Predicting Consumer Participation in a Hayride Event of Agri-tourism Activity: A Logit Model Approach

Venkata Purduri\textsuperscript{a}, Ramu Govindasamy\textsuperscript{b,\textsuperscript{a}}, Kathleen Kelley\textsuperscript{c} and John C. Bernard\textsuperscript{d}

\textsuperscript{a}Former Research Associate, Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics
Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901 USA

\textsuperscript{b}Professor and Associate Director of Food Policy Institute
Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics,
Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901 USA
Email: govindasamy@AESOP.Rutgers.edu
Phone: 848-932-9192, Fax: 732-932-8887

\textsuperscript{c}Associate Professor of Horticultural Marketing and Business Management
Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania, USA

\textsuperscript{d}Professor, Food and Resource Economics
229 Townsend Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716 USA

Abstract

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In the U.S. agricultural system, small and medium-sized farmers with limited land and capital resources are unable to compete in the national commodity markets. Direct marketing and agri-tourism are used by these enterprises to increase farm income. Agri-tourism may be broadly defined to include a range of farm-related products and services that are educational, interactive, or recreational in nature. For many farmers, farm resources (land, buildings, equipment) are not utilized for many months of the year. The use of existing infrastructure to generate supplemental farm income is an important strategy for enhancing the profitability of the farm operation. Examples of agri-tourism include Halloween corn mazes and hayrides, hunting and fishing, festivals, farm tours, and bed and breakfasts.

In addition to the direct revenue generation, by bringing non-farm residents to the farm, agri-tourism also benefits farmers in other ways. Agri-tourism creates positive interactions between farmers and non-farmers, contributing to a “culture of understanding” that is necessary for both to coexist. The benefits of agri-tourism also extend beyond the farm gate. Particularly in urbanizing areas, these activities contribute to and enhance overall quality of life as they expand recre-
ational opportunities, diversify the economic base, promote the retention of agricultural lands and open spaces, and contribute to community development.

The present study analyzes the influence of demographic characteristics on the likelihood of a consumer’s participation in hayride events during an agri-tourism visit. An Internet survey pertaining to direct marketing and agri-tourism was conducted to document the characteristics of consumers, who buy at farmer-to-consumer direct market outlets and/or visit agri-tourism operations from Mid-Atlantic States during June and July, 2010. A total of 1134 participants completed the survey from Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Of the questions asked, respondents indicated whether they participated in a hayride event during their agri-tourism visit. Based on their responses, a logit model was developed to predict demographic characteristics of respondents who participated in hayrides.

Results indicated that about 67% of respondents participated in hayride activities during their agri-tourism farm visit. According to the model results, those who resided in suburban areas, male respondents, those between 21 and 35 years of age, those between 36 and 50 years age, completed two years degree and who’s household annual income was between $40,000 and $59,999 were more likely to participate in hayrides. Conversely, those who resided in urban areas, lived more than 20 years at current location, were under 20 years of age, and who completed a graduate degree were less likely to participate. Study results should provide valuable information for those developing marketing strategies to increase agri-tourism participation and future interest in support of local agriculture. Findings of the logistic regression analyses are consistent with agri-tourism marketing theory from past studies. High intensity of agri-tourism activities should make agri-tourism an increasingly larger part of the total farming operation in the Mid-Atlantic area during off season in the years to come. Results will also help form a coalition of all relevant stakeholders from the Mid-Atlantic States to promote direct marketing and agri-tourism industry in the region and enhance their knowledge of the industry.

**Keywords:** Mid-Atlantic States, Agri-tourism, Hayrides, Logit Model