

TOURIST GROUP MANAGEMENT AT AN AGRITOURISM GOAT FARM

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Abstract: *In this paper, the authors investigate tourist group management at an agritourism goat farm. They present the main aspects of tourist group management and of a goat farm, and they illustrate the features of tourist group management at an agritourism goat farm based on books and articles on farm tourism, emphasising the differences between the management of a goat farm and that of an agritourism goat farm.*

Keywords: *tourist group, management, agritourism, goat farm*

INTRODUCTION

Tourist group management aims at ensuring an enjoyable, smooth journey for both tourists and farmers. It involves the following aspects:

- **Budget management**, i.e., ensuring that all financial aspects of the trip / visit are handled efficiently, keeping track of expenses, and managing the group's budget;
- **Communication**, i.e., addressing any concern or issues that arise, answering questions, keeping constant contact with the tourist group, and providing tourists with essential information about the trip; (Văduva L & Petroman I.M. 2021)
- **Cultural sensitivity**, i.e., ensuring that the activities and itineraries are enjoyable and inclusive, and respecting and understanding the diverse backgrounds and preferences of group tourists; (Petroman I.M. & Văduva L. 2021)
- **Customer service**, i.e., addressing any complaints / issues professionally and promptly, and provide excellent service to ensure that all group tourists have a positive experience;
- **Logistics**, i.e., handling the practical aspects of the trip / visit (for example, arranging transportation, coordinating meal plans, ensuring that all necessary travel documents are in order;

- **Planning and scheduling**, i.e., booking accommodations, activities, and transportation, creating itineraries, and managing the overall schedule to make sure the travel / visit is timely and seamless;
- **Problem-solving**, i.e., being prepared to handle unexpected emergencies / situations (for example, flight delays, lost luggage, medical issues) and finding solutions to keep the trip / visit on track;
- **Tour guide coordination**, i.e., enhancing local guides and experts' enjoyment and understanding of the tourist destination, and working with them to provide engaging, informative experiences for the tourist group. (Petroman I. et al 2010, 2013)

As for a **goat farm**, it features (The Farm-Based Education Network, 2019):

- **A shelter** (barn, shed, shelter), which needs to be dry, secure (to protect goats from harsh weather and predators), and well-ventilated, and have adequate space for the goats to move comfortably;
- **Breeding facilities**, separate areas (pens) for controlled breeding;
- **Feed** (grains, hay, minerals, supplements) **and** (clean, fresh) **water stations**, which need to be provided through clean, easily feeders and waterers;
- **Fencing** (electric fencing, high-tensile wire fencing), which needs to be secure and strong to keep goats safe and to protect them from predators;
- **Health care facilities**, i.e., an area (separate pen, small shelter equipped with necessary medical supplies) designated for health checks, treatment of injured or sick goats, and vaccinations;
- **Manure management**, i.e., composting or using manure as fertiliser for crops and pastures to maintain hygiene and prevent the spread of diseases;
- **Milking stations**, i.e., a clean, efficient milking area (equipment for milk collection and storage, a milking stand, processing facilities);
- **Pasture and grazing areas** (with a variety of grasses, shrubs, and weeds), which need to be maintained healthy and normally grazed through rotational grazing; (Petroman I. et al 2012)
- **Record keeping**, i.e., maintaining detailed records of each goat's breeding, expenses, health, and production to analyse progress, demonstrate ability to lenders, identify areas of good / poor performance, make informed decisions, manage the farm efficiently, and plan for the future;
- **Storage facilities** for bedding material, equipment, feed, and supplies to keep the farm organized and running smoothly.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The material used in this study consists of articles about the tourist group management at a goat farm, and the research method consists of identifying management aspects specific to farm tourism as presented in these researches.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Agritourism / agri-tourism / agrotourism, which has several synonyms and spelling variants – **agricultural tourism, agritainment, farm tourism, farm visit, ranch tourism, and rural tourism** (Rauniyar et al., 2021) – also has a few definitional elements – agricultural setting, agriculture, education, entertainment, farm, farming, ranch, recreation, travel, visitors, and working (Gil Arroyo, 2012, 43, 47). **Rural/agri-tourism** is seen as a **niche tourism** (Buck, 2017).

The phrase **farm tourism** refers to **working farms complementing primary agricultural functions with some form of tourism business** (Polovitz Nickerson, Black & McCool, 2001, 20), which has led to new concepts such as **agricultural multi-functionality** and **farm pluri-activity** (Arru et al., 2019).

Since **farm tourism** involves a **transition from tourism on farms to farm tourism** (Busby & Rendle, 2000), apart from the **business, change, credit, enterprise, heritage, human resource, labour, land, marketing, operation, people, performance, protected area, resource, risk, site, supply, time, and traffic management** (Tronstad & Leones, 1999; Roberts & Hall, 2001; Fanelli & Romagnoli, 2020; Couto, Castanho & Santos, 2023) problems of the goat farm, the farmer who has transformed it into an agritourism goat farm also has problems with the **management of the groups of tourists who stay at the farm or just visit it**. Gilling (1995, in Busby & Rendle, 2000, 638) reported that “farmers think that because they know how to look after animals, they know how to look after people”, but the truth is that the management of an animal farm enterprise requires different skills from those of an agritourism farm enterprise.

Tourist / visitor group management at an agritourism goat farm should take into account, as preliminaries, details about people (the guests), physical evidence (tangible components of the farm stay as a servicer), place (location of the farm), price (charge for the farm stay), process (the way the farmer will provide customer service), product (what the farmer has to offer), promotion (the way the farmer advertises farm stay business) (Mahaliyanaarachchi, 2015; Khanal, Honey & Omobitan, 2019). It involves the following:

1. Budget management is about ensuring that all financial aspects of the trip / visit are handled efficiently, keeping track of expenses, and managing the group’s budget (Hatch, 2011; O’ahu RC&DC, 2011), with focus on (The Farm-Based Education Network, 2019, 6):

- **Financial needs:** additional labor costs, infrastructure costs, additional liability insurance coverage, amenities (e.g., additional

bathroom facilities, handicap access, parking, etc.), and marketing costs;

- **Regulations:** building codes, environmental regulations, farmland preservation or deed of easement restrictions, fire and health regulations, insurance requirements, labor laws, road signs, traffic management, and zoning regulations (Hall & Bachelor, 2019).

2. Communication is about:

- **Addressing any concern or issues** that arise;
- **Answering questions;**
- **Keeping constant contact with the tourist group;**
- **Providing tourists with essential information about the trip:** for example, rules for arrival and departure times, breakfast hours, changing diapers, eating, entering certain areas, guest areas vs. family space, how and when the bill will be paid, interfering with farming activities, littering, running, smoking restrictions, taking photos in sensitive areas, touching equipment, produce, or animals, use of alcoholic beverages, Use of credit cards, whether children or babies are welcome, whether pets are allowed, yelling or otherwise disturbing animals (O'ahu RC&DC, 2011; Mahaliyanaarachchi, 2015).

3. Cultural sensitivity is about:

- **ensuring that the activities and itineraries are enjoyable and inclusive;**
- **respecting and understanding the diverse backgrounds and preferences of group tourists.**

Customer service is about:

- **addressing any complaints / issues professionally and promptly;**
- **providing excellent service to ensure that all group tourists have a positive experience** (Busby & Rendle, 2000; Polovitz Nickerson, Black & McCool, 2001; Adam, 2004; Hatch, 2011; O'ahu RC&DC, 2011; Planning for Agritourism, 2013; Mahaliyanaarachchi, 2015; Płomiński & Małolepszy, 2018; Moraru, 2019). Agritourism is **tourist- / visitor-centred** (Figure x).

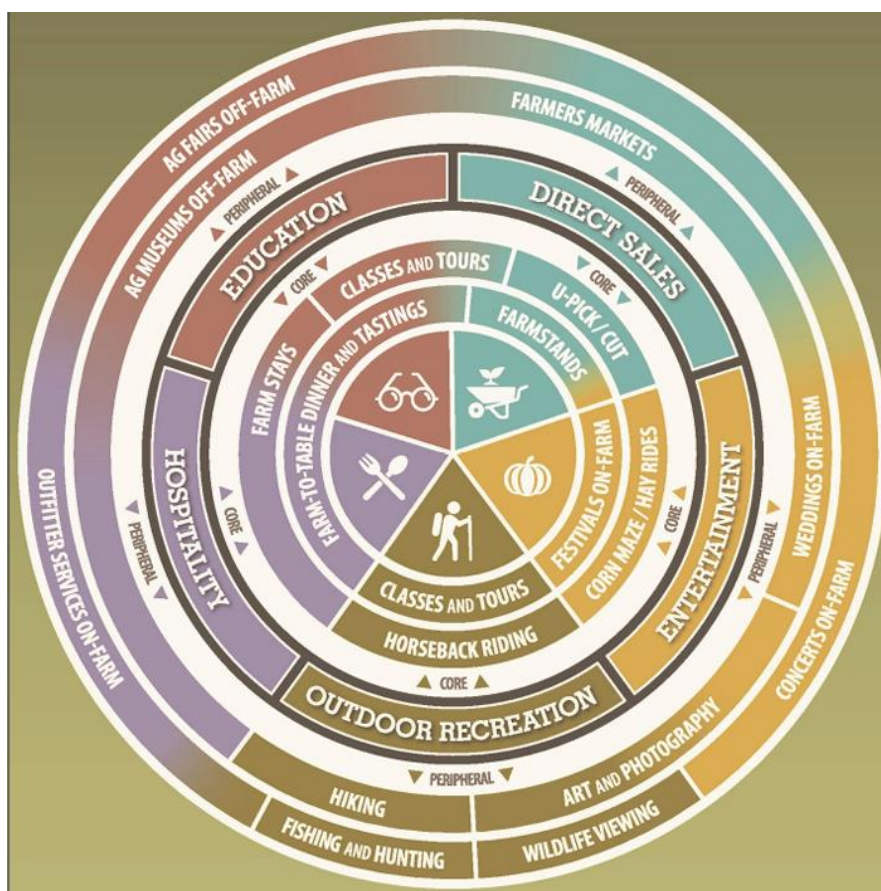


Figure x. Categories of agritourism (from Chase et al, 2018, 18)

- Accommodation: bed and breakfast, bunkhouse barn, cabin rental, camping, caravanning, children's camp, guest house, outdoor accommodation, self-catering;
- Activities: agricultural museum, baking treats, bird watching, boating, bonfire with marshmallows, canoeing, cattle drive, cave tour, children's amusements, classes / clinics / demonstrations (cooking, farming, fishing, harvesting), clay shooting, community supported agriculture, corn cannon, corn maze (educational, haunted), crop art, cut your own Christmas tree, educational activity, educational / demonstrative tour, evening outdoor recreations, face painting, farm / ranch working, farm school, farmer market, feeding zoo, fishing, food sale, game preserve, garden tour, go-carting, goat walk, guided hunt, hay bale maze, hay ride, helping to herd chickens into a coop, historical re-creation, honey tasting, horseback riding, horse-trekking, hunting (deer, dove, duck, goose, pheasant, small game, turkey), hunting dog

competition / training, kayaking, laser tag, living history farm, making toys, maze, miniature golf, mountain biking, natural features, observation dock, observing a honey comb being removed, on-farm retailing, outdoor BBQ, outdoor camping, outdoor eating, pack trip, paint ball, painting, petting zoo, photography, pick-your-own operation, planting, playgrounds, pony ride, processing demonstration, pumpkin painting, pumpkin picking, rafting, ranch skill, rappelling, refreshment sales, rent a cow / tree, roadside market, rock climbing, rodeo, tubing, school activities, self-guided driving tour, self-guided educational experiences, shooting range (firearm, moving target), sorghum maze, wagon drive / ride, walking, wildlife viewing, wine tasting, winery tour, workshop, ;

- Amenities: bakery / ice cream facility, bathing opportunities (natural water pool, reservoir, river, sea, stream, tank), bicycle rental, café, catering, cream tea, dairy shares, farm shop, mini library, pick your own, picnic site, restaurant, roadside stall / stand;
- Attractions: conservation areas, country parks, display garden (flowers, greenery, herbs), farm centres, farm museums, farm visitor centres, haunted barn / house, historical museum, self-guided farm trails, wilderness experience, wildlife viewing;
- Events: demonstrations, educational tour / visit, event hosting (birthday party, corporate retreat, family reunion, reception, wedding), farm open days, festival (food, harvest, holiday, seasonal), guided crop tour, guided walks, living history event, pageant, school tour, special event, technical tour;
- Rural access: bicycle trail, bridleway, footpath, gate, hiking trail, horseback trail, off-road vehicle driving area, picnic area, playground, stile, swimming area, track.

4. Logistics is about:

- **Handling the practical aspects of the trip / visit:**

- Arranging transportation;
- Coordinating meal plans;
- Ensuring that all necessary documents are in order (The Farm-Based Education Network, 2019): a file of all incident report forms, any signed waivers, documentation (photographic and/or video) of farm premises, employee training documents (certificates of CPR training, driver's licenses, etc.), log of farm inspections, plan(s) of operation, record of the number of visitors to the farm, repairs done

to machinery, safety and emergency response plans, and vaccinations / veterinary records.

5. Planning and scheduling is about:

- **Booking accommodations, activities, and transportation;**
- **Creating itineraries;**
- **Managing the overall schedule** to make sure the travel / visit is timely and seamless (Hatch, 2011; Planning for Agritourism, 2013), with focus on description of business, financial plan, goals and objectives, internal resources, market analysis, marketing plan, operations plan, and organization and management (Mahaliyanaarachchi, 2015).

6. Problem-solving is about:

- **Being prepared to handle unexpected emergencies / situations** (for example, flight delays, lost luggage, medical issues);
- **Finding solutions to keep the trip / visit on track** (Hatch, 2011; O'ahu RC&DC, 2011).

7. Tour guide coordination is about:

- **Enhancing local guides and experts' enjoyment and understanding of the tourist destination;**
- **Working with local guides and experts** to provide engaging, informative experiences for the tourist group about nearby attractions such as: community cultural centers, heritage places, important religious places, museums, national parks, waterfalls, etc. (Mahaliyanaarachchi, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the presentation above:

- Tourist group management has eight main aspects;
- Goat farms have specific features;
- The phrase farm tourism seems to be the best to cover all aspects involved in this type of tourism;
- Tourist / visitor group management at an agritourism goat farm shares the same aspects as tourist group management, with emphasis on documents, information about the trip, management of the overall schedule, tour guide coordination, positive experience, and regulations.

Finding the balance between farming and tourism is the key to successful agritourism operations, together with **food consumption, online reviews, and websites** (Fanelli, 2019).

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