

AGRITOURISM. BETWEEN AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM. A REVIEW

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Abstract: *This paper presents synthesized knowledge from the agritourism field from the last decade. Our aim was to critically present the most common agritourism topics in the literature, such as life-seeing and life-participating agritourism concepts, tourists' view and farmers' view on agritourism, together with the most important economic and non-economic agritourism benefits and goals for both the supply and demand sides. This paper also presents the impact agritourism has on economic diversification of agriculture. Agritourism can help family farms to remain in business, preserve agricultural heritage, maximize the productivity of farm resources through their recreational use, and improve the economic situation of local communities. Agritourism presents the potential to generate additional income, diversify the farming economy, lower risks and uncertainties and form a symbiotic relationship between agriculture and tourism.*

Keywords: *Agritourism, Tourists, Farmers, Agriculture, Diversification*

1. INTRODUCTION

Besides nature-based tourism, agricultural-based tourism is one of the fastest growing segments in the tourism industry [1]. The term “agritourism” describes nearly all activities in which a visitor to the farm or other agricultural setting contemplates the farm landscape or participates in an agricultural process for recreation or leisure purposes [2]. Agritourism usually includes many activities, such as daily visits, recreational self-harvest, hunting and fishing for a fee, nature and wildlife observation, and other outdoor activities [3]. Agritourism is a collection of products rather than one homogeneous entity [4].

Agritourism is a sustainable form of tourism, often integrated into regional development, which aims to promote rural capital and be a stimulus for local economies [4]. It is usually organized as a part of rural, green tourism in protected landscape areas [5] and promoted by organizations rather than a distinct product [6].

An analysis of European countries shows that practitioners and researchers apply the term agritourism differently [7], which causes difficulties in terms of improving knowledge of this activity and for branding and promotion. Although different definitions of agritourism highlight different European socio-cultural contexts, political and economic contexts and natural or geographic resources, agritourism is an important market niche [6].

The symbiotic relationship between tourism and agriculture that can be found in agritourism is a key element of an environmentally and socially responsible tourism in rural areas. Rural

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hospitality offers new employment and income generating opportunities for rural populations, including agritourism as expression and cultural exchange of agricultural practices, artistic heritage and craftsmanship and culinary traditions [8]. In agritourism, agriculture becomes the ‘currency’ for exchange, whereby visitors make a physical contribution to the farm economy in return for their tourism experience, as reported by other exploring working farm stays [9].

Labels such as agritourism, farm tourism, farm-based tourism, and rural tourism are often used interchangeably with agritourism and each other [10], but have also been used explicitly to denote similar but distinct concepts [11]. Agritourism is not synonymous with rural tourism, rather it is a more specific subset of rural tourism as a broader concept [11].

Agritourism is a green or non-traditional business that is easy to develop [13]. Farmers successfully engaging in agritourism reap tangible benefits, including diversified income sources, new opportunities to engage family members in farm operations, and public appreciation [14]. Agritourism and various other types of tourism in rural areas represent distinctive concepts of guest stays within rural tourism, which significantly differ depending on the degree of authenticity of the offer and possible participation in agricultural life [15].

Definitions of agritourism in literature could be classified in three groups: 1) definitions related to the type of setting (farm, any agricultural setting); 2) the authenticity of the agricultural facility or the experience and 3) the types of activities involved (lodging, education) [16]. Most studies state that an adequate setting for agritourism includes a farm [18] or any other type of agricultural setting, such as farms, ranches, nurseries and others [2]. In literature, there are two concepts related to the authenticity of the agricultural facility of the experience. The first one includes a “working” agricultural setting and the other is a “non-working” agricultural setting [11], [18]. Discussing the types of activities involved in agritourism, some studies suggest that the important part of agritourism is on-farm accommodation [2]-[3]; [17], [19], while a study in Australia [20] did not include it.

In response to changing business climates, evolving consumer preferences, and intensifying pressures on farm viability, farms increasingly turn to diversity enterprise, one of the most promising being agritourism or leisure farm. Agritourism is a green or non-traditional business that is easy to develop. Farmers successfully engaging in agritourism reap tangible benefits, including diversified income sources, new opportunities to engage family members in farm operations, and public appreciation [14]. However, the potential benefits of agritourism extend beyond the farm operation [13].

Phillip et al. [12] developed agritourism typology based on three key areas: if the product is based on a »working farm«, the nature of contact between the tourist, and agricultural activity and the degree of authenticity in the tourism experience.

While many definitions and activities associated with agritourism are recognized in the literature, researchers have struggled to develop a classification system with respect to both the characteristics and the broad definition of agritourism. One exception, however, is Phillip et al. [12], who developed a theoretical classification of agritourism operations based on three criteria: whether the setting is a working farm, the level of contact between the tourist and agricultural activity (i.e., passive, direct or indirect), and whether the visitor’s experience is authentic or staged. From those three criteria, a non– hierarchical five– class typology of agritourism was developed: (1) Non–working farm agritourism, such as a bed and breakfast on a former farm;

(2) Working farm, passive contact agritourism, such as a bed and breakfast on a current farm; (3) Working farm, indirect contact agritourism, such as serving farm products in meals on the farm; (4) Working farm, direct contact, staged agritourism such as viewing farming demonstrations; and (5) Working farm, direct contact, authentic agritourism such as helping with farm chores. Given the definitional inconsistencies of agritourism in literature, this study adopts the definition used by the Missouri Department of Agriculture [16]: “visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operation for the purpose of appreciation, enjoyment, education, or recreational involvement with agricultural, natural or heritage resources”.

The term agritourism is used to describe nearly any activity in which a visitor to the farm or other agricultural setting contemplates the farm landscape or participates in an agricultural process for recreation or leisure purposes [19], [21]. Agritourism is usually understood to take place on a working farm or other agricultural setting and to generate income for or add value to the farm [11], [16], [20]. Many activities are classified as agritourism, including daily visits (e.g., orchard tours, hayrides), recreational self-harvest (e.g., pick-your-own operations), hunting and fishing for a fee, nature and wildlife observation, and other outdoor activities [22].

Authentic agritourism is carried out on a fully functioning working farm where the agricultural activities are predominant over the touristic ones, and where familiar and direct contact with the hosting household and its members takes place in an unaltered agricultural environment. The authentic lifestyle of a farm is very important in this context [15].

According to the results of their study, conducted on the three types of agritourism stakeholders (farmers, residents and extension faculty), Arroyo et al. [16] suggest that a conciliatory definition of agritourism that captures stakeholders' perspectives should include staging of authentic agricultural activities or processes occurring in working agricultural facilities either for “entertainment” or “education” purposes. The strong inclination for the terms: “agricultural setting”, “entertainment”, “farm”, and “education” across farmers, residents and extension faculty suggest that these three stakeholders have a shared understanding of the meaning of agritourism and what this activity entails.

The development of typology that integrates provider (supply) and visitor (demand) perspectives of agritourism [4] incorporates five types of agritourism based on three discriminating features of different agritourism products: 1) whether visitors have direct or indirect interaction with agriculture; 2) if the product is based on a working farm and 3) if the visitor experiences authentic working agriculture.

Jaworski and Lawson [23] in their survey of publications relating to agritourism in Poland reveal a dominance of generic images of rurality relating to landscape, friendly people, traditional food, recreational activities. The image of agritourism promoted by organizations is based to some extent on the perceived expectations of tourists and research on the latter is an important contribution to the promotional efforts of the organization [6].

Flanigan et al. [9] modified agritourism typology and found both commonalities and differences in the definition of agritourism among providers and tourist. A working farm is a very important element considered by both groups, but more important to the farmers than the tourists. It provides direct staged interaction with agriculture and appears to best meet the expectations of both groups.

Authentic agritourism is carried out on a fully functioning working farm where the agricultural activities are predominant over the touristic ones, and where familiar and direct contact with the hosting household and its members takes place in an unaltered agricultural environment [15]. In this context, the authentic lifestyle of a farm is important, “characterized by tight agricultural connection as its name says, local culture [and] rural lifestyles” [24].

Authentic agritourism is based on the specific concept of a touristic offer on a working farm where the main income should be generated through agriculture and the touristic offers do not represent commodification decoupled from the agricultural assets of the farm. It should be differentiated, first, from other types of rural tourism and second, from other types of tourism on a working farm, such as commercial agritourism and open agritourism (learning/exploration and participation). In other words, agritourism holds no meaning as a type of rural tourism if there is no clear terminological distinction between agritourism and the other types of rural tourism.

2. LEISURE FARM – LIFE-SEEING CONCEPT

Leisure farm activities can create positive interactions between non-farmers and farmers and can raise awareness about agriculture, which ultimately benefits farmers [25]. Examples of leisure farm opportunities presently include outdoor recreation (e.g., fishing, hunting, wildlife photography, horseback riding), educational experiences (e.g., farm and cannery tours, cooking classes, wine tastings, cattle drives, ranch work experiences), entertainment (e.g., harvest festivals, corn mazes), hospitality services (e.g., farm/ranch stays, guided tours, outfitter services), on-farm direct sales (e.g., u-pick operations and roadside stands), and off-farm direct sales (e.g., farmers’ markets, county/state fairs, and special events). The leisure farm is an important product and market diversification strategy for farmers worldwide. Busby and Rendle [1] state that nature and agricultural-based tourism is the fastest-growing segment of the tourism industry.

To generate tangible benefits, including diversified income sources and increased public appreciation, farmers need to become increasingly entrepreneurial in their business approaches, including adopting business plans for leisure farms, seeking professional advice, and participating in regional and larger-scale tourism marketing initiatives [26]. A specific type of rural tourism is integrated into an agricultural estate and inhabited by the proprietor and allows visitors to take part in agricultural or complementary activities on the property [20]. A leisure farm is a business concept that merges two areas, including agriculture and tourism, to open new profitable markets and provide travel experiences with the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of a farm [27].

Wilson [22] states that leisure farms play a significant support role for many agricultural enterprises, whereas Sharpley & Vass [28] suggest that some leisure farm experiences become a desirable option to today’s leisure farms. In recent years, several studies widely recognize that leisure farms have a central relationship to value-added production, direct farm marketing, and rural development [29].

Despite this, according to the results of their study, Arroyo et al. [16] suggest that the activities offered on non-working agricultural facilities or those in which the setting is only used for landscape purposes should not be promoted as agritourism to avoid further confusion and allow a more fluent dynamic among stakeholders.

The concept of agritourism is widely considered in the literature, in particular the extent to which it may revitalize ailing rural economies and societies, yet consensus on a definition remains elusive; typically, definitions reflect particular contexts [11].

3. WORKING FARM – LIFE-PARTICIPATING CONCEPT

A working farm is the place where agricultural activities are practiced [11]. Authors suggest that tourist contact with agricultural activity can be separated into three types: direct contact, indirect contact, and passive contact. Direct contact with agricultural activity indicates that agricultural activities are a tangible feature in the tourist experience (e.g. milking a cow; harvesting a crop). Indirect contact indicates a secondary connection to agricultural activity within the tourist experience, perhaps through contact with agricultural produce (e.g. crop maze, food processing, sale of or consumption in meals). Passive contact with agricultural activity indicates that tourism and agriculture are operated independently and only the farm location is held in common (e.g. outdoor activities) [11].

The term ‘working farm’ signifies a farm where agriculture is currently being practiced [30], where agriculture is defined as the activity of rearing of animals and the production crop plants through cultivation of the soil for consumption and for sale as food and other commodities [11].

A working farm is not a key requirement of agritourism from the visitor perspective [9]. Clarke [31] illustrates numerous characteristics used to define a working farm: physical area of land, proportion of agricultural income, and the individuals’ expertise and motivations.

4. DIFFERENT VIEWS ON AGRITOURISM

One implication of this is that farmer and tourist perceptions of authenticity can potentially be quite different, primarily because their original understanding of agriculture and what it entails is quite different. This also shows how agricultural activities staged by the farmer for tourism may be perceived by tourists as providing a genuine insight into farming practices. However, ultimately an authentic experience of agriculture may only be had by tourists where agricultural activities are practiced as they normally would be. The prospect of tourists experiencing authentic agricultural activity is quite rare and normally involves physical participation in farm tasks. In most cases where tourists have the opportunity to come in direct contact with authentic agricultural activities, there will be at least some element of staging [11].

In response to these challenges, a study was undertaken in 2011 to unveil the understanding of agritourism among three stakeholder groups: providers (i.e., Farmers), current and potential consumers (i.e., Residents), and those assisting in maximizing the farmer/visitor dynamic (i.e., Extension Faculty). Taking into consideration different stakeholders’ perspectives to develop a shared understanding of agritourism can lead to a more fluent communication, collaboration, and networking among stakeholders, as well as promote local empowerment and sustainability. A shared understanding of agritourism that embodies key stakeholders’ perspectives can also facilitate its promotion among the public, technical diffusion among farmers, and furthering the development of related study fields, such as rural sociology and tourism [16]. Identifying different meanings is important to develop successful definitions of tourism-related activities, in which case it is imperative to incorporate meanings from the supply and demand sides because of their academic and marketing implications [32].

In their study, Choo and Patrick [33] examined and integrated social interaction in agritourism service encounters into four distinctive relationships, including: 1) agritourist-to-service provider; 2) agritourist-to-local resident; 3) agritourist-to-companion tourist, and 4) agritourist-to-other customer. They also examined the link between agritourists' social interactions and satisfaction with their service experience.

Holistic consideration of agritourism as an inseparable supply and demand-side phenomenon depends on concurrent consideration of both supply and demand-side perspectives [9]. Their study had three objectives: 1) to explore the main drivers of agritourism supply and demand; 2) to evaluate how agritourism supply corresponds with demand, and 3) to consider the implications of these relationships and the benefits provided for agritourism policy and practice. The main conclusion of their study was that agritourism examples in Scotland are dominated by products and services that are not predominantly focused on agriculture and are connected as a "conventional tourism transaction".

Providers and visitors suggest that direct interaction with agriculture in the context of agritourism is a valuable opportunity for agricultural experiences and education [9]. In their study, Dubois, Cawley and Schmitz [6] analyzed the associated imagery and the relationships with what is provided, expected, and experienced by tourists on working farms in Wallonia (Belgium) and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. The central objectives of their research were to identify the elements included in the imagery promoted by tourism agencies, imagery of farmers involved in agritourism and their perceptions of tourism expectations and activities provided on a farm and the imagery held, and the experiences expected by tourists who had and had not visited a farm.

5. TOURISTS VIEW

Numerous authors note the importance of physical environment (images and ideals) that attract visitors to countryside areas [18], [34]. The demand is growing for agritourism and most of that demand is coming from urban areas [9]. The main reason for agritourism growth demand is associated with a general growth in the short break activity markets, and increasing numbers of tourists reacting against conventional mass-market tourism [35].

Tourists in rural areas (rural tourists and agritourists) want to understand the local culture, speak the local language, to raise trust and to be liked by the rural inhabitants [36]. In their study, Flanigan, Blackstock and Hunter [9] admit that visitors' demand of agritourism is primarily motivated by general drivers that relate to tourism and recreation more broadly (including location, value for money, and attractive scenery).

Streifeneder [15] presents the minimum required characteristics concerning agritourism activities from the demand-side: overnight stay or same-day visit, a certain minimum interaction with the farmer and/or members of his family, no performance of agricultural activities for a long time without financial reimbursement, and payments for the agritourism services or products receiving receipt.

In their study, Dubois, Cawley and Schmitz [6] revealed three broad, cross-cutting market segments: 1) tourists who prefer a rural environment incorporating farm animals, agriculture and a natural setting; 2) tourists who prefer a farm holiday as an opportunity for enjoying farm and regional products and 3) tourists who seek farm accommodation in an area that provides access to tourist sites, cities, and provides a swimming pool.

6. FARMERS VIEW

Agritourism offers farmers the possibility of diversifying and generating additional income through touristic on-farm activities to help balance the continuously decreasing income from agricultural activities [3]. This enables farmers to stay on their farms and maintain cultivation of the land by increasing their operational income without altering the dominant agricultural character. The more general understanding of agritourism is that its activities should support and promote agricultural resources, traditions, activities, and culture. From an agro-economic theory point of view, the development of agritourism is linked to internal and external push-and-pull factors within the framework of structural change and rural area development. Agritourism, as one internal income diversification strategy, may arise due to a lack of off-farm income opportunities; it also may arise due to the farm's appropriate operational and social structures or its location in a touristic destination.

Therefore, a study was conducted by Barbieri et al. [3] to examine the perceived benefits of agritourism in Missouri (US) by assessing the importance of agritourism to the success of 16 entrepreneurial goals specific to farmers. The goals were selected to represent four dimensions (i.e., farm profits, market opportunities, family connections, and personal pursuits) that previous studies reported to be relevant in the development of on-farm enterprises, including agritourism [2], [20], [37].

A complex arrangement of economic and noneconomic goals drives the development of overall farm enterprise diversification and, specifically, agritourism [2]. The most common goals associated with agritourism are economic, including compensating for fluctuations in agricultural income, generating additional revenues and expanding market share, as well as non-economic goals, such as keeping the farm in the family, developing a hobby, or enjoying the rural lifestyle [20], [38].

Several studies have classified goals driving agritourism development into fewer dimensions or categories, the most predominant being the following four. The first goal dimension relates to the farm [household] profitability, such as stabilizing or increasing farm revenues and reducing farm debts. The second goal dimension relates to external factors, including those related to responding to market opportunities and social bonding, such as the ability of the farm family to interact with customers and educate the public. The third goal dimension relates to the farm household, such as keeping the farm within the family, their ability to continue farming and providing opportunities to keep the family together. The fourth goal dimension refers to personal pursuits, such as those related to the individual hobbies and interests of the farm operator, including their enjoyment of the rural lifestyle, retirement plans, or to retain their business independence [3], [20].

In their study, Flanigan et al. [9] state that agritourism supply is primarily motivated by socio-economic drivers (income, employment, labor) in association with contextual factors and resource consideration. For farmers, the primary appeal of working farm stays is the practical and financially feasible solution offered by the tourism market to fulfill farm labor shortages.

Farmers often respond to the tourist expectations by modifying their farming activities in ways that pose a threat to their authenticity [39]. Some farmers are moving towards developing agritourism separate from the farm enterprise where accommodation is on a working farm, but with no connection to agriculture [6].

Streifeneder [15] presents all key features a provider of authentic agritourism should provide, divided into two groups. Primary features are: an authentic working farm, complementary to predominating farming activities, monitoring of income, accommodation on farmland, enabled interaction, and accessibility. Secondary features are: quality/standard of the accommodation, infrastructure and facilities, supply of agricultural products and/or gastronomic services based on a certain number and variety of products from the farm, the possibility of buying a certain number of agricultural products from the farm and the variety of products produced on the farm that are offered to guests, specific quality of the environment and landscape of the location, number and variety of on-farm leisure facilities offered, educational services of individual courses offered on the farm by the farmer or members of the family, explanations of the production process of agricultural products, presentation of normal agricultural activities inherent in the daily life of the farm, openness regarding the farm facilities and the possibility to partake in the farmer's family life and activities, and whole-day presence of at least one family member as a contact person for the guest on the farm.

7. DIVERSIFICATION

Diversifying a farm to include recreation and leisure activities for visitors, commonly labelled agritourism, is increasingly being adopted in the United States and is suggested to bring economic and non-economic benefits to farmers, visitors, and communities. In this way, agritourism helps family farms to remain in business, preserve American agricultural heritage, maximize the productivity of farm resources through their recreational use, and even to improve the economic situation of local communities [21], [22]. Farm diversification into tourism presents the potential to generate additional income, diversify the farming economy, lower risk and uncertainties, and form a symbiotic relationship with agriculture for farming communities [20].

Agritourism appears as a convenient diversification strategy because it does not require excessive investments in farm infrastructure, labor or equipment. Farms diversifying into tourism are likely to focus on those activities that utilize their existing resources, rather than requiring additional investment. Farm operators tend to offer activities, similar to their existing farm procedures, which do not have to dramatically alter farm production and may take advantage of the flexibility of individual schedules and experiences [40]. However, economic benefits of agritourism can vary, depending on numerous factors, such as the stage of agritourism development, location, other attractions [41].

8. CASE STUDY: AGRITOURISM IN SLOVENIA

Rozman et al. [42] presented the initial hierarchy of the model for measuring service quality on a tourist farm. This model was set up through the brain-storming of experts involved into model development and was decomposed further according to the answers obtained from the questionnaires. The final structure of attributes for the assessment of tourist farm service quality is shown in Figure 1.

In this model, two primary evaluation dimensions were taken into account: Guest perception and Farm operator perception. This model presents a good example for measuring service quality on a tourist farm, because it includes both perspectives, farmers view and tourists view on agritourism, and for each of these the most relevant attributes were identified.

The Guest perception was decomposed into Premises, Services and Additional services. The Premises consist of attributes that describe the farm location and its buildings: Landscape, Environment and Farm house. The Environment describes the farm surroundings (Architecture, Availability of parking space, Architecture and Cleanness), while the inside of the farm building is embedded in the attribute House (Equipment, Homeliness, Cleanness and Spaciousness). The services are divided into farm Food service (Taste, Quality of serving, Tradition), Drinks (Diversity of drinks offer, Serving quality and their Tradition), and Attitude of farm personnel (Personal to customer, Personal to personal and Cleanness of the personnel). The attribute Additional services describes the availability of additional services provided on the farm (such as Sport, Animation and Souvenirs selling). The attribute New visits represents an important information whether the guest is ready to visit the farm again [42].

The second part of the tree, that is the subtree Farm operator, is divided into Plans for the future (whether the operator is planning to continue with tourist farm operation) and his/her Satisfaction with tourist farm operation (Comparison to other farm work, Satisfaction with the tourist farm: yes/no attribute operation, Income, Labor distribution and whether he/she finds running a tourist farm operation Interesting or not) [42].

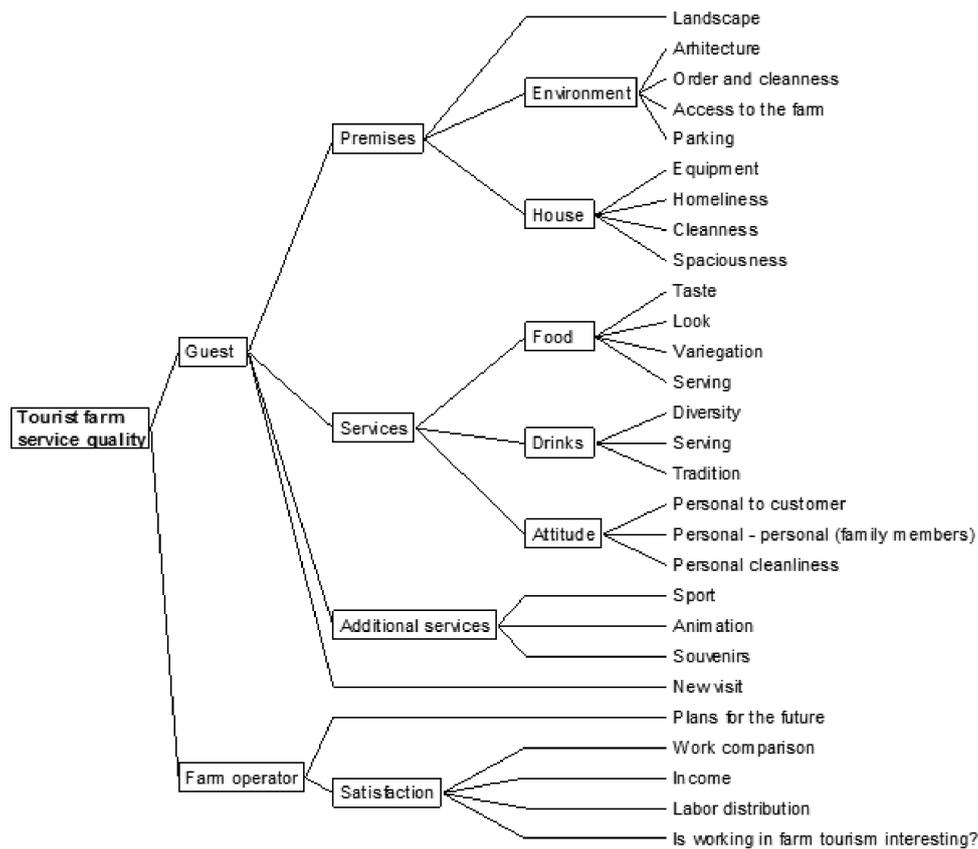


Figure 1: Tree of attributes. Source: Rozman et al. [42].

In the last step of DEXi model development, authors Rozman et al. [42] defined decision rules. Decision rules define the aggregation of values in the model from its inputs through intermediate attributes towards the root. Therefore, decision rules are defined for all internal attributes, including the root; in this model, this gives 12 utility functions in total. Figure 2 shows only one utility function, the one that aggregates the four attributes Premises, Services, Additional services and New visit into the aggregate attribute Guest.

Attribute	Scale
Tourist farm service quality	poor , average; good; very good
Guest	poor , average; good; very good
Premises	unsuitable ; suitable; very suitable
Landscape	unsuitable ; suitable; very suitable
Environment	unsuitable ; suitable; very suitable
Architecture	unsuitable ; suitable; very suitable
Order and cleanness	satisfactory ; good; excellent
Access to the farm	poor , acceptable; good
Parking	no parking place ; acceptable; good
House	poor , acceptable; good
Equipment	unsuitable ; suitable; very suitable
Homeliness	no ; yes
Cleanness	satisfactory ; good; excellent
Spaciousness	unsuitable ; suitable; very suitable
Services	poor , acceptable; good
Food	poor , acceptable; good
Taste	not good ; good; excellent
Look	not good ; good; excellent
Variagation	monotonous ; variegated; very variegated
Serving	poor , acceptable; good
Drinks	poor , acceptable; good
Diversity	monotonous ; diversified; very variegated
Serving	poor , acceptable; good
Tradition	typical ; extra
Attitude	unfriendly ; friendly
Personal to customer	unfriendly ; friendly
Personal - personal (family members)	unfriendly ; friendly
Personal cleanness	not suitable ; suitable
Additional services	poor , acceptable; good
Sport	not available ; available
Animation	not conducted ; conducted sometimes; conductor regullary
Souvenirs	not available ; few; available
New visit	no ; yes
Farm operator	poor , average; good; very good
Plans for the future	no ; yes
Satisfaction	poor , acceptable; good
Work comparison	harder ; more demanding; easier; more pleasant
Income	poor , acceptable; good
Labor distribution	unsuitable ; suitable; very suitable
Is working in farm tourism interesting?	not ; interesting; very interesting

Figure 2: Attribute scales. Source: Rozman et al. [42].

9. CONCLUSION

In established touristic destinations, agritourism diversifies the touristic offer in rural areas, and may complement it (especially because it is suitable for families and older guests), making the region in question more competitive on touristic markets. Currently in Europe, a wide variety of agritourism offers exist, corresponding to new developments in demand. Although agritourism is usually located in, and linked closely to rural areas, it is not limited to purely non-urban regions. It can also be in the agricultural landscape of the immediate city surroundings or urban hinterland. An exemplary case is the 100,000-inhabitant city of Bolzano (South Tyrol, Italy), where agritourism fits very well in the close vicinity of an urban environment, and represents an attractive complementary offer. Moreover, it represents a successful win-win situation for

a rural–urban partnership between (mostly urban) consumers and (mostly rural) agricultural providers. Finally, agritourism increases the added value of a region, generating economic multiplier effects from the spending of guests and visitors [15]. Therefore, rural areas represent excellent natural, human and economic potential which is not enough used [43].

Although the economic benefits of agritourism at the farm level have received some attention in literature, non–economic benefits, such as personal, family or social benefits, need more examination [21], [28]. Agritourism has been suggested to provide an opportunity to improve the likelihood of the survival of the farm business, allowing the farm operator and their family to continue farming and enjoying their rural lifestyle [20], [28].

Agritourism has a complementary role as a competitive alternative offer within the tourism market with a suitable price–performance ratio, corresponding to a touristic demand for regional, authentic rural life, natural experiences, locally made agricultural products, and specific legal and financial framework conditions (favorable taxation and investment support schemes) in many European countries [15].

Agritourism produces many benefits for farms, their operators, the surrounding communities, and society. Perceptions are generally positive towards the introduction of tourism into rural areas. Blending the two industries may alleviate local issues, including labor shortages in tourism and market shortages in agriculture. The positive influence of agritourism on farm family income may also be combined with the contribution the business makes to the local community via sales taxes, local employment and stimulation of local business such as restaurants and shops. The other benefits are non–economic, such as maintaining rural lifestyles and increasing awareness and preservation of local customs and unique cultural traits of an area [2].

At the farm level, entrepreneurial diversification is believed to create a more stable, and often higher, income for the producer. In times of economic distress, such as a poor harvest or depressed prices, agritourism may provide an avenue for generating alternative or supplemental income for the farm family [20]. In most cases, agritourism serves as a supplemental source of income of a lower–risk coping mechanism, while agricultural production remains the primary focus [2].

Agritourism is important to enhancing the cultural sphere of community life [44] and can offer an incentive to preserve and restore old buildings and farm equipment, which can increase the attractiveness of the agritourism enterprise [3].

In their research, Tew and Barbieri [2] stated that most respondents from the population of the farm households in Missouri reported an increase in farm profits since adding agritourism to their operations. The economic benefits derived from agritourism are related to the sale of other farm products such as value–added items, including food, wine, and decorative items [3].

Agritourism has been suggested to provide an opportunity to improve the likelihood of the survival of the farm business, allowing the farm operator and their family to continue farming and enjoying their rural lifestyles [20].

Agritourism provides multiple activities in rural areas, through which the visitor may become acquainted with features of agriculture and rurality, such as the green and natural environment, regional gastronomy, rural ways of life or heritage preservation [6].

Farm-based tourism has increasingly given farmers an opportunity to generate additional income, to be an avenue for direct marketing to consumers [2], and a way of alleviating social and economic problems: loss of income, increased expenses, globalization, and others, associated with decline of traditional agriculture industries [11]. Agritourism involves an understanding of hospitality, including direct interactions with agritourists and consumers, and requires farmers to have extended marketing practices [33].

Several studies have classified goals driving agritourism development into four dimensions: 1) farm revenues and reducing farm debts; 2) responding to market opportunities and social bonding; 3) keeping the farm within the family, with the ability to continue farming and to keep the family together, and 4) personal pursuits, such as individual hobbies and interests of the farm operator, enjoyment of the rural lifestyle, retirement plans or retaining business independence [2].

Agritourism also brings some additional benefits to the farm household and business, such as capturing new customers, educating the public about agriculture, and enhancing the quality of life for the farm family. Agritourism is also perceived as important for accomplishing market-driven goals, suggesting that the economic role of agritourism should also include economic marketing benefits in terms of increased awareness and market share of farm products and services, and branding benefits, among others. Agritourism is also very important as a marketing tool, which may create overall public awareness, potentially boost sales of the farm products, and produce several personal and family benefits [2].

The benefits of agritourism are not restricted to private economic gain, but can also potentially extend to wider public benefits, such as public education about food and farming [22] and sustainable development of rural areas [17].

Improved visibility and influence of agritourism in rural development and tourism policies would lead to improved awareness of agritourism per se, and also greater awareness of the potential benefits that agritourism can bring in the context of farm diversification [9].

Extending tourism into the agricultural sector through the development of agritourism is, in principle, both logical and potentially fruitful in enhancing the well-being of the local community [45].

Agritourism can help meet growing demand for outdoor recreation and contact with more traditional ways of life among recreationists and tourists, who seek alternatives to sun destinations and mass tourism [9]. There are often economic motivations for the adoption of agritourism, but it is sometimes explained by providers as a lifestyle choice in which welcoming visitors and educating them about agriculture and rural life may be prioritized over the financial benefits that arise [46].

From an agroeconomic theory point of view, the development of agritourism is linked to internal and external push-and-pull factors within the framework of structural change and rural area development. Agritourism, as one internal income diversification strategy, may arise due to a lack of off-farm income opportunities; it also may arise due to the farm's appropriate operational and social structures, or its location in a touristic destination.

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