

# Motivational Factors of Farm Tourists in Kerala - An Empirical Analysis of Push and Pull factors

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## Abstract

Farm tourism in Kerala has the potential to attract large number of travellers from all over the world. A proper understanding of motivational factors is essential for predicting the travel behaviour of tourists. The study is based on the data collected from the farm tourists regarding their demographic profile and motivational factors in travelling and destination choice. The study analysed ten push factors motivating the farm tourists to travel and twelve pull factors in the form of attributes of farm tourism spots. Through independent t test, the study found out a significant difference between the domestic and foreign agritourists regarding the motivational factors and attributes in destination choice. For the foreign tourists the most motivating factor for travelling is eco- friendly nature of the farm tourism spot, while for the domestic tourists it is refreshment of mind and recreational purpose. The tourism marketers can consider the result of this study for developing and offering competitive services.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Tourism, farm tourists, Travelling, Destination, Farm

## Introduction

Farm tourism is a growing sector of tourism with high potential for economic development and employment generation in Kerala (Sunil Runjaji, 2010). As the farm tourism destinations in Kerala has the potential to attract a large number of tourists, the tourism marketers should develop products and services which are competitive and as per the requirements of visitors. A proper understanding of the unique motivations and preferences of the farm tourists in travelling and destination choice is essential for successful marketing efforts. This study intends to collect information regarding the factors which motivates the farm tourists to travel to various farm tourism spots in Wayanad and also the level of importance given by them to various attributes of farm tourism destinations.

## Farm tourism- A conceptual framework

Farm tourism is a vital part of eco-tourism. It is one of the recent trends in tourism industry which promotes sustainable tourism development and is very popular among the tourists. “Farm tourism is a commercial enterprise at a working farm, ranch or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates supplemental income for the owner” (Bernardo, Valentin, & Leatherman, 2004). It is also known by different names such as agrotourism, agritourism or agricultural tourism. Farm tourism creates more employment opportunities in the agricultural field and farmers get additional

income from the tourism activities. It also creates awareness among the public regarding various farm activities.

A beautiful, clean and an attractive farm and social skills of the farmer are essentials for a successful farm tourism venture (Krishna, Verma, Sahoo, & Kumbhare, 2018). Farm tourism involves visiting a working farm or any agriculture, horticulture or agribusiness operations. The activities under farm tourism includes farm stay, educational visits, outdoor sports, participation in the rural life style and local community, enjoyment of natural environment, rural heritage, enjoying locally produced food, processing and production tour, cultural activities, multi-cuisine restaurant, gift shop, tree house, house Boating, hunting, fishing and trekking etc. (Mahaliyanaarachchi, 2015).

Agriculture is the backbone of Indian Economy. The agriculture sector provides employment opportunity to major segment of the workforce in the country. Farm tourism is one of the latest concepts in the Indian tourism industry.

### **Farm tourism in Kerala**

Kerala is basically a state with predominance of farming and agricultural activities. Farm tourism is relatively a new tourism product in Kerala. Because of the variety of crops, large number of plantations, favourable climatic conditions and beautiful landscape, the state has endless opportunity to develop farm tourism on a large scale. Farm tourism destinations in Kerala are the best spots for shopping natural products. It offers economically feasible ways to protect natural resources, natural habitats and natural scenic areas (Singh & Mishra, 2016). The state government is planning numerous projects to support the farmers to engage in farm tourism activities. The government decision to allow 5 % of the farm area for the purpose of tourism is such an initiative (Deepthi & Davy, 2017). Some well-known farm tourism spots in Kerala are Blooms Farm, Kenichira; Keerikkadan's Green Park, Kothemangalam; Bee hive Honey Park and Passion Fruit Farm, Rajakkad; Tea Town Kerala, Munnar; Green Aqua Fish Farm, Vypin; KFDC Floriculture Centre, Munnar; Mango Meadows Agricultural Theme Park, Kottayam etc.

Wayanad is one of the most beautiful places in Kerala which is rich with its natural resources. The agroclimatic conditions of Wayanad is suitable for the cultivation of plantations, variety of crops and spices. Wayanad is also famous for its beautiful organic farms which is free from all types of chemicals. So Wayanad is an ideal place in Kerala to explore the possibilities of farm tourism. Some well-known farm tourism spots in Wayanad are Blooms Green Farm, Kenichira; Pappy's Nest, Kalpetta; Parisons Plantation Experiences, Mananthavady etc.

### **Push and Pull Factors**

The wants and needs of tourists can be considered as travel motivations. Travel behaviour and destination choice of a tourist are influenced by his/her travel motivations which include both push and pull factors. Push factors are internal motives that cause tourists to seek activities to satisfy their needs or the emotional aspects of the individual which lead to travel decisions. On the other hand, pull factors are destination related forces or attributes which attract a tourist to a specific destination. (Gnoth, 1997)

## Review of Literature

Motivation is an important topic of travel and tourism studies. Knowledge about travel motivation would help the tourism marketers in predicting the future travel pattern of tourists (Raji, 2012). According to Gautam (2014) the reason for slackness in the performance of tourism industry can be attributed to the lack of effective destination planning and marketing strategy. The importance of push and pull factors in motivating tourists were mentioned in Crompton's (1979) study. Through the study the researcher suggested that the socio-psychological motives of the tourists should be given importance while developing tourism products and promotion strategies. People travel because they are pushed by their own internal forces and pulled by external forces of destination attributes (Bagari, Crowther, & Marr, 2003).

Jonsson and Devonish (2008) made an integrated approach to understand tourist motivations based on origins and how these contribute to the tourists' perception of a destination. The study suggested that by concentrating on push factors, the tourism planners can easily solve the problems related to motivation. Srikatanyoo and Campiranon (2010) examined the needs and motivations of agritourists and the correlation among them and the researcher found that many of the agritourism businesses are not successful as they lack the knowledge about the needs and motivating factors of agritourists. Kozak (2002) examined if motivational differences existed between tourists from the same country visiting two different geographical destinations and across those from two different countries visiting the same destination. The study found out that some tourists motives differed between nationalities and places visited. Joseph and Vasanthi (2017) pointed out that tourism marketing involves tactical planning and accomplishment of various marketing strategies by adopting SWOC analysis.

A review of the related literatures shows the need and significance of studying the tourist' motivations in tourism planning and destination marketing. As no such study is made in Kerala among farm tourists, this study deserves special importance.

## Statement of the problem

Kerala has a great potential to the development of farm tourism because of its natural conditions and different types of agricultural products as well as variety of rural traditions and festivals. Motivation is the starting point for all the trip related activities. In a highly competitive market like Kerala, a farm tourism destination can flourish only by designing and delivering services which motivates the potential tourist to visit and stay in the destination. An understanding of the travel motivations and its association with destination selection of farm tourists would enable the tourism destination planners to better satisfy consumer needs. This study attempts to analyse the motivational factors in travelling and destination choice among farm tourists in Kerala.

## Significance of the study

The study helps the tourism marketers in designing the farm tourism destinations and promotional activities as per the needs and requirements of tourists. It also helps the tourism planners in developing better tourist's retention strategies.

**Scope of the study**

The study is conducted among tourists visiting farm tourism spots in Wayanad district in Kerala.

**Objectives**

1. To identify and analyse the factors which motivate the tourists to visit farm tourism spots.
2. To analyse the attributes which influence the tourists while choosing a farm tourism spot.

**Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference between the domestic and foreign tourists with respect to the factors which motivate them to visit farm tourism spots.
2. There is no significant difference between domestic and foreign tourists with regard to the attributes which influence them while choosing farm tourism spots.

**Research Methodology**

The study is descriptive in nature based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data are collected through a structured questionnaire distributed among the tourists visiting farm tourism spots in Wayanad. Sampling method used is purposive sampling. The sample size of the study is 50 which includes 25 domestic and 25 foreign farm tourists. Data analysis tools used in the study includes Percentage method, Mean and independent t test.

**Limitations of the study**

1. The study is based on a sample survey. So, there may be sampling bias.
2. The study is limited to a small area.

**Analysis and Discussion**

Data collected from the farm tourists are analysed under three heads. First table gives an idea about the demographic profile of the tourists. Second table discusses the motivational factors in farm tourism with test of significance and the third table analyses the attributes which influence the tourists in farm tourism spot.

**Demographic Profile of the Farm tourists****Table No.1****Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Age in years	Up to 20	3	6
	21- 40	32	64
	41-60	11	22
	61 and above	4	8
Gender	Male	39	78
	Female	11	22
Nationality	Domestic	25	50

	Foreign	25	50
Educational Status	School Level	3	6
	Graduate level	7	14
	Post graduate	17	34
	Professional	23	46
Occupation	Govt. Employee	10	20
	Private Employee	4	8
	Business	14	28
	Professional	17	34
	Others	5	10
Monthly Income	Below 25000	2	4
	25001 – 50000	11	22
	50001 – 75000	15	30
	75001 – 100000	16	32
	Above 100000	6	12
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

An analysis of the demographic profile of the respondents given in Table No.1. reveals that majority of the farm tourists belong to the age group of 21 – 40 years. Sixty-four per cent of the respondents are from this age group. 22 % of the tourists are from the age group of 41 – 60 years. Senior citizens above the age group of 60 years and youngsters below the age of 20 years constitute a small group with 8 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. Sample consists of 78 percent male tourists and 22 percent female tourists. Educational status of the respondents reveals that majority of them are highly educated. 46 percent of them are professionally qualified, 34 per cent are post graduates and 14 percent are graduates. An analysis of the occupation of the respondents reveals that a high proportion of the respondents are professionals (34 %), 28 per cent of them are business people. Govt. employees are 20 per cent of the sample, 8 per cent are private employees and the remaining 10 percent tourists have other jobs. Income distribution of the respondents shows that most of the farm tourists are from high income group, 12 per cent of them are having monthly income above Rs.1,00,000. Income of the 62 per cent of the tourists ranges between Rs.50,000 and Rs.1,00,000. Among them 32 percent earns between Rs.75000 and Rs.1,00,000 and the remaining 30 per cent earns between Rs.50,000 and Rs.75,000 per month.

## Motivational factors in farm tourism – Push Factors

Factors which motivate the tourists to visit a farm tourism spot are analysed in Table No. 2

Mean opinion scores of the domestic and foreign tourists are analysed for statistical inferences

**Table No.2**

**Motivational factors in farm tourism with mean opinion score of the respondents and test of significance**

Sl. No	Factors	Nationality	Mean	t value	p value
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1	I prefer to visit the spot to observe and participate in agricultural activities	Domestic	3.58	2.859	0.005*
		Foreign	4.32		
2	I prefer to visit the spot for meeting the local people and studying the local culture	Domestic	3.02	6.207	0.000*
		Foreign	4.22		
3	I consider it as a social responsibility as it supports the growth of agriculture sector	Domestic	2.68	4.799	0.000*
		Foreign	3.82		
4	I consider the farm tourism spots because of its eco-friendly nature	Domestic	4.08	2.817	0.006*
		Foreign	4.44		
5	I prefer to visit the farm tourism spot for refreshment of mind and recreational purpose.	Domestic	4.36	0.378	0.706
		Foreign	4.42		
6	I prefer to visit the farm tourism spot for rest and relaxation.	Domestic	4.28	0.586	0.559
		Foreign	4.36		
7	Farm tourism spots offer an undisturbed nature to spend time with my family.	Domestic	3.30	0.093	0.926
		Foreign	3.28		
8	Farm tourism spot provides an opportunity to taste local organic agricultural products	Domestic	3.48	4.919	0.000*
		Foreign	4.20		
9	I prefer to visit the spot by seeking adventure.	Domestic	2.32	1.276	0.205
		Foreign	2.12		
10	I consider visiting farm tourism spot enhances my prestige and status and gives me recognition.	Domestic	1.60	0.764	0.447
		Foreign	1.48		

Source: Primary data

From the Table No. 2, it can be seen that motivational factors in farm tourism significantly varies between the domestic and foreign tourist with regard to five aspects. Foreign tourists prefer to visit a farm tourism spot mainly to observe and participate in agricultural activities (Mean score 4.32) they also prefer farm tourism to meet local people and to study the local culture (Mean score 4.22). While domestic tourist considers these aspects with mean scores of 3.58 and 3.02 respectively. Foreign tourist considers the visit as responsibility to the society and for the growth of agriculture sector with mean score 3.82 while it is not a significant motivating factor for domestic tourist and the mean score is 2.68 only. Eco friendly nature of the farm tourist spots (Mean score - 4.44) and opportunity to taste local organic food (Mean score - 4.20) are the other leading motivating factors to the foreign tourist. With regard to the other factors there is no significant difference between the foreign and domestic tourist as the p values are higher than 0.05.

Both domestic (mean score – 4.36) and foreign tourists (mean score – 4.42) have given high mean scores to the statement farm tourism spot for refreshment of mind and recreational purpose. Rest and relaxation are other important motives for both domestic (mean score – 4.28) and foreign tourists (mean score –



4.36). Domestic tourists have given a mean score of 3.30 for the statement ‘Farm tourism spots offer an undisturbed nature to spend time with my family’ while foreign tourists have given a mean score of 3.28 only. Both foreign (Mean score-1.48) and domestic tourist (Mean score-1.60) do not consider the visit to the farm tourism spot as a status symbol and they don’t prefer seeking adventure in farm tourism spot. Foreign tourist has given a mean score of 2.12 and domestic tourist has given a mean score of 2.32 to this aspect of motivation.

p values of independent t test reveal that there is a significant difference between foreign and domestic tourist with regard to five aspects of motivation such as observing and participating in agricultural activities, meeting the local people and studying local culture, social responsibility as it supports the growth of the agriculture sector, eco-friendly nature of the farm tourism spot and opportunity to taste local organic agricultural products. Hence the null hypothesis that ‘*there is no significant difference between the domestic and foreign tourists with respect to the factors which motivate them to visit farm tourism spots*’ stands rejected and the alternative hypothesis ‘*there is significant difference between the domestic and foreign tourists with respect to the factors which motivate them to visit farm tourism spots*’ is accepted.

## Attributes in farm tourism – Pull Factors

Destination attributes mean the features of a particular destination on the basis of which tourists select and evaluate that destination(Chahal & Devi, 2015). Mean scores given by the foreign and domestic tourists to the destination attributes are analysed in Table No.3.

**Table No.3**  
**Attributes in farm tourism with mean opinion score of the respondents and test of significance**

Sl. No.	Factors	Nationality	Mean	t value	P value
1	Accessibility	Domestic	3.98	2.958	0.004*
		Foreign	3.30		
2	Farm stay/ farm resort	Domestic	4.12	3.357	0.001*
		Foreign	4.64		
3	Peaceful and pollution free environment	Domestic	4.60	1.264	0.209
		Foreign	4.72		
4	Attractions like forestry, garden, dairy farm, fish farm, tree house etc.	Domestic	4.36	0.377	0.707
		Foreign	4.40		
5	Farm fresh shop	Domestic	3.76	1.746	0.084
		Foreign	4.04		
6	Recreational activities like farm visit, watching birds, fishing, Jeep Safari etc.	Domestic	4.68	0.885	0.376
		Foreign	4.76		
7	Outdoor sports facilities	Domestic	2.80	1.811	0.073
		Foreign	2.48		
8	Services of the tour guide	Domestic	3.16	2.126	0.036*

		Foreign	3.74		
9	Hospitality of the staff	Domestic	3.60	4.448	0.000*
		Foreign	4.48		
10	Safety and security measures	Domestic	3.56	4.098	0.000*
		Foreign	4.38		
11	Cooking with fresh farm produce	Domestic	3.72	2.654	0.009*
		Foreign	3.18		
12	Affordable price charges	Domestic	4.14	3.60	0.001*
		Foreign	3.24		

Source: Primary data

From the analysis it can be seen that there is significant difference between foreign and domestic tourist with regard to seven attributes which influence the tourist in selecting a farm tourism spot. Accessibility is a significant factor to the domestic tourist (Mean score-3.98) while it is not much considered by the foreign tourist (Mean score-3.30). Foreign tourists are giving higher priority to farm stay and farm resort with mean score of 4.64 than domestic tourists (mean score - 4.12). Service of the tour guide, hospitality of staff and safety and security are the other major attributes considered by the foreign tourists when compared to the domestic tourists. With regard to the attributes cooking with fresh farm produce and affordable price charges, domestic tourists have given more importance than the foreign tourist. With regard to the other features like peaceful and pollution free environment, farm attractions, farm fresh shop, recreational activities and outdoor sports facilities, no significant difference is found between foreign and domestic tourist.

The result of independent t test proves that there is a significant difference between the foreign and domestic tourist with regard to the attributes accessibility, farm stay/ farm resort, services of the tour guide, Hospitality of the staff, safety and security measures, cooking with fresh farm produce and affordable price charges. Hence, the null hypothesis that *‘There is no significant difference between domestic and foreign tourists with regard to the attributes which influence them while choosing farm tourism spots’* stands rejected.

## Findings

1. Majority of the farm tourists are male (78%) and from the age group of 21 – 40 years (64%).
2. Most of the Farm tourists are highly educated. 46 per cent of them have professional qualifications and 34 per cent are post graduates.
3. Professionals (34%) and business people (28%) constitute the major segment of the respondents.
4. Income distribution of the respondents shows that majority of the respondents earn above Rs.50,000 per month.
5. An analysis of the motivational factors reveals that eco-friendly nature of the farm tourism spot is the most motivating factor for the foreign tourists.
6. In the case of domestic tourists, refreshment of mind and recreation is the major motivational factor.



7. In the case of attributes in selecting a farm tourism spot, recreational activities, pollution free environment, farm attractions and farm stay are the important factors influencing both domestic and foreign tourists.

8. Hospitality of the staff, safety and security are other attributes considered by the foreign tourists. While accessibility and affordable price charges are the other major attributes influencing the domestic tourists.

### **Suggestions**

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following suggestions are put forth before the tourism planners for improving the competitiveness of farm tourism services.

1. As the foreign tourists are mainly motivated by the eco-friendly nature of the farm tourism spot, the organic farms are to be promoted for farm tourism activities.
2. Opportunities for more outdoor recreational activities like hunting, fishing, trekking, rafting, horseback riding, petting zoo etc. can be provided at the farm tourism spots to attract both domestic and foreign tourists.
3. As most of the tourists give importance to pollution free environment, the tourism planners should try to set up the farm in a location which is free from pollution and rich in natural beauty.
4. Since most of the respondents are professionals and business people having high educational qualification, opportunity may be provided in farm tourism spots for organizing conferences, meetings, training programs etc.
5. The farm shall be located at an accessible place and services should be provided at an affordable rate to attract more domestic tourists.
6. As the foreign tourists give importance to hospitality, the tourism planner should employ personnel who can create good relationship with the tourists.
7. In order to ensure safety, security personnel, firefighting facilities and other safety measures may be adopted by the tourism marketers.

### **Conclusion**

Farm tourism in Kerala is in its infant stage. But being an agricultural state, it has vast potential to explore the opportunities of farm tourism. Through this study, the researcher analysed the demographic profile and the motivational factors in travelling and destination choice among the farm tourists in Wayanad district. The study clarified the most motivating factor in travelling and the most important attribute of farm tourism spot for both domestic and foreign tourists. Findings show that motivational differences exist between domestic and foreign tourists. The results of the study provide insight to the tourism marketers in designing farm tourism services and promoting the farm tourism venture in Kerala. Future research in this area can focus on analysing the service quality of farm tourism spots in Kerala.

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