

Emerging Trends to Enhance Agritourism Promotion

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Cole Ambrock, DBA Candidate, Australian Institute of Business

Dr Svetlana De Vos, Senior Lecturer, Australian Institute of Business

Dr Uwe Kaufmann, Senior Lecturer, Research Discipline Lead, Australian Institute of Business

The Agritourism Market

Agritourism is a commercial enterprise amalgamating agricultural production and processing activities with tourism for the purpose of entertainment and recreation of the tourists. This can take the form of visiting a working farm for educational or recreation purposes and or hosting opportunities such as events, festivals, direct marketing, experiential learning, and/or overnight visits ([Vaugeois, Bence & Romanova 2017](#)). The [global agritourism market size](#) was valued at \$69.24 billion in 2019 and is projected to reach \$117.37 billion by 2027. Yet, a current challenging economic environment including high inflation and the spike in oil prices, aggravated by the war in Ukraine, continues to be the main factor weighing on the agritourism recovery in 2022 ([UNWTO, 2022](#)). Despite these challenges, agritourism is expected to adapt to the [global trends in tourism travels](#) inclusive of the [following categories](#):

- Travel “to change” (i.e, live like a local, quest for authenticity and transformation)
- Travel “to show” (i.e, Instagramable” moments, experiences and destinations)
- Pursuit of a healthy life (i.e, walking, wellness and sports tourism)
- Rising awareness on sustainability, zero plastic and climate change (i.e, rise in agritourism, eco-tourism, and eco-agritourism)
- Solo travel & multigenerational travel because of aging population and single households

Global agritourism market dominance: North America forecast

[North America](#) dominated the agritourist market size in 2019 and is forecast to sustain its dominance throughout the agritourism market in [2021-2027](#). The key factors driving the [growth of agritourism market](#) are farmers in the region capable of finding additional revenue along with their regular farm activities. For example, the Western Canadian prairie provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba account for 82 percent of the total field crop area in Canada ([Stats Canada 2021](#)). The economic output from the region produced \$36 billion in agri-food exports in 2020 which consists of the shipment of raw materials to other counties ([Holland 2022](#)). For farmers suffering from losses due to lower crop productivity, investing in the agriculture tourism business is projected to be a significant option to support their livelihood and boost income, which is further projected not only in [Canada but across the globe](#).

Moreover, the goal of utilizing agritourism is to reconnect the urban population with the activity of farming and producing food as urbanization has caused a disconnect between rural and urban demographics ([Sutherland et al 2020](#)). As of 2017, only 3% of Canadians had a direct connection to the farm and farm producer, leading to a lack of understanding of agricultural production in Canada ([Sutherland et al 2020](#)). Exploration of agritourism to reunite the urban population to rural communities may revitalize and reignite interest in the agriculture industry in the future. In fact, tourists trends increasingly opt for a 3E (Entertainment, Excitement, Education) formula which has largely replaced the traditional 3S (Sun, Sea, Sand) pattern ([WTTC, 2019](#)).

Experience economy in shaping the competitiveness of agritourism

The 21st century is marked by accelerated development of the experience economy which uses feelings, emotions, and experience—rather than products—as basic commodities. How the assumptions of the experience economy affect the competitiveness of agritourism, and what are the emerging opportunities in promoting agritourism under the experience economy paradigm? In their book entitled 'Tourism and socio-economic transformation of rural areas', [Kosmaczewska and Poczta \(2021\)](#) emphasise that today's tourism is a specific "experience industry" with growing importance attached to [experiences viewed as a megatrend](#).

For example, the widespread creation of experiences by state-of-the-art technologies (i.e., AR, VR), the need for active participation (immersion) from product users, customization and personalization of experiences (CX), are aspects of vital importance in this emerging megatrend that shape agritourism offerings to the modern consumers. ([Tom Dieck and Han, 2022](#)). The theories that explain this phenomenon include the "economy of experiences". The experience economy model consists of four realms (4Es) involving *education, entertainment, escapism, and aesthetics* to understand the experiential view of consumer behaviour (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The model explains the transition of companies selling products and services to selling experiences to engage with customers in a personal and memorable way.

4Es Realms: Emerging trends in agritourism context

The first realm, *education*, is considered to be a motivator for consumers as it increases skills and awareness by presenting the learning interactively and hands on experiences Education trends capitalise on the growth of [education farms](#) with planting seeds, picking fruit, or evaluating the quality of the grain activities projected to create a [positive outlook for the market in the upcoming years](#).

The second *entertainment realm* provides a passive participation where the attention of guests is occupied by observing the activities or performances of others. [Entertainment activities](#) can include watching an animal being born, observing a piece of equipment perform its function (i.e., tractor feeding the animals), or a brew master bottling beer.

The third realm of *esthetic experience* (a passive activity), where tourists can appreciate the beauty of the surroundings and sites are selected for the unique landscape and eye appealing effects that differ from urban life. Esthetic examples are available to primary agri-food producers who engage in [agritourism to capitalize on the uniqueness of their land](#).

The last realm of *escapism* is a motivator of consumers to leave their normal environment and embrace a new place or experience. [Examples](#) include operating farm equipment such as tractors, combines, or off road vehicles. The more activities offered at the agritourism location increases the potential for customers to fully realise escapism and have a positive experience. Research conducted by [Mahdzar et al. \(2020\)](#) explored the synergies between experience economy and the enjoyment of visitors in rural tourism destinations and concluded that the ranking of the four realms from highest to lowest are: esthetics, escapism, education, and entertainment. Based on the [Fortune Business Insights](#) forecast, Event & Recreation segment ([approximately 50 % of global market share](#)) expected to be a leading customer trend in 2020 – 2027 followed by direct market (36%) and education & experiences (14%) segments.

The [Event & recreation segment](#) is expected to hold a prominent share in the global market attributed to a significant increase in the demand for recreational tours & activities at farms and at places that have a rural ambience. With the results in mind, agritourism destinations should ensure their site is pleasant, has appreciative views, and hosts a variety of adventurous activities that help visitors escape from their daily routine (Mahdzar et al 2020).

Future opportunities to expand consumer reach

The word “Edutainment” has been derived from the combination of the words “education” and “entertainment”. [Companies](#) will continue targeting older learners who are increasingly borrowing elements from consumer internet, digital media, and gaming. There are numerous drivers that lead to growth in the [edutainment market](#).

- Increased adoption of edutainment globally
- Increased investments by large gaming and educational businesses
- Ease of game design

[Edutainment for the purpose of agritourism](#) can be conducted through immersive technologies. Despite being at a nascent stage, these technologies have an effective impact on e learning. One of the most important immersive technologies for learning is Artificial Intelligence/AI (inclusive of mixed reality, virtual reality, and augmented reality). For example, [ARtour](#) project combines an augmented reality experience (i.e, aquaponics and subsistence crops) with on-site experiences to learn about agritourism while encouraging tourists to maintain responsible environmental behavior. This edutainment – based project enhanced outdoor learning experiences and was considered as a useful guide to promote agritourism.

Similarly, Virtual reality (VR) experiences prompt participants to interact with a virtual environment through one’s senses and recognition to attain knowledge using animation, sound, and video ([Mi et al. 2016](#)). In the agritourism context, to achieve a larger target audience and capture farm site efficiencies, the adaptation of VR in the form of edutainment gained some attention ([Garzón et al. 2018](#)).

The use of large farm equipment is an attraction for people of all ages as it sparks curiosity and childhood imagination of ‘big toys’. The issues of safety, limited cab space, and weather-related work periods makes for a difficult field experience for agritourism guests. With recent improvements in rural broadband internet service, wireless cameras, and Bluetooth technology, the edutainment experience of VR combine rides is possible. The process of combining includes harvesting a grain crop and separating the seed from the straw stock. The VR experience would showcase the entire process via a live steam event where tourists are able to speak directly to the producer in the cab to answer any questions that may come up.

Overall, with the rising participation in agritourism activities in numerous countries around the world, farmers have been increasingly adopting agritourism to gain a competitive advantage and capitalise on the uniqueness of their farm and farming lifestyle for promotion. Based on the emerging trend examples discussed, agritourism is projected to create a positive outlook for the market in the upcoming years.



Cole Ambrock

DBA Candidate, Australian Institute of Business

A passionate marketing enthusiast, Cole strives at idea creation and futuristic thinking. With storytelling as a foundation for learner success, he enjoys creating lasting impressions and promoting business acumen while instructing at Lakeland College. Cole has a Master’s degree in marketing and recently began his doctorate designation by researching agritourism in Western Canada to address the knowledge gap of urban consumers towards agriculture production. Cole actively farms alongside his parents and brother near Beauvallon, Alberta and looks forward to building the farm for the next generation.



Dr. Svetlana De Vos

Senior Lecturer, Australian Institute of Business

Experienced Senior Lecturer in Marketing with a demonstrated history of working in the higher education industry. Skilled in Marketing Management, Analytical Skills, Advertising, and Integrated Marketing. Strong research professional with a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) focused in Business/Marketing Research; Dean’s Commendation Award for Doctoral Thesis Excellence from University of Adelaide.



Uwe Kaufmann

Senior Lecturer, Australian Institute of Business

Uwe is an applied trade economist and has more than 15 years of experience in academia with multidisciplinary specialisation in international trade, public policy and the regulatory environment and their impact on business operations, economics, and sustainable development.