INTRODUCTION
Chapter 1. Introduction

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1.1 Introduction of the topic:
As per the census 2011 data, population of India is 1.21 billion. It means it has increased by 870 million since independence. India’s accounts for 17.5 % of the world’s population, whereas it has an area of 3,287,240 sq. km i.e. only 2.4 % of the total surface area of the world. The Agricultural land is getting divided and subdivided per generation which has increased the number of marginal farmers and low land holders (Agriculture Census Report 2005-06). Rising input costs, decreased yields, poor agriculture commodity prices are becoming responsible for declining agriculture income and profit. Pressures due to globalization and industrialization are threatening the existence of agriculture. Global corporations buy commodities from farmers at artificially low prices, subsidized by taxpayers. These same corporations then flood foreign markets with crops priced at below-market prices, called ‘dumping.’ Because the prices are so low, dumping forces smaller producers out of business and captures – unfairly – a greater share of the market for transnational. Loss of land leads to Increase in migration. This is forcing farmers to look for additional income via job or business so as to sustain their household income.

Worldwide scenario states that, farmers across the globe are recognizing the need and desire to diversify their farm products and services to supplement their agriculture income. Farmers across Maharashtra have a good opportunity to diversify their agriculture business into Agritourism so as to increase the sustainability of afarming by offering value added products and services to the farm tourists.

Indian countryside is bestowed with nature’s beauty. Dense forests, sea beaches, mountains with deep valleys and many flowing rivers have made India nature’s paradise. In India there are more than six lakhs villages with rustic beauty having potential to attract urban tourists. Hence, Indian domestic tourism activity and agriculture must be linked in an inseparable bond to gain fruitful results.

In today’s era of liberalization and globalization travel and tourism is extensively recognized as an important civil industry worldwide which provides major potential for economic growth and development. For many developing countries it is one of the main sources of foreign exchange income and the number one export category, creating much needed employment and opportunities for development. In over 150 countries tourism is one of the five top export earners, and in 60 it is the number one export category. (India’s 12th Five Year Plan Report, 2011)
According to World Travel and Tourism Economic Impact Report 2012, Travel and Tourism consistently performing well and it is one of the world’s largest industries. In 2011, it has shared 9% of global GDP and created 255 million jobs. In 2011, the total contribution of travel and tourism to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry, was 8.7% of total employment (254,941,000 jobs). This is expected to rise by 2.0% in 2012 to 260,093,000 jobs and rise by 2.3% p.a. to 327,922,000 jobs in 2022 (9.8% of total).

This report has also predicted that travel and tourism will grow by an average of 4% annually and in the year 2022 this industry will account for 328 million jobs.

In India, total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was INR 5,651.0 bn (6.4% of GDP) in 2011, and is forecasted to rise by 7.8% p.a. to INR12,891.2 bn in 2022. It has been also mentioned in WTTC Report, 2009 that India will be a tourism hot-spot from the year 2009 to 2018 having the highest 10-year growth potential.

(The 12th Five Year Plan prepared by the Planning Commission highlights the need to adopt “pro-poor tourism” for increasing net benefits to the poor and ensuring that tourism growth contributes to poverty reduction. Tourism plays a key role in socio-economic progress through creation of jobs, enterprise, infrastructure development and revenue earnings.) The Planning Commission has identified tourism as the second largest sector in the country in providing employment opportunities for low-skilled workers.

Travel and tourism in India is getting a massive impetus due to globalization and opening of economy to the world. India’s travel and tourism industry is the second highest foreign exchange earner for the country and according to an estimate total direct employment in the tourism sector is around 20 million. (Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) report, 2011)

Maharashtra contributed 25 per cent of the country’s industrial output and 23.2 per cent of its GDP in 2010-11.

As discussed in the Maharashtra’s Agro industrial policy Report 2010, Maharashtra is a bio-diverse state with nine Agro-climatic zones and varying soil types suitable for agricultural development. Though Maharashtra is a highly industrialized state of India, agriculture still continues to be the major livelihood earner for the people of the state. Agriculture and allied activities contribute nearly 12% per cent to the State’s income, although 55% of the population is dependent on agriculture.
In Maharashtra the travel and tourism industry including transport, storage and communication trade, hotels and restaurants accounted for around 20 -22% of the GSDP and 3.5% of the state’s employment. (Patil Usha, 2011)

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) defined the concept of sustainability with respect to development, as ‘developments which satisfy the needs of present generation without compromising the needs of future generation’. Likewise, sustainability of farm indicates a similar meaning, i.e. the long term stability via farm income over the period which will take care of the farmers of one generation to other.

Maharashtra is among the leading producers of a variety of agricultural products enjoyed by residents in the state and beyond.

Rural families are mainly engaged in farming and to some extent in agri-related businesses. Because of many affecting factors such as unpredictable environment and more unpredictable crop yield, fluctuating market rates for agricultural goods, unawareness of technology, unexpected and huge expenses, government rules and regulations etc., farmers’ income is not consistent. In Maharashtra, farmers are embracing the death through suicide due to their disappointing earnings.

An Interview with India Today in 2007, Hon. Shri. Sharad Pawar, Union Agriculture Minister said, “Unless and until we reduce the burden of population on land, agriculture will not be viable. Developing countries which have succeeded in diverting their population to other sectors have been able to resolve the crisis in agriculture. We have to follow that route.”

Agriculture faces significant challenges in responding to the changing global agri-business milieu. Due to the decreased incomes in agriculture in the last few decades, farm diversification is recommended as one tactic for survival of business. Because of technology today, farming has become more advanced than ever before. Because of lack of economies of scale, small-scale farmers have been thrown out of the farming partially or completely and forced to search for business other than farming as alternative sources of revenue. Now, some of the Maharashtrian farmers have considerably changed the range of products and services they provide in response to changing demographics, consumer preferences, so as to enhance farm viability.

Many farmers not only are running their regular farming operation but also have found Agritourism as proficient way to increase their declining farm incomes. Few farmers have
completely abandoned their traditional farming, because the overall income and thereby profits from their Agritourism business immensely prevail over their previous operation.

Urbanization is increasing day by day all over India and also in Maharashtra. Maharashtra is the third most urbanized state in the country, behind Tamilnadu (48.45%) and Kerala (47.72%). The state has 45.23% urban population, which is much higher than the national average of 31.16%. Out of total population of 11,23,72,972 in the state, rural and urban distribution is 6,15,45,441 and 5,08,27,531 respectively. (Census Data 2011).

Jane Eckert (2006) commented on need of Agritourism that “People want a new experience and escape from the stress of traffic jams, office cubicles, and carpooling in cities and suburbs, where the majority of the population resides. Children, as well as adults, can learn the process of growing food while enjoying a vacation together at an Agritourism attraction.” Same is the situation with densely populated cities in Maharashtra.

The pace of innovations and technology advances is getting faster and faster and is forcing everybody to compete severely to survive and grow in the city area. People from city areas are unhappy to face traffic chaos and pollution but are helpless. They are far away from nature and natural beauty. Their routine life is revolving around job place to home and free time is restricted to manmade entertainment places like theatres, hotels and clubhouses. The one and the only available nature they can enjoy are in the form of small gardens. For excursion, most of the city people like to visit and experience villages. If these people get proper facilities of accommodation, bed and breakfast, they can satisfy their desire to learn about agriculture, taste the bucolic cuisine and enjoy rural life at economical prices. No doubt, it naturally tends to give opportunity to the farmers and villagers to start and develop Agritourism centers so as to add one sure source of income.

Maharashtra is situated in the western region of India, gifted with abundant natural resources. between longitude: 76°00’ east, and between latitude: 20°00’ north and surface area of 3,07,713 km² and spread across the west coast of India with a 720 km long coastline along the lush green Konkan region. Along with the Western Ghats and the Sahyadri mountain range there are several hill stations and water reservoirs with semi-evergreen or dense forests. There are many tourist centers in Maharashtra which are supporting natural environment for the Agritourism centers in Maharashtra.
1.2 Introduction of Agritourism:
Since, now days the major development in Agritourism is taking place all around the world, different forms of Agritourism are seen. Agritourism gives people the chance to breathe fresh air, learn about rural environment, ride horses, pick fruits, feed animals, milk cows and participate in actual work of farm and buy produce directly from a farm.
Agritourism is a form of niche tourism in which farms are used as tour destinations for educational and/or recreational purposes. MART has accepted the concept of Agritourism as, “the practice of attracting travelers or visitors to rural areas which are used primarily for agricultural purposes”.
S.H. P. Malkanthi and J. K. Routry (2011) mentioned that “Agritourism is increasingly recognized as an important strategy that can contribute to agricultural development through diversification of farming activities and providing opportunities to rest, relax, enjoy and study about farming for the visitor.”
Sanjay Yadavrao, one of the directors, MART on 16th May 2011 said in his speech, “Our Agritourism centers offer tourism, having blend of local culture, heritage and history, and not just a plain outing for fun tourists often encounter while visiting usual tourist spots”.
Agritourism center is the location where tourists from the urban areas can come and spend their weekends or holidays in a village with agricultural atmosphere at a very economical cost; it is the home away from home giving a personal feel of harmony with rural culture.
Agritourism integrates agriculture with pleasure and gives the benefit of agriculture and tourism activities to the tourists that deliver economic benefit to concerned farmer and villagers.

1.3 Evolution of Agritourism – Worldwide and in Maharashtra:
Agritourism is a form of niche tourism that is considered as a growth industry in many parts of the world, including Australia, Canada, the United States, Srilanka, and the Philippines. (Wikipedia, Agritourism – evolution,2012). Agritourism overlaps with ecotourism, geotourism, and culinary tourism. Other terms associated with Agritourism are "agritainment", "value added products," "farm direct marketing", and "sustainable agriculture".

Beginning of Agritourism: Agritourism in United States
Agritourism is identified by different names in different parts of the world. Agrotourism, farm tourism, Agritourismo, agricultural tourism, agri-tainment are some of the alternative
and associated terms with Agritourism. To know about the prior and beginning of Agritourism history, literature takes us to America where in the late 19th century urban families used to visit relative’s farm in the summer season to enjoy holidays and to escape from summer heat in populated area. As the transportation mode easy by automobile invention and development, rural visits were popular among the urban area in second decade of 19th century. After the great worldwide depression in 1929 and World War II countryside visit and recreation became a way to get away from stress. In 1960-1980 urban people were interested in riding horses, petting farm animals, experiencing rural life which led to starting of commercial farm tours, farm accommodation and farm bed and breakfast. As the urbanization as well as gap between non-farm families and farmers exceeds, farm vacation business showed remarkable increase and right from 1990s, Agritourism became a pivotal business for farmers of America which made a great economic impact on them and surrounding communities.

Laurie S. Z. Greenberg (2006) noted about Agritourism business in U.S., “Nature tourism and Agritourism are the two fastest growing segments of the tourism market in the U.S., with 30% growth expected in the period 1997-2007.”

According to the survey of Federal Reserve Board in Kansas, tourism is becoming increasingly important to the U.S. economy where basic travel and tourism industry accounted for 3.6% of all employment. Moreover, one out of every 18 people in U.S. has a job directly resulting from travel expenditures.

Hyungsuk Choo (2012) and Ilsson PA (2002) noted that overall, rural tourism, where Agritourism is a subset, experienced an annual growth rate of 6% in North America as well as Europe from 2002 to 2004. According to one nationwide study conducted by Barry JJ, Hellerstain D. in 2004, 62 million Americans visited farms one or more times in 2000, which corresponds to almost 30% of the population.

As mentioned above, in America farmers having Agritourism business offer various activities to the agritourists like U-pick operations (fruits and vegetables), riding horses, farm stands for fresh farm products as well as for regional products like hand crafts, on-site learning and tasting of cheese making or wine making etc.

In America, state wise Agritourism centers are established by policy makers and farmers so as to grab the maximum economic benefits by converting normal farm into the commercial tourism farm. Farm center at California University has developed database about all existing Agritourism centers throughout the California state. They proved that
Agritourism is one best alternative for improving incomes and economic viability of small farms and rural communities. (George, H., Getz, C., & Hardesty, S., 2011)

Another association in North Carolina named ‘Handmade’ in America is using Agritourism to develop the local economy and craft trades, and to educate tourists about agriculture practices. They have explained regarding Agritourism on their website that “Agritourism is a niche market that not only assists communities with solutions to help diversify their economic base, but it also helps our regional urban centers and increasingly suburban populations to understand the important role that farming and rural life plays in our history, by highlighting the need for it in our contemporary society. Agri-tourism projects reinforce the need to support local growers and sources and allow the visitor to experience what it is to be part of the land.”

Many books have been published in America promoting Agritourism which clearly reflects the Agritourism development in America. The publication, Promoting Tourism in Rural America compiled by Liam R. Kennedy Clarion University of Pennsylvania explains the need for planning and marketing rural community and weighing the pros and cons of tourism. According to this book, “local citizen participation is helpful and should be included in starting any kind of a tourism program which also enhances the community.”

Agritourism consultant Jane Eckert promoting Agritourism through website, rural bounty brought this business more in focus. Her blog profiles farm stays and tracks Agritourism news.

**Agritourism in Australia:**

From last two decades Agritourism in Australia is also spreading its wings across the whole country. Agritourism business in Australia insists to build socially, environmentally, and economically sound tourism businesses. Agritourism offers their rural communities the possibility of extending tourism into rural areas in a sustainable way. The best part is that associations in Australia are becoming media in between rural tourists and farmers and growing their farm-based enterprises. They have specially highlighted the hospitality quality of farmers with statement, “There’s nothing like the welcoming smile of an Aussie farmer.” The website ‘Agritourism Australia’ depicts development of Agritourism business in Australia.

In many European rural communities, tourism has become powerful engine of economic growth.
Dan Bernardo, Luc Valentin, and John Leatherman (2004) mentioned that “Agritourism and other forms of on-farm diversification have grown into an increasing requirement for financial stability in farm businesses across western Europe. About one-third of all farm businesses in the United Kingdom are now engaged in nontraditional agricultural enterprises, and farmer involvement in Agritourism in France and Italy is even higher.” Belinda Xarba ,Hidajet Shehu (2011) noted importance of Agritourism development in European countries. Stating the need of Agritourism they point out that “Structural changes in economies are causing severe stress in many rural areas especially for those with a high dependence on agriculture. So, all the concerned authorities including policy makers and local leaders were in search of finding innovative ways in order to resolve the economic problems of these areas. The European Union developed a framework to support rural integrated development to resolve the problems of the rural areas in which Agritourism occupies an important position.”

**Agritourismo: Agritourism in Italy**

In Italy in the decade of 1970, small scale farming became less profitable; many farmers migrate to big towns in the search of job. In the year 1985 Italian Govt. made the law and launched the concept of Agritourismo which actually is a farm house available for vacationers to enjoy the rural life in Italy and in reverse for farmers it is the way to increase the farm income. These centers are totally rural in nature and give rustic experience to the travelers. Some of the centers are very big and luxurious which provide world class facilities to the tourists and so these Agritourismo are successful in attracting domestic as well as foreign tourists in Italy. These centers insist to serve the food to the tourists that are prepared from their own farm produce or at least locally available.

**Agro-tourism in Sri Lanka**

As noted by Dr. S.M.P Senanayke, Rev. Dr. Wijitapure Wimalaratana (2005) and S.H. P. Malkanthi and j. K. Routry (2011) Agritourism sector of Sri Lanka is still in its initial stages.Sri Lanka is an agricultural country and it has also diverse agro-climatic conditions suitable for growing different types of crops, fruits, vegetables and trees. Very few agro-tourism destinations are operating at present with general facilities and
services. The remarkable increase in the interest surrounding the concept of agritourism of other countries is influencing the development of Agritourism in Sri Lanka. Above researchers have focused specialities of Sri Lanka’s Agritourism as, “complex paddy cultivation systems with history of 2500 years, plucking tea leaves using the traditional ‘bag-on-the-back’ method, rubber tapping under expert guidance, huge and very old irrigation tanks, many tea and rubber plantations, milking cattle on dairy farms, or even working in many scenic paddy fields (ploughing using bullocks, work on paddy nurseries, transplanting seedlings in muddy fields). Their research results revealed that there are several possibilities for the establishment of Agritourism in the Sri Lanka.

Advent of Agritourism in Maharashtra:

"Unless our villages are self-sufficient, our nation cannot progress; we must go to villages in order to achieve development of villages.”- Mahatma Gandhi

These words are still true and ATDC, pioneer institute in agricultural and rural tourism development has come forward to realize Gandhiji’s dream.

In Maharashtra concept of agritourism was first implemented by a group of 30 farmers from Malegaon near Baramati who shared around 110 acres land and formed the Agricultural Development Trust in 1968. This trust decided to run Agri-Tourism project on a pilot scale on its own 110 acres model farm.

Prior to setting up the successful pilot Agri and Rural Tourism Project in Malegaon, in October, 2005, a market survey was conducted by ATDC with sample size of 2,440.

The analysis of the survey revealed that:

• 35% of urbanites do not have relatives in village.
• 43% urbanites have never stayed or visited village.
• 57% urbanites have never visited dairy farm.

This survey prompted to execute Agri-Tourism in the 110 acre model farm of the Agriculture Development Trust.

Although credit of launching and running successfully the first Agritourism center in Maharashtra, goes to ATDC (Agritourism Development Corporation) located at Malegaon, Baramati, Shri.Pandurang Taware is really the man behind the gun. He is the father of Innovating of Agritourism concept in Maharashtra and in India. He belongs to farmer’s family and is well aware of problems faced by farmers. After working for seventeen years in hospitality business and gaining reasonable experience particularly in the core area of sales and marketing of new concepts in hospitality business Shri.
Pandurang Taware decided to start Agri Tourism with the help of Agriculture Development Corporation, Baramati in the year 2005. While successfully carrying the responsibility of Marketing Head at ATDC he also runs his own separate ATC at Palshi, Baramati.

Under his active involvement in various conferences, ATDC has won a number of national and international awards ‘National Tourism Award’ declared by Ministry of Tourism Govt. of India, in the year 2008-09 for the most innovative and unique tourism product, finalist of ‘Global Tourism for Tomorrow Award’ 2011, constituted by WTTC London, ‘Global Responsible Tourism Award’ 2011, constituted by Responsible Travel London.

First Agri Tourism center was set up in Baramati. Lateron ATDC, Pune took it upon itself to popularize this concept in every corner of Maharashtra for which it has been continuously conducting the training program for the farmers in Maharashtra.

ATDC’s various concepts will be adopted worldwide now due to United Nations World Tourism Organization’s acknowledgement and with National Tourism Award by Tourism Ministry, Government of India. This will help in supplementing tourism activities to core agricultural activities and provide financial support to agriculture sector across the globe including India. Therefore, this recognition and National Tourism Award is an important milestone in India’s Agritourism development.

The website of ATDC is also very eloquent which gives detail information about ATDC and Agritourism for the benefit of new entrants in this business.

ATDC’s mission is

“To promote agriculture tourism to achieve income, employment and economic stability in rural communities in India, help boosting a range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract urban tourists to their area thus provide opportunity for urban people to get back to the roots.”

Agritourism at ATDC has threaded nostalgic mood of urban people and employment generation for rural community in such a manner that all the stakeholders of Agritourism should be benefitted.

**Employment generation at ATDC:**

ATDC has proved that practicing traditional farming along with supplementary activities can generate tremendous employment. ATDC Pune has initiated various programs.
ATDC made available new employment opportunity to farmers in which they can sell their agriculture products directly to the tourists at affordable prices by avoiding agents or middlemen. The agro products like ‘papad’ and pickles made by ‘Mahila Bachat gat’ or self help groups (SHGs) are also in demand at ATC centers.

“World Agritourism Day” and ATDC:
To popularize the concept of Agri and Rural tourism across the world, ATDC celebrates 16th May as “World Agri Tourism Day”. It was a great achievement for International Agri Tourism sector as a whole and for ATDC in particular when United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has approved efforts by ATDC and declared 16th May as “World Agri Tourism Day” from the year 2008 and added it in their international events calendar.

Establishment of Maharashtra State Agri and Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation Ltd (MART):
Agritourism is a worldwide ever expanding movement –Maharashtra is doing its bit to link itself to the world through MART. There was urgent need to bring all Agri and rural tourism co-operatives under one umbrella and to have apex body that will guide, train, build capacity, promote, sell and market agri and rural tourism concept in urban cities, at the same time work in tandem with government departments to develop agri and rural tourism as the most desired supplementary income and employment generation source to the agriculture communities in the state of the Maharashtra.

With a view to provide a common platform to various ATC’s operating across the state, ATDC, Pune founded Maharashtra State Agri and Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation Ltd (MART) which was registered on 12th Dec 2008. From Nov.2011 Shri.Balasaheb Barate is the president of MART.

The main objective of the Maharashtra Agri and Rural Tourism Co-operative Federation Ltd, Pune is to provide consultancy, assist in project reports preparation, sales and marketing and training in the field of Agri and Rural Tourism besides promoting and showcasing the culture of the Agriculture and Rural families of Maharashtra and India, and help the agriculturist (farmers) to earn the well-deserved respect in addition to the supplementary income to their families and introduce this concept of Agritourism to the urban citizens as an educational, recreational and entertainment opportunity.
MART also coordinates the activity of planning, financing, marketing and liaison with various state and central Agencies. The Agri-tourism co-operative societies get financed by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). The loan is utilized in creating infrastructure facilities in the village to support the Agritourism. MART is also setting up special cell for imparting training to farmers across Maharashtra on agri-based tourism.

1.4 Rationale of the study
Agritourism can rejuvenate the conventional concepts and views on tourism, and is bringing in a new dimension in the sustainable development. As stated by Fariborz Aref (2009) rural tourism development has become a top priority of the economic agenda of all the countries. Egbali Naser Abbas Bakhshandea Nosrat and Sayyed khalil Sayyed Ali (2011) stated that, “The most important purpose of tourism development is economic and social development of the tourism areas.”

Research study of Agritourism in Maharashtra will help in highlighting such benefits. Researcher Rao (1989) has raised the issue as “keeping in view the vast majority of small and marginal farmers and their resource-poor condition, the question is- how to make these farm households viable. How can these farmers maximize their total returns from farming? It is a known fact in India that small and marginal farmers are generally resource—poor. This is more so in arid and semi-arid regions, where due to lack of adequate potential of development, like irrigation, the farmers are forced to use the available resources without caring for sustainability.” Existence and growth of Agritourism business is associated with and driven by both the sides of supply (farmers) and demand (tourists). To overcome the problems of lower income from farming through the related and unrelated diversification strategy farmers (supply side), are forced to supplement their income. Along with this tourists’ (demand side) increased income and demand for more specialized forms of vacation to experience the rural environment and nostalgia associated with a working farm enterprise has stimulated growth for tourism activities in rural areas. Lisa Marie Assante, Hsing Ivan Wen, Kimberly Lottig (2012) concluded from the data collected from residents in the region of Oahu and Hawaii, that “Many respondents also felt the State must better balance needs of residents with the needs of tourists and the demands of the tourism industry.”
Pandurang Taware (2008) said about Agritourism scope, “The urban population which is having roots in villages always has the curiosity to learn about rural life regarding sources of food, plants, animals, handicrafts, languages, culture, tradition, dresses and rural lifestyle. Agritourism has the capacity to satisfy the curiosity of this segment of population.”

The need of this study is to understand Agritourism from both sides of Agripreneurs and tourists and thereby to promote agricultural economic development in Maharashtra. According to the father of Modern Management Peter F. Drucker, purpose and basic functions of Business are as follows-

“Business purpose must lie in society since business enterprise is an organ of society. There is single definition of business purpose: to create a customer.”

Peter Drucker also insisted on basic two functions - marketing and innovation. Marketing and Innovation produce profits; all the rest are “costs.”

Objective of marketing is to know and understand the customer in a way that the product or service fits according to customer needs and wants and sells itself.

The second function of business is innovation. It is not necessary for a business to grow bigger; but it is necessary that it constantly grows better. Innovation can be defined as the task of endowing human and material resources with new and greater wealth producing capacity. With the help of Innovation managers must convert society’s needs into opportunities for profitable business.” (Drucker P., 1973)

Both the angles of marketing and innovation fit in the business of Agritourism. In Maharashtra understanding the Agritourism business and tourist’s psychology will definitely foster this industry in a faster and better manner. Hence, there is need of studying this emerging agribusiness trend.

A study based on commonalities and differences among different ATCs is also important so as to compare activities and their efforts and to divide them in a small, medium and large Agritourism centers. This will be beneficial for ATC owners to check their centers' activities and to see where their operation can be improved.

Although a considerable amount of work has been carried out on tourism, it is disappointing to note that scientific research on Agritourism is still at its infancy. Compared to individual tourism or Agriculture, the quantum of research which has been carried out on Agritourism is minimal. The motivation of this research topic is to explore these areas and contribute to the scientific advancement of the subject. The reason of
this study was to gain a better understanding of the current status of Agritourism in Maharashtra so as to develop a knowledge base that will enhance its growth.

Understanding the psyche of Agritourists is important from the viewpoint of Agritourism Center (ATC) owners so as to develop facilities and services at Agritourism center. Most of the farmers in Maharashtra have seen a downward trend in farm income as agricultural prices have gradually decreased, while agribusiness’s expenses have risen. To tackle this situation, farmers are searching for supplemental income from their farming operations. Since the farmers continue to be hit by decreasing land size and thereby profits, Agritourism may provide the potential for additional farm income through on-farm sales of value-added products and services.

There is need of knowing the level of benefits farmers receive from running Agritourism business. Thus due to its greater importance from both the angles, this topic has been selected for research study.

1.5 Problem Statement

Since Agritourism business started from the year 2005 in Maharashtra, farmers in the Maharashtra adopted Agritourism as part of a diversification strategy to increase income, it is important for farmers to clearly understand Agritourism.

Peter Drucker has stated regarding success factors of any business that, “It is the customer who determines what a business is. It is the customer alone whose willingness to pay for a good or for a service converts economic resources into wealth, things into goods. What the business thinks it produces is not of first importance—especially not to the future of the business and to its success. What the customer thinks he is buying, what he considers value, is decisive—it determines what a business is, what it produces, and whether it will prosper. The customer is the foundation of a business and keeps it in existence.” (Drucker P., 1973)

Study of tourists’ expectation and satisfaction factors is essential to grow this industry in the future. Few researchers who had studied Agritourism business and made conclusions were mostly derived from secondary data. Moreover, studies of tourists’ attitude towards this business were not studied.
1.6 Research questions and Objectives:
The overall objective of this research study is to scrutinize the opportunities for Agritourism development in Maharashtra as a strategy for enhancing the viability of the farms in the state. The specific and general research questions were identified as below.

Specific Questions:
What is the status of Agritourism business in Maharashtra? What factors are necessary for Agritourism development in Maharashtra?

General Research Questions:
What is the relation between distance from main cities and development of Agritourism centers?
Does farm size influence the success of an Agritourism centers?
What is employment generation capacity of ATCs?
How many tourists' visit to such ATCs? What kind of groups they belongs to?
What specialties ATCs are providing to tourists with respect to food, accommodation, and agricultural activity?
What are the attractions available near the ATCs?
How the type and number of Agritourism activities related to the success of Agritourism business?
What is the financial effect on Agripreneurs income after starting ATCs?
What are the marketing tactics used by ATCs?

Specific Question No.2:
What is the tourists’ expectation from the Agritourism centers?
Which are the media used in the advertising of ATCs?

General Research Questions:
Why the tourists visit to ATCs?
How much distance tourists travel to reach ATCs?
How much time tourists spend at ATCS?
Which factors to what extent are important in tourists’ decision to visit Agritourism center?
What is the tourists’ satisfaction level related to different service offered by ATCs?
Which are the media preferred by tourists to know about ATCs?
Below is the research questions’ table linking with identified objectives of research topic.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Related objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the status of Agritourism business in Maharashtra?</td>
<td>To identify the types of Agritourism businesses that currently exist in the Maharashtra by location, size, gross income, and type of product or service offered. To explore the status of Agritourism of Maharashtra.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Which factors are necessary for Agritourism development in Maharashtra?</td>
<td>To find out the minimum requirements for initiating Agritourism business. To study the extent of additional income from Agritourism centers as a supplementary income source for Maharashtrian farmer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the tourists’ demand from the Agritourism centers?</td>
<td>To find out Tourist’s expectations, perception and satisfaction level from a few ATC’s visited by them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which are the media used in the advertising of ATCs?</td>
<td>To know the media preferred by ATCs for advertising. To know media preferred by tourists to know about ATCs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.7 Scope of the Study:
It is important from viewpoint of agricultural community i.e. farmers and the government regarding study of Agritourism that if it is to be used as a dominant diversification option for sustaining the viability of the agricultural sector and rural communities.

The study is restricted and related to Agritourism business in Maharashtra. It covers the study of ATC centers in Maharashtra and study of expectations of tourists who visited it. This research study highlights on related concepts of Agritourism, current business status of it, scope and obstacles in development of it in Maharashtra. All the data collection and research findings are made in the year 2011-2013.

1.8 Limitations
Researcher faced the different sort of limitations during research work as mentioned below:

> Long Distance became main difficulty in direct visit to Agritourism centers.
- Inadequate response to mailed questionnaire from Agritourism centers.
- Hesitation in sharing information by ATC owners.
- Non availability of contact numbers of ATCs at MART.

Some of the limitations were anticipated in the beginning and to overcome these problems and to complete the research study, sincere and hard efforts have been made by researcher.

1.9 Expected Contribution:
Like any other value-added enterprises, Agritourism industry has to tackle with potential risks and costs. Agritourism requires capital investment for center development and hosts’ time to engage and entertain the tourists. Investment risk is involved in Agritourism development including infrastructure development and providing facilities related to hospitality and other service activities. As like other enterprises the main determining factor in success or failure of an Agritourism enterprise is largely dependent on effective management. Successful management of an Agritourism center requires many things which should be present and available for tourists. Knowing the range of activities which are important for development of Agritourism center will be helpful in attracting more tourists to such centers. Understanding the preferred media for advertisement by centers and preferred media used by tourists to know about centers will be helpful in deciding promotional media for ATCs. This research study will discuss different facets associated with development of Agritourism business in Maharashtra.

With survey findings based on responses from Agritourism business owners and Agritourists, current business activities can be analyzed and improved. For example, if research shows that using the business website or advertising through the internet is a useful and effective method for large Agritourism centers, but small Agritourism centers do not use the internet, MART could assist small ATCs by providing better information and support them in developing a Web site.

From the research study of this topic it is expected that it would highlight on related concepts of Agritourism, current business status of it in Maharashtra, scope and obstacles in development of it. If the suggestions are implemented by the ATC owners it would be helpful for them to execute effective communication with the tourists and so improving advertising effectiveness in Agritourism business. It would be also useful for those farmers who want to initiate their own centers. All those associated directly or
indirectly with this industry, practitioners, academicians and research scholars may refer this research report for their respective purposes.

Critical study of Agritourism Industry in Maharashtra would ultimately improve the overall growth of Agritourism in the state. Agritourism business development is important because it advances the sustainability of agriculture, something that is in danger because of various reasons like land holding pattern, urbanization, unpredictable monsoon and thereby uncertain crop yield etc.

This study is important as it will help policy makers to determine how they can accelerate the growth of Agritourism all over Maharashtra.

1.10 Outline of the study:
This research study introduces the Agritourism concept which links the agriculture and tourism and discusses on current status of this business practiced by farmers in Maharashtra. This Research study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter provides introduction and background information about the research topic and focuses on the status of both agriculture and tourism sectors. The second chapter defines Agritourism, reviews the literature and examines various classifications of Agritourism, demographic profile of Maharashtra. This chapter also examines the discussions with regards to agriculture and tourism.

The third chapter discusses methodology, and introduces the theoretical framework of the study and provides a detailed description of how the research would be carried out. Chapter four presents the data collected and provides an analysis with interpretation. The fifth Chapter provides conclusions and recommendations based on the study.

This research study examines Agritourism as a feasible policy option for related diversification for farmers in Maharashtra.