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Information-source utilization, innovativeness and networking, knowledge towards agritourism among farmers and promotional officers in Bhopal division of Madhya Pradesh, India

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Abstract

Agritourism is an emerging farm-diversification activity that requires adequate information, knowledge, innovativeness, networking and a favourable attitude among farmers and supporting personnel. The present study was conducted to assess information-source utilization, innovativeness, networking, knowledge and attitude towards agritourism among agritourism-practising farmers and agritourism-promoting officers in Bhopal Division of Madhya Pradesh, India. The study covered Bhopal, Raisen, Rajgarh, Vidisha and Sehore districts. An exploratory research approach was adopted, and a total of 90 respondents, comprising 71 agritourism-promoting officers and 19 agritourism-practising farmers, were studied. Information-source utilization, innovativeness, networking, knowledge and attitude were assessed using structured schedules and scales. The findings revealed that 64.79 per cent of officers and 47.37 per cent of farmers belonged to the medium category of information-source utilization. Similarly, 64.79 per cent of officers and 78.95 per cent of farmers belonged to the medium category of innovativeness, while 49.29 and 52.63 per cent, respectively, belonged to the medium networking category. Attitude towards agritourism was predominantly moderately favourable among 83.09 per cent of officers and 68.42 per cent of farmers. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents possessed a strong knowledge base regarding agritourism, while information-source utilization, innovativeness and networking were predominantly at medium levels. Strengthening these dimensions may further support the development and promotion of agritourism in Bhopal Division.

Keywords: Agritourism, information-source utilization, innovativeness, networking, attitude, farmers, agritourism-promoting officers, Madhya Pradesh

1. Introduction

Agriculture remains an important source of livelihood for rural households; however, dependence on farming alone may expose farm households to fluctuations in farm income, production costs and market conditions. Farm diversification has therefore emerged as an important approach for creating supplementary income and strengthening the economic resilience of farming households.

Agritourism represents one such diversification pathway by combining agricultural activities with tourism-related experiences. It provides opportunities for visitors to experience farming, rural life, local food, traditional culture, livestock activities and other farm-based activities. In addition to supplementary income, agritourism can contribute to rural employment, promotion of local products

and preservation of rural culture. Previous studies have also examined the performance, benefits, perceptions and development opportunities associated with agritourism.

The development of agritourism requires more than the availability of agricultural resources. Farmers need appropriate information, knowledge, innovativeness and networking, together with a favourable attitude and institutional support. Agriculture and Horticulture Department officers can also play an important role by communicating relevant information, facilitating linkages and providing promotional support to farmers interested in agritourism.

The Bhopal Division of Madhya Pradesh, comprising Bhopal, Raisen, Rajgarh, Vidisha and Sehore districts, provides a suitable setting for agritourism because of its

agricultural base, proximity to urban centres and tourism potential. The original thesis identified the need to examine agritourism awareness, opportunities and limitations in this region, noting the limited systematic evidence available for the Bhopal Division.

Although agritourism has potential as a farm-diversification activity, its development depends partly on the availability and use of relevant information, the willingness to adopt new ideas, networking with supporting institutions and stakeholders and a favourable attitude towards agritourism. However, evidence specifically comparing these dimensions among agritourism-practising farmers and agritourism-promoting officers in the Bhopal Division remains limited. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to assess information-source utilization, innovativeness, networking, and attitude towards agritourism among agritourism-practising farmers and agritourism-promoting officers in Bhopal Division of Madhya Pradesh.

2. Objectives

The present study was undertaken with the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the level of information-source utilization related to agritourism among farmers and agritourism-promoting officers.
2. To assess the level of innovativeness among farmers and agritourism-promoting officers in relation to agritourism.
3. To assess the networking of farmers and agritourism-promoting officers for agritourism.
4. To assess the attitude of farmers and agritourism-promoting officers towards agritourism.

3. Research Methodology

The study was conducted in Bhopal Division of Madhya Pradesh, India, comprising five districts, namely Bhopal, Raisen, Rajgarh, Vidisha and Sehore. The division was

purposively selected considering its agricultural potential, tourism possibilities, proximity to urban centres, supportive policy environment and accessibility.

An exploratory research approach was adopted for the study, and a multi-stage sampling procedure was followed. All identified farmers practising agritourism within the study area were included in the study, resulting in 19 farmer respondents. Officers associated with agritourism promotion from the Agriculture and Horticulture Departments were also selected. The officer sample consisted of 71 respondents, including Joint Directors, Deputy Directors, Assistant Directors and Senior Development Officers. Thus, the total sample comprised 90 respondents, including 71 agritourism-promoting officers and 19 agritourism-practising farmers.

The present paper focused on four variables: information-source utilization, innovativeness, networking, and attitude towards agritourism. Information-source utilization was assessed using the sources included in the thesis, and respondents were classified into low, medium and high categories. The score ranges used were 10–16 (low), 17–23 (medium) and 24–30 (high). Innovativeness, networking and attitude were assessed using the structured scales adopted in the thesis. Networking was assessed through the respondent's linkage with identified stakeholders/partners, while attitude was assessed using the specified attitude scale.

The collected data were summarized using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation to describe the distribution and level of the selected variables among agritourism-promoting officers and agritourism-practising farmers.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Information-Source Utilization Related to Agritourism

Information sources used by agritourism-promoting officers and farmers were assessed through item-wise responses and an overall information-source score.

Table 1: Information Sources of Agritourism-Promoting Officers about Agritourism (n = 71)

S. No.	Information Source	Always n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Never n (%)
1	Television	60 (84.51)	5 (7.04)	6 (8.50)
2	Agritourism website	42 (59.20)	24 (33.80)	5 (7.00)
3	Newspaper	59 (83.10)	8 (11.30)	4 (5.60)
4	Research Journals and Bulletins	9 (12.70)	58 (81.69)	4 (5.60)
5	University Sources	30 (42.30)	36 (50.70)	5 (7.00)
6	National Agritourism Development Board	9 (12.70)	59 (83.10)	3 (4.20)
7	Social Media	24 (33.80)	39 (54.93)	8 (11.27)
8	Training Programme	29 (40.80)	39 (54.93)	3 (4.27)
9	Agritourism Tours	21 (29.60)	40 (56.34)	10 (14.06)
10	Agricultural Conferences	20 (28.20)	38 (53.52)	13 (18.30)

Television (84.51%) and newspaper (83.10%) were the most frequently used sources under the “Always” category. Research Journals and Bulletins and the National Agritourism Development Board recorded the lowest

“Always” use (12.70% each).

The majority of officers (64.79%) belonged to the medium category, followed by high (32.39%) and low (2.82%) categories.

Table 2: Distribution of Agritourism-Promoting Officers According to Information Source

S. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low (10–16)	2	2.82
2	Medium (17–23)	46	64.79
3	High (24–30)	23	32.39
	Total	71	100.00
	Mean = 23.41		SD = 2.94

Table 3: Information Sources of Farmers about Agritourism (n = 19)

S. No.	Information Source	Always n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Never n (%)
1	Agriculture/Horticulture Department	2 (10.50)	13 (68.40)	4 (21.10)
2	Agriculture/Horticulture Officer	4 (21.10)	14 (73.68)	1 (5.22)
3	Tourism Department	2 (10.50)	10 (52.66)	7 (36.84)
4	Training Programme	4 (21.05)	6 (31.58)	9 (47.37)
5	Newspaper/TV	12 (63.16)	6 (31.58)	1 (5.26)
6	Social Media	12 (63.16)	6 (31.58)	1 (5.26)
7	Friends/Acquaintances	13 (68.42)	2 (10.53)	4 (21.05)
8	Internet/Website	8 (42.11)	8 (42.11)	3 (15.79)
9	Other Sources	6 (31.58)	4 (21.05)	9 (47.37)

Friends/acquaintances (68.42%), newspaper/TV (63.16%) and social media (63.16%) were the most frequently used sources under the “Always” category among farmers.

Table 4: Distribution of Farmers According to Information Source

S. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low (10–16)	3	15.79
2	Medium (17–23)	9	47.37
3	High (24–30)	7	36.84
	Total	19	100.00
	Mean = 19.29		SD = 3.14

The majority of farmers (47.37%) belonged to the medium category, followed by high (36.84%) and low (15.79%)

categories.

Thus, the medium category predominated among both officers and farmers, although the mean information-source score was higher among officers (23.41) than farmers (19.26). This indicates comparatively greater information-source utilization among the officers.

4.2 Innovativeness Related to Agritourism

Innovativeness of the respondents was assessed through statements related to technology adoption, use of the internet, training, exchange of ideas and learning from successful agritourism models.

Table 5: Innovativeness of Agritourism-Promoting Officers (n = 71)

S. No.	Particulars	Agree n (%)	Uncertainty n (%)	Disagree n (%)
1	Give priority to adopting latest technology	37 (52.1)	13 (18.3)	21 (29.6)
2	Make efforts to keep updated with latest technology	37 (52.1)	13 (18.3)	21 (29.6)
3	Use internet for promotion of agritourism	38 (53.5)	13 (18.3)	20 (28.2)
4	Agritourism as an opportunity for socio-economic development	47 (66.2)	12 (16.9)	12 (16.9)
5	Give high priority to training related to agritourism	38 (53.5)	13 (18.3)	20 (28.2)
6	New technologies do not provide additional benefits in agritourism (–)	2 (2.8)	0 (0.0)	69 (97.2)
7	Agritourism is more beneficial than conventional farming	38 (53.5)	13 (18.3)	20 (28.2)
8	Exchange new ideas related to agritourism with farmers/officers	38 (53.5)	13 (18.3)	20 (28.2)
9	Lack of financial assistance hinders adoption of innovations (–)	47 (66.2)	14 (19.7)	10 (14.1)
10	Learn from successful agritourism models	46 (64.8)	14 (19.7)	11 (15.5)

Among officers, the highest agreement was recorded for agritourism as an opportunity for socio-economic development (66.2%), followed by learning from successful agritourism models (64.8%).

The majority of officers (64.79%) belonged to the medium innovativeness category, followed by high (18.31%) and low (16.90%) categories.

Table 6: Distribution of Agritourism-Promoting Officers According to Innovativeness

S. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low	12	16.90
2	Medium	46	64.79
3	High	13	18.31
	Total	71	100.00
	Mean = 21.59		SD = 3.74

Table 7: Innovativeness of Farmers (n = 19)

S. No.	Particulars	Agree n (%)	Uncertainty n (%)	Disagree n (%)
1	Give priority to adopting latest technology	17 (89.5)	1 (5.3)	1 (5.3)
2	Make efforts to keep updated with latest technology	16 (84.2)	0 (0.0)	3 (15.8)
3	Use internet for promotion of agritourism	16 (84.2)	2 (10.5)	1 (5.3)
4	Agritourism as an opportunity for socio-economic development	15 (78.9)	2 (10.5)	2 (10.5)
5	Give high priority to training related to agritourism	15 (78.9)	2 (10.5)	2 (10.5)
6	New technologies do not provide additional benefits (–)	9 (47.4)	3 (15.8)	7 (36.8)
7	Agritourism is more beneficial than conventional farming	15 (78.9)	2 (10.5)	2 (10.5)
8	Exchange new ideas with farmers and agricultural officers	17 (89.5)	1 (5.3)	1 (5.3)
9	Lack of financial assistance hinders adoption of innovations (–)	15 (78.9)	2 (10.5)	2 (10.5)
10	Learn from successful agritourism models	17 (89.5)	2 (10.5)	0 (0.0)

Among farmers, the highest agreement was observed for adopting latest technology, exchanging new ideas, and learning from successful agritourism models (89.5% each).

Table 8: Distribution of Farmers According to Innovativeness

S. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low (up to 24)	2	10.53
2	Medium (24.01–29)	15	78.95
3	High (Above 29)	2	10.53
	Total	19	100.00
	Mean = 26.89		SD = 2.15

The majority of farmers (78.95%) belonged to the medium innovativeness category, while 10.53 per cent each belonged to the low and high categories.

Overall, medium innovativeness predominated among both officers and farmers.

4.3 Networking for Agritourism

Networking for agritourism was assessed in terms of linkages with different institutional, market and community partners.

Table 9: Networking Partners of Agritourism-Promoting Officers (n = 71)

S. No.	Networking Partner	Frequency	Percentage
1	Tourism Department	65	91.55
2	Self Help Groups	49	69.01
3	Social Media/Digital	66	92.96
4	Tour Operators	66	92.96
5	Agriculture Department	68	95.77
6	Horticulture Department	68	95.77
7	Other Agritourism Units	43	60.56
8	Local Community/Admin	64	90.14

Among officers, the highest networking was reported with the Agriculture Department and Horticulture Department (95.77% each), followed by Social Media/Digital and Tour Operators (92.96% each). The lowest was with Other Agritourism Units (60.56%).

Table 10: Distribution of Agritourism-Promoting Officers According to Networking

S. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low (up to 3)	3	4.22
2	Medium (4–6)	35	49.29
3	High (7–8)	33	46.47
	Total	71	100.00
	Mean = 5.89		SD = 1.17

Table 11: Networking Partners of Farmers for Agritourism (n = 19)

S. No.	Networking Partner	Frequency	Percentage
1	Tourism Department	15	78.95
2	Self Help Groups	15	78.95
3	Social Media/Digital	16	84.21
4	Tour Operators	15	78.95
5	Agriculture Department	13	68.42
6	Horticulture Department	13	68.42
7	Other Agritourism Units	15	78.95
8	Local Community/Admin	14	73.68

The majority of officers (49.29%) belonged to the medium networking category, followed by high (46.47%) and low (4.22%) categories.

Among farmers, the highest networking was reported with Social Media/Digital (84.21%), followed by Tourism Department, Self Help Groups, Tour Operators and Other Agritourism Units (78.95% each). The lowest networking was with the Agriculture and Horticulture Departments (68.42% each).

Table 12: Distribution of Farmers According to Networking for Agritourism

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low (up to 3)	3	15.78
Medium (4–6)	10	52.63
High (7–8)	6	31.57
Total	19	100.00
	Mean = 6.15	SD = 1.49

The majority of farmers (52.63%) belonged to the medium networking category, followed by high (31.57%) and low (15.78%) categories. Overall, the medium networking category predominated among both officers and farmers.

4.4 Attitude towards Agritourism

Attitude towards agritourism was assessed among both agritourism-promoting officers and farmers using the attitude scale included in the thesis.

Table 13: Distribution of Agritourism-Promoting Officers According to Attitude towards Agritourism

S. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Less favourable (<24)	5	7.04
2	Moderately favourable (24–26)	59	83.09
3	Highly favourable (>26)	7	9.85
	Total	71	100.00

Mean = 25.84

The majority of officers (83.09%) had a moderately favourable attitude towards agritourism, followed by highly favourable (9.85%) and less favourable (7.04%) attitudes.

Table 14: Distribution of Farmers According to Attitude towards Agritourism

S. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Less favourable	4	21.05
2	Moderately favourable	13	68.42
3	Highly favourable	2	10.53
	Total	19	100.00

Mean = 25.95

Among farmers, 68.42 per cent belonged to the moderately favourable category, followed by 21.05 per cent with less favourable and 10.53 per cent with highly favourable attitudes.

The thesis reports that, among officers, the strongest agreement was associated with statements concerning increased farmers' income through agritourism development, improvement in government department credibility, and the need for timely training.

Overall, the findings indicate that moderately favourable attitudes predominated among both officers and farmers, despite the high level of knowledge observed in both groups.

5. Conclusion

The study revealed that medium levels of information-source utilization, innovativeness and networking predominated among both agritourism-promoting officers and farmers. Attitude towards agritourism was predominantly moderately favourable among both officers and farmers.

Overall, the findings indicate that while respondents possessed a strong knowledge base regarding agritourism, there is scope to further strengthen information-source utilization, innovativeness, networking and favourable attitudes for supporting the development and promotion of agritourism in Bhopal Division.

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