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UNVEILING THE CONTRASTS BETWEEN RURAL TOURISM AND AGRO-TOURISM

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The journey of exploring the countryside has two different and distinct paths i.e., rural tourism and agrotourism. Uncovering the differences between these two types of rural exploration highlights the wide varieties of experiences available to tourists seeking a rural vacation. Rural tourism focuses more on cultural and natural aspect, offers a profound connection with history and heritage. On the other hand, agrotourism combines agricultural activities with tourism. Travellers participate in farming activities and gaining valuable insights in to the farming community. The key contrast between agro tourism and rural tourism are their target audiences. Despite of their differences both agrotourism and rural tourism celebrate the charm and values of rural life and contribute to the preservation of local culture and provide economic support to locals.

The modern era tourism become “experience oriented”, which requires new dimensions and opportunities to explore authentic and innovative tourism experience. Travellers being more interested in finding more flexible and sustainable travel options, especially after pandemic outbreak. Travelers looking for relaxation and a closer connection with nature and tradition. They are getting attracted towards the charm of the countryside in this world that is frequently defined by urbanization and fast-paced living. Such tourists have exciting opportunities through rural tourism and agrotourism, two distinct kinds of tourism options with roots in rural settings. Although these both terms often used synonymously, there is a significant difference between them and each has its own unique beauty

Rural tourism and agro-tourism are two distinct forms of tourism which showcase different perspectives of rural life and also provides unique experiences for tourists. While both forms of tourism are rural based, they differ in their focus and offerings Rural tourism focuses on highlighting the charm of rural life and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract visitors to their area which aims to offer tourists an authentic rural life

experience. Agritourism, on the other hand, is more focused around visiting active farms and ranches which offers a hands-on opportunity to acquire knowledge about local food production through experiences like picking fruit, feeding animals, and tasting farm-fresh cuisine

Rural Tourism

UNWTO defines Rural Tourism as "a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle / culture, angling and sightseeing. Rural Tourism activities take place in non-urban (rural) areas with the following characteristics: i) low population density, ii) landscape and land-use dominated by agriculture and forestry and iii) traditional social structure and lifestyle".

It has been considered as a means of achieving economic and social development and regeneration that can benefit to rural people for an effective source of secondary income and employment and has a potential to contribute in the revival of lost folk arts and handicrafts. It includes agricultural activity-oriented tourism (i.e., agro-tourism or leisure agriculture), culture-oriented activities (i.e., cultural and historical tourism, or museum tourism), and ecological nature-oriented recreation activities (i.e., nature tourism, agro-tourism, green-tourism, or ecotourism).

Rural tourism encompasses not only farm tourism, but also any tourist activity in rural areas that is understood to be a way of enjoying rural life within the community, as well as enjoying stunning rural landscapes and supporting rural prosperity and environmental quality. This comprises natural resources in the area, rural village environment and terrain (farmland and forestry, lakes, and mountains, diversity of agriculture, farm production, harvesting fruits, gardening, venues for forestry, livestock rearing and fishery operations) and local rural culture (rural buildings, historical architecture, cultural relics, temples, indigenous cultural practices and custom)

Functions of Rural Tourism

- **Cultural Function:** Preservation of cultural heritage to ensure the security of unique lifestyles, culture and folk arts of rural villages. At the same time, it also helps to create unique rural culture and cultural assets into promote rural tourism.

- **Social Function:** To establish contacts between urban people, rural villages, and rural areas, to increase farmer social networks, to close the urban-rural divide, and to improve the quality of life in rural areas.
- **Educational Function:** To provide opportunities for urban residents to learn about agriculture, including crop farming and animal rearing, as well as to experience rural life and appreciate its culture and ecosystems within local communities.
- **Therapeutic Function:** To make leisure activities available to the general public. This allows for close associations with natural landscapes and ecosystems in rural areas, which helps to relieve daily work stress and gives peace of mind to everyone who wishes to enjoy rural tourism.
- **Environmental Function:** To improve and update the rural environment's quality. It is also intended to safeguard natural landscapes and ecosystems, as well as to develop rural tourism in the community.
- **Economic Function:** To expand rural employment possibilities, raise rural income, and establish a thriving rural economy.
- **Recreational Function:** To provide public spaces for leisure activities and rural leisure excursions so that tourists have a positive experience throughout their stay.

Benefits of Rural Tourism

- Creates jobs and money for residents of remote rural areas. This is especially helpful for women, who sometimes lack new possibilities to earn money outside of the home.
- Develops a market for local products and services and keeps them alive.
- Promotes the conservation and protection of natural resources such as rivers, woods, and mountains, as well as local fauna and flora, birds, fish, and nearly extinct creatures. When these are valued as living assets in order to generate money, they are typically cared for.
- Encourages the preservation of old customs and traditions, crafts, traditional festivals, architecture, food, and other cultural practices.
- Because services are frequently offered by village inhabitants, rural tourism benefits the village by increasing collaboration among villagers as they conduct the local enterprise of catering for tourists.
- Offers chances for cultural exchange. These interactions, perhaps, will lead to increased understanding among peoples and stronger ties to the global family.

- Aids in slowing urbanization by providing a better economic future for rural families.

Agrotourism

World Tourism Organization (1998) defines as “Agri-tourism involves accommodation being offered in the farm house or in a separate guesthouse, providing meals and organizing guests’ activities in the observation and participation in the farming operations.”

Agrotourism is a type of commercial enterprise that combines agricultural production and/or processing with tourism in order to attract visitors to a farm, ranch, or other agricultural business for the purpose of entertainment, education and revenue generation.

Here a local farmer gives tour of their agricultural farm to tourists so that they can see how they grow, harvest, and process locally grown crops and provides farm-stay opportunities, including educational programs and recreational activities, are frequently provided by farmers.

It may include activities such as visiting a farm, watching and participating in farm activities, experiencing livestock such as cattle and goats, taking a bullock cart ride, spending a day or two surrounded by nature, eating food prepared by local farmers and labour, visiting a rural market, and other such allied activities related to an agriculture farm.

Agrotourism, which combines agriculture and tourism, offers a one-of-a-kind chance for people to connect with the land, adopt sustainable practices, and get a comprehensive appreciation of the crucial role agriculture plays in shaping our lives and communities.

Basic principles of Agro-Tourism

Three basic principles should guide agritourism are following:

- 1) **Something for visitors to see** - Agro-tourism can provide travellers with a variety of experiences, including animals, birds, farms, and nature. Tourists may also be drawn to Agro-tourism through culture, dress, festivals, and rural games.
- 2) **Something for visitors to do** -Tourists can participate in various farm and non-farm activities like harvesting, processing, cultural activities

- 3) **Something for visitors to buy** -Tourists can purchase rural crafts, clothing, farm gate fresh agriculture products, and processed meals as souvenirs.

Roles of Agro-Tourism in Rural Development

- It ensures cash flow throughout the off-season.
- Agritourism aids in the preservation and dissemination of rural values.
- Agricultural products can be sold by businesses that cultivate and harvest them.
- As a result, rural populations are employed.
- It preserves and communicates agricultural and rural values.

Benefits of Agro-Tourism for Farmers

- Operational expansion of farms.
- Farmers must enhance their farm revenue streams in order to protest income volatility. Creating new consumer niche markets
- Increasing the availability of local agricultural goods.
- Promoting local made agricultural products.
- Improving farm living and working conditions, as well as recreational opportunities.
- Instilling an entrepreneurial spirit and managerial abilities.
- Farm enterprises can become more sustainable over time.

Benefits for Communities

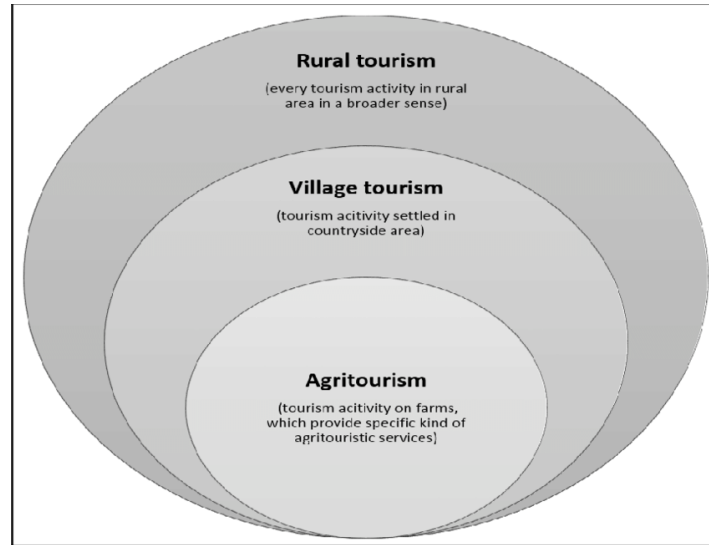
1. Businesses and services can generate additional money by recruiting travellers.
2. Tourists and people in rural areas should be protected against environmental damage.
3. Taking part in the preservation and revitalization of local art, craft, and traditions.
4. Increasing employment and income in rural areas in order to diversify and develop the rural economy.
5. By providing a more dynamic business climate, we hope to attract additional small enterprises and industries.

Contrasts Between Rural Tourism and Agro-Tourism

“Rural tourism” is considered the broader term encompassing a diversity of activities (e.g., “nature tourism”, “eco-tourism”) as long as those activities and experiences are offered

on a rural setting. Agro tourism is a part of rural tourism. Although these terms often used synonymously, there are differences between them as follows

Feature	Rural Tourism	Agritourism
Scope	Broader range of activities like ecotourism, exploring cultural and historical aspect	Primarily concerned about agricultural activities, farm visits, farm education, farm stays, and farm-to-table experiences
Rural Environment	Natural beauty, scenic landscapes are the major highlights	Agricultural landscapes, farming practices, livestock are the major highlights
Activities	Wide range of activities such as hiking, biking, nature walks, wildlife spotting, cultural events, heritage tours, and interacting with local communities are being offered	Activities directly related to agriculture, such as farm tours, farm stays, harvesting, animal feeding, playing with animals are being offered
Cultural Heritage	Exploration and celebration of the cultural heritage, traditions, folk dance, handicrafts, and local festivals of rural communities	Primary emphasis is on agricultural traditions, farming style, and the rural lifestyle
Economic Impact	Contribute in finance diversification, employment creation, and income generation in rural community	Provide additional sources income for farmers and agricultural communities
Accommodation	Offers a wide range of accommodation options, including countryside resorts, farm stays, guesthouses, and eco-lodges according to the preference of tourists	Farm stay is the major option for accommodation in case of agrotourism
Food Experiences	May include farm-to-table experiences, local cuisine, tasting locally produce products, and visiting farmers' markets	Focuses on farm-fresh food experiences, such as farm-to-local cuisine, agricultural product sampling, and learning about local food production
Educational Focus	Provide educational opportunities about rural environments, biodiversity, cultural diversity, customs, traditional handicrafts.	Offers educational experiences mainly focused on farming techniques, crop cultivation, animal husbandry, and sustainable farming practices



(source- https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-relationship-between-rural-tourism-village-tourism-and-agritourism_fig1_317117744)

Similarities between Rural Tourism and Agro Tourism

- Both rural tourism and agrotourism take place in rural setting.
- Main objective is to taking advantages of rural resources to generate income.
- Providing immersive rural experiences to tourists.
- Helps in cultural exchange between tourists and locals.
- Support local economy.
- Helps in preservation of local culture, heritage, art.

Conclusion

Rural tourism and agro-tourism are both gateways to the soul of the countryside, each provides tourists a unique and unforgettable experience of rural setting. Both pathways lead to a greater appreciation for the land, the people, and the values that keep rural communities at its centre. Both pathways help in preservation of local culture, food and tradition. Despite of their similarity and dissimilarities, both contributes in the betterment of rural society.

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