

Agritourism as the Epitome of India's Sustainability Culture : A Narrative Review

*Komal Jenifer Dsouza*¹
*Ankitha Shetty*²
*Rajasekharan Pillai K.*³

Abstract

Purpose : Agritourism is thought to be one of the tourism industry's most sustainable byproducts in the age of sustainable practices. India is adjusting to the notion that agritourism, a prospective and expanding sector of the tourism industry, could place the nation on the global agritourism map and transform the nature of the travel and tourist industry.

Methodology : This paper reviewed the trajectory of agritourism in India by adopting a narrative synthesis approach to consolidate the textual descriptions available in the public domain by using SANRA – Scale for the Assessment of Narrative Review Articles (2019). The search yielded $n = 552$ results. $N = 45$ fulfilled the inclusion criteria, i.e., $n = 18$ tourism policies of Indian states and UTs, $n = 15$ gray literature, and $n = 12$ scientific articles.

Findings : Agritourism has a lot of potential, but it also confronts challenges like strained stakeholder relationships and a lack of awareness among businesses about sustainability. There is still no national enabling policy in place, despite intermittent efforts from a few states.

Practical Implications : Futuristically, a definitive roadmap could contribute toward the sustainable development of India's agritourism sector. The sector also called for a contemporary yet effective framework through a National Tourism Policy that could encourage more farmers to indulge in sustainable agritourism while also promising outstanding hospitality to those seeking gratifying experience, peace, and tranquility.

Originality : Our study pioneered in offering a definitive roadmap underscored by practical designs, pragmatic strategies, and consistent monitoring that could accelerate India's agritourism sector and revolutionize the rural prosperity of the country.

Keywords : sustainable tourism, agritourism, India, tourism strategy, narrative review

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The noise of the ever-changing world makes the average person want some quiet and solitude. People seek to experience intermittent and transient relief from the hustle of their routine by visiting places of serenity and indulging in other indoor and/or outdoor recreational activities. The “effect-recovery theory” developed by Meijman and Mulder (1998) and the “conservation of resources theory” developed by Hobfoll (2010) proved that traveling for leisure allows one to relax, control thoughts and emotions, and detach from the

¹ *Research Scholar*, Department of Commerce, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Eshwar Nagar, Manipal - 567 104, Karnataka. (Email : komal.dsouza@learner.manipal.edu) ; ORCID iD : <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9499-8056>

² *Associate Professor (Corresponding Author)*, Senior Scale, Department of Commerce, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Eshwar Nagar, Manipal - 567 104, Karnataka. (Email : ankitha.shetty@manipal.edu)

ORCID iD : <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1314-7322>

³ *Professor*, Manipal Institute of Management, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Eshwar Nagar, Manipal - 567 104, Karnataka. (Email : kr.pillai@manipal.edu) ; ORCID iD : <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5266-2215>

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daily routine of life. As a result, tourism-recreation has been gaining considerable momentum among the masses. As the world is becoming an accessible and safe place in terms of visiting far and closer locations, it further translates to a broader expansion of tourism services and products.

Tourism activities are deemed to be sustainable if they uphold the social crux of the local community and protect the environment while being viable economically (Khalid et al., 2019; Santos-Roldán et al., 2020). Both human and physical environments are promoted through the practice of sustainable tourism. These aspects can be translated in the aspect of agritourism as preservation of family farms for future generations, sustenance of soil, landscape, and natural habitats that include plants and animals, strengthening ties with knowledge linked to traditions and history, and practicing eco-friendly/sustainable agritourism activities (Cheteni & Umejesei, 2022).

India is one of the oldest civilizations that boasts an exciting kaleidoscope of culture, traditions, and geography. With this, the country is proud of its potential to capture the whims of every tourist who throngs to varied destinations ranging from places of worship to snow-capped mountains and lively villages to the breathtaking coast – we have it all. With well-known travel sites at the forefront and a value chain that fosters collaboration amongst multiple stakeholders, tourism has emerged as a key enabler of overall growth and development in our nation (Venkatesh & Raj, 2016). In tandem with this, the country is slowly recognizing the potential that India has with diversely rich resources through which agritourism – a promising and growing area in the tourism sector – can uplift the farming community in India and change the face of the country's tourism sector (Dsouza et al., 2023). Despite the intentions of tourists, the presence of ample natural resources and the interest among farm owners toward agritourism, the country lacks a foundational framework to enable the growth of agritourism in India. We decided to start a thorough narrative assessment in order to synthesize and comprehend the policy interventions meant to strategically promote agritourism in India because of the evidential gap in the present landscape of tourism regulations. As a result, this paper presents a thorough overview of agritourism in the Indian context as well as a wealth of material that encourages entrepreneurs and policymakers to view agritourism as a major driver of development and progress that fosters a culture of sustainability. The research questions answered through this review are:

- **RQ1:** What is the background and history of agritourism in India?
- **RQ2:** How is the growth trajectory of agritourism in India?
- **RQ3:** What are the opportunities and scope attached to agritourism in the Indian context?
- **RQ4:** What is the roadmap to unwrap the potential of agritourism in India?

Materials and Methods

While various studies have employed different types of approaches to study the different areas of tourism, narrative review as a method is visibly bleaker (Mura & Sharif, 2016), and this highlights the need to explore tourism through the lens of a narrative review. The expanding scope of narrative review, which helps researchers bring social reality to light, is demonstrated by the increased interest from academics and policymakers in the attribution of conceptual and implicit knowledge related to tourism (Sharma, 2022). Therefore, a narrative synthesis approach is adopted to consolidate the textual descriptions available in the public domain. Research articles, reviews, interview excerpts, government data available in the public domain, and news articles are synthesized and systematically structured to understand and discuss the growth and scope of agritourism in India. In addition to this, tourism policies – past and present, i.e., drafts – are carefully examined to observe the consistency of attention provided to agritourism and supporting initiatives for its improvement. Table 1 presents the search approach used for the gray literature search, Web of Science (WOS), and SCOPUS.

Table 1. Search Strategy

Database	Date	Search Strategy	Number of Articles
Web of Science	January 20, 2023	(Andhra Pradesh) OR (Arunachal Pradesh) OR (Bihar) OR (Chhattisgarh) OR (Goa) OR (Gujarat) OR (Haryana) OR (Himachal Pradesh) OR (Jharkhand) OR (Karnataka) OR (Kerala) OR (Assam) OR (Madhya Pradesh) OR (Maharashtra) OR (Manipur) OR (Meghalaya) OR (Mizoram) OR (Nagaland) OR (Odisha) OR (Punjab) OR (Rajasthan) OR (Sikkim) OR (Tamil Nadu) OR (Telangana) OR (Tripura) OR (Uttarakhand) OR (Uttar Pradesh) OR (West Bengal) OR (Andaman and Nicobar Island) OR (Chandigarh) OR (Dadra and Nagar Haveli) OR (Daman and Diu) OR (Delhi) OR (Jammu and Kashmir) OR (Ladakh) OR (Lakshadweep) OR (Puducherry) (All Fields) and (India) OR (Indi*) OR (North India) OR (East India) OR (West India) OR (South India) OR (Central India) (All Fields) and (Agritourism) OR (Agritourism) OR (Farm tourism) OR (Farm-based tourism) (All Fields)	43
Scopus	January 20, 2023	(TITLE-ABS-KEY ((Agritourism) OR (Agrotourism) OR (Farm AND tourism) OR (Farm-based AND tourism)) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ((Andhra AND Pradesh) OR (Arunachal AND Pradesh) OR (Bihar) OR (Chhattisgarh) OR (Goa) OR (Gujarat) OR (Haryana) OR (Himachal AND Pradesh) OR (Jharkhand) OR (Karnataka) OR (Kerala) OR (Assam) OR (Madhya AND Pradesh) OR (Maharashtra) OR (Manipur) OR (Meghalaya) OR (Mizoram) OR (Nagaland) OR (Odisha) OR (Punjab) OR (Rajasthan) OR (Sikkim) OR (Tamil AND Nadu) OR (Telangana) OR (Tripura) OR (Uttarakhand) OR (Uttar AND Pradesh) OR (West AND Bengal) OR (Andaman AND Nicobar AND Island) OR (Chandigarh) OR (Dadra AND Nagar AND Haveli) OR (Daman AND Diu) OR (Delhi) OR (Jammu AND Kashmir) OR (Ladakh) OR (Lakshadweep) OR (Puducherry) OR (India) OR (Indi*) OR (North AND India) OR (East AND India) OR (West AND India) OR (South AND India) OR (Central AND India))) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "cp") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ch") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "re") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "bk") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "cr")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))	464
Gray Literature	January 21, 2023 to January 26, 2023	"Agritourism in India" OR "Farm tourism in India" OR "Agriculture Tourism in India" OR "Indian Agritourism Sector" OR "Growth of Agritourism in India" Time Range : January 2000 to February 2023 Language: English	15

All relevant documents from various databases were screened by authors Komal Jenifer Dsouza, Ankitha Shetty, and Rajasekharan Pillai K. The scientific articles were derived from Scopus and WOS where we included articles, conference abstracts, book chapters, and reviews to ensure the coverage of a broader scope of literature. The

search was conducted extensively by the author Komal Jenifer Dsouza. After screening the titles and abstracts, we proceeded to the full-text review stage to assess their relevance to the inclusion criteria. Documents particularly focusing on the domain of agritourism in India were considered for review. The search for gray literature was conducted on the search engine “Google” by Ankitha Shetty. The author, Rajasekharan Pillai K, searched for the tourism policies of individual states and UTs. Only those articles published by governments, bloggers, and news editorials focused on agritourism in India were considered for review. To guarantee that a decision was made regarding the ultimate inclusion of pertinent materials, the authors conducted separate searches and met frequently. SANRA – Scale for the Assessment of Narrative Review Articles developed by Baethge et al. (2019) is used to evaluate the quality of the body of articles we reviewed, as presented in Tables 2 and 3. This tool is proven to be comprehensive, guides future research, avoids duplication, and presents appropriate data. This scale includes six items that act as a tool to cover all the documents and data that support the study. The six items are “explanation of the review's importance,” “statement of the aims of the review,” “description of the literature search,” “referencing,” “scientific reasoning,” and “presentation of relevant and appropriate endpoint data.” The scale makes provisions to score each referred document from 0 to 2, where 0 is the lowest score of assessment, and 2 is the highest. Baethge et al. (2019) confirmed that the utilization of SANRA is feasible, inter-reliable, homogenous in its items, and offers internal consistency. They have also highlighted the contribution of SANRA in improving the standard of non-systematic reviews.

Analysis and Results

Results of Scientific Articles

There were 464 and 43 results found in the Scopus and WOS searches, respectively. We screened 12 papers for inclusion in the review after finishing the title and abstract screening. We decided to include all 12 articles because they satisfied SANRA's quality assessment requirements and inclusion criteria.

Results of Policy Documents

Since the goal of our research was to examine the trajectory of agritourism's growth in India, we combined the state and union territory tourism laws that contained provisions for the expansion of agritourism in the relevant area. The search for tourism policies was conducted to look for documents published by governments on regulated websites. It is still not clear to us that India has moved from a 2002 Draft National Tourism Policy to a strong, comprehensive National Tourist Policy. A total of 28 states and 8 UTs were included in the $n = 30$ tourist policies that we found through a search for such regulations. While three UTs had tourism perspective plans rather than policies, one state and two UTs had no tourism policy. From the $n = 30$ documents, we included $n = 18$ articles as $n = 2$ policies mentioned rural homestays but did not link them to agritourism, while $n = 10$ policies did not have provisions for agritourism or related terms.

Results of Gray Literature

We searched for pertinent resources, such as blogs, news stories, and government data about agritourism in India, as shown in Tables 2 and 3. The timeline was between January 2000 and February 2023, but the results reflected only those articles that were published after 2018. We included $n = 15$ documents that revolved around the theory, strategy, growth, practice, and future of agritourism in India.

Table 2. Article Rating Using SANRA

Citation	Title	Explanation of the Review's Importance	Statement of the Aims of the Review	Description of the Literature Search	Referencing	Scientific Reasoning	Presentation of Relevant and Appropriate Endpoint Data
Singh (2002)	"Tourism in India: Policy Pitfalls"	2	1	2	2	1	2
Sharma (2005)	"Tourism Policy Innovations of an Indian State (Haryana) and Their Implications"	2	2	1	1	2	2
Shehrawat et al. (2011)	"Agricultural Tourism for Sustainable Rural Development"	1	1	2	1	2	1
Chettiparamb & Kokkranikal (2012)	"Responsible Tourism and Sustainability: The Case of Kumarakom in Kerala, India"	1	2	2	2	2	1
Chavan & Bhola (2014)	"Indian Tourism Market: An Overview of Emerging Trends and Development"	2	1	1	2	1	1
Venkatesh & Raj (2016)	"Impact of Tourism in India"	1	2	1	1	1	2
Pandey & Joshi (2016)	"Institutional Frameworks in Community Based Tourism Policy Frameworks for an 'Inclusive India' with Emphasis on Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)"	2	2	1	2	2	
Rajendran & Smitha (2017)	"Strategic Planning for Orchid Farming as a Profitable Enterprise and Agri-Tourism Component"	2	2	2	2	2	2
Ahamed (2018)	"Indian Tourism - The Government Endeavours Resulting into Tourism Growth and Development"	1	2	2	1	2	2
Dsouza et al. (2022)	"The Assessment of Locavorism through the Lens of Agritourism: The Pursuit of Tourist's Ethereal Experience"	2	1	1	2	2	2
Sharma (2022)	"Evolution of Tourism Policy in India: An Overview"	2	2	2	1	2	2
Koliopoulos et al. (2022)	"Green Designs in Hydraulics-Construction Infrastructures for Safe Agricultural Tourism and Sustainable Sports Tourism Facilities Mitigating Risks of Tourism in Crisis at Post COVID-19 Era"	2	2	1	2	2	1

Table 3. Gray Literature Rating Using SANRA

Article Title and Citations	Reference	Explanation of the Review's Importance	Statement of the Aims of the Review	Description of the Literature Search	Referencing	Scientific Reasoning	Presentation of Relevant and Appropriate Endpoint Data
"How States Can Give a Boost to Agri-Tourism" (Sarath & Sivakumar, 2022)	https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/how-states-can-give-a-boost-to-agri-tourism/article65900436.ece	2	2	2	2	2	2
"Village Youths to Promote Rural Economy, Tourism" (Hindustan Times, 2022)	https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/lucknow-news/village-youths-to-promote-rural-economy-tourism-101651510890399.html	2	2	1	0	2	1
"Agro-Tourism Planned for College Students" (The Hindu, 2022)	https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/agro-tourism-planned-for-college-students/article38267472.ece	1	1	2	0	1	2
"Agri-Tourism in India: Beautiful Farmstays to Get Back to your Roots" (The Times of India, 2022)	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/hotels/agri-tourism-in-india-beautiful-farmstays-to-get-back-to-your-roots/photostory/91621690.cms	1	1	2	0	2	2
"Tapping the Potential of Indian Villages in a Push for Rural Tourist Destinations" (Chakrabarty, 2023)	https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tapping-the-potential-of-villages-in-a-push-for-rural-tourist-destinations/article66525666.ece	2	2	2	1	2	2
"Maharashtra's Agri-Tourism Push: Over 500 Farms Recognised as Agri-Centres"	https://www.cnbctv18.com/videos/agriculture/agri-tourism-gives-fresh-breath-of-life-to-maharashtras-ailing-farmers-15077171.htm	1	1	2	1	2	2
"Agritourism Market in India Size, Growth Rate (19.9%),	https://www.einnews.com/pr_news/625773114/agritourism-market-in-india-size-share-growth-rate-19-9-analysis-business-	2	2	2	2	2	2

Analysis, Business opportunity-2023-2028
Opportunity
2023–2028”
(EIN News, 2023)

“Agritourism Wave Kicks off in India's North East in the State of Sikkim. Gulf News” (Bhutia, 2022)	https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/india/agritourism-wave-kicks-off-in-indias-north-east-in-the-state-of-sikkim-1.1660459441187	2	1	1	1	2	2
“Rajasthan Govt. Implements Rural Tourism Scheme” (ANI, 2022)	https://theprint.in/india/rajasthan-govt-implements-rural-tourism-scheme/1250260/	1	2	1	2	2	1
“Agro-Tourism in North East India” (Nath & Ram, 2022)	http://e-pao.net/epPageExtractor.asp?src=travel.Agro_Tourism_in_North_East_India_By_Dipak_Daya.html	2	2	2	2	1	2
“Andhra Pradesh: Research Station at Chintapalle Banks on Agri-Tourism to Popularise Tribal Areas” (Babu, 2022)	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/visakhapatnam/research-station-at-chintapalle-banks-on-agri-tourism-to-popularise-tribal-areas/articleshow/95329427.cms	2	1	2	1	2	1
“Maharashtra Introduces Agro-Tourism Policy” (Deshpande, 2020)	https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/maharashtra-introduces-agro-tourism-policy/article32538399.ece	1	1	2	2	2	2
“Karnataka Unveils Agricultural, Tourism Policy; Eyes ₹ 5,000 Crore Investment” (Poovanna, 2020)	https://www.livemint.com/news/india/karnataka-unveils-agricultural-tourism-policy-eyes-rs-5-000-crore-investment-11601202315484.html	2	1	2	2	2	2
“Rural Tourism Projects Underway in	https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/travel-tourism/rural-tourism-	2	2	2	2	1	2

Bihar, Kerala: projects-underway-in-
Tourism Minister” bihar-kerala-tourism-
(The Indian minister/2083806/
Express, 2020)

“How can <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2019/02/how-can-agritourism-transform-rural-india/>”
Agritourism Transform Rural India?”
(Yadav, 2019)

1

1

2

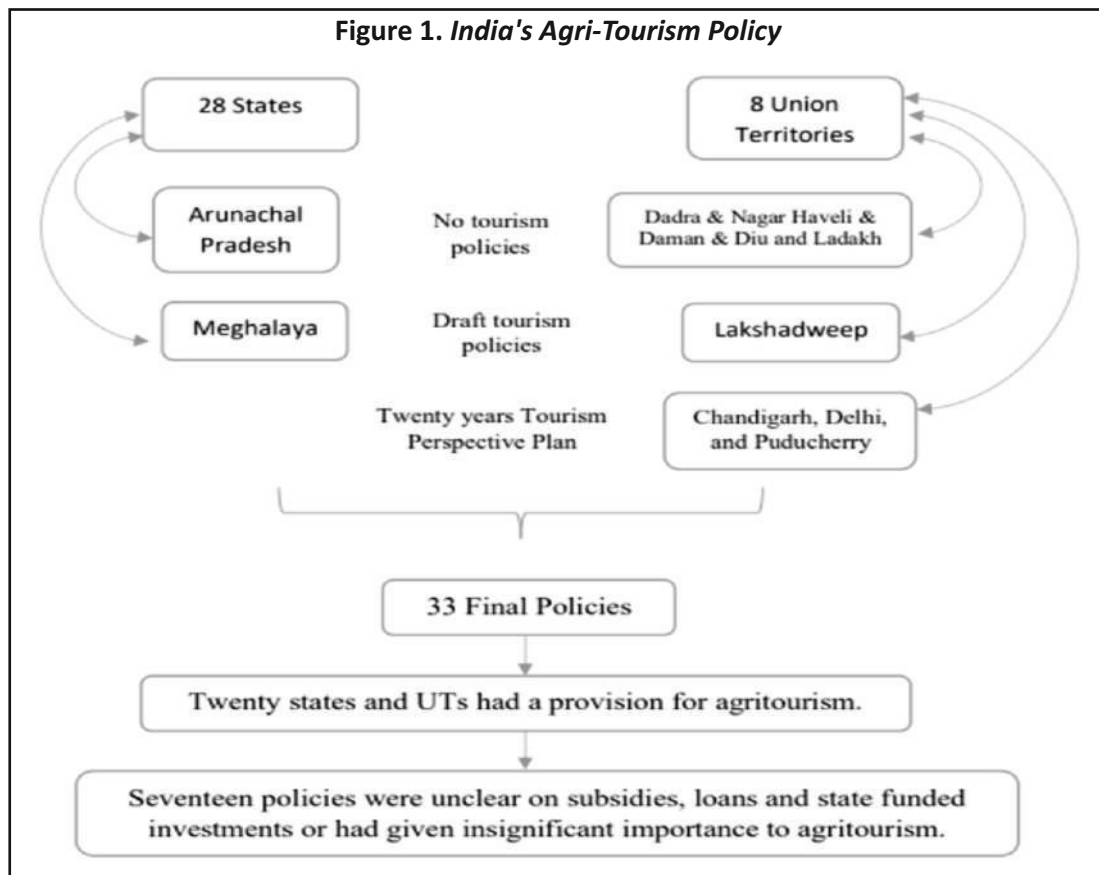
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2

2

Findings

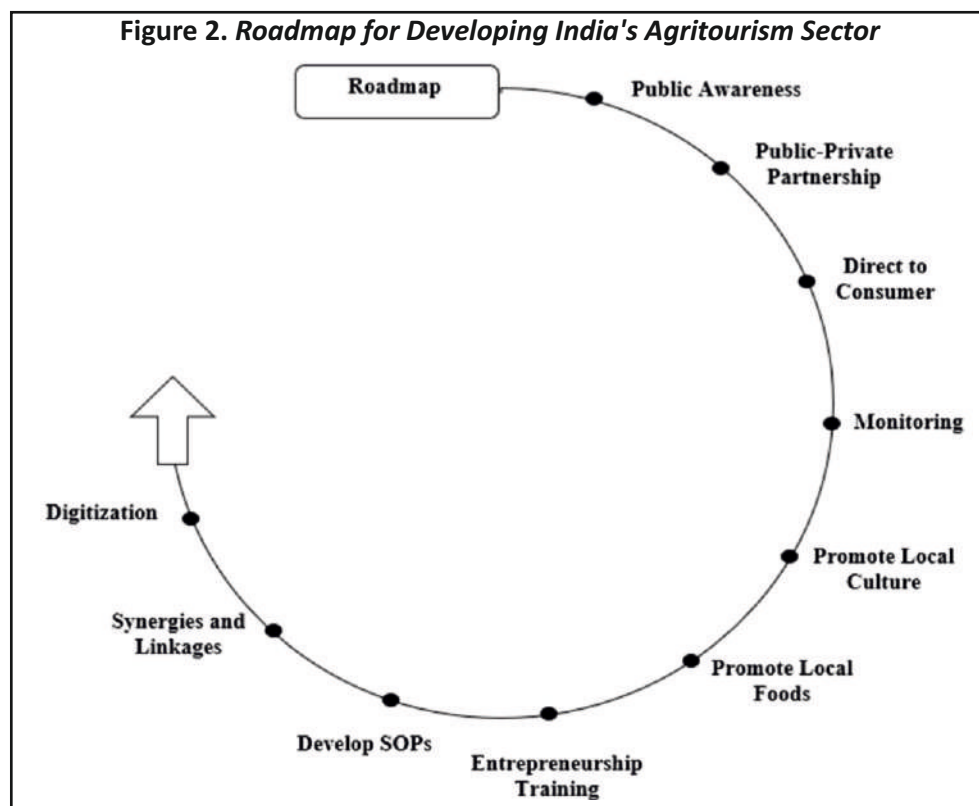
Farmers must be aware of the potential that their agricultural farms carry to diversify beyond farming activities. The abundant availability of land and related agricultural resources can be capitalized and used for agritourism purposes. Various organizations are willing to partner with farms, be they big or small, if the farm owners agree to make use of the potential resources to expand the farm to offer services to the community and other stakeholders through agritourism (Mishra & Ojha, 2014). But to materialize this, the planning and practice of agritourism needs to be based on the ethical principles of sustainable rural development (Ravichandran, 2023; Shekhar et al., 2023). If these values are not followed, the negative effects could devastate the ecosystem, ruin local culture, degrade the natural landscape, and distance the locals from other agritourism stakeholders.



This review meticulously synthesized the extant literature published in the area of agritourism and offers a clear picture of the past and present and a roadmap for the future of agritourism in India while looking at the challenges in the area parallel to the positive effects. Research papers, policies, book chapters, news articles, interview excerpts, and blogs were carefully screened by using the “Scale for the Assessment of Narrative Review Articles” (Baethge et al., 2019). Drawing from this, we found that despite the presence of agritourism in India for decades, it was formally promoted in 2005 as a flagship project under the Agri Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC). Over the years, the model that was developed back then was constantly improved and is now being adapted across the country by agritourism entrepreneurs. In addition to this, tourism policies at the state and UTs were analyzed carefully to understand where agritourism stands in every individual policy. Figure 1 demonstrates that, out of the 28 states and 8 UTs, Meghalaya state and the UT of Lakshadweep have draft versions of their tourism policies, but Arunachal Pradesh state and the Union Territories of Dadra & Nagar Haveli & Daman & Diu and Ladakh have not yet developed one. After more observation, we determined that just three states—Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh—among the 20 states and union territories that have policies supporting agritourism have explicit provisions for the strategic development of agritourism. Our research has a number of applications and policy ramifications that will help the nation's agritourism industry. By combining several literature sources, a roadmap has been created that serves as a foundation for creating a strong National Tourist Policy that promotes inclusiveness, teamwork, and sustainable, all-encompassing development.

Roadmap for the Development of Agritourism in India

India's countryside is gradually battling the spotlight, even as the country's cities and towns are growing quickly. Those involved now understand that rural India must flourish and become self-sufficient, with tourism playing a



major role in this. The National Tourism Policy of India was established in 2002, and this has to be highlighted. This proves that an updated policy is required, one that takes into account the nation's socioeconomic changes and temporal dynamics. Following an earlier draft from 2015, a new draft policy was started in November 2021. The government has not yet created a final National Tourism Policy for India, nevertheless. Considering this, a roadmap is curated to vitalize agritourism in India by synthesizing and analyzing past/current and draft tourism policies of India, as depicted in Figure 2.

✎ Educate the public about agritourism and its associated benefits. For instance, encourage school and university students, especially in the urban setup, to visit farm stays and experience agritourism in its most raw form (“Agro-tourism planned for college students,” 2022). These trips can inform the next generation about agriculture while providing them with a fun tourist experience, as the majority of young people nowadays are unaware of the labor-intensive nature of farming.

✎ For agritourism's anticipated growth, provide the idea and practice of “Public-Private Partnership” based on the “Social-Equity model.” This has the potential to enhance the financial, economic, and social growth of farmers through a systematic approach (Ministry of Tourism Government of India, 2021). This can be enabled through organized farm groups and cooperatives in which farmers of a given area are registered as members.

✎ Introducing the practice of “direct to consumer” through which the tourists are offered organic and quality products to boost the local economy. States and other areas are slowly adopting similar approaches. In order to enable the state and federal governments to create strong models, this needs to be strengthened. It may inspire the nation to make aggressive efforts to make agritourism genuine, natural, and profitable for both parties.

✎ State government involvement is essential to ensuring that the benefits outlined in the schemes naturally reach the farmer's community. Furthermore, micromanagement can be practiced by authorities to monitor the implementation of “sustainability” in the agritourism enterprise by not just the entrepreneurs but all the other associated stakeholders ranging from tourists to the local community.

✎ The residents of the village should be provided with the necessary resources, information, and infrastructure to bring the intricacies of rural India to the forefront (Kamat, 2011). The villagers can perform various folklore, display arts, and organize cultural camps for the tourists to get a feel of the traditions, cultures, and customs of the rural community. This can further ensure that the artistic heritage, otherwise feared to go extinct, can remain strongly engraved in society for a long time.

✎ As part of their agritourism experience, tourists can expand their appetite for delicious, fresh, and organic cuisine by supporting local foods both during their visit and in the surrounding rural community. Government and local bodies should encourage farmers and locals to offer a “farm-to-kitchen” experience for the tourists by educating the farmers on how to strategically practice it as an additional income mode as they use the produce from their farm to prepare local delicacies. This promotes the concept of locavorism – where a person visiting a particular place seeks to have only local food (Khalid et al., 2019) – thus creating demand for local foods.

✎ Develop and provide training to potential agritourism entrepreneurs in the aspects related to employee management, customer service, innovative business idea development, and marketing techniques (Ministry of Tourism Government of India, 2021; Shah et al., 2019) to help the farmers think rationally and profitably build their businesses.

✎ Develop and introduce suitable training modules, schemes, and programs to close the awareness gap persistent in the minds of the farmers concerning the quality of products and services and the establishment of credibility

through maintaining a standard in their operations. Efforts must be put in by organizations – private and public – to develop SOPs that can be strictly adhered to by entrepreneurs in their businesses.

✧ Create synergies among participants with a set of forward and backward linkages (Singh et al., 2023) between self-help groups, farmer markets, and rural artisans by skilling this sector and creating a platform where tourists can get easy access to sustainable farm goods.

✧ The introduction of digitalization is one of the main goals of India's proposed tourist policy. Entrepreneurs can advertise their farm businesses and draw attention from potential tourists by using specialized platforms. Apart from this, tourists can access these websites to look for an agritourism stay based on their requirements. As online traffic needs to be regulated and monitored, the government can keep a close tab on the activities while also making schemes, subsidy announcements, and new initiatives known to the service providers.

For instance, Kerala – God's Own Country – has had tourists bustling in and out of the state for decades. The state's tourism activities are rekindled owing to its resourceful potential, support from the government, and unceasing interest from the locals. Kerala ensures visitors have an incredibly unforgettable experience that they will remember for the rest of their lives, from the mist-covered hills of Munnar to the picturesque backwaters of Alleppey. Alongside several mainstream spots, Kerala is known for its picturesque landscapes, which include farms and orchards dotted with tall, arching coconut trees, lush green paddy fields, and coffee and tea plantations. Over the years, the State Tourism Department has been working on diverting the traffic to niche spots that help tourists connect with nature through farm stays while also helping the farmers generate profitable income through diversification (Ganesan & Rao, 2005). The Kerala tourism department launched the “Kerala Agri Tourism Network” in 2021 with the aim of utilizing the agricultural sector's tourism potential. The network is based on the UNWTO's Responsible Tourism agenda, and by 2023, over 5,000 farm stay owners are expected to receive incentives and training. The state's tourism department offered Responsible Tourism packages to foreign travelers, but post-COVID, domestic travelers are also seeking these packages that are majorly focused on agri and rural tourism (Vidyadharan, 2022).

A new program called STREET was launched in May 2022 by Kerala Tourism. Through this, the state offers tourists a taste of experiential tourism in its unexplored rural pockets. STREET is short for “Sustainable, Tangible, Responsible, Ethnic Tourism” that abides by “Tourism for Inclusive Growth” – the slogan promoted by the United Nations. Under phase 1 of the initiative, a total of ten rural spots are being aided to develop activities and facilities that can offer a memorable experience to tourists during their stay. For instance, the little village of Maravanthuruthu in the district of Kottayam was one of the first target locations under this project. As a result, the settlement was raised, and the canals were cleaned. The residents now own boats that they use to take visitors on picturesque tours through the backwaters. Therefore, the overall goal of Kerala's Responsible Tourism mission is to help the community grow, tap the unexplored resources in the rural heartlands, and offer tourists an authentic agritourism experience. Kerala has a lot of potential for agritourism, but there is still more work to be done before the farming community fully utilizes all of the resources. Initiatives spearheaded by the state such as these require greater focus in order to encourage sustainable agritourism that simultaneously encourages responsible tourism among a larger segment of Kerala's farming community.

Discussion

Among the wide range of services that the tourism industry offers to its customers, agritourism is appearing more clearly on the horizon as tourists wish to intensively experience the various forms of agriculture and its related rural activities (Liang et al., 2021; Tenie & Fintineru, 2020). Farming communities view agritourism as a means of

enhancing their socioeconomic status since it combines the two industries in a way that promotes social security and economic independence (Musa & Chin, 2022; Ramakrishna, 2011). Agritourism development presents a huge growth opportunity for rural communities. Agritourism can teach visitors about the idea and practice of sustainable and responsible tourism. It can also improve the local economy, increase agricultural productivity, discourage immigration, promote social participation, open up avenues for the sale of agricultural products, and pave the way for the inflow of abundant resources from private and public stakeholders into rural areas (Mahmoodi et al., 2022). The farming community is not the only beneficiary of agritourism since tourists enjoy the perks of having an ethereal experience while quenching their thirst to unwind from everyday worries through this escapade (Dsouza et al., 2022). Farm tours, regional food, customs and traditions, farming, “pick-your-own-farm-produce” events, and farmhouse relaxation are all ways that visitors can immerse themselves in this culture.

Over 49% of Indians are engaged in agriculture and related activities, which shows that our villages are predominantly agrarian, while this sector contributes over 16% to the country's GDP (Modi et al., 2019). Legislators, businesses, governments, and individuals have all pushed various agritourism-related initiatives in an attempt to transform the sector, as agriculture is the foundation of India's economy (Ahamed, 2018). These initiatives carry the potential to fuel rural economies as farmers and dependents can have a better shot at becoming financially stable by participating in activities beyond farming. Policies in this regard are yet to become robust in many areas (Singh, 2002). Agritourism, one of the verticals under rural tourism, is gaining impetus as a revolutionary concept in the Indian agro and tourism industry – a catalyst of growth and development (Koliopoulos et al., 2022). In addition to the government's contribution, organizations and individuals are also taking initiatives to promote agritourism among local communities.

The vision of revolutionizing the agritourism industry was dreamt by many but brought to life by one. States like Haryana (Sharma, 2005), Kerala (Chettiparamb & Kokkranikal, 2012), and Maharashtra are making strategy-driven moves to improve their stages' agritourism sector. Among these, Pandurang Taware is a household name among the farming community as the one who revolutionized the modern agritourism sector in the state of Maharashtra. His initiatives in the area of agritourism, especially in assisting over 600 farmers to earn over 58 crores during the fiscal year 2018–19 (Raina, 2022), have earned him the title – “Father of Agritourism” in India. Under the aegis of the Agri Development Trust, Pandurang Taware founded the ATDC in 2004 at Baramati, Pune. He ensured that the farmers involved were educated about the strategic blend of tourism with agriculture and developed an exemplary business model based on the premise that the urban population is leaning toward nature while looking forward to spending quality family time in picturesque rural setups (Chavan & Bhola, 2014). The initiative was introduced with the policy to employ local artisans, laborers, and youth for infrastructure, farming activities, and agritourism guides, respectively, while women from organized self-help groups were on contract for services related to food preparation, thus resulting in sustainable rural development (Shehrawat et al., 2011). This institution is based on the Private–Public Partnership (PPP) model that promotes synergy between the private sector and farmers. The tourists are introduced to life on a farm through an authentic village experience, from understanding their culture to respecting and following the norms of the community through participation (Pandey & Joshi, 2016). This model is now taken as an example across the country through which farmers can generate more revenue using diversification.

Policy, Practical, and Research Implications

India, being a predominantly agricultural country, has started to focus on improving the niche area, i.e., agriculture, to bring it to the fore as more than just a farming activity. As a result, agriculture has evolved into agritourism, a refuge where people from all over the world come to find comfort in the embrace of Mother Nature, although it must be observed that agritourism is not limited to tourists alone. Thus, we draw upon the scope

attached to agritourism in the Indian context based on interview excerpts, news articles, and research implications found during our work.

✦ The overwhelming surge in urban population, rising pollution, effect of urban lifestyle on residents' health, and fast city life is creating a natural demand in the minds of urban dwellers to experience rurality through agritourism (Vidyadharan, 2022) with an added edge to include sustainability as part of the experience.

✦ India has a diverse agricultural physiography that enables farmers to grow a wide range of products, including fruits, grains, spices, and pulses. Examples of these products include coffee, tea, and apple plantations in Kerala and Coorg, as well as saffron and apple cultivation in the valleys of Kashmir.

✦ Engaging in agritourism activities exposes the rural residents to the masses, i.e., tourists, who can hone their personality, enhance their communication skills, improve their confidence, and gain knowledge through interactions.

✦ Agritourism is considered a low-investment, low-risk business as the farmlands where associated activities are conducted are with those resources that are either naturally available or part of the primary practice of agriculture.

✦ Agritourism is observed to be an inexpensive travel getaway for tourists who look for a relaxing holiday in natural setups, while the cost of vacationing in remote and natural agritourism establishments is marginally cheaper than urban getaways.

✦ Agritourism has brighter prospects thanks to campaigns like “Swadesh Darshan,” which bolsters the support for agritourism by offering tourists a theme-based circuit that includes the components of rural tourism like agritourism, national parks, forests, etc.

✦ Development of the local economy, especially the farming community, through diversified income modes, while also creating ample windows for the youth, thus retaining them in the rural circuits with positive enforcements (Nath & Ram, 2022; Ravichandran, 2023).

✦ In addition to this, safeguarding nature, ecology, and the environment through sustainable agritourism practices (“Village youths to promote rural economy, tourism,” 2022).

✦ Creation of synergy through technological improvements in agritourism and finance, such as insurance, sales, finance, marketing, and other sectoral mechanisms.

✦ Research in the area of sustainable tourism is on the rise. However, existing research in this area has predominantly focused on tourists, leaving an evidential gap in studies examining the role and impact of policies and regulations on service providers, the community, and the economy. This gap can be filled by attempting to study the dimension of agritourism policy and how it shapes the country's agritourism landscape.

Conclusion

As a hybrid mode of tourism, agritourism is of recent origin in India. Amid its great potential, agritourism is faced with an array of challenges, ranging from a lack of clarity about the concept of agritourism among stakeholders to an unstable national tourism policy. Moreover, developmental transitions in an economy must be done by considering all the areas of societal and economic activities. Agriculture in India is dominant in the rural areas that are relatively backward. Therefore, encouraging tourism in these areas must be done slowly, meticulously, and carefully without disturbing the balance of the region. Agritourism should be viewed as a catalyst to project rural India to the rest of the world as a tourism destination that offers outstanding hospitality to those who are seeking

gratifying experiences, peace, and tranquility. In an era that shoots liberalization and globalization from every sector, travel and tourism provide great potential for holistic economic growth and development. While a few states have adopted strategic models to practice and promote agritourism among farmers, there is a dire need to develop effective, contemporary, and adaptive frameworks that can encourage more farmers to indulge in sustainable means of practicing agritourism.

This paper offers a holistic perception of agritourism and its scope in India while also providing a roadmap that can help in promoting sustainable agritourism in the country. Moreover, we stress upon the fact that our country needs proper guidance through a robust National Tourism Policy, especially as the visitor-magnitude in the country has been increasing phenomenally. Agritourism needs to be promoted through deliberate design, strategic marketing techniques, and relentless revamping. A definitive roadmap with an enduring vision can contribute toward the holistic and sustainable development of India's agritourism sector and accelerate the rural prosperity of the nation.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

The narrative review takes into consideration only the Scopus and WOS databases for scientific articles and does not include ProQuest and Taylor and Francis. Obtaining sample data from many different databases would significantly improve the learning curve. Additionally, the keywords used in the search strategy could include more relevant keywords and this limitation should motivate researchers to explore ways of collecting data from various databases with improved keywords for an in-depth analysis for future work in this area. If one does not search other than Google online for articles and other extracts available in print media, one may lose out on valuable resources related to gray literature. Investigating gray literature can help future researchers grow their database.

Authors' Contribution

Komal Jenifer Dsouza conceived the primary idea and developed the research design to undertake the narrative review by applying the SANRA – Scale for the Assessment of Narrative Review Articles. Dr. Ankitha Shetty conducted an extensive search for gray literature along with scientific literature and extracted relevant articles and research papers, respectively, screened these meticulously, and assessed the quality of the articles for final inclusion. Dr. Rajasekharan Pillai K. screened and synthesized the tourism policies of various states and UTs that included provisions for agritourism development in the region. Komal Jenifer Dsouza wrote the manuscript in consultation with both authors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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About the Authors

Komal Jenifer Dsouza is currently a Research Scholar at the Department of Commerce, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal. She is in the final year of her doctoral studies, working in the area of sustainable agritourism.

Dr. Ankitha Shetty is currently working as an Assistant Professor (Senior Scale) and is the Research Co-ordinator at the Department of Commerce, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal. She serves as a Ph.D. Research Guide in the areas of marketing, insurance, tourism, rural education, psychology, and lo-fi music. She is an Editorial Review Board Member of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, Emerald Publishers.

Dr. Rajasekharan Pillai K. is currently the Director and Professor at the Manipal Institute of Management, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal. He guides postgraduate and Ph.D. students in their areas of academics and research, respectively. He also serves as a member of the University Research Protocol Committee in Management and Social Sciences. His areas of research include health economics, inclusive growth, tourism, banking, higher education, and behavioral economics.