

Determinants of the Farmers' Willingness to Participate in Rural Tourism in Pakistan

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Abstract

Low agricultural productivity, low profit, and lower standard of living of agricultural population has caused many problems in rural as well as urban areas. Eradication of rural poverty and improving rural standard of living is challenge for many countries in the world. Rural tourism has been introduced in many regions of the world to diversify income sources of rural people and preserve rural culture. This study aimed to investigate willingness of Pakistani farmers to start rural tourism. Data was collected from 100 farmers with the help of a pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire. Chi-square / fisher's exact test was used to analyse the relationship between explanatory variables and willingness of the farmers. Results showed that age, education, income, land holding, distance from district headquarter, and farmers' participation in social activities has significant impact on willingness. Young and educated farmers with higher annual income and landholdings and living near to city are more inclined to start rural tourism. Social behaviour of the farmers also plays very important role in decision about starting rural tourism.

Keywords: *Rural Tourism, Rural Poverty, Agricultural Productivity, willingness, Pakistan.*

1. Introduction

For many years development of tourism has been neglected in Pakistan and its share in national GDP was low. Increased per capita income and demand for leisure, need for diversification of income sources of resource lacked regions, and global trends has made tourism an important economic sector in the country. There has been wider realization for economic potential of tourism sector at national level. Few years back, even there was no tourism policy in the country. However, recently national as well as provincial governments has devised plans and strategies to develop tourism. In 2018, federal government in Pakistan formed a task force to develop set of strategies for revival of tourism in the country. Several measures have been taken since then, such as ease of visa policy, promotion of religious tourism (Kartarpur Corridor, etc), development of brand Pakistan, tourism e-portal, development of national minimum standards, development of Pakistan tourism development fund, participation in international tourism exhibitions, etc. These measures are considered significant steps in revival of tourism in Pakistan. Since, 1980's tourism sector saw a blow, terrorism and political instability has negatively impacted tourism in Pakistan. Improvement in security situations and stability has once again make Pakistan as international tourism destination. Recently, Pakistan has been listed by many international forums as safe and beautiful tourism destination. Pakistan is not far from achieving the lost glory in world tourism. World has moved from conventional tourism to alternate tourism. One such type of tourism introduced and adopted in many countries is rural tourism. Rural tourism is combination

of both agriculture and tourism industries (Hegarty & Przezborska, 2005; Lupi, Giaccio, Mastronardi, Giannelli, & Scardera, 2017). According to Sikora and Wartecka-Ważyńska (2012) rural tourism means visitors visit rural areas, see agricultural activities, and stay there for spending some leisure time and also learned different cultural activities. Rural tourism also enables interaction between the tourist and local communities (Nooripoor, Khosrowjerdi, Rastegari, Sharifi, & Bijani, 2020). Through rural tourism activities rural community easily share their local culture with the tourists. Whereas, rural tourism invites tourists to explore different kind of agricultural activities and ways of farming etc., (Prayukvong, Huttasin, & Foster, 2015). In rural tourism, visitors may enjoy different types of daily activities at the farm such as fishing, hunting, horse riding, self-harvesting, wildlife experience, field experience, visit fruits orchard and performed many outdoor activities (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; Che, Veeck, & Veeck, 2005; McGehee & Kim, 2004; Wilson, Thilmann, & Watson, 2006). All these agricultural activities are important for the revitalization of the rural areas (Iorio & Corsale, 2010).

The development in rural tourism is just a planned process, it can be viewed as a dynamic, ongoing and socially constructed process that includes many individuals who continuously work for the enhancement of rural tourism. According to Nooripoor et al. (2020) rural tourism provides employment opportunities to the rural population which significantly increases their income and reduces poverty. In the 21st century, rural tourism has performed a vital role in the development of the rural economy, increases the country gross domestic products (GDP), and the continued support from the public sector has increased the income of local communities (May-Chiun & Peter Songanc, 2014).

Rural tourism as an alternative tourism for development of rural areas as well as tourism model for tourism has been supported by many researchers. According to Moradi et al. (2011) rural life and environment is totally different from the urban environment such as, urban life is full of chaos and pollutions, while the rural life is blessed with natural environment and resources. That's why the urban people move towards the rural areas to reduce the stress in daily life and spend some leisure time. Furthermore, rural tourism activities are also beneficial for the development of the local economy, along with foreign earing, poverty reduction, and job creation (Askarpour, Mohammadinejad, & Moghaddasi, 2020; Kumar, Hussain, & Kannan, 2015). According to Barbieri (2013) rural tourism provide many benefits to the rural community, when the visitors travel to rural areas, they support the local economy in many ways in term of transportation expenses, food expenses, and accommodation expenses etc. The benefit of rural tourism is, it provides a new source of supplementary income to the rural community and improved rural lifestyle (Etikan & Çukur, 2011). Furthermore, rural tourism spurs infrastructure development in rural areas and reinvigorate local culture. Rural tourism also provides the opportunity for retaining population in rural areas that might otherwise experience depopulation. On the other side rural tourism also faced different issues like the main issues of rural tourism need to preserve natural resources, proper need for education, better understanding between the tourist and local community (Terzić, Petrevska, & Petrović, 2019).

From multidimensional benefits of rural tourism, one of them is very significant and that is contribution in rural economy. Traditionally, rural economies in the developing world have been based on agricultural activities (crops, livestock, poultry, fisheries, and forestry). Declining agricultural productivity, low farm profits, resource degradation, and climate changes has threatened the sustainability of rural areas, as a result, rural population started migrating out in search of economic opportunities. Which itself is a big problem for any country. Rural-urban population has caused many social, economic, and environmental problems in urban areas. National governments and international bodies have been struggling hard to decrease rural outmigration. Rural tourism has been developed to diversify income sources of rural population and develop rural areas. Pakistan is the 5th populous country in the world, where 61% population lives in rural areas and poverty is widespread in rural area. A large proportion of the population in Pakistan relies on agriculture for livelihood. However, degrading quality of land and water, small land holding, and land fragmentation has serious negative impact on earnings of the rural population. To diversify income sources of the rural population development of rural tourism

could be a viable solution. However, to develop tourism analysis of intention and preferences of stakeholders is very important. Hence this study tried to investigate willingness of rural farmers to participate in rural tourism.

2. Methodology

Selection of the area

Sargodha districts was chosen as a study area for this research. The district is part of Punjab province, which is largest province in the country from population perspectives. Punjab is also rich with fertile soil and has highest share in national agricultural value addition. Due to abundance of agricultural and cultural resources, better road infrastructure and other facilities the province is ideal to be rural tourism destination. Sargodha districts has a long history of citrus planation. It is hometown of citrus in Pakistan, the citrus produced in the area is consumed domestically as well as exported. Secondly, Sargodha is home to Kirana hills which is a beautiful place for visitors. These hills are also known as dark mountains due to its caramel scenes. Sargodha is also rich with traditional foods and festivals. All these things make Sargodha district an ideal area for rural tourism. Tourism is not much developed in this district. Being near Faisalabad (an industrial city) Sargodha provides large number of workers to cities like Faisalabad and Lahore. Therefore, Sargodha districts was taken as focus of the research and willingness of the farmers was investigated.

Data

Data was collected from the study area with the help of a pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire. The respondents were approached through the village leaders. Individual efforts to reach farmers were in vain because majority of the farmers think that survey team is from some government department and provision of information will lead them in some trouble. Hence, we requested village leaders to gather farmers at one place. Sargodha is divided into 7 tehsils (counties) and 62 union councils. Four tehsils were chosen purposively and further 4 villages were chosen from each tehsil. Total 100 farmers were interviewed from 8 villages. Before collection of data, survey team gave a presentation on benefits and costs of rural tourism. Printed brochures were also distributed to farmers where details about rural tourism were given. Data was collected on a printed survey form, for sake of understanding questions were translated into local language (Punjabi). The Questionnaire covered various aspects of farmers and rural tourism. The questionnaire was divided into following sections; Socio-demographic, Agricultural resources, farmers experience of tourism, willingness to establish rural tourism, and social participation of the farmers. Description of the explanatory variables is given in Table 1. The age of the farmers' are considered as a contineous variable and the mean value of age is 46.76, while the minimum age of the farmer is 29 years old and maximum age of the farmer is 63 years. The marital status of the respondent is measured if the respondent is married = 0 and if the respondent is single =1. The mean value of marital status was 0.35 which shows that 35% of the respondents are single and the remaining 65% are married and the mean year of schooling of the household head were 5.28 schooling year. If we look at the average household size is 9.78 members, which is larger than the estimated household size of 6.7 persons by the Pakistan bureau of statistics. Distance from the district city is considered an important indicator for the selection of tourism place and the mean value of the distance from the district is 59.7 kilometer, while we find that the minimum distance of the farm from the district is 25 kilometer and maximum value of distance is 100 kilometer far from the district city. Household wealth is another significant factor for the implementation of agritourism activities on their farm. Average annual income of the farm owner is found to be pakRs 350,000. The landholding is a significant natural resource which has an impact on the farmer willingness to invest in agritourism. The mean owned area of the respondents is 58.70 acres. The ownership of small ruminants and livestock is 3.5 and 12.9 animals respectively. Average sale of animal milk was 5202 liter, while annual income from the sale of the animal was Rs218,000.

Method

We used Chi-square/fisher exact test to check the relationship between farmers' willingness and other explanatory variables.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Description	St. Dev.	Mean	Min.	Max.
Willingness to rural tourism	1 if willing, 0 otherwise				
Age	years	9.29	46.76	29	63
Marital status	1 if married, 0 otherwise	0.47	0.35	0	1
Education	Years of schooling	1.41	5.82	1	5
Household size	No. of household members	3.15	9.78	3	17
Distance from district city	In kilometers	17.55	59.7	25	100
Annual income	In PKR	1.17	350,000	1000,000	6,000,000
Owned area	In acres	24.8	58.70	25	220
Small ruminants	No. of small ruminants	1.6	3.5	1	12
Livestock	Total number of livestock	7.35	12.9	1	40
Annual sale of milk	In liters	3.96	5202	500	17000
Income from animal sale (Rs)	Income from animal sale	1.10	218,000	50,000	500,000

3. Results

Table 2 presents the result of chi-square/ fisher's exact test. The dependent variables for the analysis were willingness to start rural tourism and explanatory variables were, age, education, income, land holding, income from sale of animal, distance from district headquarter, and participation in social activities. The results shows that there's significant difference between age of the willing and not willing farmers. The young farmers are more inclined to start rural tourism while old farmers are not willing. Education also plays very important role, educated farmers in the study area are more willing to start agritourism compared to less educated farmers. Role of education in decision making about rural tourism is confirmed by previous studies also (Bagi & Reeder, 2012; Malkanthi, Ishana, Sivashankar, & Weeralal, 2015; Tew & Barbieri, 2012; Yeboah, Owens, Bynum, & Okafor, 2017). The farmer annual income was also found to have statistically significant and positive impact. This results is in line with the findings of the previous studies (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; Malkanthi et al., 2015; Yeboah et al., 2017). Annual income from the sale of animals also found to be positive and significant impact on farmer participation in rural tourism. Distance from the district city also found to be positive and significant impact on farmer willing to participate in rural tourism. If the rural territory far from the main city the tourists hesitate to stay and sometimes ignore the rural tourism. Owned area of the farmer has statistically significant and positive impact on farmer willingness to participation in rural tourism activities. Participation in social work was also found to have a significant impact on farmer willingness to participate in agritourism.

Table 2: Relationship between willingness, sociodemographic, and other variables (chi-square/fisher's exact test)

Variable	Willingness		Test result
	Yes	No	
Age	43.1	59.5	***
Education (years)	12.5	5.3	***
Annual income (Rs)	4,500,000	1,500,000	**
Annual income from sale of animals (Rs)	300,000	56,000	*
Distance from district city (km)	33	75.3	***
Owned area (acre)	55.5	150.1	***
Participation in social work	4.2	1.3	***

Note: ***, **, * indicated 15, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Rural tourism has the potential to play an important role in the economy of country and considered an important sector for rural development. It creates employment opportunity for rural community. Furthermore, the rural community directly involved in agricultural activities, hence agriculture is widespread in rural areas of Pakistan. While rural tourism has been extensively adopted and practiced in many rural areas of developed countries. In many other developing and developed countries, including Asia, rural tourism is an influential sector for the creation of employment opportunities, preservation of local culture, and revenue generation. In this study, the author investigated the farmer willingness to participate in rural tourism in the rural areas of Pakistan. The universe of the study was Punjab province and data were collected from the Sargodha district. Two sample T test was use to analyze the data. The results of this study show that 71% of farmers are willing to participate in rural tourism, while the remaining 29% are not willing. Age of the farmer is significant factor for farmers' willingness to participate in rural tourism because the aged farmer have much knowledge about the agriculture and their experience can build a strong market for tourism in rural territory. Farmer education is another important factor for participation in rural tourism. The educated farmer definitely participates in agricultural seminars and conferences etc which helps to increase their experience and knowledge about agriculture and also related to rural tourism. The farmer annual income and income earned from the sale of animals also significant factor for farmer willing to participate in rural tourism because to start the rural tourism for the tourist require huge capital for investment purposes like as build parks for kids, hospitality services for the tourist etc. distance from the district city is important for tourist point of view if the visited rural site is closer to the main city definitely the tourist preferred rural tourism and spend some moment in the rural space while on the other hand if far from the main city the safety measure is the main obstacle for rural tourism. While the owned area of the farmer is significant and positive impact on farmer willingness to participate in rural tourism because if the farmers' have enough area for parks, and recreational activities, they can easily start the rural tourism. Participation in social work is also found to be positive and significant impact on farmer willingness to participate in rural tourism.

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