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Agri Tourism - A New Way Agriculture Marketing

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Introduction : Farmers continue to look for creative and innovative means of generating additional revenue. Many farmers have turned to agricultural and nature based-tourism activities to generate additional revenue. Other farmers have the desire to provide educational opportunities, especially to children, to expose them to agriculture and its importance to local communities. Farmers can expand their businesses and increase farm income by offering people the opportunity to visit and experience agricultural and nature-based activities.

The past few years have witnessed an increased interest in Agri tourism activities across the nation. These activities range from visiting zoos, working dairies, and boating, to bird watching. Other activities such as children's camps, corporate events, and cabin rentals are also gaining popularity. These are just a few of the activities that are being provided that have created new uses for many farm and natural resources. To be successful, it is important to commit necessary resources, including a significant amount of managerial time and farm labour as well as a significant investment in marketing and promotion¹.

Marketing : Most Agri tourism operations are not "turn-key" businesses with customers lining up at the door waiting for it to open. Agri tourism venues require a significant amount of planning, marketing, and promotion to create successful enterprises.

The primary focus of all marketing and promotion activities is straightforward...to inform potential visitors about the operation and its activities and to attract visitors to the farm. The Agri tourism audiences are often separated into two groups: individual families with children and

groups, i.e., school groups, senior citizen groups, church groups, civic groups, day care groups, children and youth groups, and tour groups. Families are frequently targeted on weekends and holiday while groups are often targeted during weekdays. Marketing methods can be developed to address each of these groups and may include brochures, print, radio, Internet, television, signs, and sponsorships, use of a logo and positive word-of-mouth comments and referrals².

Starting Agri-tourism : With the emergence of agri-tourism, farm operators have begun to think beyond crop development and create an experience to sell at a retail price directly to the consumer. The following section discusses some of the potential pitfalls to consider prior to entering an agri-tourism operation³.

In order to successfully interact with the public, an agri-tourism enterprise requires refined interpersonal relations skills as well as professional written and oral communication skills. More labour and the need for employees may also result from operating an agri-tourism business. Increased marketing may interfere with normal farm activities, and hosting visitors requires dealing with the public, which increases risk and liability. The business operator must be well informed of the many aspects surrounding the safety and liability of starting a new operation or expanding an existing one. Such aspects include understanding and following local, state, and federal regulations regarding zoning, signage, food service, animal exhibits, and health. In order to begin a successful agri-tourism business, protocol must be met and laws must be carefully followed throughout the lifespan of the business⁴.

Deciding to be involved in agri-tourism is not the best choice for every agricultural operation. Operators of the business must

understand that not all businesses are suitable for the entry of visitors due to convenience of location, parking availability, employee availability, regulatory regulations that must be followed, and the commitment involved.

Reason for offering Agri tourism as marketing tool in India

1. For Improving the Economic Stability of Rural Communities and Farming Enterprises:-

Rural economy is agriculture dominating sector where most of people is connected with agriculture directly or indirectly. But agriculture is quite uncertain and unstable sector. Agri tourism offers security in life of rural community and farming activity⁵

2. Boost and Supplement Agriculture Income-

farmers have to face the problem of income insecurity because there is problem of seasonal variation, market fluctuations, nearby product substitution and high competition. In this situation agri tourism give a boost to income and some time gives a strong support to their financial needs.

3. Providing an organized market to agriculture products and activity:-

For every farmer the most difficult problem is to bringing product to market for consumers but in agriculture marketing they do not need to go anywhere. Here the consumer directly go to the farm and enjoy the life of farmers, consume fresh fruits and vegetables, do fishing in ponds, playing with animals and enjoy food cooked in wood fire.

4. New centre of attraction for investors:-

Agri tourism is an emerging as well as interesting concept but agriculture is the oldest sector of the economy. It is most basic and primary sector but always neglected by investors because of its product inelasticity. But if tourism is connected with agriculture then it will be more attracted by the investors as a profitable motive. So the requirement of investment will be fulfilled.

5. Creating more popularity of agriculture:-

As we all are moving towards modernization we are forgetting our roots but without roots we are going to die. As the younger generation is

more attracted towards modern technology but to make agriculture more popular the help of agri tourism can be taken⁶. for this is it very important to create popularity of agri tourism by the help of social media and campaigning in schools as well as in colleges.

Developing a Marketing Plan : A marketing plan assists in the evaluation of the market potential for the products and services so that we can develop strategies to take advantage of the potential. There are seven main components to a complete plan⁷:

1. Research and analysis is the process of gathering information regarding the potential market for your products and services. It allows to evaluate strengths and weaknesses and in the identification of a target market.
2. Setting marketing and financial goals and objectives will assist in developing appropriate metrics necessary to evaluate efforts.
3. Marketing mix describes the specific strategies needed to penetrate the target market, get them to spend money, and to get them to come back to your enterprise. These strategies include covering the 4P's of marketing (product, price, place, and promotion).
4. Developing a marketing budget will provide a roadmap for your marketing expenditures.
5. It will be important to monitor customer response in order to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing plan.
6. A contingency plan is a must in describing possible adjustments needed if they are not either more or less effective than planned.
7. A punch list for marketing plan can help in summarize the tasks necessary to put the plans in action.

It is critical to know and understand target market. Having background information will allow to learn about the target audience, improve the description of operations, evaluate strengths and weaknesses, and analyze opportunities and threats. The market plan should contain information regarding the⁸:

- Enterprise description

- Market situation
- Target customer profile
- Analyze the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities, and then identify the threats to enterprise.

When developing a market plan don't confuse the plan with the act of planning. Both are needed to succeed. Planning process doesn't end when your plan is done. The true value of the plan is the implementation it causes. Implementation begins the day when the target audience is determined. Understand that market plan is never really done, it always revising if because reality is always changing the variables. Without having a plan and a way to measure results, we will never realize the difference between the plan and reality. Work on market plan, don't just write it.

Providing excellent customer service based on the needs, wants, and expectations of the target market is important in identifying, attracting and retaining customers. It also enables you to gain positive referrals. Excellence in customer service begins with a very specific plan that should include these steps⁸

1. Research on customers' needs wants and expectations.
2. Establish customer service goals and expectations.
3. Develop customer service policies.
4. Train employees to implement policies (and make sure they do).
5. Develop an effective set of metrics for the market plan and customer service policies.
6. Evaluate the effectiveness of your plan.

Challenges and Suggestions :

Challenges :

- Lack of Awareness regarding agri tourism between agri farmers and consumer
- Lack of investment for promotion of agri tourism.
- Lack of infrastructure in rural area.
- Migration towards urban area
- Lack of sanitation and clean drinking water in rural area

- Lack of education in rural area.
- Lack of proper connectivity with urban area and other states
- Lack of mode of transportation

Suggestions :

- Government programs should connect with the agri tourism activity and marketing.
- Use of social media, TV, radio, newspaper should be adopted for promotion of agri tourism.
- Campaigning in school and collage to create awareness in youngsters
- Agri tourism should also introduce as interesting tourism type and special packages should be provided.
- State tourism board should handle the activity of agri tourism like state handles the activity of agriculture and farming.
- Other agri activity like horticulture, sericulture, viticulture, tree plantations, flowers and fruits plantation should be introduced in agri tourism.
- Special campaign should be done between rural farmers and children, and benefits of agri tourism should be provided.
- State should work on improving infrastructural facility in rural area.
- Use of alternative natural resources should be provided.

Conclusion : Most of the agriculture farmers are facing the problem of marketing. Bring their product to the market, bearing transportation and other charges facing tough competition from other farmers, selling their product at lower cost so that they can short out their average cost. But introducing agri tourism at a broad level can be the savior of life of farmers. Concept of agri tourism is quite similar with rural tourism. But they are not same. Rural tourism provides the opportunity to live in rural area, experience the feeling of muddy house and enjoy but the agri tourism is broader than rural tourism, as it provides you not only the rural tourism facilities but also gives an opportunity to enjoy the farming activity. You can play in mud, do plantations, playing with animals, do fishing, cook your own

and enjoy the authentic taste of wood fire cooked food. Rural tourism gives you the epic experience but agri tourism motivates you toward saving our future. Give your contribution as a sustainable tourism and development. This tourism automatically gives the marketing promotion of agriculture. So we can conclude that agri tourism can be work as tool of agriculture marketing.

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