

# “Post-pandemic: Agritourism in the light of Maha Agrotourism 2020”

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## ABSTRACT

In Covid-19 pandemic Tourism industry has suffered a major setback. Agritourism was already in nascent stage of its growth before covid-19 scenario. The current study is for analysing the willingness of tourists for planning a vacation at Agritourism centre during and after pandemic. The article focuses on suggestions to farmer to cope up with new normal and making changes at centre for enhancing tourist satisfaction. Also the support and benefit farmers will receive through Maharashtra Agritourism Policy 2020.

**Key words:** Agritourism; COVID-19; leisure time; holiday; agritourism farm, Maharshttra Agritourism Policy 2020

## INTRODUCTION

Covid -19 pandemic has affected life of every person as well every form of Business. But Hospitality and Tourism industry faced disastrous impact due to measures to contain the pandemic. The disease been highly contagious restriction were led on movement of people, Lockdown were called across many countries. Due to lockdown many economic activities were slowed down, some went out of business leading to high-rate unemployment. Tourism has been an important earner for the Indian economy, having contributed 6.8 percent of GDP in 2019. Yet, the Indian tourism sector remains at the tenth spot in terms of travel and tourism spend and created eight percent of the total employment in 2019. Tourism in India suffered a major setback in 2020. As per a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Hotelivate study, the Indian tourism industry is set to lose around Rs 5 lakh crore. As per information shared by tourism secretary Yogendra Tripathi with the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture, 2 to 5.5 crore employed in the sector, directly or indirectly, have lost their jobs and revenue loss was pegged at Rs. 1.58 lakh crore.

Agritourism is defined as travel which combines agriculture with a touristic experience, allowing guests to have a flavour of farm life during their rural retreat. It is becoming an increasingly important part of both the tourism and agriculture industry worldwide, as it brings in additional revenue for farmers but also helps to increase knowledge about agriculture and rural areas. Farmers have highlighted recently in their communications on COVID-19 that the sector has been badly affected.

As emphasised by Gössling (1) tourism is an industry in which revenue is permanently lost because the unsold products and services, e.g., accommodation, cannot be sold in the following years, which has a knock-on effect on employment in the industry. Also, Unexpected critical events may include such events as natural disasters, epidemic outbreaks, terrorist attacks, and financial crises (2)

However, the shock caused by COVID-19 has led to the following situation:

- global economic shock and a decline in the number of travels related thereto; in the first quarter of 2020, the number of foreign tourist arrivals dropped by 20–30%, and it could drop by 60–80% over the course of the entire year (3)
- the economic shock is more dramatic and the decline in the economic growth is twice as large as it is in the case of regular upheavals (e.g., cyclones, bush fires, earthquakes, terrorist attacks);
- the economic shock might lead to structural changes in some industrial sectors (4)

When unexpected events happen, tourist demand may drastically decrease (5) When choices are associated with a risk (6), consumers often delay or give up on making decision. Recent studies show that the major concerns of tourists pertain to safety and protection, emphasising the main risk factors: war and political instability, health, crime, terrorism (7). Prospective tourists tend to delay or cancel their plans to travel to the destinations affected by pandemic, especially if there are no anti-viral medications and vaccines, and the virus spreads rapidly and may affect their health (8)

The current study is done with the purpose of identifying tourist plan during and after Covid-19 pandemic in context with Agritourism. Study is done to sought answers to Questions like What is current attitude of Tourists regarding



planning holidays? What are the determinants of inducing tourists choose Agritourism? How are safety facilities important? What Tourists are expecting from the owners of the centre for health safety?

#### **Agritourism Theory:**

Amalgamation of agriculture and tourism has resulted into Agri-tourism, which reorient the agriculture as tourist destination and attraction for providing a type of special interest tourism to cater the need of modern tourist to experience and obtain the knowledge of cultivating various products in agriculture. It gives an opportunity for urban people to get back to their roots of rural connectivity and also helps the cultivators to generate additional revenue and employment from their agri-fields(9)

The term agritourism is new face of rural tourism and rural business. It is rural based business that is open to the public. In simple words, it is farmer operation where with very less or no investment, within available resources, the farmer offers tour their agriculture farms. Here the farmers allow people to witness farm activities like cultivation, harvesting, processing. Also the farmer offers to provide farm fresh cooked and accommodation to the tourists.

Thus Agritourism is a business venture located on working farms, ranch or agricultural enterprise that provide experience for visitors while generating supplemental income for the owner.

The development of agritourism depends on innovative solutions introduced in this area. Innovation in agritourism is both creating a tourist product from scratch and a professional marketing environment for the natural and cultural values existing in a given area. These activities are part of the concept of sustainable innovation(10)

#### **ELEMENTS OF AGRITOURISM SYSTEM**

A system is a group of interrelated, interdependent and interacting elements that together form a single functional structure. (Weaver & Lawton, 2006).

According to Leiper's Basic Whole Tourism System has five primary elements At least one tourist, At least one tourist generating region At least one transit rout region, At least one tourist destination, A travel and tourism industry.

Based on this theory, Agritourism system components are

Tourist,  
Agri-entrepreneur (farmer),  
Tourist destination (farm),  
Tourism region (village area) and then  
Travel and tourism industry.

Nowadays, agritourism consists of the following elements forming the basis of the agritourism product(11)

- Accommodation: the farmer has the possibility to obtain additional income through the rental of extra rooms in their household.
- Food: the farmer has an opportunity to directly capitalise their agricultural production, constituting a direct link between the person offering services (the farmer and their family) and the person requesting them (the tourist). Another feature of the food offered in agritourism is the fact that it is based on the traditional cuisine of the region, and is prepared from the produce from the owner's own farm or from the local area, thus supporting both the farm itself and the local area—of which the farm is a part.
- Tourist entertainment: in the case of agritourism, tourist entertainment is based on the activities traditionally performed on agricultural farms or in the household, in which the tourist can actively or passively participate.

Those who choose to visit an agritourism operation are likely seeking a new and enjoyable experience, unlike what happens in their everyday lives, and may be unfamiliar with the farm lifestyle. They seek a connection to a local farm, to understand and appreciate where their food comes from, to gain a better understanding of the farming lifestyle, or to reminisce about childhood experiences on a farm.

#### *Benefits Of Visit To Agritourism*

Education about farming aspects  
Routine change  
Back to roots pleasure  
First-hand experience of rural lifestyle  
Closeness to nature



Recreation and entertainment activities on farm  
Off the farm site country side visits  
Fresh from farm availability of agri-products.

Much like the entire tourism sector, agritourism has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Tourists fear the prevailing pandemic; they are reacting and changing their tourist travel plans in the current holiday period.

### **Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Tourism**

Many study are in progress to analyse the impact of Covid-19 on Tourism world wide. Due to COVID-19, tourism is such a highly affected sector and may remain affected in the long term, i.e. approximately more than 1.5 years. Hence, in this scenario, it is necessary to measure the losses due to pandemic so that policies can be redesigned to manage tourism activities. In India there is a fall in foreign tourists' arrival rate by 68% from February to March 2020 and hence fall in foreign exchange earnings (FEE) by 66.32%, which has a significant impact on the economy (Statista, [2020](#)). (12)

Research conducted among consumers in the USA and Great Britain (collected between 13 and 16 March) showed that approximately 50% of American consumers and 38% of British consumers voluntarily cancelled, delayed or were forced to cancel their holiday plans due to the coronavirus and the crisis stemming from it. In both markets, 35% of consumers reported that they were not planning any trips at the time, and only 15% of the respondents in the United States and 27% in Great Britain claimed that their holiday plans remained uninterrupted. However, 70% of the respondents whose trip was interrupted plan another holiday in the next year. Although the global crisis made trips in the near future unlikely, people remain hopeful. More than 40% of consumers in both markets wants to try and will book holidays within the next six months(13)

Research conducted among American consumers by Trips to Discover showed that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 29% of the respondents abandoned their plans to travel entirely, 20% are still undecided about their plans, 20% are still travelling as planned, 18% are still travelling, but changed 6 of 19 their destinations or plans, and 11% had not planned their trips yet. The persons who cancelled their trips did so due to the limitations concerning travelling and shutdowns of destinations (51%), 47% of the respondents stated that they were concerned for their health, and decreasing the expenses constituted the reason for only 1% of the respondent(14)

There are signs that initially the journeys will be closer to people's homes and that people will practice car tourism more often. Hence there is immense potential for Agritourism in near future.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study attempts to analysing the willingness of tourists for planning a vacation at Agritourism centre during and after pandemic. The article focuses on suggestions to farmer to cope up with new normal and making changes at centre for enhancing tourist satisfaction. The primary and secondary data have been used for the research paper.

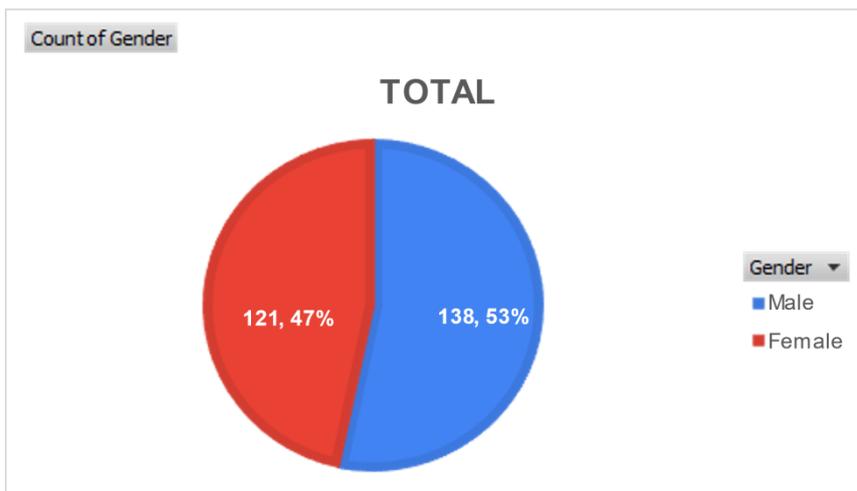
The questionnaire has been prepared to collect the data. The cartographic technique has been used to represent the data. Primary Data:- Primary data were collected by using the questionnaire technique. Due to the fact that the target group reached were the people who are active in terms of tourism, non-probability sampling was applied. The study covered individuals aged 15 and above. The study used whatsapp and facebook groups, in which tourism was the main subject of interest. The link to the survey questionnaire was posted in the groups in question.

Secondary data:- Secondary data is collected from available literature and research studies conducted related to the study.

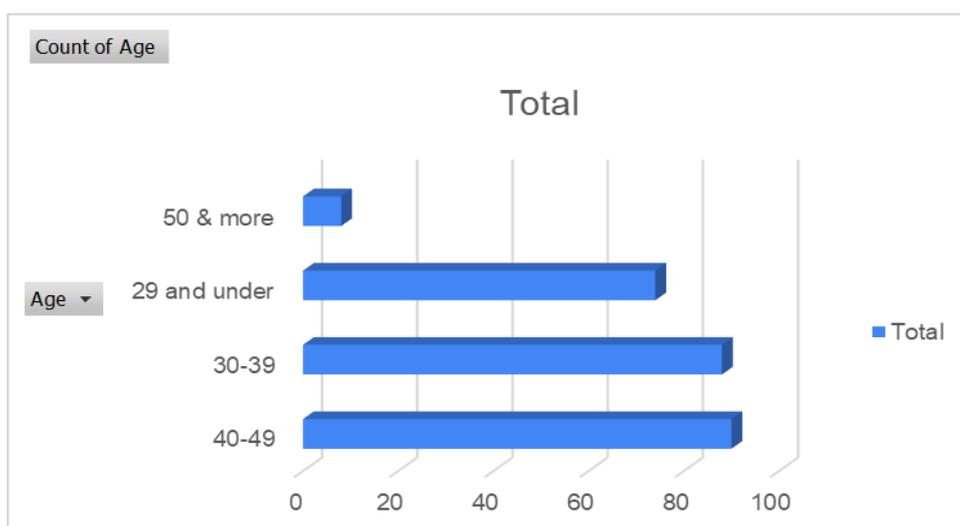
## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Respondents profile**

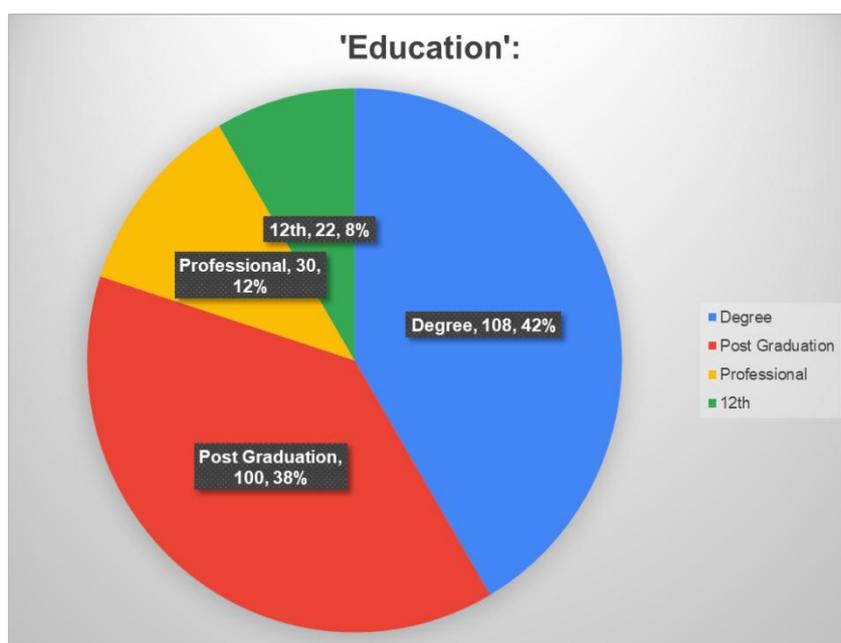
The survey was answered by 260 respondents. Majority of them were male tourists. The respondents were from age group of 17 to 75 but the average age group of respondents was 41-50



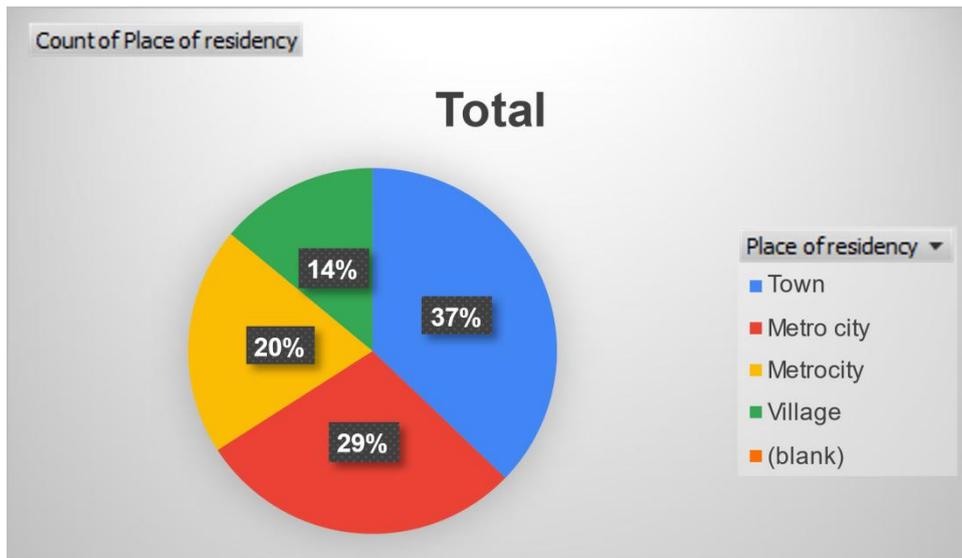
Gender of Respondents , 53% male and 47% were female respondents



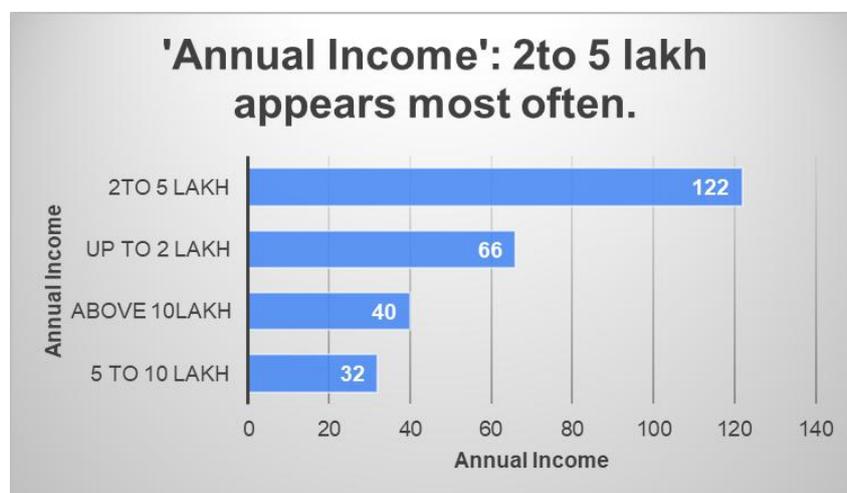
The Tourist visiting Agritourism is majority of age group of 30-39 and 40-49.



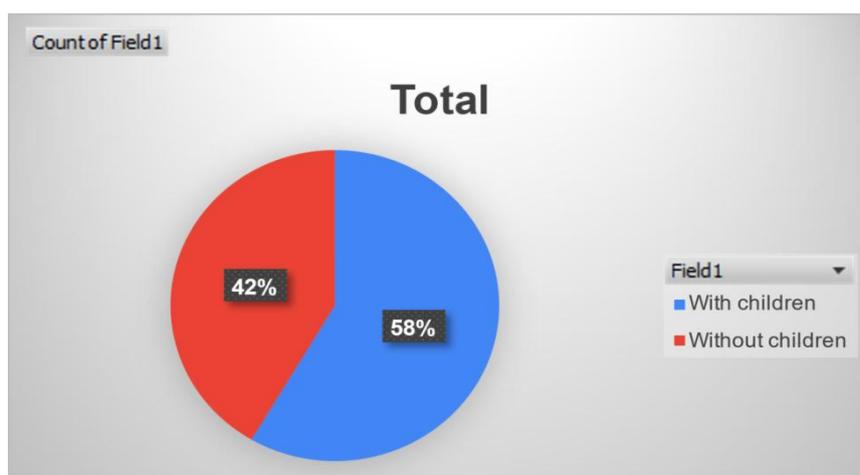
The 42% of respondents were Graduate and 38% were Post Graduate.



The majority of tourist who visit Agritourism centre are from metro-cities or towns

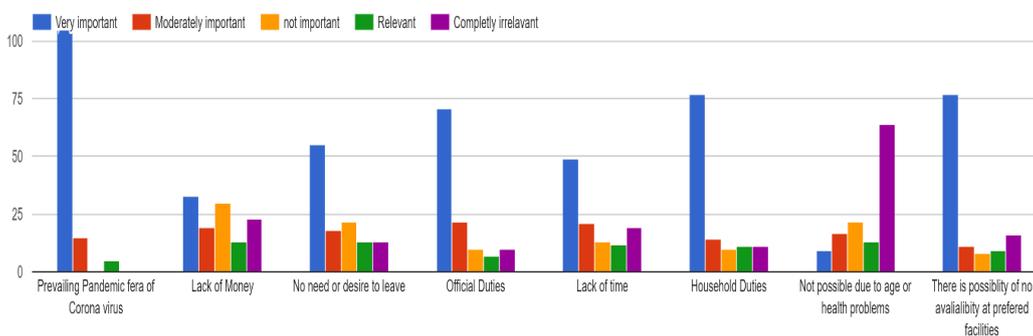


The Annual Income group of respondents were majorly between Rs.2 to Rs.5 lakhs



The presence of children in the household undoubtedly constitutes a factor determining tourism-related activity. In the study group, 58.5% of the respondents had children. The subject matter of the study were the tourist plans of the tourists in Maharashtra for the period between September and December 2020, in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the study, the respondents were asked whether they were planning at least one tourist trip. The results of the study show that the vast majority of the respondents (60%) had such plans

What were reason for lack of your willingness to set on tourist in 2020

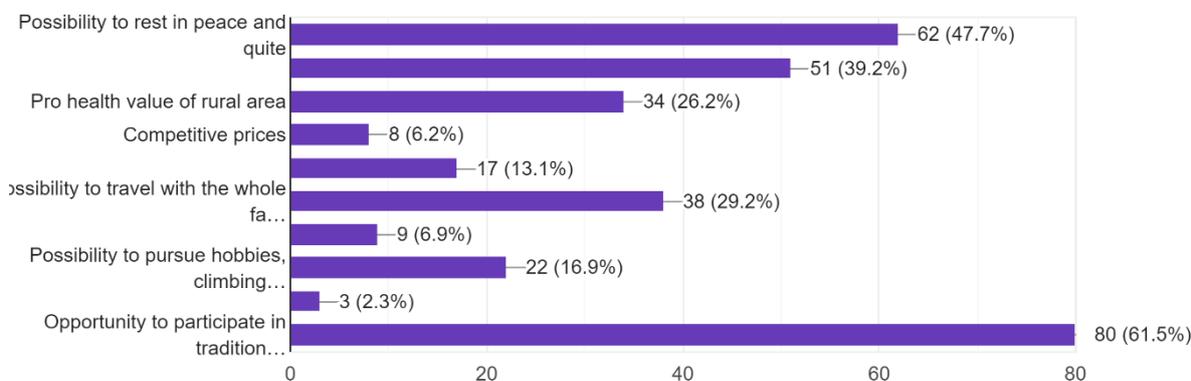


Reasons for Lack of willingness of people to go on tourism in 2020 The most important reasons from the study were Prevailing Pandemic fear of Corona virus, Household and Official duties. As well possibility of no availability of preferred facilities.



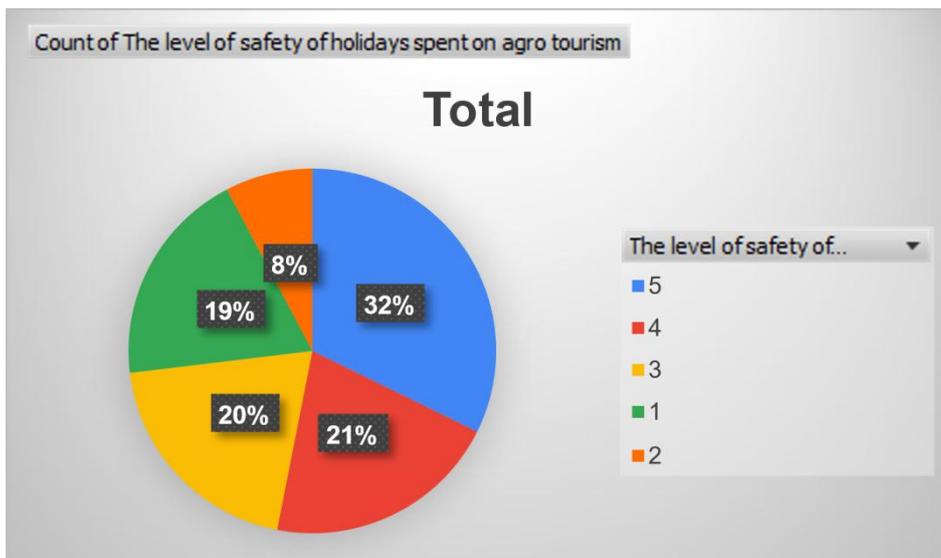
The opinion of the respondents regarding the willingness of planning a vacation at an agritourism farm during the COVID-19 pandemic

The respondents were not sure of any plan, The majority of them had plans those were dependent on covid scenario



Determinants or Motivators of Agritourism as choice of Tourism

Majority of Respondents visited or are willing to visit agritourism for the reason of Opportunity to participate in tradition, as well Possibility of finding quite or peace. Also other reason like healthy food and rural atmosphere too.



The level of safety of holidays spent on agritourism farms on the scale from 1 (least safe) to 5 (safest) in the opinion of the respondents(already visited tourist)

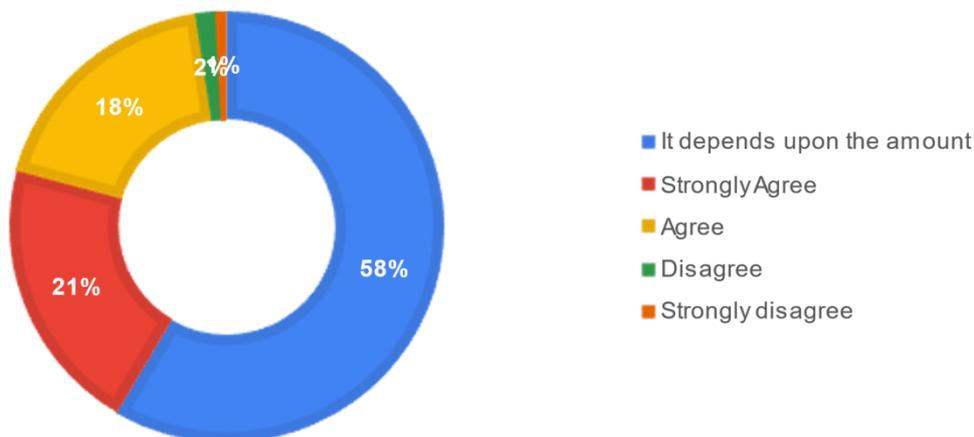
Most of The respondents found Agritourism centres to be safest



The respondents were, moreover, asked what actions with regard to increasing the safety of their stay they expected the owners of agritourism farms.

The respondents wanted the owners to follow all safety measures

### 'ARE YOU WILLING TO PAY ADDITIONAL COST FOR THE CONFIRMATION OF SANITARY AND SAFETY'.



Respondents' willingness to incur additional costs for the confirmation of sanitary and safety measures on an agritourism farm in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic

Very few respondents are not willing to incur additional cost. Whereas 21% respondents agree on paying more. Where as large number of them feel that, they will pay if they receive the value service.

### CONCLUSIONS

Covid -19 pandemic is the condition for which none of the economy was prepared, Still all across the world are trying to cope with it. The new normal concept guides each one of us to adaptability and improvement. Tourism is the sector that has been most affected by the situation. Agritourism is a form of non-mass tourism, the guests spend their time close to the nature and at facilities which are small frequently located far away from large clusters of people, which is in line with the current recommendations of health services.

From the study findings we can conclude that pandemic has impacted peoples decisions of trips in 2020. Though the conditions are getting better still the fear has not wiped, but people are willing to take trips in near future. They prefer to travel nearby destination and safe less crowded places. Agritourism is one of the option. As per the study tourists visit or are willing to visit the Agritourism for possibility of peace and call of traditions. But they are expecting certain safety and sanitary measures to be followed by the owners.

### SUGGESTIONS

Disinfection of common areas, Hand disinfection panels, Restrictions on the maximum number of tourist staying overnight on the farm, Reducing the number of tourist staying in common place, Changes in the organisation of serving meal, Obtaining the sanitary and epidemiological safety.

- Apart form following these measure, the centre owners are take help, of government declared SOP.
- The Ministry of Tourism developed an initiative called SAATHI (System for Assessment, Awareness & Training for Hospitality Industry) by partnering with the Quality Council of India (QCI) in October 2020. The initiative effectively implemented guidelines/SOPs issued with reference to COVID-19 for safe operations of hotels, restaurants, B&Bs and other units
- Taking advantages of several branding and marketing initiatives by the Government of India such as 'Incredible India!' and 'Athiti Devo Bhava' has provided a focused impetus to growth
- Much-needed importance of hygiene
- Launch of more attractive schemes to the customers and the tour operators.

Much important promotion measure taken by Government of Maharashtra's MahaAgritourism Policy 2020

### Highlights of Agritourism Policy of Government of Maharashtra 2020

The Maharashtra state cabinet has cleared Agritourism policy on 6 September 2020 the policy is for rural development through tourism, making available market for agriculture produce, encouraging agriculture allied business, providing employment opportunities to women and youth in rural areas.

It would also provide platform to showcase folk art and culture as well as agriculture to tourists and allow them to spend time in a pollution-free environment. Post Pandemic this policy will bring about improvement in Agritourism scenario.

#### ***Purpose of Agritourism tourism policy***

- To give tourist pleasure of farming and village
- To promote agribusiness
- To develop villages through agritourism
- To provide a rightful platform for agriculture products
- Ensuring market for agriculture products
- Encouraging agro based business
- To provide environmental friendly and prosperous tourism experience
- To create an alternative source of income for the farmers
- To provide employment opportunities to women and budding youth of village
- To promote folk art and traditions
- Giving tourist an experience of actual farming
- To create pollution free tourism for tourist
- Giving experimental enjoyment of agritourism
- Utilization of Paddy and gyran lands of village
- To experience natural environment

#### ***Benefits to farmers:***

- Certificate of registration from Department of tourism
- Bank loans available to agricultural practitioners
- Benefit under Power Distribution
- Benefit under GST
- Benefit for Green House, Fruit production, Horticultural Products, Processing Units
- Benefit for digging artificial water reservoir
- LPG connection will be charged for domestic rate rather than commercial rates for Kitchen at centre
- Training will be provided to farmers for starting and running centre. Also training for maintaining hygiene safety security of tourists. Farmers will be trained for marketing of centres. The training will include visit to successful model Agritourism centres
- For Promotion and Marketing of centre will be done via appropriate medium, as well through MTDC website.

In conclusion we believe that holiday in the country on Agritourism farm during and pandemic and after pandemic will be preferred by Tourists. Also with the support of government and its schemes and policies like MahaAgritourism 2020, Agritourism is about to receive a boost in the near future.

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