

Agritourism, Farm Visit, or . . . ? A Branding Assessment for Recreation on Farms

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Abstract

The demand and offer of recreational activities on farms has increased over the last decades and promises increased growth in the future because of the benefits it brings to farmers and visitors. Despite this growth, a breadth of names (e.g., agritourism, farm visit) are used interchangeably to depict this activity. Such inconsistency reflects a lack of industry branding which diminishes marketing effectiveness and hinders stakeholders' collaboration. Therefore, a study was conducted to evaluate the Memorability, Distinctiveness, Relevance and Flexibility and overall preference of eight typical names associated with recreation on farms among farmers and visitors. The multimodal approach employed reveals that efforts are needed to standardize and diffuse a brand name for recreation on farms because of reduced Memorability. Although "Agritourism" appears suitable to brand recreation on farms given its Distinctiveness, Relevance, and Flexibility, results are inconclusive and call for further efforts for educating the public about its meaning.

Keywords

agritourism, branding, farm visit, tourism branding, rural tourism

Introduction

Increasing strategies exist for farmers to offset dwindling revenues from agriculture, including alternative crop farming toward pricier products, selling portions of farmlands, and off-farm employment (Carpio, Wohlgenant, and Boonsaeng 2008; McGehee 2007; Nickerson, Black, and McCool 2001). Another popular alternative includes the diversification of the farm economic portfolio through different types of enterprises, such as value-added production and recreation opportunities programming (Brandth and Haugen 2011; Koutsouris et al. 2014). Recreation on farms, either for a fee or seeking other types of indirect economic benefits (e.g., increased market share), can be delivered through a diversity of activities. Examples of these activities include the direct (e.g., self-harvest) and indirect (e.g., hayrides) enjoyment of farm activities; the observation of the farmscape and on-site processes (e.g., orchard tours, wineries); educational opportunities (e.g., culinary classes); extractive (e.g., hunting) and nonextractive (e.g., hiking) outdoor recreation activities, including those requiring motorized vehicles or special equipment; and hospitality services, including events, lodging, and food services (Barbieri 2013; Barbieri and Mshenga 2008; Brandth and Haugen 2011; Koutsouris et al. 2014; McGehee 2007; Phillip, Hunter, and Blackstock 2010; Tew and Barbieri 2012; Veeck, Che,

and Veeck 2006). For some, the on-site direct sale of farm products, through farm stands and gift shops, for example, also represents a type of on-farm recreation (Ryan, Debord, and McClellan 2006; Schilling, Sullivan, and Komar 2012).

On-farm recreation through very specialized (e.g., visiting tea gardens to partake in leaf picking) or generic (e.g., orchard tours) activities are consistently depicted as a form of tourism (Ainley 2014; Brandth and Haugen 2011; Cheng et al. 2012; Di Domenico and Miller 2012), regardless of distance traveled or the overnight stay as these activities are usually one-day visits to local communities (Gil Arroyo, Barbieri, and Rich 2013; McGehee and Kim 2004; Rich et al. 2010). This form of tourism has increased in popularity

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in the last few decades (Cordell 2008; Gil Arroyo, Barbieri, and Rich 2013; Ollenburg and Buckley 2007; Sotomayor et al. 2014), most likely because of the multiple benefits it offers to both providers and visitors. From an economic standpoint, this activity increases farm revenues, and even profits, as well as decreases economic dependence on agriculture (Barbieri 2013; Busby and Rendle 2000; Che, Veeck, and Veeck 2005; Koutsouris et al. 2014; Schilling, Sullivan, and Komar 2012). Additional economic benefits include providing farm household members with new employment opportunities (Ainley 2014; Barbieri 2013; Kizos and Iosifides 2007; Veeck, Che, and Veeck 2006), promoting the consumption of local products and bonding with local producers, and stimulating local economies (Di Domenico and Miller 2012; Kline, Barbieri, and LaPan 2015; Lobo et al. 1999; McKenzie and Wysocki 2002; Sonnino 2004).

Recreating on farms provides visitors with educational opportunities, such as learning about the role of the agricultural sector in their community and local economy (McGehee 2007; Nickerson, Black, and McCool 2001); it also fosters family togetherness and restores ties with rural communities (Carpio, Wohlgenant, and Boonsaeng 2008; Ollenburg and Buckley 2007; Veeck, Che, and Veeck 2006). Further, offering recreational activities on farms enables the preservation and perpetuation of the family farm heritage by helping pass the business to the next generation of farmers, preserving tangible historic resources (e.g., barns), and promoting the preservation of intangible heritage such as local customs, ancestral practices, and rural landscapes (Ainley 2014; Barbieri 2013; Che, Veeck, and Veeck 2005; Colton and Bissix 2005; LaPan and Barbieri 2014; Kizos and Iosifides 2007; McGehee 2007; Tew and Barbieri 2012; Yang 2012).

Despite the mosaic of economic and non-economic benefits that recreation on farms brings to farmers and visitors, as well as the increased interest in it as an area of study in recent years, such an industry has not developed its own brand, specifically in terms of having a standardized name. Various names are concurrently and interchangeably used among practitioners and academicians to refer to this industry, such as agritourism, farm visits, and agritainment, among many others (Carpio, Wohlgenant, and Boonsaeng 2008; Nickerson, Black, and McCool 2001; Tew and Barbieri 2012; Veeck, Che, and Veeck 2006). More than being a mere etymological puzzle, this lack of branding diminishes the effectiveness of marketing strategies, creates confusion among stakeholders and visitors, and diminishes its distinction from competing recreational opportunities.

To increase industry branding and lessen the confusion caused by different name use, a study was conducted to evaluate brand name preferences associated with recreation on farms among farmers (as industry providers) and residents (as potential or actual visitors). Study results can serve to develop a unified brand name that appeals to farmers and visitors alike, which in turn will help to increase the recognition of this form of tourism, build its image, and foster visitor

loyalty (Cleary 1981; Hart and Murphy 1998; O'Malley 1991; Rooney 1995). The next sections review the existing literature on branding and summarize the different brand names associated with recreation on farms; describe the survey procedures and the multimodal data analysis employed in the study; detail the study results on the preferences of different brand names and the emerging themes associated with recreation on farms; and discuss final remarks including marketing implications.

Literature Review

Branding: The Marketing Role of the Brand Name

Branding refers to the process of identifying a good or service from different producers or providers, thus distinguishing itself from its competitors (Aaker 1991). By providing a meaning to certain products and services, branding can reassure or persuade consumers about the quality, value or benefits, reliability and trust, or other desired attributes of the product/service (Bowbrick 1992; Herbig and Milewicz 1993; Hoeffler and Keller 2002; Hillenbrand et al. 2013; Keller 1998). In the case of travel and tourism, branding efforts should communicate their intangible benefits in a way that influence consumers' perceptions (Middleton et al. 2009). Thus, branding is a powerful marketing tool because through the process of building the image of a product or service and creating their distinctiveness, it leads to brand loyalty over time (Cleary 1981; Hart and Murphy 1998; O'Malley 1991; Rooney 1995). For such values, brands are recognized among a company's most valuable assets (Aaker 1991).

A brand is built upon a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or any combination of those elements (Keller 1998). Besides differentiating and promising a value of a certain product, brands also have the capacity to "incite beliefs, evoke emotions and prompt behaviors" (Kotler and Gertner 2002, 249). Among the many elements that compose a brand, name is probably the most fundamental, especially for marketing strategies (Landler, Schiller, and Therrien 1991; Rooney 1995). A well-chosen name can give companies a marketing edge over comparable competitors (Berry, Lefkowitz, and Clark 1988) because it has the capacity to convey the meaning of a brand and can provide aggregate information about the product, especially related to the quality of the product/service (Gardner and Levy 1955; Ginden 1993; Richardson, Dick, and Jain 1994). The brand name can also influence price and willingness to purchase (Grewal et al. 1998); thus, it is consistently suggested to be more powerful than the product price (Dawar and Parker 1994). Berry, Lefkowitz, and Clark (1988) suggested four characteristics for developing a brand name among service providers: (1) *Memorability*, so the brand name can be easily understood, used, and recalled; (2) *Distinctiveness*, to identify the supplier and distinguish it from their competitors;

(3) *Relevance*, to convey the nature of the service or benefits delivered; and (4) *Flexibility*, so it can be used to providers' foreseeable expansions.

The concepts of brand and branding have been applied to very diverse settings and disciplines (Wentz and Suchard 1993), including tourism destinations' image based on visitors' perceptions (Blain, Levy, and Ritchie 2005; Cai 2002; Florek, Insch, and Gnoth 2006; Qu, Kim, and Im 2011). Yet research is needed to assess the destination brand identity, which offers the providers' perspective of the meaning and vision behind a brand (Cai 2002; Florek, Insch, and Gnoth 2006; Maumbe, Zhou, and Selin 2013; Wheeler, Frost, and Weiler 2011). A notorious lacuna in the literature relates to branding assessment of specialized tourism industries (e.g., volunteer tourism, ecotourism) spanning beyond a given destination.

Given the simultaneous production and consumption of tourism services (Wheeler, Frost, and Weiler 2011), myopic branding assessments on either the destination image (visitors' perspective) or identity (providers' perspective) can lead to brand misrepresentation because both are needed to build the destination brand (Cai 2002). Thus, excluding providers' perspectives may result in brands that, although appealing to visitors, conflict with brand owners' values and therefore may not be fully embraced (Maumbe, Zhou, and Selin 2013; Wheeler, Frost, and Weiler 2011). Branding tourism services and products in a successful manner is imperative to reduce the destination vulnerability to unforeseen external events (e.g., natural disasters); decrease visitors' risk regarding the quality and performance of the product; enhance marketing strategies related to visitors' segmentation, internet-based promotion, and distribution efficiency; and facilitate stakeholders' cooperation and long-term planning efforts (Middleton et al. 2009). Therefore, the absence of branding assessments related to specialized tourism industries is challenging their further development, which is troublesome taking into consideration that niche products are valuable to multi- and single-product destinations (McKercher and Chan 2005). Recreation on farms, as portrayed in this study, fits both types of destinations. It is a tourism destination when taking into consideration the farms that are providing the product, and it is a form of specialized tourism industry when responding to visitors' interest in agriculture-related issues.

Brand Names Associated with Recreation on Farms

Given the importance of branding in marketing services to consumers, and particularly tourism services and products, the variety of names used by practitioners and researchers in the tourism field to depict recreation on farms is concerning. The fact that recreation on farms umbrellas a wide spectrum of specific activities, ranging from mere contemplation (e.g., orchard tours) to hands-on participation (e.g., pick-your-own) while crossing several industries (e.g., agriculture,

tourism, hospitality, retailing), adds to the difficulty of crafting one brand name to capture such complexity.

Currently, the most popular names used to depict recreation on farms include "agritourism" (Colton and Bissix 2005; McGehee 2007; Phillip, Hunter, and Blackstock 2010; Schilling, Sullivan, and Komar 2012); "agri-tourism" (Hegarty and Przeborska 2005; Koutsouris et al. 2014; McGehee and Kim 2004; USDA: NASS 2007); "agricultural tourism" (Veeck, Che, and Veeck 2006); "agrotourism" (Kizos and Iosifides 2007; Lobo et al. 1999); "farm tourism" (Brandth and Haugen 2011; Busby and Rendle 2000; Ilbery et al. 1998; Ollenburg and Buckley 2007; Phillip, Hunter, and Blackstock 2010); and "agritainment" (McKenzie and Wysocki 2002; Kime et al. 2011; Wicks and Merrett 2003). Farm visit and farm recreation are also used, especially among practitioners. Although earlier studies referred to recreation on farms as "rural tourism" (e.g., Fleischer and Pizam 1997; Sharpley 2002), more recent literature clarifies that "rural tourism" is the broader term encompassing a diversity of activities offered in a rural setting (Colton and Bissix 2005; Hegarty and Przeborska 2005; Kizos and Iosifides 2007; McGehee and Kim 2004). Given that visiting agricultural settings for recreation is not circumscribed to rural areas and a growing number of those facilities fall within urban boundaries because of urban sprawl (Barbieri and Tew 2010; Xu and Rich 2012), taking both terms as synonyms is ontologically improper.

The many names used to depict recreation on farms are also alternatively employed in different contexts. For instance, the U.S. Department of Agriculture uses "agritourism or recreational services" (USDA: NASS 2007, B-24), whereas the most common terms in the literature are "agritourism" and "farm tourism" (Ainley 2014; Barbieri and Mahoney 2009; Barbieri and Mshenga 2008; Brandth and Haugen 2011; McGehee 2007; Nickerson, Black, and McCool 2001; Rich et al. 2010; Wicks and Merrett 2003; Wilson, Thilmany, and Sullins 2006). In contrast, a wider variety of names are used in Europe, including "agritourism," "agri-tourism," and "farm tourism," among others (Brandth and Haugen 2011; Di Domenico and Miller 2012; Hegarty and Przeborska 2005; Ilbery et al. 1998; Kizos and Iosifides 2007; Sonnino 2004). In Australia and New Zealand, "farm tourism" appears as the brand name most widely employed (Ollenburg and Buckley 2007; Pearce 1990).

Study Justification

Inconsistencies in constructs associated with novel study topics are not unusual and, when investigated, serve to strengthen a field of study. Until recently, for example, most studies on agritourism acknowledged definitional variations in agritourism (e.g., Carpio, Wohlgenant, and Boonsaeng 2008; Hegarty and Przeborska 2005), which were preventing further development of the praxis and science of this activity (Colton and

Bissix 2005; Flanigan, Blackstock, and Hunter 2014; Phillip, Hunter, and Blackstock 2010; Veeck, Che, and Veeck 2006). Rich et al. (2010) identified nine unique definitions of agritourism among 13 related studies, in which the only commonality was the use of the word *farm* or *agriculture*. Phillip, Hunter, and Blackstock (2010) smoothed existing definitional inconsistencies by proposing a taxonomic definition of agritourism, which was later tested on the field among different stakeholders in the United States (Gil Arroyo, Barbieri, and Rich 2013) and Scotland (Flanigan, Blackstock, and Hunter 2014); those efforts not only advanced the knowledge of agritourism but also carried important managerial, marketing, and outreach implications.

Likewise, branding inconsistencies surrounding recreation on farms call for a thorough examination of preferred brand names from their providers (i.e., farmers) and consumers (i.e., current/potential visitors) perspectives. Bringing together both perspectives can help develop a brand name that while appealing to visitors, responds to the farmers' vision and needs (Cai 2002; Florek, Insch, and Gnoth 2006; Maumbe, Zhou, and Selin 2013; Wheeler, Frost, and Weiler 2011). In doing so, it is critical to capture the perceptions of both actual and potential visitors to obtain results that can accurately inform policy, marketing, and planning decisions (McKercher and Chan 2005). Building a shared brand name for specialized forms of tourism, as recreation on farms, can help better identify this type of recreation among other tourism services provided at a destination (Aaker 1991; Cleary 1981; Hart and Murphy 1998), build visitors' loyalty over time (O'Malley 1991; Rooney 1995), and even position farms providing this type of recreation as appealing to specialized tourists (Cheng et al. 2012; Morgan, Pritchard, and Piggott 2003). Given the scarcity of studies on brand names for types of tourism activities, this study borrows concepts from the literature on service branding and tourism destination branding to evaluate brand name preferences for a specific sector of the tourism industry (i.e., recreation on farms).

Study Methods

This manuscript reports partial results of a larger project on the overall meanings of agritourism that comprised three major components: definition development, branding, and perceived benefits. This manuscript focuses on branding and aims to identify a name for recreation on farms that is well accepted across two of its main stakeholders: farmers and residents, the latter including potential and current visitors. Specifically, three objectives drive this study: (1) identify the preferred terms to depict recreation on farms; (2) assess the suitability of "agritourism" as a brand name for this type of recreation on farms; and (3) compare preferences for different brand names, including the term "agritourism" between farmers and residents. The suitability of "agritourism" as a brand name was more thoroughly examined in this study given that the departments of agriculture of both states where

the study was conducted use this term to depict farms offering recreational (including on-farm sales) or educational opportunities and because of its recurrent use in the academic literature.

Survey Instrument and Procedures

Given the extent of the project, a comprehensive e-survey instrument was developed to query about brand name preferences, definitional elements (e.g., preferences on standard definitions), and perceived benefits associated with recreation on farms. As applicable to this manuscript, survey questions were crafted to assess the four branding characteristics (Berry, Lefkowitz, and Clark 1988); memorability and distinctiveness were assessed regarding all brand names used to depict recreation on farms, while relevance and flexibility were examined related to "Agritourism." The survey also collected participants' demographic information and additional questions specific to each sample; for example, farmers were asked about their farm characteristics (e.g., acreage, gross farm sales, the number of visitors received) while residents were asked about their recent recreational visit to farms and their willingness to visit a farm for recreation in the future.

To assess the memorability of existing brand names for recreation on farms, participants were asked to list up to five terms they would use to describe "visiting farms for recreational purposes" using an open-ended format. To evaluate the distinctiveness of existing brand names, participants were asked on a second screen how much they liked or disliked eight brand names frequently found within the literature (agri-tourism, farm tourism, agritourism, rural tourism, agrotourism, farm visits, agricultural tourism, and agritainment); these brand names were randomly presented to participants and rated using a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = dislike very much; 5 = like very much). So as to prevent bias introduced with the brand names queried in the second screen, participants could not go back to edit their responses to the first question. To examine relevance, participants were asked to write in their own words what came to their minds when they heard or read the word "Agritourism." Finally, to evaluate the brand flexibility, respondents were asked to list up to three activities they would classify as "Agritourism."

Sampling and Survey Procedures

The study was conducted in Missouri (MO) and North Carolina (NC) in the United States. These states were chosen because although they have a very small proportion of farms offering recreational opportunities (MO = 0.5%, NC = 1.1%), their recreation-related revenues doubled between the 2012 and 2007 Census of Agriculture (USDA: NASS 2007). Two groups of participants were recruited for this study. First, a sample of 797 farmers involved in agritourism was obtained (MO = 193, NC = 604) from agriculture- and

agritourism-related organizations (MO Department of Agriculture, NC Agritourism Networking Association), which are believed to be comprehensive in both states. The second group of participants, involving two nonrandom panels of residents, was assembled by a marketing company based on both states' population (MO = 444, NC = 675). Although the use of online panels is not ideal because of coverage, measurement, and sampling errors (Dillman, Smyth, and Christian 2009), the decision behind its use was made based on the exploratory nature of this study and economic considerations (Gao, Barbieri, and Valdivia 2014a, 2014b). Residents were surveyed to capture both current and potential visitors to the farm (Sotomayor et al. 2014).

An online platform was used to survey both samples. Farmers were surveyed following a modified Tailored Design Method (Dillman, Smyth, and Christian 2009) consisting of an initial email inviting them to partake in the study followed by up to four reminders to nonrespondents. The marketing company contracted for this study administered the survey to the residents' panels. Data collection spanned between January and April 2011. The farmers' survey produced 252 responses, representing a 36.8% adjusted response rate after incomplete responses were removed (MO = 43.2%, NC = 34.7%). A prescreening of the panel of residents for survey completion resulted in a total of 868 valid responses (MO = 355, NC = 513) after removing cases submitting blank forms.

A preliminary screening examination showed that respondents from both states had comparable profiles: residents were similar in age, gender, and income distribution, whereas farmers reported similar farm gross income and a similar proportion held off-farm employment ($p > 0.05$). Potential nonresponse bias among the farmers' sample was indirectly evaluated by comparing key variables between the first and last waves of respondents (Armstrong and Overton 1977). No significant differences were found for age, gender, and off-farm employment status of responding farmers, or on their farms' gross income ($p > 0.05$). Although the nonrandom composition of the panels implies that they are not representative of either state population, sociodemographic characteristics of panelists are comparable to their corresponding general population in terms of gender, age distribution, and household income ($p > 0.05$). However, panelists from Missouri ($p = 0.003$) and North Carolina ($p = 0.015$) did tend to be more educated than their states' general population.

Multimodal Data Analysis

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to examine data collected. Quantitative methods performed were descriptive statistics, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Wilcoxon signed rank. Descriptive statistics were used to develop a demographic profile and to identify brand name preferences among each sample. To calculate

branding assessments of the entire study sample, farmers' responses were weighted to account for the number difference between samples. For example, to calculate the overall memorability assessment among all respondents and identify the top evoked themes, farmers were weighted by 3.504, which resulted from the number of responding residents divided by the number of responding farmers (862 / 246). Given that the number of respondents differed for each type of assessment (memorability, distinctiveness, relevance, flexibility), the weighting varied across branding indicators as denoted in their corresponding tables. Brand names over the neutral point were further analyzed using ANOVA to compare the brand name preferences between farmers and residents ($p < 0.05$) and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests to assess whether mean ranks between brand names differed within respondents; Bonferroni correction was used in the latter analysis to reduce type II statistical error due to multiple comparisons (10 pairs) across brand names ($0.05/10 = p < 0.005$).

Content analysis was used to identify themes that emerged from qualitative data gathered from three survey questions: (1) "What term or terms would you use to describe people visiting a farm for recreational purposes?" (2) "In your own words, please explain what comes to your mind when you hear or read the word 'Agritourism'"; and (3) "Please list three main activities that you would classify as 'Agritourism.'" To ensure interrater reliability in the qualitative analysis and to assist with the in-depth discussion of findings, open-ended responses were examined in three separate stages by two independent coders. A coding training session was held to clarify the coding process and stages. The first stage of the analysis involved a "long preliminary soak" (Hall 1975, 15) in which all of the responses were read for overall comprehension. The second stage involved a close reading and identification from which each coder independently created a list and groups that summarized their analysis findings. These lists and groupings were shared between the coders and discussed to assist in identifying any conflicts in interpretation; this process resulted in further refinement. From these reviews, a final list of themes was generated, and responses were categorized accordingly.

Results

The majority of respondents were female (farmers = 58.8%, residents = 57.9%) and in their midadulthood ($M_{farmer} = 54$ years old, $M_{residents} = 46$ years old). Only a third of responding residents (32.4%) were employed full-time, which is consistent with their reduced formal education (only 28.9% had a high school degree) and low household income (27.7% were making less than \$25,000 a year). Most visitors (52.0%) had never visited a farm for recreation purposes. However, 24.2% had visited once in the last three years and 23.8% at least three years ago; a third (36.4%) considered it likely to recreate on a farm within the next year.

Table 1. Memorability Assessment: Evoked Themes and Common Statement Examples for Recreation on Farms.

Evoked Themes and Statements	Residents (<i>n</i> = 862)	Farmers (<i>n</i> = 246)	All ^a (<i>n</i> = 1,108)
Education & Awareness (e.g., learning, educational, teaching, informational)	315 ^b	115 ^b	718
Fun & Relaxation (e.g., enjoyable, relaxation, exciting, refreshing)	272 ^b	87 ^b	577
Farm Hands-on Experience (e.g., pick your own, feeding the animals, experience)	313 ^b	69 ^b	555
On-Farm & Outdoor Recreation (e.g., hay ride, corn maze, horseback riding, ATV, hiking)	373 ^b	51	552
Brand Names (e.g., agritourism, agri-tourism, agro tourism, farm visit)	17	123 ^b	448
Connection to the Land & Rurality (e.g., back to your roots, back to the land, country living)	168	62	385
Travel & Events (e.g., farm festival, events on the farm, touring, day trips)	130	67 ^b	365
Agriculture (e.g., farmer, farming, ranch, planting/processing crops)	269 ^b	13	315
Farm Fresh & Local (e.g., fresh food, fresh produce, local healthy)	59	44	213
Family & Children (e.g., fun, family-oriented, family fun, kid friendly)	60	38	193

a. Farmers were weighted ($\times 3.504$) to calculate the sum.

b. Top five themes.

Most responding farmers were the owner-manager of their farms (83.1%); the large proportion of off-farm employment (49.6%) among farmers may explain their relatively high household income (40.3% were making at least \$75,000) while reporting less than \$50,000 annual farm gross sales (53.2%) in 2010. Most farmers reported selling agricultural products (87.9%) and receiving visitors on their farms for recreation purposes (92.1%). Those receiving visitors opened their gates to the public for at least six years (62.4%), and only 11.9% started doing so within the last two years. Although only 36.5% received at least 2,000 visitors in 2009, most believed that visitors were important or very important for their farm operations (74.5%) and were planning to increase their recreational offerings in the future (71.8%).

Assessing the Memorability of Existing Brand Names

Terms that participants provided to describe visiting a farm for recreational purposes were analyzed to evaluate whether any of the existing brands were memorable (i.e., recalled). Ten themes emerged from the content analysis of stated terms associated with recreation on farms (Table 1). Among those, standard *Brand Names* were memorable only among farmers (*n* = 123). By far, the most often recalled brand name was "Agritourism" (*n* = 62), distantly followed by "Farm Tours" (*n* = 9) and "Agritainment" (*n* = 8). Besides standard brand names commonly used to depict or advertise recreation on farms, some farmers included other creative and

innovative brands although they were not recurrent (e.g., "haycation," "eco-education," "agri-adventure").

Considering both samples, the three most memorable themes were *Education & Awareness*, *Fun & Relaxation*, and *Hands-on Experience*. *Education & Awareness* (residents = 315, farmers = 115) was often described in a very broad sense, such as learning experience, educational, and informational. In fewer cases, participants described a specific activity or farm element (e.g., "to better understand how vineyards/wineries function," "truffle orchard education," and "learning about different animals"), which may be associated with particular activities farmers were offering or experiences residents had. Residents (*n* = 272) and farmers (*n* = 87) alike stated a variety of terms suggesting *Fun & Relaxation* (e.g., "fun," "exciting," "relaxing," "enjoyable," "wholesome"). Under the theme of *Farm Hands-on Experience* (residents = 313; farmers = 69), participants most often noted the self-harvest of specific farm products (e.g., "pick your own," "apple picking," "collecting chicken eggs"); the interaction with animals (e.g., "petting farm," "to be able to interact with the animals on a farm," "feeding cows"); and the overall enjoyment of the farm experience, which included statements associated with the rural lifestyle (e.g., "in touch with agriculture," "experiencing farm life," "experiencing a different lifestyle").

Among residents, *On-Farm & Outdoor Recreation* also emerged within a top theme associated with recreation on farms (*n* = 373). These included farm-based recreational activities (e.g., "hay rides," "corn mazes," "pig races"); extractive and nonextractive nature-based recreational

Table 2. Distinctiveness Assessment: Preference of Brand Names to Depict Recreation on Farms among Study Participants.

Brand Names	Dislike Very Much (%)	Dislike (%)	Neutral (%)	Like (%)	Like Very Much (%)	M	SD	Mean Rank
All Respondents (<i>n</i> = 1,155) ^a								
Farm Visit	3.9	8.0	26.5	40.1	21.5	3.7	1.0	1
Farm Tourism	3.5	8.5	33.7	38.8	15.5	3.5	1.0	2
Agricultural Tourism	4.0	10.9	33.9	35.5	15.7	3.5	1.0	3
Agri-tourism	6.6	12.6	32.7	28.6	19.5	3.4	1.1	4
Agritourism	7.1	14.1	28.7	31.3	18.8	3.4	1.2	5
Rural Tourism	8.2	22.4	38.3	23.0	8.1	3.0	1.1	6
Agrotourism	15.9	33.4	35.4	11.2	4.1	2.5	1.0	7
Agritainment	27.6	29.5	26.1	10.9	5.9	2.4	1.2	8
Residents (<i>n</i> = 908) ^b								
Farm Visit	2.9	5.8	26.8	42.9	21.7	3.8	1.0	1
Farm Tourism	5.4	10.5	36.8	35.6	11.7	3.4	1.0	3 ^c
Agricultural Tourism	3.9	8.1	31.7	38.2	18.2	3.6	1.0	2 ^c
Agri-tourism	10.8	17.3	41.2	23.1	7.6	3.0	1.1	4
Agritourism	11.8	20.9	39.8	22.7	4.7	2.9	1.0	5
Farmers (<i>n</i> = 247) ^b								
Farm Visit	4.9	10.2	26.2	37.3	21.3	3.6	1.1	4 ^c
Farm Tourism	1.6	6.5	30.6	42.0	19.2	3.7	0.9	3 ^c
Agricultural Tourism	4.1	13.7	36.1	32.8	13.3	3.4	1.0	5 ^c
Agri-tourism	2.4	8.1	24.3	34.0	31.2	3.8	1.0	2 ^c
Agritourism	2.5	7.4	17.6	39.8	32.8	3.9	1.0	1 ^c

a. Farmers were weighted ($\times 3.676$) to calculate the mean rank.

b. Only included brand names over the neutral point ($M > 3.0$).

c. Different ranking from the overall population.

activities (e.g., “fishing,” “hunting,” “bird watching”); and outdoor activities, including “walking trails,” “horseback riding,” and motorized activities (e.g., “four wheeling”). To a lesser extent, residents also stated terms alluding to *Agriculture* (*n* = 269) including those referred to the actors involved (e.g., “harvesters,” “farmers,” “seasonal workers”), practices (e.g., “farming,” “plowing,” “planting crops”), products (e.g., “cows,” “crops,” “produce”), and even equipment (e.g., “tractor,” “John Deere equipment,” “farm equipment”) associated with different aspects of agriculture. Exclusively among farmers, *Travel & Events* was a persistent topic (*n* = 67) and comprised terms suggesting some sort of tourism activity (e.g., “day tripping,” “tours,” “farming trip”), on-farm accommodations (e.g., “dude ranches,” “farm rental vacations,” “all inclusive family vacations”), and festivals and events (e.g., “event at the farm,” “farm festivals,” “farm showcases”).

Brand Name Distinctiveness for Recreation on Farms

Altogether, most participants liked or liked very much the brand names *Farm Visit* (61.6%, $M = 3.7$), *Farm Tourism* (54.3%, $M = 3.5$), and *Agricultural Tourism* (51.2%, $M = 3.5$) to depict recreation on farms (Table 2). Conversely, about half of participants disliked or disliked very much the

brand names *Agrotourism* (49.3%, $M = 2.5$) and *Agritainment* (57.1%, $M = 2.4$); *Rural Tourism* appeared within the neutral point ($M = 3.0$). The mean rankings of the brand names over the neutral point were poles apart between the study samples. Residents preferred *Farm Visit* ($M = 3.8$) and *Agricultural Tourism* ($M = 3.6$), which were the least preferred among farmers. The latter group, contrariwise, favored *Agritourism* ($M = 3.9$) and *Agri-tourism* ($M = 3.8$), names with the lowest score among residents. Among those, *Farm Visit* was the only brand name that both residents ($M = 3.8$) and farmers ($M = 3.6$) liked.

Brand names whose means fell over the neutrality point ($M > 3.0$) were further examined to identify whether they statistically differed within and between samples. Wilcoxon signed-rank tests indicated that rank mean differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.005$) within the residents' sample for all brand names examined (Table 3). In simpler words, residents preferred *Farm Visit*—their first ranked name—over all the remaining brands, *Agricultural Tourism* (ranked second) over the brands with lower rankings, and so on. Fewer significant results were found within the farmers' sample. *Agritourism*—their top preferred brand name—had a significant higher mean rank than the remaining names, excepting for *Agri-tourism*, which was their second ranked mean. *Agri-tourism* and *Farm Tourism* also had significantly higher rankings than *Agricultural Tourism* among farmers.

Table 3. Distinctiveness Assessment: A Comparison of Brand Name Ranks within Responding Residents and Farmers (Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test).

Brand Names (<i>n</i> = 1,118)	Z score ^a and Significance	
	Residents	Farmers
Farm Visit—Agricultural Tourism	4.313*	2.530
Farm Visit—Farm Tourism	10.268*	-1.479
Farm Visit—Agri-tourism	14.952*	-2.362
Farm Visit—Agritourism	16.398*	-3.094*
Agricultural Tourism—Farm Tourism	6.122*	-4.374*
Agricultural Tourism—Agri-tourism	14.737*	-5.097*
Agricultural Tourism—Agritourism	16.138*	-6.037*
Farm Tourism—Agri-tourism	10.198*	-1.794
Farm Tourism—Agritourism	12.051*	-2.872*
Agri-tourism—Agritourism	3.917*	-1.351

a. Z-score sign (+/-) indicates direction.

*Bonferroni adjusted significance ($p < 0.005$).

Significant differences were also found between farmers and residents regarding the five top preferred brand names examined: *Farm Visit* ($F = 4.420$, $p = 0.036$), *Agricultural Tourism* ($F = 8.615$, $p = 0.003$), *Farm Tourism* ($F = 21.641$, $p < 0.001$), *Agri-tourism* ($F = 121.457$, $p < 0.001$), and *Agritourism* ($F = 199.004$, $p < 0.001$; Table 4). Among those, *Farm Visit* was the only brand name that both residents ($M = 3.8$) and farmers ($M = 3.6$) liked; thus, although significant statistical differences between both samples existed, the difference may not have been practically substantial. Significant differences were more pronounced regarding the remaining brands, falling close or even below the neutrality point to either group. While farmers liked *Farm Tourism* ($M = 3.7$), *Agri-tourism* ($M = 3.8$), and *Agritourism* ($M = 3.9$), residents showed neutrality and even rejection toward them ($M = 3.4$, $M = 3.0$, $M = 2.9$, respectively). Conversely, residents liked *Agricultural Tourism* ($M = 3.6$), which fell closer to neutrality among farmers ($M = 3.7$).

Assessing the Relevance of the Agritourism Brand Name

The relevance of the “Agritourism” brand name was assessed through the analysis of participants’ answers for what comes to their minds when they hear or read this term, which resulted in six emerging themes (Table 5). “Agritourism” was most relevant in conveying the *Blending of Agriculture & Tourism* for residents ($n = 493$) and farmers ($n = 132$) alike. Although some participants referred to such a combination of industries straightforwardly (e.g., “touring agriculture,” “using agriculture for tourism,” “the trip would be about agriculture,” “turning agriculture into a tourist program”), other responses were more elaborate: “tourism based in agricultural setting or dealing with agricultural subjects”

(no. 207, farmer), “tourism that involves agriculture, whether it be at a farm or somewhere else that involves outdoor activities and farming” (no. 1028, resident). Within this theme, the centrality of visiting a farm as the pinnacle of agricultural settings was prominent (e.g., “farm visit,” “people visiting farms,” “tourism directly and specifically focused on farm-related visitation”). Many participants inserted a diversity of activities, reinforcing the centrality of the farm visit itself, such as: “inviting the public for profit or nonprofit intentions for recreational, educational, agricultural, and/or other activities on the farm” (no. 144, farmer), “individuals visiting the farm to participate in activities such as you pick, educational tours, group tours, mazes” (no. 143, farmer), “having an experience visiting a farm or agricultural type of business for an educational and entertaining/purpose” (no. 10, farmer), “farm festivals or visits, farms that provide fruit picking to the general public, hayrides” (no. 518, resident), and “It makes me think that someone is going to visit an agricultural area for an activity other than work” (no. 626, resident).

Experiencing Farm Lifestyle & Activities was the second most salient theme among participants, ranking third among residents ($n = 100$) and second among farmers ($n = 100$). Statements falling within this theme include the observation of the practice of farming and their associated lifestyle to participation in actual agricultural tasks. A couple of participating farmers captured the whole farm experience with these words: “Opening farms for visitors to enjoy beyond the products picked or purchased. Selling the entire farm experience” (no. 153) and “Going to a farm that allows the public to see the farm in action regardless of what is offered” (no. 138). Many residents referred to the chance of observing the farming lifestyle, such as “an opportunity to visit a farm and see what it would be like to live there” (no. 452) and “finding out about farm life and all it provides” (no. 547). Many referred to the actual participation on agricultural tasks and the interaction with the farmers: “Farm tours, hands on experience on a real farm. Touching, feeling and smelling a real farm. Takes you back in time to another era” (no. 108, farmer), “[. . .] They may pick pumpkins or berries, take a hay ride, milk a cow or visit the hen-house to gather eggs” (no. 26, farmer), and “visiting farms to experience the life of farming hands on” (no. 1130, resident).

Within this theme, several farmers and residents alike stressed the role of “Agritourism” as a bridge reconnecting urban dwellers with agriculture and rural life. Examples among farmers include “getting ‘City Folks’ back to the country farms to see how food is really ‘produced’” (no. 136), “selling a farm experience to urbanites” (no. 179), and “city folks seeing where their food and clothing comes from, often for the first time [. . .]” (no. 13). In a similar vein of thought, residents wrote, “Urban people trying to understand farming. These are ones who have never been on a farm” (no. 1071), “People who live in cities and did not grow up on farms going to the country to see a more agricultural life style” (no. 793), and

Table 4. Distinctiveness Assessment: A Comparison of Brand Name Preferences between Responding Residents and Farmers (Analysis of Variance).

Brand Names ^a	Scale Mean ^b		F	p Value
	Residents	Farmers		
Farm Visit	3.8	3.6	4.420	0.036
Farm Tourism	3.4	3.7	21.641	<0.001
Agricultural Tourism	3.6	3.4	8.615	0.003
Agri-tourism	3.0	3.8	121.457	<0.001
Agritourism	2.9	3.9	199.004	<0.001

a. Organized in descendent order based on overall mean (see Table 1).

b. Scale ranged from 1 = dislike very much to 5 = like very much.

Table 5. Relevance Assessment: Themes That the Agritourism Brand Name Evokes.

Emerging Themes and Exemplary Statements	Residents (n = 839)	Farmers (n = 245)	All ^a (n = 1,084)
Blending Agriculture & Tourism (e.g., touring agriculture, tours of farming activities)	493 ^b	132 ^b	945
Experiencing Farm Lifestyle & Activities (e.g., finding out about farm life and all it provides)	100 ^b	100 ^b	442
Learning about Farming (e.g., learning about life on a farm, education)	93 ^b	74 ^b	346
Recreating & Entertaining on Farmlands (e.g., fun on the farm, farm related entertainment)	43	55	231
Valuing Local Farms (e.g., to support local farms, buying from that farm)	21	36	144
Complaining about "Agritourism" (e.g., no clue, fancy way of saying farm visit!)	52	9	83

a. Farmers were weighted ($\times 3.425$) to calculate the sum.

b. Top three themes.

Having grown up on a farm, I can imagine city-folks coming out to see how their milk is gathered, how their meat is grown, and how their fruits and vegetables are harvested. Oooh! Aaah! (no. 574).

The "Agritourism" brand name also evoked opportunities for *Learning about Farming* among residents ($n = 93$) and farmers ($n = 74$). For most, this educational experience was circumscribed to agricultural production, such as: "being able to teach others about agriculture and how a working farm operates" (no. 75, farmer); and "people learning about where some of their foods come from" (no. 763, resident). One farmer wrote:

This term is when a farm is engaged in showing their place to people to educate the public on farming today. People go to a farm that is listed as Agritourism friendly knowing that the farmer will take time out of their day to show and explain different things on the farm. (no. 194)

Within these themes, some emphasized learning about where food comes from, such as:

Showing kids and others where milk, chickens and cotton, tobacco come from. . . My son's girl came last summer, she took pictures of tobacco, cotton & corn fields. . . She is from Canada, never seen it grow. . . (no. 817, resident)

Others, like this farmer, described the educational rounded experience of "Agritourism" beyond agricultural and food production as

Educational and cultural exposure to rural life on a farm. An opportunity to learn more about where and how our food progresses from the farm to our table. An opportunity to get back to the earth and learn more about how to protect our resources so that we can sustain a viable food source for our country. (no. 87)

Although to a lesser extent, "Agritourism" also evoked on participants *Recreating & Entertaining on Farmlands* (e.g., "people who go to farms for entertainment," "entertainment on the farm," "fun on the farm") and *Valuing Local Farms* either by recognizing its role in supplementing farm incomes (e.g., "a farm trying to make a living," "a way to keep farms

in business”) or to access fresh foods (e.g., “Farms open to individual buyers of their products,” “person visiting a farm and buying something from that farm [. . .]”). A farmer voiced the value of agritourism as

Visiting and supporting a local family farm that produces healthy clean products that feed your family. While there you take in other fun activities for your children while learning more about how those healthy products (whether meat/eggs/produce) are grown. (no. 234)

It is also worth mentioning that for some residents ($n = 132$), the “Agritourism” brand name did not convey any special meaning (e.g., “I have no clue,” “don’t understand the word so nothing comes to mind”) or even carried some confusion, such as “confusing term, I think the term used should be more self-explanatory” (no. 487) and “it sounds like something that I would have to look up in the dictionary” (no. 639). Few participants (residents = 52; farmers = 9) also voiced their discontent with the “Agritourism” brand name, suggesting that more effort is needed to widely spread their use and recognition. A couple of participating farmers wrote: “producer-centric jargon that the customer never uses, doesn’t understand, and doesn’t relate to” (no. 173) and “although I understand the business term, and its need for specific wordage in any business niche, it does not conjure up the feeling evoked by visiting a farm” (no. 63); even more emphatically, a resident wrote:

Nothing. . . . Just a big fancy word for over educated idiots. . . . Not what farm life is like nor would I want to go visit. . . . I wouldn’t be interested at all. . . . But telling people how peaceful and relaxing it is and how beautiful it is to watch farm animals is a much more better way [*sic*] to get their attention. . . . (no. 746)

Assessing the Flexibility of the Agritourism Brand Name

Participants provided a wide range of activities associated with “Agritourism” indicating the flexibility that such a brand name holds. Based on the types of “Agritourism” activities found in the literature, stated activities were categorized in seven major groups: *Hands-on Experiences*, *Farmscape Observation*, *Farm-related Recreation*, *Educational Opportunities*, *Farm Hospitality*, *Outdoor Recreation*, and *Farm Direct Sales* (Table 6). The most widely acknowledged “Agritourism” activities by both samples were *Hands-on Experiences* (residents = 373, farmers = 171), closely followed by *Farmscape Observation* (residents = 459, farmers = 140); *Farm-related Recreation* fell third within residents ($n = 192$) and farmers ($n = 125$).

Within the *Hands-on Experiences* category, most participants provided typical examples (e.g., “picking fruits and vegetables,” “gathering eggs from a chicken coop,” “petting gentle animals,” “cutting-down your own Christmas tree”).

Some residents, though, were more creative in their responses, which is most likely associated with a previous experience: “rounding-up pigs” (no. 877), “planting and caring for a vegetable garden” (no. 431), “pull weeds” (no. 595), “feeding hogs” (no. 538), and “herding sheep” (no. 620), for example. *Farmscape Observation* included a variety of activities implying the static appreciation of the farm elements (e.g., “tour a dairy farm,” “visiting a winery,” “see how animals are raised”) and the observation of agricultural process (e.g., “watching crops being planted or harvested,” “observe farming in progress or manufacturing agricultural products”). The enlisted activities were even more diverse related to *Farm-related Recreation*, stretching from typical corn mazes and hayrides to more sophisticated events such as tractor pulls.

A variety of *Educational Opportunities* were also cited by residents ($n = 141$) and farmers ($n = 61$), including “learn how animals are raised” (no. 1078), “learning about agriculture” (no. 193), and “learning farm operations” (no. 898). Less cited were those referring to *Farm Hospitality* (residents = 42, farmers = 47), encompassing event programming, food services, and lodging; *Outdoor Recreation* (residents = 87, farmers = 21), including wildlife extractive activities, physically active activities and even motorized recreation; and *Farm Direct Sales* (residents = 30, farmers = 24), denoting the purchase of farm products.

Discussion

When discussing and interpreting study results, two limitations of this study should be considered. Firstly, the use of a nonrandom panel of residents suggests that their perceptions should be taken with caution if seeking generalizations to a larger population. Although the results show that panelists’ sociodemographic characteristics were comparable to the general population in both states, they had higher levels of formal education, which may imply a greater awareness of the “Agritourism” brand name. The use of panelists also cautions for potential measurement errors associated with repeated survey participation because panelists tend to be members of different panels (Dillman, Smyth, and Christian 2009). Similarly, when extrapolating to other realities, caution is advised as both states included in the study (MO and NC) are in the process of developing their recreation industry on farms and may not represent perceptions of other states. A cursory review of online advertisements, for example, suggest that the “Agritourism” brand name is widely used in states (e.g., California, Texas) and countries (e.g., Italy) where such activity is more settled. Second, the use of an online platform may have limited the richness of the qualitative data gathered as compared to other collection methods (e.g., face-to-face interviews) that allow probing to enrich participants’ points of view. Accounting for both limitations, study results provide important directions to increase the branding of recreation on farms.

Table 6. Flexibility Assessment: Types of Activities Associated with the Agritourism Brand Name.

Activity Categories and Examples	Residents (n = 790)	Farmers (n = 242)	All ^a (n = 1,032)
Hands-on Experiences (e.g., U-pick, milking cows, petting zoo)	373	171	931
Farmscape Observation (e.g., farm tour, wineries, observation of process)	459	140	916
Farm-related Recreation (e.g., hayride, corn maze, pig race, tractor pull)	192	125	600
Educational Opportunities (e.g., ag education, classes, educational tour)	141	61	340
Farm Hospitality (e.g., events, lodging, farm stays, food services)	42	47	195
Outdoor Recreation (e.g., fishing, hunting, horseback riding, ATV)	87	21	156
Farm Direct Sales (e.g., buying fresh foods & vegetables, farm stands)	30	24	108

a. Farmers were weighted ($\times 3.265$) to calculate the sum.

Study results indicate that the branding for recreation on farms is still at its infancy as existing brand names were memorable only among farmers. While these results are not surprising given the identity farmers may have developed over time with their recreational offerings, they undoubtedly suggest that efforts are needed to standardize a memorable brand name among the public. Such effort is critical taking into consideration that specialized forms of tourism are valuable to support other offerings in multi-product destinations or to attract visitors to destinations where they may be the only attraction (McKercher and Chan 2005), like the case of on-farm recreation in remote rural areas. Strengthening the branding of recreation on farms is even more needed given the many benefits this activity brings to farmers, farm households, and overall society (Barbieri 2013).

To nurture memorability and build loyalty in the long-run, results suggest that the brand name of recreation on farms should convey itself as an educational catalyst to raise awareness of agricultural issues, especially among children and urban dwellers. Such strong emphasis on educating the public about agriculture is frequently reported in the literature as a driver for on-farm recreational development (McGehee and Kim 2004; McKenzie and Wysocki 2002; Nickerson, Black, and McCool 2001; Ollenburg and Buckley 2007; Tew and Barbieri 2012) and a motivating factor for visiting a farm for recreation (Sotomayor et al. 2014). In addition, it is important that branding efforts toward the public make reference to the diversity of on-farm and outdoor activities available, especially those involving hands-on experiences (e.g., u-pick-up, petting zoos). Such preference for farm-related experiences is most likely associated with visitors' desire to directly enjoy agricultural and rural lifestyles, and their efforts to reconnect youth with farming (Di Domenico and Miller 2012; Nickerson, Black, and McCool 2001; Nilsson

2002; Phillip, Hunter, and Blackstock 2010; Srikanthoo and Campiranon 2010; Tew and Barbieri 2012; Topp 2011).

Results clearly show that "Rural Tourism," "Agrotourism," and "Agritainment" do not distinctively depict recreation on farms; thus, the use of these as brand names should be discouraged. However, farmers and residents failed to reach a consensus about the most distinctive brand name, which posits a marketing challenge given that brand names need to be simultaneously appealing to providers and visitors (Maumbe, Zhou, and Selin 2013; Wheeler, Frost, and Weiler 2011). Among the examined brand names, "Agritourism" and "Farm Visit" are worth further discussion. On the one hand, "Agritourism" was statistically the highest ranked among farmers most likely because it portrays meanings associated with their values and vision; however, it was the least preferred among residents. Therefore, its adoption may require more efforts to educate the public about its meaning. On the other hand, "Farm Visit" was the only brand name that both residents and farmers liked; however, it ranked fourth for farmers and statistically below "Agritourism." Therefore, the use of "Farm Visit" may contest farmers' values and vision, which may challenge an effective branding development (Cai 2002). Such contradiction in the findings between both key stakeholders brings out a sensitive but important discussion. Although current tourism marketing principles tend to favor visitors' needs and desires (hence, leaning toward the "Farm Visit" brand name), such principles may challenge farmers' worldview defined by a special core of values associated with being or remaining a farmer (Gasson 1973). Until further research elucidates this topic or a brand name settles as widely recognized, findings suggest that the use of either name should not be stand-alone but be accompanied by information describing what this activity entails.

Results on the relevance and flexibility of “Agritourism” provide further insights on the branding of recreation on farms. As per its *Relevance*, “Agritourism” evoked a blend of agriculture and tourism, description that is commonly used in the literature (Tew and Barbieri 2012). It also aroused statements associated with experiencing the farm lifestyle and learning about farming, which are predominant motivations for visiting agricultural settings for recreation (Che, Veeck, and Veeck 2005; Sotomayor et al. 2014; Srikatanyoo and Campiranon 2010). “Agritourism” also appeared suitable to evoke a breadth of leisure, recreational, educational and hospitality-related activities, indicating its flexibility to adapt to potential changes in the agricultural context or visitors’ needs. Such flexibility can also enable neighboring farmers to offer distinct experiences catering to visitors with different desires, which can reduce the competition among them and enhance the complementarity of the destination (Xu 2014).

Study results and aforementioned limitations call for further scrutiny of recreation on farms’ branding. Future studies should consider targeting random samples of residents (including visitors and nonvisitors) to account for different levels of on-farm recreation participation. Expanding this research to other locations that have a more established on-farm recreation industry (e.g., California, Texas) can help to elucidate the feasibility of adopting a brand name. Importantly, given these study findings, future investigations should also assess the relevance and flexibility of “Farm Visit” as compared to “Agritourism.” Along with survey methods to enable proper comparisons, the use of qualitative approaches may be suitable to specifically examine in-depth whether “Farm Visit” concurs with farmers’ vision and images. In moving forward toward a broader contribution of this study, it is advisable that branding assessments of other types of specialized tourism (e.g., medical tourism) are conducted given their proliferation in the last years coupled with their relatively small market keeping in view their capacity to contribute to local economies (Wilhelm Stanis and Barbieri 2013). In doing so, it is critical to collect primary data of current and potential tourists to accurately inform policy, marketing, and development strategies, as the use of secondary data can be misleading and misrepresentative of the current state of specialized tourism (McKercher and Chan 2005).

Concluding Remarks

This study aimed to provide some insights toward the branding of recreation on farms rather than finding consensus carved in stone regarding the best brand name. With that aim, the strongest conclusion is that more efforts are needed to standardize and diffuse a brand name for recreation on farms, especially among the public. As applicable to service industries, it is imperative that such a brand name is memorable, distinctive, relevant, and flexible enough to capture the breadth of activities offered in agricultural settings (Berry,

Lefkowitz, and Clark 1988). It is also critical that such a brand name responds to suppliers’ visions while evoking a meaningful image to visitors (Cai 2002; Maumbe, Zhou, and Selin 2013; Wheeler, Frost, and Weiler 2011), and to be integrated into marketing efforts coordinated across different stakeholders (Cheng et al. 2012).

Given the overall low memorability related to standard brand names among residents, the established distinctiveness of “Agritourism” among farmers, as well as the relevance and flexibility that this brand name evokes, “Agritourism” appears to be suitable to brand recreation on farms. In doing so, it is advisable to educate the public about its meaning by conveying a mix of educational and recreational activities linked to the practice of agriculture, highlighting hands-on activities. Although “Farm Visit” also appeared as a suitable brand name, its adoption may not be aligned with farmers’ vision and images, which may reduce its acceptability among providers. However, it is worth noting that the suitability of “Agritourism” demonstrated in this study should not be taken as conclusive given that relevance and flexibility assessments were not inclusive of other brand names; this is particularly true pertaining to “Farm Visit” as this was the only brand name that both residents and farmers liked. Thus, it is suggested a branding study should be conducted in the near future to compare the suitability of “Agritourism” in contrast to “Farm Visit.”

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