree House Farm Stay	S.A.S.Nagar	Diamond
13	Ground Zero Farm Stay	S.A.S.Nagar	Silver
14	Kudrat Farm Stay	S.A.S.Nagar	Diamond
15	Whistling Hills	S.A.S.Nagar	Diamond
16	The Village	S.A.S.Nagar	Diamond
17	Hindugarh Fort Farm Stay	S.A.S.Nagar	Diamond
18	Greens Acre Haveli and Retreat	Amritsar	Diamond
19	Ranjit Villas Farm Stay	Amritsar	Diamond
20	Farmers's Villa Farm Stay	Amritsar	Diamond
21	Sukh Amrit Farm Stay	Roopnagar	Diamond
22	The Bharatgarh Fort	Roopnagar	Diamond
23	Deeproot Retreat	Roopnagar	Diamond
24	Hansali Organic farm Stay	Fatehgarh Sahib	Diamond
25	The Chandigarh Sardar Farm	Fatehgarh Sahib	Silver
26	Orange Farm Stay	Fatehgarh Sahib	Diamond
27	Jyani Natural Farm	Fazilka	Diamond
28	Forest view Farm Stay	Fazilka	Diamond
29	The Kothi	Gurdaspur	Gold
30	Punjabiyat	Gurdaspur	Diamond
31	Kailash Farms	Hoshiarpur	Diamond
32	Citrus County	Hoshiarpur	Diamond
33	Prakriti Farm Stay	S.B.S.Nagar	Silver
34	Kartar Farms	Pathankot	Silver
35	Gary Farms	Patiala	Gold
36	Ranjit Villas Farm Stay	Amritsar	Diamond
37	Mann Makhni Farms	Bathinda	Silver
38	Satluj Farm Stay	Anandpur Sahib	Diamond

B. Challenges faced by farm owners

Farm Entrepreneur is a key figure in the economic development of the country. But they face various problems in day to day work. Every flourishing business has its own kind of problems. Some of the major problems encountered by Farm entrepreneurs are discussed as under.

- 1. Entrepreneurial problems:** Farm Entrepreneurs on their part lack specific skills required to flourish their enterprise.
 - **Lack of professionalism:** Farm entrepreneurs have less risk bearing capacity due to lack of financial resources and external support in marketing and basic management of the farms.
 - **Lack of adequate funds:** Sufficient funds are needed for the development of human resources and maintenance of farm stays. Farm owners lack adequate funds because of plethora of reasons such as seasonal or less tourists visits, high maintenance costs of stays and meeting day to day expenditures. Central government and state government should

Sr. No.	Farm Stay Name	District	Category
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provide financial assistance for the success of rural projects in the form of tax benefits. It will further help in non migration of rural crowd in urban areas.

- **Low skill level of workers** The success of an industry depends on the efficient, skilled and trained manpower. But in case of farm entrepreneurs they are not able to find such manpower. The workforce available in the village is uneducated and of typical rural mindset. Moreover, the workforce has the knowledge of their local language only. In that case they are not able to communicate well with the foreign and other state tourists visiting the farms. These all factors leads to absenteeism and labor turnover, resulting in the unprofessional working of the enterprise.
- **Semantic Barrier:** The workforce at farm stay being not well qualified is familiar with their local language only. They don't understand universal language like English and tourists' local languages. This semantic issue acts as a hindrance in communication between ground level staff and tourists.
- **Lack of Training Programs For Workers:** The industries in rural areas are not only established just to take advantage of cheap labor so farm entrepreneurs should also see the challenges existing in urban areas and be prepared for them but also to bring about an integrated rural development. Training is very essential in the development of an enterprise. In case of farm industry, there is an alarming need of training the workforce. They need to be provided with on the job training. Youths in rural either work at farm or migrate to urban land. Their stereotypical mindsets need to be reformed through behavioral training sessions.
- **Orthodox Mindsets with Traditional Belief:** Land owners think that their livelihood depend only on agricultural income. They are unaware of the advantages of business opportunities they can procure from precious farm lands. The circumstances and domain in the family, society and support system is not instrumental to stimulate farm owners to take up entrepreneurship as a career. It may be due to lack of awareness and knowledge of entrepreneurial opportunities. The young and well educated rural youth moves to urban areas for better career and development. Continuous stimulation and inspiration is needed in case of rural entrepreneur and their workforce whom is sometime arduous to set forth.
- **Lack of Technical Knowledge:** Today is the era of technology. Enterprises run better with the aid of automation and mechanization. In case of farm entrepreneurs, they suffer paucity of information and technology.

2. **Infrastructure Problems:** Farm stays are located at distant places from the city and also far from bus terminals, railway stations and international airport so it is difficult for the foreign and domestic tourists to reach the stays. Absence of all weather roads and transport facilities acts as an obstacle to approach the farm stays. At times, an unfavorable weather condition of the state also affects the accessibility and approachability to farm stays. Sometimes occurrence of large scale power cuts disturbs the operations of farm stays and cause dissatisfaction among tourists at the farm stays.

3. Administration Problems

- **Lack of Government Support:** Lack of government support to promote farm tourism. Lack of an advisory system for the farm tourism operators or the entrepreneurs.
- **Lot of Red Tapism:** A good deal of legal formalities involved in registration process. Rural entrepreneurs find it extremely difficult in complying with various legal formalities in obtaining licenses due to illiteracy and ignorance.
- **Lack of Training Organised by Punjab Tourism** for farm entrepreneurs. Lack of training facilities and extension services crate a hurdle for the development of rural entrepreneurship

4. Tourists Problems

- **Awareness among Tourists:** Tourists are not aware of farm stays because of less advertisement. Promotion and marketing of rural tourism is less in state. Less interest is found among tourists for farm tourism. Once in a blue moon urbanites show their curiosity to visit rural areas.
- **Absence of Tourist Police and Tourist Guide:** Tourists visiting the farm stays found less security and safety due to the absence of tourist police available near the arm stays. The tourist guide plays a very cardinal role in attracting tourists. Department of Tourism is unable to select and train licensed guide at farm stays.
- **Less Availability of Medical Facilities:** Availability of 24*7 doctor facility is not available in some areas. The hospitals and dispensaries are located very far from farm stays.
- **Unhygienic Conditions:** Tourists look for a quality surroundings and purposive visit with standard hygienic conditions.

VIII RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Farm owners should be provided proper financial grants from the concerned government authorities. Authorities can make it possible by creation of finance cells. Loans can be provided at concessional interest

rates. On the other hand, farm owners need to have appropriate knowledge of managing financial resources, accounting and budgeting.

2. Farm owners need to well train towards organizational skills such as day to day administration, managing selves and their time.
3. Government can make efforts to encourage famers for investing in such proposals, developing personal skills of farmers through seminars and training sessions. [13]
4. It is necessary for the concerned government authorities to develop human resources, providing amenities at the outskirts of the cities, availability of infrastructural facilities in the form of wide roads, accessible transport channels and bus tops. Government support is needed, realizing the importance of rural tourism. Legal formalities can be restructured and liberalized.
5. Grading and standardization should be promoted and promotional activities should be enhanced. NGO's should be provided full support by government. [15]
6. The government should organize proper training programs for offering training facilities for workforce of farm stays. It will further enhance the quality of the hospitality and services provided by ground level staff. English learning sessions also need to be organised.
7. Farm owners need to market or advertise their farm stays through newspapers, magazines and by creating their own websites.
8. Problem of crime and exploitation of tourists in certain cases, demands an alarming need of Tourist Police at various regions near farm stays. Tourist police and Complaints Handling centers can be organised to confirm the utmost safety of tourists.
9. Farm owners are required to provide standardized of goods and services to the tourists. Farm owners should understand the service expectations of tourists and be able to fulfill accordingly.
10. Taking feedback from the tourists and maintaining their address and contact details to inform them about further events at the farm stays.
11. Attractive tourism packages should be designed in accordance with the expectations of both foreign and domestic tourists.

IX CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicates that farmers are increasingly turning to farm tourism because tourism is a key figure for supplementary revenue, although they lack many of the fundamental business competencies required for success and growth of the business. This indicates the need to address these skill deficiencies through more effective training of farmers and support for farm tourism providers. It is therefore of the utmost importance of on the

part of government to make Farm tourism a cost-effective activity The challenges found in this study are the factors enough to take into account when it largely affects the employment and income generation in rural areas..

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