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### Demographic dynamics of Agrotourism stakeholders in Coimbatore district

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#### Abstract

This study investigates the demographic dynamics of agrotourism stakeholders in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu. Data were collected from 10 agrotourism venture owners and 100 visitors through structured interviews. The study highlights key demographic attributes such as age, gender, education, farm size, income, and visitor preferences. The findings revealed that venture owners are predominantly middle-aged, educated entrepreneurs managing medium to large farms, while visitors are primarily young urbanites seeking short recreational experiences. These insights underscore the potential for targeted marketing strategies and sustainable development in the agrotourism sector.

**Keywords:** Agrotourism, demographic analysis, visitor preferences, venture ownership.

#### Introduction

Agrotourism, a fusion of agriculture and tourism, has gained prominence as a catalyst for sustainable rural development. By offering unique rural experiences, agrotourism supports economic diversification, preserves cultural heritage, and fosters environmental conservation. Barbieri and Mshenga (2008)<sup>[2]</sup> defined agrotourism as "any practice developed on a working farm with the goal of attracting visitors", highlighting its potential to blend agricultural productivity with tourism-driven engagement. Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu, with its rich agricultural landscape and vibrant tourism sector, serves as an ideal setting to explore the demographic dynamics of this burgeoning industry.

The findings are particularly relevant for policymakers, marketers, and entrepreneurs aiming to optimize agrotourism offerings and promote inclusive growth. By highlighting the profiles of both venture owners and visitors, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the industry's potential and challenges, paving the way for innovative and sustainable strategies.

#### Review of literature

##### Demographics of venture owners

Studies in agrotourism highlighted notable trends across key variables. Bhatta *et al.* (2019)<sup>[3]</sup> and Baipai *et al.* (2023)<sup>[1]</sup> observed a growing interest among younger farmers, with 64% of operators in Nepal aged 21-40. However, male dominance persists, though female participation has been rising, reaching 28.1% in Nepal. Education levels vary regionally; while 85.9% of operators in Nepal had limited schooling, Tan & Abdullah (2022)<sup>[5]</sup> reported higher educational attainment among Malaysian operators. Smaller

farm sizes were increasingly viable for agrotourism, as shown by Tan & Abdullah (2022)<sup>[5]</sup>, where ventures on farms as small as 6.9 acres succeeded. Income challenges persisted, especially during post-COVID-19, with Havale (2023)<sup>[4]</sup> reported declining revenues in India, underscoring the importance of diversification.

Visitor demographics revealed corporate groups as the largest segment, accounting for 58% of visitors in Indian agrotourism (Havale, 2023)<sup>[4]</sup>. Ownership remained predominantly individual or family-based, with 100% proprietorship documented by Havale (2023)<sup>[4]</sup>. Additionally, years of experience vary, with Bhatta *et al.* (2019)<sup>[3]</sup> noted an increase in new ventures, reflecting growing adoption. These insights highlighted both the opportunities and challenges faced by agrotourism ventures in adapting to evolving market dynamics.

##### Demographics of venture visitors

Studies on agrotourism visitors highlighted a strong presence of younger individuals, particularly those in their 20s and 30s, who were drawn to the adventure and experiential aspects of agrotourism. Zawadka *et al.* (2022)<sup>[6]</sup> and Havale (2023)<sup>[4]</sup> both reported that younger visitors make up the majority of the audience, with many holding higher education degrees, reflecting a keen interest in agricultural and rural experiences. Gender distribution is varied, with some studies indicating a slight female majority, while others showed male dominance, but overall, both genders are equally engaged in agrotourism activities. The appeal of agrotourism spans both urban and rural populations, with visitors seeking either an escape from city life or a reconnection with rural roots. Zawadka *et al.* (2022)

[6] found that nearly half of their respondents came from urban areas, while the rest were from rural settings. In terms of occupation, the majority of visitors were students and professionals, and the majority preferred traveling in groups with family or friends. The duration of visits tends to be short, with many staying for a day or two, and the primary sources of information about agrotourism were word-of-mouth and social media, reflecting the growing influence of digital platforms in promoting these experiences.

### Methodology

Coimbatore district in Tamil Nadu was selected as the study area due to its vibrant agricultural base and growing popularity as an agrotourism destination. The region's diverse demographic and cultural landscape provided a rich context for the study.

### Sampling Techniques

**Snowball Sampling:** To identify 10 agrotourism venture

owners, snowball sampling was employed. Initial respondents were identified through local networks and online directories, and subsequent participants were located through referrals.

**Purposive Sampling:** A purposive sampling technique was used to select 100 visitors representing the 5 agrotourism ventures. The criteria for selection included availability, willingness to participate, and diversity in demographic representation.

### Data Collection

Primary data were collected through structured interviews using a pre-tested schedule. Key variables included age, gender, education, income, travel preferences, and source of information. The instrument was validated for reliability to ensure the accuracy of the findings.

### Results

**Table 1:** Profile of the Agrotourism venture owners' (n=10)

S. No	Attributes	Number	Percentage
<b>I</b>	<b>Age</b>		
1.	Young (Less than 35 years)	2	20.00
2.	Middle (35-45 years)	7	70.00
3.	Old (More than 45 years)	1	10.00
<b>II</b>	<b>Gender</b>		
1.	Male	7	70.00
2.	Female	3	30.00
<b>III</b>	<b>Education</b>		
1.	Illiterate	0	0
2.	Upto primary education	0	0
3.	6 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup> grade	0	0
4.	11 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	0	0
5.	Diploma or certificate holders	0	0
6.	Graduate	7	70.00
7.	Post graduate	3	30.00
<b>IV</b>	<b>Farm size</b>		
1.	Marginal (< 1 Ha)	0	0
2.	Small (1.1-2.0 Ha)	0	0
3.	Semi-Medium (2.1-4.0 Ha)	0	0
4.	Medium (4.1-10.0 Ha)	5	50.00
5.	Large (>10.0 Ha)	5	50.00
<b>V</b>	<b>Monthly income</b>		
1.	Low (Below Rs. 1 lakh)	3	30.00
2.	Medium (Rs. 1.1 lakhs - Rs. 3.50 lakhs)	5	50.00
3.	Above (Rs. 3.51 lakhs)	2	20.00
<b>VI</b>	<b>Type of visitors visiting the Agrotourism venture</b>		
1.	By oneself	0	0
2.	Families	3	30.00
3.	Senior citizen groups	1	10.00
4.	Friends' groups	4	40.00
5.	Educational institutes	1	10.00
6.	Corporate groups	1	10.00
<b>VII</b>	<b>Years of experience</b>		
1.	Less than 10 years	8	80.00
2.	10-20 years	2	20.00
3.	Above 20 years	0	0
<b>VIII</b>	<b>Ownership structure</b>		
1.	Others	0	0
2.	Enterprise / Pvt. Limited Company	0	0
3.	Cooperative	0	0
4.	Partnership	0	0
5.	Sole proprietorship	10	100.00

The profile of the agrotourism venture owners in Coimbatore district (Table 1.) revealed several key characteristics. The majority of owners (70%) were middle-aged (35-45 years), with smaller proportions being younger (20%) or older (10%). Male owners dominated, accounting for 70%, while female participation stood at 30%, indicating a growing presence of women in the sector. All respondents were educated, with 70% holding graduate degrees and 30% having postgraduate qualifications, reflecting a strong academic background among the owners.

Farm sizes were evenly split between medium-sized (4.1-10 hectares) and large farms (>10 hectares), with 50% in each category. In terms of income, half of the respondents (50%) earned ₹1.1-3.5 lakhs monthly, while 30% fell into lower (<₹1 lakh) and higher (>₹3.5 lakhs) income brackets. Visitors to these ventures were primarily friends' groups (40%) and families (30%), with fewer from corporate groups, educational institutions, or senior citizen groups (10% each).

The majority of owners (80%) had less than 10 years of experience in agrotourism, with only 20% having 10-20 years and none exceeding two decades. Notably, all ventures were operated as sole proprietorships (Fig 1.) highlighting the individual-driven nature of ownership in

this sector. This profile demonstrated a blend of middle-aged, educated entrepreneurs managing medium to large farms with a focus on family- and group-oriented tourism activities. The findings pointed out an evolving and increasingly inclusive agrotourism sector with substantial potential for growth and innovation, particularly as younger generations and women become more involved in this field.

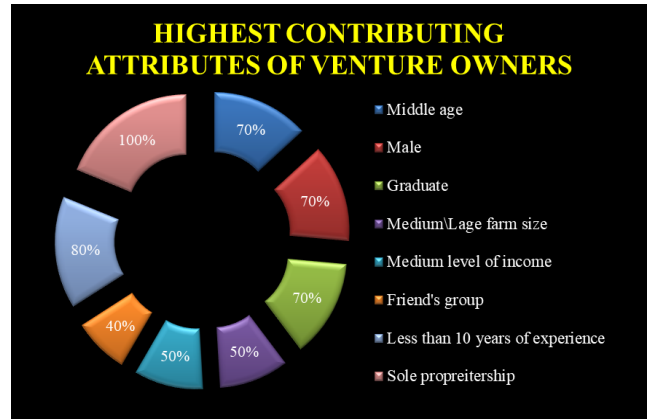


Fig 1: Attributes of Agrotourism venture owners

Table 2: Profile of the Agrotourism venture visitors (n=100)

S. No	Attributes	Number	Percentage
<b>I</b>	<b>Age</b>		
1.	Young (Less than 35 years)	45	45.00
2.	Middle (35-45 years)	35	35.00
3.	Old (More than 45 years)	20	20.00
<b>II</b>	<b>Gender</b>		
1.	Male	55	55.00
2.	Female	45	45.00
<b>III</b>	<b>Education</b>		
1.	Illiterate	2	2.00
2.	Upto primary education	5	5.00
3.	6 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup> grade	10	10.00
4.	11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	18	18.00
5.	Diploma or Certificate holders	15	15.00
6.	Graduate	35	35.00
7.	Post Graduate	15	15.00
<b>IV</b>	<b>Place of residence</b>		
1.	Urban	60	60.00
2.	Rural	40	40.00
<b>V</b>	<b>Occupation</b>		
1.	Home Maker	15	15.00
2.	Student	20	20.00
3.	Self-employed /Businessman	25	25.00
4.	Employee	40	40.00
<b>VI</b>	<b>Frequency of visit</b>		
1.	One time in last five years	40	40.00
2.	Two times in last five years	25	25.00
3.	Three times in last five years	15	15.00
4.	Four times in last five years	10	10.00
5.	Five times or more in last five years	10	10.00
<b>VII</b>	<b>Travel partner</b>		
1.	Friend/Friends	30	30.00
2.	Spouse	20	20.00
3.	Colleagues	15	15.00
4.	Family members	35	35.00
<b>VIII</b>	<b>Number of travel partners</b>		
1.	1-3 members	40	40.00
2.	4-6 members	30	30.00

3.	7-9 members	20	20.00
4.	10 members or more	10	10.00
<b>IX</b>	<b>Monthly income</b>		
1.	Low (Below Rs. 1 lakh)	25	25.00
2.	Medium (Rs. 1.1 lakhs - Rs. 3.50 lakhs)	50	50.00
3.	High (Above Rs. 3.51 lakhs)	25	25.00
<b>X</b>	<b>Duration of the stay</b>		
1.	Less than one night (day trip)	30	30.00
2.	One night	45	45.00
3.	Two nights	15	15.00
4.	More than three nights	10	10.00
<b>XII</b>	<b>Source of information</b>		
1.	Word of mouth	25	25.00
2.	Social Media	40	40.00
3.	Radio	0	0
4.	Brochures & Leaflets	0	0
5.	Newspaper ads	0	0
6.	Hoardings	0	0
7.	Websites	20	20.00
8.	Television	15	15.00
9.	Others (Specify)	0	0

The demographic profile of agrotourism venture visitors in Coimbatore (Table 2.) revealed a predominantly young (45%) and middle-aged (35%) audience, with males (55%) slightly outnumbering females (45%). Majority of the visitors (60%) hail from urban areas, reflecting the appeal of agrotourism to city dwellers seeking rural experiences. Educationally, the visitors were well-qualified, with 35% holding graduate degrees and 15% postgraduates, indicating a preference for nature-based tourism among the educated populace. Occupation-wise, the largest group comprises employees (40%), followed by self-employed individuals (25%), students (20%), and homemakers (15%), showcasing a diverse visitor base with varied professional backgrounds. Most visitors were infrequent attendees, with 40% having visited once in the past five years and only 10% making more than four visits, indicating limited repeat visits. The majority travelled with family (35%) or friends (30%), and group sizes are typically small, with 40% comprising 1-3 members. Visitors were predominantly from the medium-income bracket (₹1.1-3.5 lakhs/month, 50%), with equal representation (25%) from low- and high-income groups. Trips were generally brief, with 45% staying one night and 30% opting for day trips, while only a minority (10%) stay for more than three nights, reflecting a preference for short recreational getaways.

Social media (40%) and word-of-mouth (25%) emerged as the leading sources of information, followed by websites (20%) and television (15%), underscoring the influence of digital and interpersonal channels in promoting agrotourism. The findings (Fig 2.) highlighted that agrotourism appeals primarily to urban, educated, and younger demographics who favor brief, group-oriented, and recreational visits. This underscores the potential for targeted marketing strategies leveraging digital platforms and tailored experiences to enhance visitor engagement and retention. These insights suggested that agrotourism has strong potential for growth among younger, educated professionals, and the industry should focus on leveraging digital platforms and offering tailored experiences to better engage and retain this key demographic.

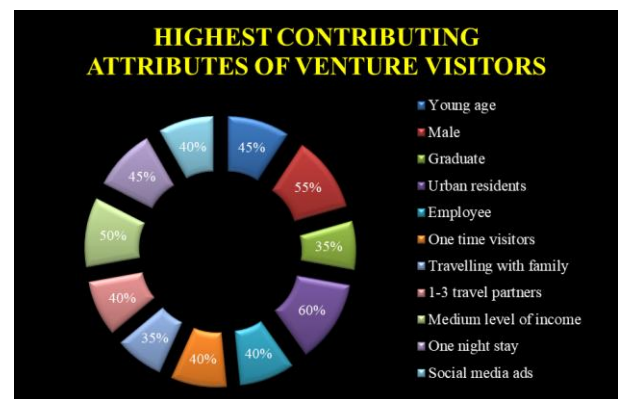


Fig 2: Attributes of Agrotourism venture visitors

### Conclusion

The study revealed that agrotourism in Coimbatore is driven by middle-aged, educated entrepreneurs managing medium to large farms. Visitors, on the other hand, were predominantly young urban dwellers with higher educational qualifications and a preference for brief, group-oriented trips. These findings highlighted the growing appeal of agrotourism as a sustainable leisure activity among younger, educated demographics.

The sector's potential lies in leveraging digital platforms for targeted marketing and fostering inclusivity by encouraging greater participation from women and younger entrepreneurs. Policymakers and practitioners should focus on tailored strategies that align with visitor preferences and venture owners' capacities to enhance the overall sustainability and profitability of agrotourism. The study underscores the importance of continuous research to adapt to the dynamic needs of this promising sector.

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