

TOURISTS' MOTIVATIONS AND PREFERENCES FOR AGRITOURISM ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

The agritourism is a category of tourism in full expansion worldwide. By its social and economic contribution to the development of rural communities and farms, the agritourism became an attractive alternative for the diversification of agricultural businesses. The main aim of the present paper is to identify, based on the international literature of concern, which are the reasons that determine the tourists to choose agritourism as a form of leisure. The studies carried out by specialists in different countries point out that the tourists' preference for agritourism is highly influenced by the context in which they are, and is generated by a wide range of "push" and "pull" type of factors. The tourists have different expectations from a stay at the agritourism farm due to a large variety of motivations. According to their nature, the reasons to practice agritourism are physical, emotional, cultural and personal, being subject to status or desire for self-development. The physical and mental relaxation, the opportunity to spend nice time together with the family or friends, the possibility to buy fresh fruits and vegetables and the wish to have direct contact with nature and to enjoy the beauty of landscapes are the most obvious motives that determine the tourists to attempt an agritourism experience. The participation at agricultural activities does not represented a major interest for agritourists. The relationships between the tourists' preferences for agritourism activities and their motivations show that they are interested in those activities that are consistent with the initial reasons sustaining their decision to practice agritourism.

Key words: agritourism, tourist motivations, activity preferences

An issue on which the specialists in agritourism field had reached an overall consensus is the fact that the succes of any form of tourism involves the obtaining of satisfaction on behalf of the consumers of tourism products. In order to achieve the tourist satisfaction, it is necessary to know what motivates the tourists to travel towards a certain tourism destination and to choose a certain form of toursim, as well as what they appreciate the most during the stay and which is their post-travel behaviour regarding the future tourism-related intentions (Prokopis C., 2010).

The perception of the tourist destination by visitor and the formation of its expectations regarding it are influenced by the motivation (Correia A. *et al.*, 2007). The motivations to travel involves a range of needs that drive a person to engage in a tourist activity (Park D. and Yoon Y., 2009).

Considered a sub-set or a specific form of rural tourism, and in some cases not clearly differentiated from it, the agritourism can be described as an alternative enterprise that provides activities directly linked with the agrarian environment and with the agricultural products, services and experiences (Matezold J., 2002).

The agritourists are the rural tourists who consume agritourism goods and services, while agritourists' needs involve a set of attributes that they would like to obtain as a result of their consumption or purchase. The preferences of the agritourism consumer refer to the level of his interest in the products, services and facilities offered by an agritourism attraction (Nasers M.S., 2009).

The agritourist expectations from the tourist experience are very divers according to the individual, considering both its tangible and intangible aspects (Prokopis C., 2010), the travel frequency to the agritourism attractions being dependent on residence location, travel distance, gender and race (Carpio C.E. *et al.*, 2008).

Knowing and understanding the way in which the agritourism is considered and the experiences sought by tourists in rural areas will allow to determine some factors that are influencing the agritourism demand, thus contributing to the assessment of development and diversification of the tourism activities offered by farmers (Varmazyari H. *et al.*, 2018).

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MATERIAL AND METHOD

The purpose of the present paper is to highlight the most popular motivations that determine the potential tourists to choose the agritourism as a form of leisure. At the same time, the objective was to identify the services and activities preferred by agritourists, on the basis of which farmers can develop more effective promotion strategies and offer more attractive facilities.

In many countries, the terms agritourism and rural tourism are synonymous, which is why our analysis is more extended, referring to aspects regarding the motivations and preferences of rural tourists in general, not only specifically to agritourists. Based entirely on the review of the specialized literature, this paper attempts to answer two essential questions for the development of rural tourism and agritourism: 1) Why tourists come to visit farms and rural areas? and 2) What would they be willing to spend their money on?

By analyzing the international literature it was found that there are not many studies on tourists' motivations for the consumption of agritourism products and services. In order to obtain the most relevant information, hereby were used the results of studies carried out in several countries on 3 continents (Asia, North America, Europe). With this respect was gathered information about the reasons and preferences of tourists from very different geographical areas, both in terms of socio-economic conditions and stages of agritourism development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The agritourists are very heterogeneous in terms of preferences for agritourism activities and services (Barbieri C., 2014; Molera L. and Albaladejo P.I., 2007), being driven by a very complex and wide panel of motivations (Molera L. and Albaladejo P.I., 2007; Park D. and Yoon Y., 2009), these depending largely on the characteristics of the agritourism attractions (Jolly D. and Reynolds K., 2005; Sotomayor S. *et al.*, 2014). The motivation to practice agritourism is determined by a sophisticated set of socio-economic variables, being subject to various external influences (Moraru R.A. *et al.*, 2016), the tourists having different expectations and motivations on different occasions to visit the tourist destination (Lashley C. and Lincoln G., 2003). Furthermore, the tourists' preference for agritourism is highly influenced by the context in which they are, such as health condition, professional and family situation (single or married, with or without children) (Santeramo F.G. and Barbieri C., 2017).

The research carried out by Tsephe N.P. and Eyono Obono S.D. (2013) allowed, based on the review of specialized literature, the identification of factors that influence the motivation of tourists visiting the rural area, these being divided into 4 categories:

- physical factors („pleasure and relaxation of body and mind”, „memorable and once in a lifetime experiences”, „to seek adventure and pleasure”);
- cultural factors („the need to explore and learn more about nature”);
- interpersonal factors („the need to escape from busy daily life”, „the quest for safety offered by friendly local people”, „the quest for pollution free, peaceful, hassle free environment and beautiful landscapes”, „affordability of rural destinations”);
- factors linked with status and prestige („willingness for intellectual enrichment and to discover new things”).

Consumers' preference for a particular form of tourism is determined by “push” and “pull” factors. Tsephe N.P. and Eyono Obono S.D. (2013) also classified the rural tourism motivation factors into these two types (*table 1*). As the agritourism is a special form of rural tourism, we consider that the same motivational factors also act in the case of agrotourists.

Table 1

Motivation factors for rural tourism
(after Tsephe N.P. and Eyono Obono S.D., 2013)

„Push“ Factors	„Pull“ Factors
Escape	Memorable and life time experience
Pleasure and relaxation	Adventure
Intellectual enrichment	Safety
Learn more about nature	Pollution free, peaceful, hassle free environment, beautiful landscapes
	Affordability

The “push” type motivational factors are closely linked to the individual characteristics of the tourist and implies his desire to satisfy his personal needs (for example: rest and relaxation, escape, adventure, health and fitness, social interaction etc.). The “pull” type motivational factors are focused on the attractiveness of tourist destinations, taking into account the attributes of the destination (such as: beauty of the landscape, climate, recreational opportunities, cultural events etc.) and the types of facilities offered (e.g.: quality of services, accessibility, quality of facilities).

Many of the specialty studies have shown that the most popular “push” factors were „knowledge-seeking”, „relaxation”, and „family togetherness”, while the most common “pull” factors refers to „natural and historic

environments”, „cost”, „facilities”, „safety” and „accessibility” (Park D. and Yoon Y., 2009).

Most studies on the motivation for visiting agritourism attractions have been conducted in the USA. Thus, a study that covered the entire national US territory found that the main reasons for agritourists to visit farms were „enjoying the rural landscape”, „visiting family and friends” and „learning about food production” (Barry J.J. and Hellerstein D., 2004). According to the research carried out by Sotomayor S. *et al.* (2011) in Missouri (USA), the most important motivations reported by agritourists were those related to the activities with the family („do something with their family”) and experiencing nature („view the scenic beauty”, „enjoy the smells and sounds of nature”) (table 2). Regarding their favorite activities, most agritourists have expressed their desire to collect fruits and vegetables by themselves (75,9%), to participate in a festival or other event in the rural area (70,3%) and to have the opportunity to observe wildlife (38,5%).

Table 2

The importance of motivations for visiting farms and the main activities preferred by agritourists
(after Sotomayor S. *et al.*, 2011)

Importance of motivations		Main favorite recreation/leisure activities	
Motivations	Importance*	Activities	% of agritourists
Do something with their family	4.28	Pick-your-own fruit/vegetable	75.9
View the scenic beauty	4.25	Attend a festival or event	70.3
Enjoy the smells and sounds of nature	4.06	Wildlife observation	38.5
Experience new and different things	3.98	Hiking, biking or cross-country	33.9
Learn more about nature	3.98	Fishing	33.6
Have a change from their daily routine	3.90	Other recreational activity	30.9
Get exercise	3.84	Boating, canoeing or sailing	25.8
Give their mind a rest	3.70	Attend a private party	20.9
Experience excitement	3.69	Swimming	19.7
Use their equipment	3.65	Horseback riding	13.7
Recall good times from the past	3.59	Hunting	13.0
Experience solitude	3.57	Drive motorized RVs	9.0
Be with people having similar values	3.49		
Think about their personal values	3.43		
Share their agritourism/outdoor skills	3.07		

* Based on the five point Likert scale: from 1 (“very unimportant”) to 5 (“very important”).

Following the study undertaken in California (USA) by Jolly D. and Reynolds K. (2005), it was found that the strongest motives underlying the consumers' interest in participating in agritourism were: buying fresh and home-made products, supporting local agricultural producers, interaction with nature and relaxation (*fig. 1*). The experiencing of farm activities was the least requested service among those offered by the agritourism farms in this region.

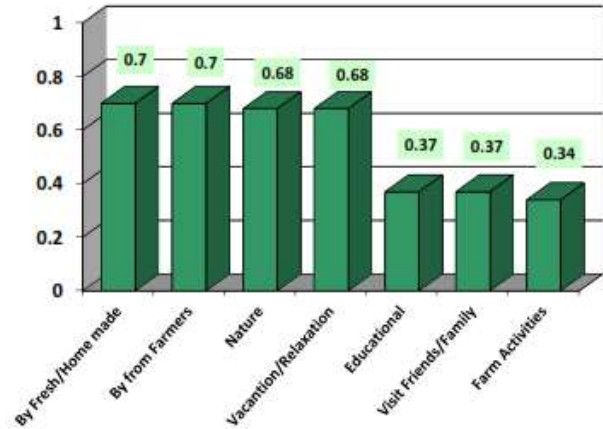


Figure 1 Motivation for participating in agritourism activities (Mean Ranking, scale:0-1)
(Jolly D. and Reynolds K., 2005)

The results obtained in California (USA) by Jolly D. and Reynolds K. (2005) have been largely confirmed by other subsequent studies conducted in different states of the USA. Thus, the opportunity to purchase fresh products (especially vegetables and fruits) directly from local farmers was also a priority for agritourists in Michigan (Che D. *et al.*, 2006) and Tennessee (Jensen K. *et al.*, 2006). Also in Iowa, the study undertaken by Nasers M.S. (2009) highlighted an almost similar situation, with the difference that spending time together with the family or friends was a more popular reason than the opportunity to buy fresh agricultural products and to support of local farmers.

Jensen K. *et al.* (2006) established that the main visitors' preferences for the activities and services offered by Tennessee agritourism attractions are, in order of their importance, the following: purchasing fresh products, on-site restrooms, adequate parking, the opportunity to learn about the processes of obtaining or manufacturing the farm or business products, the location (accessibility) of the farms. A moderate interest was expressed by the agritourists for farm scenery, picnic areas and the opportunity to enjoy the presence of farm animals or pets. The purchasing of food and beverages or souvenirs and handicraft products is not very attractive for the visitors to agritourism establishments in Tennessee. The fact that the farm location and on-

site restrooms are important factors that influence tourists' decision to take part to agritourism is also evident from the study carried on Nasers M.S. (2009) in Iowa (USA).

According to previously mentioned research (Jolly D. and Reynolds K., 2005; Che D. *et al.*, 2006; Sotomayor S. *et al.*, 2011), it seems that the agritourists visiting American farms don't particularly feel the need to participate in agricultural activities or to improve their agricultural skills. This idea is also supported by the conclusions of other studies carried out in Europe and Asia. In Scotland, the most agritourists are less motivated by the agriculture-related features, such as the possibility of being involved in farm activities or observing agricultural activities (Gladstone J. and Morris A., 1998;

Flanigan S. *et al.*, 2015). In Turkey, the participation in agricultural festivals and events, adventure and involvement in farm activities are not priorities for agritourists (Artuğer S. and Kendir H., 2013), while, in Iran, learning and experimenting agricultural practices are not considered to be among the attractive agritourism services (Varmazyari H. *et al.*, 2018).

Based on their study in Thailand, Srikatanyoo N. and Campiranon C. (2010) stated that agritourism consumers are weakly motivated by the opportunity to improve their agricultural skills and to get involved in farm/agritourism activities, as well as by the opportunity to participate in agricultural events/festivals or to purchase agricultural goods (*table 3*).

Table 3

Summary of the Means - Agritourist Motivations and Needs (Srikatanyoo N. and Campiranon C., 2010)

Agritourist Motivations	Importance*	Agritourist Needs	Importance*
to relax mentally	4.19	beautiful scenery	4.25
to enjoy scenery	4.08	safety	4.22
to relax physically	4.07	clean and green environment	4.22
to enjoy life	3.93	convenience of restroom and shower facilities	4.14
to be in an agricultural environment	3.90	diversity of attractions	4.01
to discover new places and things	3.89	convenience of bedroom facilities	3.97
to escape from day-by-day stress	3.86	taste of food and beverage	3.90
to be together with family	3.85	easy to access	3.89
to improve health and wellbeing	3.83	attractions close to main touring routes	3.81
to build strength relationships	3.78	convenience of communication facilities	3.80
to get away from city life	3.70	educational opportunities about agriculture	3.72
to experience agricultural life and activities	3.69	activities that allow for family participation	3.64
to make friends or meet people with similar interest	3.56	participation in agritourism activities	3.60
to improve agricultural skills	3.52	agricultural goods purchasing opportunities	3.51
to attend agricultural event or festival	3.49	non-agriculture activities	3.39
to purchase agricultural goods	3.47		
to have an adventure	3.47		

* Based on five point Likert scale: from 1 ("very unimportant") to 5 ("very important")

On the other hand, Santeramo F.G. and Barbieri, C. (2017) believes that the agritourists are seeking, first off all, to reconnect themselves with the agricultural environment and local farmers. The visitors' preferences related to the agritourism services in a geographical area depend, in the opinion of Varmazyari H. *et al.* (2018), on the level of industrialization, the urbanization rate and the agritourism history in the respective area.

Based on the suggestions found in the literature, Ainley S. and Smale B. (2010) chose the most popular reasons for which tourists visit the rural area and the agritourism farms, these being divided into three categories of benefits: *family, relaxation, learning*. Their study conducted in Canada showed that these three dimensions of benefits are considered by all types of rural tourists as having almost equal importance. In the case of agritourists, which represented about 4.7% of the total rural tourists in Canada, spending time with family was the most mentioned reason, preceding

the desire for relaxation and the need to learning of new things.

In the UK, the favorite motives for practicing rural tourism are of psychological nature: „relaxation/well-being” (45%), „fresh air” (24%), „peace and quiet” (22%), „fitness and good health” (14%) (Countryside Commission, 1995).

Following the results of their study conducted in Finland, Tyrvainen L. *et al.* (2001) are of the opinion that the rural tourists are primarily motivated by the desire for change, relaxation and to experience something new. Establishing social contacts and having a pleasant time with family were found as relatively important reasons. Relaxation is the major motivating factor also in Komppula's opinion (2005), who states that Finnish rural tourists want primarily a quiet and stress-free vacation, to be in touch with nature and enjoy beautiful landscapes. Srikatanyoo N. and Campiranon C. (2010) achieved similar results in Thailand, where the

agritourists were mainly driven to visit farms in order to relax physically and mentally, to discover nature and to enjoy green environment (table 3).

In Turkey, the agritourists are strongly motivated to visit farms by getting relaxation in an agricultural environment, expressed through reasons like: „to enjoy the scenery”, „to enjoy life”, „to relax mentally”, „to improve health and well-being”, „to get away from city life”, „to relax physically, „to escape from day-to-day stress” (Artuğer S. and Kendir H., 2013). The researches carried on in Korea by Park D. and Yoon Y. (2009) concluded that the primary motivations for rural tourism and agritourism were „family togetherness”, „relaxation”, „socialisation”, „learning” and „novelty and excitement”. These results confirm the conclusions of a previous study by Song D. (2005), which showed that the favorite reasons for Korean rural tourists were „escape from everyday life” and „family togetherness and learning”.

Devesa M. *et al.* (2010) examined the motives for tourists to visit rural areas of Spain, concluding that the most common reasons for this are: rest, tranquility and contact with nature (44.8%), culture (24%), proximity, gastronomy and nature (13.9%), returning to origin (17.4%). The results of another study carried out in region of Murcia (Spain) by Molera L. and Albaladejo P.I. (2007) indicated that the main benefits sought by rural tourists were, in order of their preferences: spending leisure time with family, relaxation, active rest, knowledge of rural life. The beautiful scenery and the natural environment were found by Canoves G. *et al.* (2005) as basic motivators for the rural tourists to visit the Spanish countryside.

A study regarding agritourism in India revealed that the tourists are primarily interested in the typically rural food, the opportunity to participate in farm activities and about entertainment possibilities, being less pretentious about the quality of accommodation facilities, accessibility and location of agro-tourism attraction and adequate parking facilities (Kumbhar V.M., 2012). A major preference to the consumption of local natural foods and fresh agricultural products was expressed, also, by the agritourists in Iran (Varmazyari H. *et al.*, 2018).

In Cyprus, the study conducted by Prokopis C. (2010) on the agritourism market segmentation based on traveler's motives or benefits sought by visiting farms, revealed that the most tourists were driven to the agritourism attractions due to the facilities/attributes of tourist destination (such as: authenticity, local traditions/customs, local traditional gastronomy, handmade art crafts) and the opportunity to perform outdoor or sports

activities (table 4). The reasons related to the natural environment or those of psychosomatic nature have proved to be of secondary importance.

Table 4
The main categories of agritourists, according to the reasons for visiting the countryside (after Prokopis C., 2010)

Categories of agritourists	% of agritourists
“Destination driven”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “authenticity seekers” ○ “gastronomy seekers” ○ “archaeology seekers” 	29
“Activity driven”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “walkers” ○ “cyclists” ○ “sport activity seekers” ○ “horse riders” 	26
“Natural environment driven”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “nature seekers” ○ “flora seekers” ○ “fauna seekers” ○ “bird watchers” ○ “entomologists” 	17
“Tranquility/psychosomatic driven”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “relaxers” ○ “escapists” ○ “nostalgia seekers” ○ “spirituality seekers” ○ “novel seekers” 	16
“Personal attention/Hospitality driven”	10
Agritourists “for other reasons driven” to the countryside	2

Prokopis C.'s (2010) study indicates that the general satisfaction was expressed by the agritourists who stated that, in addition to meeting their both physiological and psychological needs and expectations, they also experienced the element of „pleasant surprise” at the tourist destination.

CONCLUSIONS

Individual particularities greatly influence the behavior of agritourism consumers, which represents a very heterogeneous category of tourists. The set of motivations for the agritourism experience is generated by a wide range of “push” and “pull” type of factors and it depends significantly on the context in which the tourist is found, related to his family situation, professional or health status. The importance of motivational factors of farm visitors varies greatly from one geographical region to another. As the most prevalent motivating factors for agritourism were found: physically and mentally relaxation, spending free time with family or friends, interaction with nature and opportunity to purchase fresh products directly from local farmers or to enjoy beautiful scenery. For agritourists,

participating at farm activities and learning about agricultural issues did not represent basic motivational factors to visit agritourism attractions.

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