



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Destination Marketing & Management

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jdmm

Research Paper

Exploring emotional response to images used in agritourism destination marketing

Leah Joyner^{a,*}, Carol Kline^b, Jason Oliver^c, Daniel Kariko^d^a University of Utah, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, 1901 E South Campus Drive, Annex C, Room 1085, Salt Lake City, UT 84112, United States^b Hospitality and Tourism Management, Appalachian State University, 4078 Peacock Hall, Boone, NC 28608, United States^c Roger Williams University, Bristol, RI 02809, United States^d Jenkins Fine Arts Center, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Agritourism destinations
Farm photography
Farm animals
Marketing images
Focus groups
Photo-elicitation
Authenticity

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the role that photography can play in agritourism destination marketing (ADM). The study utilized photo-elicitation and included five focus groups: two farmer groups, two visitors groups, and one of Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) staff and community members from the Greenbrier Valley in West Virginia. Participants were shown farm images used for agritourism marketing, and their responses were teased into themes. Results indicated that subjects preferred photos portraying animals and farmers together as well as photographs of farmers interacting with tourists. Participants also preferred photographs including children. Related to nostalgia, historical structures and landscapes were favorites. Visitors preferred visually appealing animals while common farm practices (e.g. animal ear tags) were considered unpleasant. The presence of fences evoked negative emotions from tourists and color images were preferred for promotions by farmers and tourists. The results can aid destination marketers by providing insight into the reactions certain photographs elicit for various stakeholders.

1. Introduction

Agritourism offers a spectrum of benefits to host farms, visitors, and rural communities. As the industry continues to grow, so does the need for information to guide the selection of effective imagery for marketing agritourism destinations. Agritourism destinations attract diverse audiences, ranging from local residents, home cooks, academics, and farmers themselves. Farms who host visitors must identify their niche target audiences, and, in doing so, are faced with the task of selecting appropriate imagery to appeal to each group. Through a case study involving imagery used to market agritourism destinations in West Virginia, this study discusses the complexities in selecting images that appeal to a broad range of visitors. Utilizing a collection of images used for marketing by a group of pasture based livestock farms in the Greenbrier Valley, the authors explored how visitors with varying ranges of experience with farming, community residents, and farmers responded differently to certain photographic elements.

Agritourism consists of 'farming-related activities carried out on a working farm or other agricultural settings for entertainment or education purposes' (Arroyo, Barbieri, & Rich, 2013, p. 39), and provides an opportunity for direct farmer-to-consumer marketing. Agritourism

activities that might occur on a farm include but are not limited to: pick your own systems, recreational activities, hosted events such as weddings or festivals, guided tours, and dining or accommodation opportunities on the farm (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2009). Weaver (2006) describes agritourism, as one of the oldest forms of sustainable tourism, and notes its high potential to contribute to rural economies. According to the US Census, 23,350 farms took advantage of agritourism's economic benefits in 2007, reporting \$566 million in agritourism income (Thessen, 2007). Drawing visitors from other areas to farm attractions can bring substantial income to other community members because it creates the opportunity for tourists to spend money at local attractions, stores, lodging, and restaurants. Agritourism may also act as a tool for preservation of rural heritage (LaPan & Barbieri, 2013), help protect rural landscapes and open spaces (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2009), and contribute to the cultural and social aspects of communities while encouraging entrepreneurship (Naidoo & Sharpley, 2016). Bringing tourists onto farms helps create a personal connection between producer and consumer, encourages brand loyalty, and ultimately yields higher profits to the farmer (Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Additionally, positive experiences contribute to consumer decisions to revisit the farm (Choo & Petrick, 2014). While agritourism has received more attention in the

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: leahelizabethj@gmail.com (L. Joyner), klinec@me.com (C. Kline), joliver@rwu.edu (J. Oliver), karikod@ecu.edu (D. Kariko).<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2017.10.004>Received 3 January 2017; Received in revised form 20 October 2017; Accepted 26 October 2017
2212-571X/ © 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

last decade, there is a gap in the literature concerning the design of marketing and promotional strategies (Colton & Bissix, 2005). Farms and communities can only enjoy benefits of agritourism if they successfully attract consumers. To address this, the paper investigated the use of visual imagery in agritourism promotions.

The first aim of this study was to determine which types of photographs are the most appealing to consumers. The second was to determine if there was a difference in the way various agritourism stakeholders reacted to the photographs taken on agritourism farms. The specific research questions follow.

1. Why are some photographs more successful than others in agritourism destination marketing (ADM)? Specifically, what are the elements within a photograph that elicit a strong response or connection between informants and the image?
2. Is there a difference between what farmers find visually appealing and what other stakeholders are drawn to? If so, what are these differences?
3. What emotions and/or associations do these images provoke for the various stakeholder audiences?
4. What are the implications of these results for the design of ADM campaigns?

2. Agritourism marketing

Effective promotional strategies are crucial to the continued growth of local food systems. Some farms successfully establish a web presence, which assists farmers in reaching nearby urban markets that often have demand for gourmet and specialty products (Bond, Enns, & Brockhouse, 2011). Social media also helps foster communication between producers and consumers, as farmers can post daily updates on what is happening at the farm and announce products that will be available in the immediate future (Barbieri, Gao, Valdivia, Corinne, 2016). A California study on agritourism found that word of mouth was the leading form of promotion, with 97% of participants in a survey based research project citing it as the most effective type of marketing material (Rilla, Hardesty, Getz, & George, 2011). Signs outside of businesses, business cards/brochures, and websites were listed as other effective modes of marketing. Other recommended types of promotional materials included advertisements in regional magazines, both paid and feature stories in newspapers, chamber of commerce ads, materials in visitor bureaus, direct mail, and business newsletters (Rilla et al., 2011).

Social media and other marketing efforts aimed at promoting local foods tended to be pursued by individual farms. As a result, they failed to create a collaborative 'place-based identity' with which tourists can easily identify (Che, Veeck, & Veeck, 2005). Frien (2010) found that local growers in the agricultural area northeast of Spokane, Washington supported the collective desire to become a destination for agritourism by investing in print and web advertising that showcased farms and orchards open to visitors, citing a cohesive marketing strategy as a great contributor to branding the destination as a thriving agritourism hotspot (Frien, 2010). The results suggested that, like other services that benefit from pooled primary demand and synergies gained from foot traffic, agritourism providers should collaborate to develop a place identity which positions the location as a desirable destination with multiple attractions.

A high degree of participation in such membership-based business organizations can influence overall gross income, further supporting the value of cooperative branding in agritourism (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008). However, less is known about how cooperative growers should best communicate with prospective consumers. A shared understanding of the needs and motivations of agritourists can guide the development of effective promotional materials (Srikatanyoo & Campiranon, 2010).

2.1. Agritourist motivations

Draper, Shenoy, and Norman (2006) suggested that agritourists are interested in activities that are unique to the destination, such as visiting local sites of historic significance or purchasing local food. Brown and Reeder (2007) found that farms located within close proximity to cities do well to offer recreational activities while those farther from heavily populated areas may want to offer habitat based attractions geared towards hunters, anglers, and trail riders. In Michigan, a survey revealed that the top reason cited for visiting agritourism operations was to buy or pick fresh produce (Che et al., 2005). Researchers have also noted differences between male and female agritourists, and Srikatanyoo and Campiranon (2010) found that female agritourists have the potential to be more demanding customers and will place a high value on safety while male customers, who still value safety, are more focused on scenery. The researchers also used a factor analysis to find three major groups of agritourist needs: 'activities and shopping; facilities, services, and location; and attractions and environment', as well as three types of agritourist motivations: 'agricultural experiences; quality of life, relationships, and adventure; and relaxation' (Srikatanyoo & Campiranon, 2010, p. 174).

In addition to understanding the motivations of agritourists, destination marketers may do well to appeal to culinary tourists. Culinary tourism intersects with the interests of agritourism stakeholders in that the marketing of food can reinforce the sustainability of a destination while also contributing to the regional branding of food products (Quan & Wang, 2003). One way to invoke a desire to visit farms among culinary tourists is to utilize photographs of farms as active landscapes in promotional materials that tell the story of a place (Schnell, 2011).

2.2. Photo-elicitation and destination marketing

Photography is inextricably linked with tourism, as images may inspire in viewers the desire to see for themselves the landscapes and cultural contents of a photograph (Neumann, 1992). In fact, the relationship between the images used to market tourist destinations and the resulting photographs that tourists take while visiting that destination can result in a mirroring effect whereby tourist snapshots attempt to recreate photographs in marketing materials (Garrod & Fyall, 2005). In a study of tour operators' websites, Björk (2010) explored how elements of the site could stimulate emotional responses, and found that photographs, along with information content and structure, were the most important elements for stimulating emotional responses influencing tourists' decision making process. Previous experiences, expectations, desires, and fantasies can shape the visitor's perception of an agritourism destination's idyll (Zhou, 2014). As such, it is important to not only understand which images are appealing, but also why. In the current photo-elicitation study, we have set out to explore just that, using a set of photographs used to market visitor experiences at West Virginia livestock farms.

As described by Collier (1967), photo-elicitation has been previously used as a development tool to generate conversation. In this process, photographs are taken of the subject or topic under study, and are used as a springboard for discussion (Purcell, 2009). Although the discussion might include the arrangement of the subject matter within the image, the medium used to capture the shot, and/or the style of the photograph, the subject matter featured in photographs is an essential topic for discussion when using the photograph to position a touristic offering.

Balomenou and Garrod (2014) denote two distinct methods of photo-elicitation including researcher-driven photo-elicitation and participant-generated image photo-elicitation, often referred to as volunteer employed photography (VEP). Researcher-driven photo-elicitation occurs when researchers produce their own visual data as a spring board for discussion based data collection (Collier, 1957; Matteucci, 2013). VEP methodology utilizes participatory photography

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7419273>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7419273>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)