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Constraints, financing and promotional mechanisms for agritourism development: Evidence from Bhopal division of Madhya Pradesh, India

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Abstract

Agritourism provides an opportunity for farm diversification by combining agricultural activities with tourism, recreation and rural experiences. However, its development may be constrained by financial, promotional, awareness and institutional factors. The present study was conducted to assess the limitations, sources of funding and popularization mechanisms associated with agritourism in Bhopal Division of Madhya Pradesh, India, covering Bhopal, Raisen, Rajgarh, Vidisha and Sehore districts. An exploratory research design was adopted, and data were collected from 90 respondents comprising 71 agritourism-promoting officers and 19 farmers practising agritourism. The findings revealed that 84.51 per cent of officers and 68.42 per cent of farmers perceived a high level of limitations in establishing agritourism. Among officers, lack of farmer awareness (91.55%), security/hygiene concerns (88.73%) and lack of initial capital (87.32%) were major limitations, whereas farmers primarily identified lack of initial capital (84.21%), lack of farmer awareness (78.95%) and lack of effective promotion (73.68%). Regarding financing, own capital (100.00%) and bank loans (94.74%) were the most commonly reported sources. Local fairs and farmer-government-private sector collaboration were highly rated by farmers, while social media, newspaper/television, local fairs and word-of-mouth communication were highly rated by officers as popularization mechanisms. The study concludes that improved awareness, financial facilitation, effective promotion and institutional coordination are important for strengthening agritourism development in the study area.

Keywords: Agritourism, constraints, financing, farmers, promotion, rural tourism, extension support, Madhya Pradesh

1. Introduction

Agritourism is an emerging form of farm diversification that connects agricultural production with tourism, recreation, education and rural cultural experiences. It enables farmers to generate additional value by providing visitors with opportunities to experience farming activities, local food, traditional culture, rural landscapes and other farm-based recreational activities. Agritourism may include crop and livestock experiences, farm stays, rural festivals, handicrafts and other visitor-oriented activities. The concept strengthens the linkage between agriculture and tourism while encouraging on-farm diversification and contributing to rural quality of life.

The potential of agritourism is multidimensional. It can provide additional farm income, generate rural employment, increase the sale of local products, conserve rural culture and natural resources, and contribute to local tourism development. Farmers may offer accommodation, local food, farm demonstrations, animal-related activities, handicrafts, rural festivals and other recreational experiences. However, establishment of agritourism enterprises requires resources

beyond conventional agricultural production, including visitor accommodation and facilities, sanitation, safety arrangements, landscaping, signage, recreational infrastructure and promotional activities. Farmers also require appropriate knowledge of tourism-oriented business management and access to financial support.

Previous studies reviewed in the thesis indicate that agritourism development can be constrained by inadequate rural infrastructure, insufficient information, limited government support, weak marketing strategies, inadequate risk-management mechanisms, lack of training and skills, poor telecommunication infrastructure and small landholdings. Financial support is also an important component of agritourism development, particularly for infrastructure investment, operational costs, marketing, training and environmental management. Potential financial mechanisms discussed in the literature include government grants and subsidies, public-private partnerships, tourism development funds and innovative financial services.

Promotion is equally important because the economic

viability of an agritourism enterprise depends on attracting visitors. Evidence reviewed in the thesis indicates the importance of communication channels such as word-of-mouth communication, consumer and trade shows, newspaper advertising and signage for promoting agritourism enterprises.

The Bhopal Division of Madhya Pradesh, India, provides a relevant setting for examining these issues. The division comprises five districts—Bhopal, Raisen, Rajgarh, Vidisha and Sehore—and was purposively selected considering its agricultural base, tourism potential, proximity to urban centres, supportive government environment and accessibility.

Despite the potential of agritourism, the establishment and development of farm-based tourism enterprises may be affected by limitations related to awareness, capital, access to finance, skills, promotion and institutional support. Therefore, the present study focuses specifically on limitations in the establishment of agritourism, sources of financing and popularization mechanisms among agritourism-promoting officers and farmers practising agritourism in the Bhopal Division of Madhya Pradesh.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Study area

The study was conducted in Bhopal Division of Madhya Pradesh, India, covering five districts: Bhopal, Raisen, Rajgarh, Vidisha and Sehore. The division was purposively selected considering its agricultural base, tourism potential, proximity to urban centres, supportive government environment and accessibility.

2.2 Research design and sampling

An **exploratory research design** was adopted. A multi-stage sampling procedure was followed for selection of respondents. The study included 90 respondents, comprising 71 officers involved in promoting agritourism from the Agriculture and Horticulture Departments and 19 farmers practising agritourism in the study area.

2.3 Data Collection and Measurement

Primary data were collected through a structured interview schedule. Limitations in establishing agritourism were assessed using 10 statements covering awareness, initial capital, loan accessibility, training, promotion, policy knowledge, administrative procedures, community support, return on investment, and security/hygiene. Responses were recorded on a three-point continuum of Agree, Uncertain and Disagree, scored as 3, 2 and 1, respectively. The total score ranged from 10 to 30 and respondents were classified into low, medium and high categories.

Popularization mechanisms were assessed using 10 statements, including social media, local fairs, newspaper/television, government schemes, word-of-mouth communication, tour/travel agencies, educational visits, collaborative efforts, digital marketing and brochures/posters. These were also measured using the three-point continuum.

2.4 Financing and Data Analysis

Farmers were asked about the sources used for financing their agritourism enterprises, including own capital, bank loans,

government schemes/grants, family/relatives, financial institutions, Self Help Groups and private investors. Frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to summarize the findings.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Overall limitations in establishment of agritourism

The findings revealed that a majority of respondents perceived a high level of limitations in establishing agritourism. Among agritourism-promoting officers, 84.51 per cent were in the high category, while 15.49 per cent were in the medium category. Among farmers practising agritourism, 68.42 per cent were in the high category and 31.58 per cent were in the medium category. The mean limitation score was

27.18 (SD = 2.95) for officers and 25.21 (SD = 3.87) for farmers.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to perceived limitations in establishment of agritourism

Limitation category	Officers (n=71)	Farmers (n=19)
Low	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Medium	11 (15.49)	6 (31.58)
High	60 (84.51)	13 (68.42)
Total	71 (100.00)	19 (100.00)
Mean	27.18	25.21
SD	2.95	3.87

The results indicate that limitations in establishing agritourism were perceived as high by both groups of respondents, with officers reporting a comparatively higher mean limitation score than farmers.

3.2 Major limitations perceived by agritourism-promoting officers

Among the agritourism-promoting officers, lack of farmer awareness was the most prominent limitation, reported by 91.55 per cent of respondents. This was followed by security/hygiene concerns (88.73%), lack of initial capital (87.32%), and difficulty in obtaining loans and lack of policy knowledge (84.51% each).

Table 2: Item-wise limitations perceived by agritourism-promoting officers

Limitation	Agree n (%)
Lack of farmer awareness	65 (91.55)
Security/hygiene concerns	63 (88.73)
Lack of initial capital	62 (87.32)
Difficult to get loans	60 (84.51)
Lack of policy knowledge	60 (84.51)
Lack of effective promotion	58 (81.69)
Lack of training/skill development	46 (64.79)
Lack of community support	46 (64.79)
Uncertain return on investment	44 (61.97)
Complex administrative procedures	43 (60.56)

Thus, officers primarily identified awareness, security/hygiene, capital, credit access and policy knowledge as the major limitations in establishing agritourism.

3.3 Major limitations perceived by farmers

Among the farmers practising agritourism, lack of initial capital was the most prominent limitation, reported by 84.21 per cent of respondents. It was followed by lack of farmer

awareness (78.95%), lack of effective promotion (73.68%), and difficulty in obtaining loans and lack of policy knowledge (68.42% each).

Table 3: Item-wise limitations perceived by farmers

Limitation	Agree n (%)
Lack of initial capital	16 (84.21)
Lack of farmer awareness	15 (78.95)
Lack of effective promotion	14 (73.68)
Difficult to get loans	13 (68.42)
Lack of policy knowledge	13 (68.42)
Lack of training/skill development	11 (57.89)
Complex administrative procedures	11 (57.89)
Lack of community support	11 (57.89)
Uncertain return on investment	10 (52.63)
Security/hygiene concerns	9 (47.37)

The findings show that farmers mainly perceived financial, awareness and promotional factors as the major limitations in establishing and developing agritourism enterprises.

3.4 Comparison of farmer and officer perceptions

Both groups identified lack of farmer awareness and lack of initial capital among the major limitations. Officers gave greater emphasis to security/hygiene concerns, whereas farmers placed greater emphasis on lack of effective promotion.

Table 4: Comparison of selected major limitations

Limitation	Officers (%)	Farmers (%)
Lack of farmer awareness	91.55	78.95
Security/hygiene concerns	88.73	47.37
Lack of initial capital	87.32	84.21
Difficulty in obtaining loans	84.51	68.42
Lack of policy knowledge	84.51	68.42
Lack of effective promotion	81.69	73.68
Lack of training/skill development	64.79	57.89
Lack of community support	64.79	57.89
Uncertain return on investment	61.97	52.63
Complex administrative procedures	60.56	57.89

Overall, awareness and financial constraints were common major limitations, while security/hygiene concerns were more prominent among officers and effective promotion was more prominent among farmers.

3.5 Financing pattern of agritourism enterprises

The findings showed that own capital was the most commonly used source of funding, reported by 100.00 per cent of farmers, followed by bank loans (94.74%). Government schemes/grants were reported by 63.16 per cent, while 57.89 per cent used family/relatives as a source of funding. Financial institutions, Self Help Groups and private investors were reported by 26.32, 21.05 and 5.26 per cent of farmers, respectively.

Table 5: Major sources of funding reported by farmers

Funding source	Farmers n=19	Percentage (%)
Own capital	19	100.00
Bank loan	18	94.74
Government schemes/grants	12	63.16
Family/relatives	11	57.89
Financial institutions	5	26.32
Self Help Group	4	21.05
Private investor	1	5.26

The funding-source diversity score had a mean of 4.11 (SD = 1.10). The majority of farmers (68.42%) were in the medium category, followed by 26.32 per cent in the low category and 5.26 per cent in the high category.

3.6 Popularization mechanisms for agritourism

Among agritourism-promoting officers, 46.48 per cent were in the high category, followed by 39.44 per cent in the medium and 14.08 per cent in the low category. Among farmers, 52.63 per cent were in the medium category, 31.58 per cent in the high category and 15.79 per cent in the low category. The mean scores were 28.67 (SD = 1.89) for officers and 27.10 (SD = 2.42) for farmers.

Table 6: Selected popularization mechanisms

Popularization mechanism	Officers Agree (%)	Farmers Agree (%)
Social media	94.4	73.7
Local fairs	93.0	94.7
Newspaper/TV	94.4	78.9
Government schemes	69.0	63.2
Word-of-mouth communication	93.0	84.2
Tour/travel agencies	90.1	73.7
Educational visits	91.5	78.9
Farmer-government officer-private sector collaboration	91.5	94.7
Digital marketing	88.7	84.2
Brochure/poster	91.5	68.4

The findings indicate that local fairs and collaborative efforts received high agreement among farmers, while social media, newspaper/TV, local fairs and word-of-mouth communication received high agreement among officers.

4. Discussion

The study revealed that agritourism development in Bhopal Division is affected by multiple constraints related to awareness, finance, credit access, promotion, policy knowledge and enterprise management. Lack of farmer awareness and lack of initial capital were identified as common major limitations by both officers and farmers.

The findings are consistent with Dangi (2018) ^[6], who reported inadequate rural infrastructure, insufficient information, limited government support and weak marketing as important challenges to agritourism development. Similarly, Ekka *et al.* (2021) ^[7] identified lack of training and skills, poor telecommunication infrastructure and other infrastructural limitations as constraints. These findings support the present observation that agritourism requires not only agricultural resources but also appropriate knowledge, infrastructure and institutional support.

Financial constraints were particularly important among farmers. Own capital and bank loans were the predominant funding sources, while relatively fewer farmers reported financial institutions, Self Help Groups and private investors as funding sources. This finding is consistent with the literature reviewed in the thesis, which emphasizes the need for financial support for infrastructure, operational costs, marketing and training.

Promotion was another important aspect. Farmers gave high importance to local fairs, collaborative efforts and word-of-mouth communication, while officers gave high ratings to

social media, newspaper/television, local fairs and word-of-mouth communication. This indicates the importance of combining traditional, community-based and digital promotional channels for agritourism development.

Overall, the findings suggest that strengthening agritourism requires coordinated support in awareness creation, skill development, financial facilitation and promotion. These areas can be addressed through greater coordination among farmers, Agriculture and Horticulture Departments, Tourism agencies, financial institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

5. Conclusion

The study revealed that agritourism development in Bhopal Division of Madhya Pradesh faces considerable limitations. A high level of limitations was reported by 84.51 per cent of officers and 68.42 per cent of farmers. Lack of farmer awareness, lack of initial capital, difficulty in obtaining loans and lack of effective promotion were among the major constraints.

Farmers relied mainly on own capital (100.00%) and bank loans (94.74%) for financing their agritourism enterprises. Popularization findings indicated the importance of local fairs, collaborative efforts, social media, newspaper/television and word-of-mouth communication.

Overall, the findings indicate that strengthening awareness, financial access, promotional activities and institutional coordination is important for facilitating agritourism development in the study area.

6. Limitations of the Study

The study was confined to the Bhopal Division of Madhya Pradesh and involved 19 farmers practising agritourism and 71 promotional officers. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the context of the study area. The study relied on information furnished by respondents and is therefore subject to perception, memory and possible personal bias. The thesis itself identifies the limited geographical coverage, relatively small sample and respondent-reported information as limitations. The study is descriptive and does not establish causal relationships between individual constraints and enterprise performance. Financial information was based on respondents' reports and was not independently audited. The successful agritourism cases presented in the thesis are illustrative examples and should not be generalized to all agritourism enterprises in the division.

7. Scope for Future Research

Future research should examine:

1. Actual profitability and return on investment of agritourism enterprises.
2. Tourist satisfaction and repeat visitation.
3. Effectiveness of digital marketing in generating tourist bookings.
4. Accessibility and effectiveness of government financing schemes.
5. Role of youth and women in agritourism enterprises.
6. Role of farmer groups and cooperatives.
7. Destination branding and rural tourism networks.
8. Visitor safety and service-quality standards.
9. Long-term changes in farm income and employment

after adoption of agritourism.

The thesis specifically recommends further research on marketing patterns, tourist satisfaction, destination branding, social media, local fairs, word-of-mouth promotion and coordination among farmers, KVKs, cooperative societies, Agriculture/Horticulture Departments and agricultural universities.

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