

GREEN FARM EXPERIENCE: TOURISM RECOVERY MEASURE TOWARDS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has become one of the highest contributors to the world economy but is also among the industries that were seriously affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. This pandemic has created a way to refocus how tourism operates. The way people will treat their next travel will be much different from before. Tourism may be transformed into a sustainable experience with emphasis not only on economic and social aspects but on environmental contributions as well. As the new norm in tourism is about to emerge, there will be conscious acts that will result in more hygienic and open destinations, more careful tourists, more engagement with nature, and lesser interaction with people. Nature-based destinations such as farms may benefit from a shift to sustainable experience. Any event or occurrence in the farm that forms meaningful memories and creates an impact on caring for the environment and natural resources, including those who share it is described as a green farm experience. Diversifying a traditional farm into farm tourism without much investment may help in the gradual recovery of domestic tourism and improve the livelihoods of the rural community, as well since it covers the supporting industries from agriculture and tourism.

Keywords: Tourism Recovery, Green Farm Experience, Farm Tourism

1. BACKGROUND

The extensive spread of coronavirus called Covid-19 has severely weakened the global economy. Mobility restrictions and containment measures led to the closure of businesses, corporate offices, events, work, and schools. The increasing number of lockdown periods, monetary policies, and travel restrictions have aggravated the impact on economic activities and stock market status (Ozili & Arun, 2020). The United Nations World Travel Organization (2021) revealed that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a substantial decline in international travel by 75 percent, a figure of international arrivals that is comparable to the 1990s. With a substantial drop in tourism revenues, the COVID-19 outbreak has become the most economically damaging impact on the travel and tourism industry (Škare, Soriano, & Porada-Rochoń, 2021).

Tourism has become one of the highest contributors to the world economy. The UNWTO reported that the pre-pandemic figures show that travel and tourism have the highest growth among the basic industries. Travel & Tourism is a major contributor to international trade in services, with global visitor exports, the amount contributed by visitors to the country they visit, generating a record \$1.5 trillion in 2017. This is equivalent to an average of \$4 billion a day, almost 7% of total exports and 30% of total world services exports. In 2017, there were 1.322 billion international tourist arrivals (ICAO, 2018).

Tourism Transformation

On the bright side, the United Nations for Environment Programme predicted that this pandemic will change how people view tourism. With physical distancing as the new normal, tourism will shift from groups to private or individual travel (Sonia, 2020).

The people are interested to know if tourism will return to normalcy. With the kind of pacing most countries

have for the vaccines and recoveries, there were some speculations that tourism will never be the same again. In 2021, as many variants are coming in, old-fashioned tourism will no longer be the norm. Nikkei Asia released several reports that it will be a long way for tourism to return to normal. The used-to-be-crowded tourist market for souvenir shops and clothes is now physically closed. The most visited places can just be experienced virtually. Parties and assemblies are history and are temporarily be substituted by virtual meetings and conferences.

What is the future of tourism after covid-19? The way people will treat their next travel will be much different from before. This pandemic has created a way to refocus how tourism operates.

Benjamin, Dillette, and Alderman (2020) in their article *We can't return to normal: committing to tourism equity in the post-pandemic age* call this pandemic an opportunity for a transformative normal, from mass tourism into a more sustainable and equitable tourism landscape. Covid-19 pandemic has also forced the shift of global awareness to mindful individuals with heightened care towards compassionate tourism (Lew et al., 2020). In Italy, destinations will have the opportunity to develop a more sustainable way of managing their tourists as mobility restrictions are still in effect without forgetting the health protocols that will prevent further contagions (Corbisiero & Monaco, 2021). The pandemic might be the right time to revalue the natural potentials of an area where strategies towards sustainable tourism may be implemented (Dobrescu, & Mazilu, 2020). All pieces of literature are gleaning towards sustainability and green tourism.

In the context of a pandemic, tourism may be transformed into a sustainable experience with emphasis not only on economic and social aspects but on environmental contributions as well (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020). Policies and programs for sustainable tourism are not enough (Guo,

Jiang, & Li, 2019). The industry has mainstreamed mass tourism for several years. Hence, it may be an opportunity to look into trends and shocks that can contribute to defining sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism may be associated with uncrowded destinations as physical distancing is still in effect (Santos-Roldán, Canalejo, Berbel-Pineda, & Palacios-Florencio, 2020). It may also mean a wake-up call towards mindful-driven tourism products and services that creates conscious consumers and visitors with an emphasis on compassionate and meaningful tourism (Stankov, Filimonau, & Vujičić, 2020). Since pandemic is a global and widespread phenomenon, tourism recovery can be a concerted effort of various stakeholders. Sharma, Thomas, and Paul (2021) emphasized the importance of community involvement in developing a resilient tourism industry against a pandemic.

As the new norm in tourism is about to emerge, there will be conscious acts that will result in more hygienic and open destinations, more careful tourists, more engagement with nature, and lesser interaction with people (Koh, 2020). This becomes an opportunity for farm tourism to take the lead in the recovery.

Even in the 1970s, the concept of farm tourism has already been known and has evolved through time. It is often viewed as a farm diversification strategy in rural areas to provide a sustainable income to the farmers (Phelan & Sharpley, 2010). Farm tourism has also transformed the traditional image of farmers into new identities such as becoming an educator, culture disseminator, service provider, marketer, and product designer (Hinkel, 2011) which may be an approach for the young generation to engage in farming. In Iran, farm tourism was viewed as a driver of social and economic growth in rural communities (Nematpour & Khodadadi, 2021).

Indeed, the covid-19 pandemic has brought many changes, especially in the way tourist choose their next destinations. With limited mobility across borders, there has been a shift from cruise tourism to domestic tourism. To accelerate the recovery of local tourism, nature-based tourism is seen as the main component in creating a sustainable tourism upturn program (Hussain & Fusté-Forné, 2021).

Green Farm Experience

Farm tourism can be economically gainful without putting pressure on heavy forms of activities.

Breiby, Duedahl, Øian, and Ericsson (2020) termed this as a sustainable experience where tourists create meaningful memories that could influence future actions toward destination sustainability. The value of their experience can be in any of the four sustainable experience dimensions such as interaction with the natural environment, interaction with the cultural environment, insights and views, and lake-based activities (or contextual activities). The experience value may generate future actions leading to sustainable tourism.

Nature-based destinations such as farms may benefit from a shift to sustainable experience through the concept of a green farm experience. Green farm experience can be broadly defined as any event or occurrence in the farm that forms meaningful memories and creates an impact on caring for the environment and natural resources, including those who share it. It involves a farm visit or activity of caring for the planet without damaging or depleting natural resources. Below are some activities which may lead to future actions as tourists enhance their escapism in a farm destination.

Table 1. Sample green farm experiences

Meaningful experience	Future actions
A walk in the fields	Appreciation of local farmer's produce; advocacy towards sustainable farming
Outdoor family gathering	Family cohesion; long cleaner and fresh environment
Social media photography	Demand for attractive landscape and greener environment; advocacy to plant more trees and flowers
Animal feeding	Wider orientation towards nature; concern with animal welfare
Farm spa	Demand for the fresher environment; longing for a stress-free environment
Rice planting	Appreciation to rice farming; demand for environment-friendly planting methods

The long period of lockdowns has forced people to find ways to de-stress and breathe in an open, fresh, and covid-free environment. Some go for therapy; others just stay and do nothing. People have ways to enhance their wellness. Tourists often choose farm tourism because they want to learn something from the farm or they just simply want to be on a farm because this may be the easiest way to commune with nature. With these purposes, these become the entry point for a green farm experience. Farm destinations address the pandemic requirement such as less crowded and ventilated areas for tourists. The basic thing is to offer what is needed and expected.

Diversifying a traditional farm into farm tourism without much investment may help in the gradual recovery of domestic tourism and improve the livelihoods of the rural community, as well since it covers the supporting industries from agriculture and tourism. Farm tourism is a sub-sector of agritourism. Agritourism, creative integration of tourism elements with agriculture, may include other services such as the transport sector, food sector, accommodation sector, and those involved in the value chain system. While farm tourism is functional and dominant at the farm level, other local industries may be benefited from its operation. This may also become a turning point for neighboring farmers to improve their landscape, production, or services.

2. CONCLUSION

The transformation of farms into a wellness destination may be viewed as a developmental tool in improving the

livelihoods of a community, especially in the pandemic period. The rural landscape, farm produce, and the space between nature and people are naturally present without much cost to satisfy the escape that tourists need from the pandemic breakout. When tourists visit a farm destination, the community may be tapped to engage through various services such as offering a culinary heritage, land/sea transport services, private accommodation facilities, traditions, and other activities that might be of interest to the tourist's search for a farm green experience or wellness.

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