

Kansas agritourism business owners' perception of communication practices and intentions to expand business development

by

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Abstract

Growing interest in local food and sustainable farming practices has led to an increase in agritourism operations. Agritourism is a sector of agriculture that connects the consumer and the agriculture industry. Research on Kansas agritourism is limited, and no studies investigate Kansas agritourism business owners' perceptions of their communications and marketing efforts.

Exploration of the importance and implementation of communication strategy by Kansas agritourism business owners can provide insight into the future growth, business motivation, and community impact these business owners possess. Identifying the barriers agritourism business owners face related to expansion and communication strategies provide insight into how to expand and improve the agritourism industry in Kansas. This study explored how Kansas agritourism business owners' perceptions of communications practices relate to their intentions to expand their business through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior.

The research questions of this study were addressed using a quantitative survey instrument distributed to registered Kansas agritourism business owners via email. The questionnaire inquired about the following areas: (1) current communication strategies and importance level of the respondent, (2) intentions to expand Kansas agritourism operations, (3) motivations and current business success, (4) respondent's barriers related to business expansion and communication strategies and (5) profile of the responding agritourism business owner. The demographic characteristics of Kansas agritourism business owners were identified using descriptive statistics. Data analyses of variance and correlations were used to answer the research questions.

This study revealed in-person, word-of-mouth promotion is the most important communication channel for agritourism business owners. The difference in perceived importance of digital communication channels was statistically significant between livestock operation, accommodation and vineyard/winery businesses. Print communication channels perceived importance was statistically significant and different between accommodation and vineyard/winery businesses. The difference in perceived importance of in-person communication channels was statistically significant between farms of all varieties, accommodation and vineyard/winery businesses. In addition, there was a positive relationship between Kansas agritourism business owners' ability to promote their business and their perception of communication and marketing practices' importance.

Results from this study indicated Kansas agritourism business owners' perception of communication practices and how they related to their intentions to expand their business. Adding a unique perspective to agritourism research, this study offers the perspective of agritourism business owners. The findings provide insight and recommendations for both state agritourism programs and agritourism business owners. It is recommended that future research continues to analyze agritourism from the business owners' perspective by identifying the role and importance of communications within their business strategy. To encourage continued growth of the agritourism industry, is essential to understand what drives business owners to be successful and expand their businesses.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my Papa Raley, Grandpa Sam and Grandma Bishop. Thank you for the unconditional love and memories I had the privilege to experience with you throughout my childhood. Your support and guidance from heaven have helped me accomplish so much in life.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Background & Setting

Innovation and expansion of the agricultural industry are necessary to provide for the everyday consumer (Frona et al., 2019) as well as the viability of agricultural operations (Battersby, 2013). Agritourism is a sector of agriculture that connects the consumer and the agriculture industry by providing an inside look at a variety of operations (Agapito et al., 2016). Literature does not provide a consistent definition of agritourism, and it has been used interchangeably with other terms. There is a major discrepancy between the definitions of agritourism in relation to the type of setting in which the activity takes place. For example, some studies state agritourism must be carried out on farms (Carpio et al., 2008). Other studies expand the setting to include any type of agricultural operation, including farms, ranches, and nurseries (Che et al., 2005). There are other studies that include off-farm facilities, such as farmers' markets, where farm products are sold away from the farm production setting (Wicks & Merrett, 2003).

Agritourism provides the opportunity for the everyday consumer to learn and experience why agriculture is important and how present it is in everyday life (Dimitrovski et al., 2019). Tourism is any activity that involves a person traveling or staying in a place outside of their usual environment for no more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, or other purposes (Theobald, 2004). The growing interest in local food and sustainable farming practices has led to an increase in agritourism operations (Battersby, 2013). Consumers are becoming increasingly interested in where their food comes from and in locally sourced products (Henryks & Pearson, 2010). The COVID-19 pandemic caused a disruption in the tourism and hospitality industry

(Adom et al., 2021). Agritourism has become a preferred travel trend due to the impacts of COVID-19 on travel, shifting preference to local-based activities (Adom et al., 2021).

For agritourism business owners, consumer curiosity creates an opportunity for owners to provide the knowledge and resources consumers seek (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008). Barbieri and Mshenga's (2008) explains the opportunity:

In the USA in particular, changing lifestyles and population demographics are creating new markets and opportunities for farmers to diversify and increase their revenues because many urban residents are taking refuge from the rigours of city life and seeking a farm experience that is perceived to be relaxing (para. 2).

Consumer curiosity toward agricultural lifestyles provides agritourism business owners a unique opportunity around the subject of agriculture (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008). By providing educational resources and activities, agritourism business owners help supplement their personal business and provide a new adventure and experience to visitors (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008).

Rural areas rely heavily on farming, even though small and medium-sized farms encounter financial hardships with the cost of inputs and frustrating commodity prices (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008). The rural community can be defined based on population size, amenities available, housing, or any territory that is not located in an urban area. Farming provides financial and living support to personal individuals and their families, but also the development and survival of rural communities (Ashkenazy et al., 2018). Farming is seen as “offering producers a significant opportunity to differentiate themselves, and in so doing, build and sustain a competitive advantage in their chosen markets” (Amanor-Boadu, 2013, pg. 59). Economic pressures have caused agricultural producers to seek ways to diversify their products.

Agritourism offers unique ways for agriculture-related resources to be used to gain additional income (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008). Agritourism encompasses a variety of activities from farm-related activities to overnight stays, hayrides, corn mazes, and taking advantage of existing farmland (Rich et al., 2016). It also offers educational opportunities, such as animal interactions, pick-your-own produce, and touring the farm or its facilities (Rich et al., 2016). Visitors are not obligated to take part in agricultural activities, but they are able to have a direct connection with the agricultural setting (Rich et al., 2016). Agritourism in the United States also complements the growing demand for culinary, heritage, and nature tourism (Rich et al., 2016). Agritourism has many aspects that connect to new experiences on the farm and create new opportunities for destinations to connect to agricultural traditions and tourism (Rich et al., 2016).

The most popular agritourism activities that produce the most income include pick-your-own produce, Christmas tree sales, hayrides, children's educational programs, petting zoos, and on-farm festivals (McGehee & Kim, 2004). These popular activities are common for young couples and families to enjoy throughout the United States (McGehee & Kim, 2004).

Agriculture commodities create unique agritourism business opportunities (Joo et al., 2013). The state of Kansas is considered a major contributor to the agriculture segment in producing and providing agricultural commodities for consumers nationwide (Kansas Department of Agriculture, 2022). Kansas produces 20 percent of the total wheat grown in the United States (Kansas Department of Agriculture, 2022). The animal sectors in Kansas continue to grow and reflect contributions at the global scale (Kansas Department of Agriculture, 2022). With the increasing demand from consumers, agriculture producers continue to meet the highest standards while utilizing fewer resources (Kansas Department of Agriculture, 2022).

The state of Kansas has a unique sector of tourism solely dedicated to agritourism businesses. Within the umbrella of Kansas Tourism, the Kansas Agritourism program is a free resource and program where agritourism businesses can register and receive assistance in the promotion of their business (Kansas Agritourism, 2022). The Kansas Agritourism program offers marketing and promotion benefits as well as resources related to limited liability and business management (Kansas Agritourism, 2022). After the completion of business registration, the Kansas Agritourism program provides a website link with the business information for tourists and local community members to see (Kansas Agritourism, 2022). Kansas agritourism business owners also can promote upcoming events and activities on the Kansas Agritourism program page after the completion of registration (Kansas Agritourism, 2022).

Kansas has fewer agritourism businesses in the state compared to the rest of the United States (Amanor-Boadu, 2013). Agritourism businesses benefit the owners and the state of Kansas financially and developmentally (Amanor-Boadu, 2013). However, agritourism business owners have concerns about barriers that could inhibit their ability to keep up with rapid industry growth (Miller et al., 2012). The lead concern of agritourism business owners is how to properly market and promote their business, specifically that their comfort level with technology would limit their output of promotional procedures (Miller et al., 2012). Concerns regarding liability coverage and insurance were also cited (Miller et al., 2012).

Each agritourism business owner offers a different perspective and experience of what agritourism can look like (Sandt et al., 2018). The rural lifestyle is one component that drives the interest and curiosity of visitors to the state of Kansas for agritourism experiences (Kansas Department of Agriculture, 2022). With the advancements in technology increasing, more individuals find themselves searching for more agriculture-related activities and events to

explore (Brune et al., 2020). Effectively marketing and connecting with current and potential customers can increase both overall experience and knowledge gained (Miller et al., 2012).

For agritourism businesses, a developmental plan of successful methods to enhance visitor attendance and experience can assist in improving their personal businesses (Che et al., 2005). Developmental plans contain opportunities for growth, funding plans, financial goals, operational needs and sales and marketing activities (Che et al., 2005). Both well-established agritourism businesses and new business ventures can benefit from increasing overall tactics to support their business (George et al., 2011). Tactics can include advertising, direct marketing, branding, packaging, online presence, printed materials, sales presentations and sponsorships (George et al., 2011). Marketing tools and resources help guide in assisting with building and improving a marketing plan that benefits both the agritourism business owner and the experience of the visitor (George et al., 2011).

A successful marketing plan can also assist agritourism businesses in becoming better discovered when located in more rural areas (Ammirato et al., 2020). Businesses located in rural areas can have a decreased number of visitors due to the lack of knowledge on the location of where the business is (Ammirato et al., 2020). Agritourism businesses located in rural areas has been an increasing trend due to landowners wanting to utilize their farmland (Ammirato et al., 2020). The rural areas can create unique opportunities for business owners to continue or create business ventures (Ammirato et al., 2020).

Many agritourism businesses are located in rural areas, outside of big city areas (Essex et al., 2005). Rural communities benefit from local agritourism businesses because of the

supplementary traffic and business visiting from other cities or outside the region (Essex et al., 2005).

Agritourism contributes to sustaining rural communities, heritage, and cultural landscapes by expanding job opportunities and income for local residents (Essex et al., 2005). New and established agritourism operators can utilize the results of this study to increase awareness of their business to both locals and travelers nationwide (Miller et al., 2012). In addition, the results can contribute to the economic value and popularity of their agritourism business (Miller et al., 2012).

In order for agritourism business owners to be successful, communications are used as a tool to assist. Communications is used to inform, market and relay event details and information to potential visitors regarding agritourism businesses (Giray et al., 2019). Creating online content, merchandise and educational information helps in establishing agritourism businesses reputation and creates familiarity with potential guests (Giray et al., 2019). The increase of technology innovations has created an even more unique opportunity for agritourism businesses to communicate more through popular digital platforms such as Facebook, TikTok and Instagram. The digital platform era creates a quick and easy way agritourism businesses can utilize to relay a message or information is a fast way (Giray et al., 2019). Communications consist of the messages and media deployed to communicate for a business. Advertising, direct marketing, branding, packaging, online presence, printed materials and appearance are some communication methods (Alharbie, 2015). These practices are used to promote business's opportunities and potential to visitors and customers (Alharbie, 2015). Communication channels allow for businesses needs to be met when related to business expansion. Business needs relate profitability, marketing and overall success (Alharbie, 2015). Communications has been seen to

help business owners with expanding their business (Alharbie, 2015). The intentions business owners have to continue and grow their business is related to the communication and marketing practices being utilized (Alharbie, 2015).

Communications contributes to agritourism business development by providing additional resources agritourism business owners can use to potentially increase their overall income and promotion of their business (Tiago et al., 2021). This serves as a resource that business owners do not necessarily have to invest a lot of money in (Tiago et al., 2021). Social media platforms and other communication channels have free options that can then be upgraded (Tiago et al., 2021). The investment into communication within a business can increase the business development overtime (Tiago et al., 2021). Business development progression can refer to expanding in the products and services being offered at the business (Tiago et al., 2021). Agritourism business owners recognize in order to survive and be successful communication strategies are necessary (Falkheimer et al., 2017).

Small business owners take all risks when opening a business. When small businesses do not have to adequate preparation or information of what a business entails, they will like shut down in the five years to follow (Turner & Endres, 2017). Commonly lack of skill, knowledge and strategy to succeed with a small business are contributing factors. To mitigate these risk, small business owners rely in communication to assist in the acknowledgement and development of small businesses (Turner & Endres, 2017). Communications creates promotion opportunity to the public to become aware of the business. This led to successful businesses with large followings based on if business owners interpreted the importance of communications (Turner & Endres, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

In Kansas, there has not been a focused look from the perspective of agricultural communications at the benefits, impacts, or uses of media that agritourism business owners can utilize to be successful (Rich et al., 2016). Research done in the field of agricultural communications can help increase the popularity and familiarity of agritourism in Kansas (Amaral et al., 2012). Currently, Kansas agritourism research is focused on the economic value agritourism brings to the state and to agritourism operators (Amanor-Boadu, 2013). Though economic value provides some financial insights, there continues to be a void in what Kansas agritourism business success is, the motivational factors for agritourism business owners to continue and expand their business development and the marketing tactics that help promote such businesses.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore how Kansas agritourism business owners' perceptions of communications practices relate to their intentions to expand their business. Communication strategy importance and implementation can provide insight into the future growth, business motivation and community impact Kansas agritourism business owners possess. Identifying the barriers agritourism business owners face related to expansion and communication strategies will provide future solutions to expand and improve the agritourism industry in Kansas. As a result, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What were the most important communication channels agritourism business owners perceived between print, digital and in-person?

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in importance of communication channels between types of agritourism businesses?

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' perceived importance of communication and marketing practices and their intention to expand business development?

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between how agritourism business owners believe they are perceived in their local community and owners' intention to expand business development?

Research Question 5: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' confidence in the ability to promote their business and intention to expand business development?

Research Question 6: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' barriers faced and intention to expand business development?

Research Question 7: What is the relationship between how successful agritourism business owners perceive their business and confidence in the ability to promote their business?

Research Question 8: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' perceived importance of communication and marketing practices and confidence in the ability to promote their business?

This study also gives the Kansas Agritourism program a current assessment of the comfortability Kansas agritourism business owners have in regard to marketing their business. This information will allow for future materials to be created to assist in improving marketing and outreach tools for agritourism business owners. This study provides data on the current agritourism business in the state and what category they are considered. By the end of this study, Kansas Agritourism and other state agritourism state programs will be able to understand who

Kansas agritourism businesses are, how they succeed, how they relate to one another, and what they need to succeed.

Definition of Terms

Agritourism: For the purpose of this study, the definition by the Kansas legislature will be adopted. The Kansas legislature defines agritourism as, “any activity which allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including, but not limited to, farming activities, ranching activities or historic, cultural or natural attractions” (Kansas State Legislature, n.d.).

Rural Community: For the purpose of this study, a rural community is defined as a rural area, adjacent to agricultural areas characterized by primacy economies, or exhibiting other nonurban cultural, social, and ecological traits (Sanders & Lewis, 1976).

Tourism: For the purpose of this study, tourism is, an industry focused on activities, accommodations, and services that meet the needs of people traveling for leisure and recreation (Hunt & Layne, 1991).

Limitations

This study is limited to only agritourism business owners who are registered with the Kansas Agritourism program. The results cannot be generalized to other state agritourism programs or businesses. However, accounting for this limitation, study results provide an essential understanding of agritourism business owners in Kansas.

Basic Assumptions

The following assumptions were made about this study:

1. Individuals participating in the survey are the owners of agritourism businesses enrolled in the Kansas Agritourism program.
2. Participants answered questions with honesty based on their individual experiences in the agritourism industry.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Overview

Chapter two provides the current literature on agritourism, as well as contributing conceptual framework to this model. Examining previous studies and theories allowed for the expansion of current knowledge on agritourism and agritourism business owners. The following subject areas were examined: agritourism in the United States, agritourism in Kansas and the benefits of agritourism. A theoretical framework was also developed using the Theory of Planned Behavior.

History of Agritourism

Agritourism in the United States

The term agritourism describes an activity when an individual visits a farm or other agricultural setting to learn or participate in the agricultural process for recreation or leisure (Phillip et al., 2010). Agritourism is a subset of tourism that includes other leisure and hospitality businesses that attract visitors. Activities that are classified as agritourism include, “daily visits (e.g., orchard tours, hayrides), recreational self-harvest (e.g., pick-your-own operations), hunting and fishing for a fee, nature and wildlife observation, and other outdoor activities” (Tew & Barbieri, 2012, p. 216).

Farm-related recreation and tourism can be traced back in history to early as the 1800s. Escaping the city heat and other inclement weather was considered a vacation (Chikuta & Makacha, 2016). Families would visit relatives who lived in rural areas to experience the calm and relaxation that the city did not provide. When the automobile era arrived in the 1920s, agritourism continued to trend upward in popularity and familiarity. Having a form of

transportation meant more opportunity to explore, less travel time to new areas, and an increased curiosity about what rural America had to offer (Chikuta & Makacha, 2016).

From 1929 – 1945 the Great Depression and World War II created a distinct time of worry and stress for all individuals in the United States (Chase et al., 2018). Farm-related recreation and tourism were used as activities to attempt to escape the worries and scares tomorrow may bring. This led to high demand for rural recreation in horseback riding, farm petting zoos, and farming activities into the 1970s (Chase et al., 2018). Farm vacations, bed and breakfasts, and commercial farm tours were popularized by the 1990s as an increase in individuals took an interest and curiosity about what the experience was (Chase et al., 2018).

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted individuals nationwide. Gathering inside spaces was discouraged to avoid the virus while social distancing was encouraged (Chin & Musa, 2021). This created a widespread shutdown of public businesses, schools, and other shared spaces considered high risk for the spread of infection. People were encouraged to avoid crowded areas, and to instead find spaces outside where social distancing could meet government-mandated requirements (Chin & Musa, 2021). Nature-based tourism was considered low risk during the pandemic and offered space for physical distancing outdoors. This caused an increase in people exploring all outdoor activities, especially those that were agriculture-related (Kalaitzandonakes et al., 2020).

Agritourism businesses today receive more than 62 million visitors a year in the United States (National Tour Association, 2022). The public curiosity about the agriculture industry continues to grow which makes businesses more open to educating and sharing how their business is related to and contributes to agriculture. Ranches and farms that sell or process food for human consumption are becoming more interested in adopting agritourism as part of their

business (Whitt et al., 2019). Operations with horses and cattle have a higher likelihood of adding an agritourism component to their business. Farmers' markets are becoming a popular place for agritourism operators to sell and promote their business to the local community (Whitt et al., 2019).

Agritourism in Kansas

In the past, the agritourism of Kansas had lower participation compared to other states in the United States (Amanor-Boadu, 2013). However, from 2002 to 2007 there was a 21 percent increase in agritourism activities, resulting in a nearly 41 percent increase in revenue for agritourism revenue (Amanor-Boadu, 2013). Kansas producers have acknowledged the potential for agritourism to grow their businesses with intention of improving their overall business and educating community members (Amanor-Boadu, 2013).

In 2004, the Kansas Agritourism Promotion Act was signed into law (Kansas Agritourism, 2022). The intent of this act was to spur the promotion, diversification, and expansion of the agritourism industry in Kansas (Kansas Agritourism, 2022). The act created a registration process that allowed the state to aid in promoting agritourism operations (Miller, 2014). The registration process for an agritourism business is free and lasts up to five years before the operator must renew it. A completed registration provides the agritourism operator with a trustworthy and resourceful document to display to visitors (Miller, 2014). The benefits include limited liability protection, signage resources and tax credit to assist in agritourism business development in Kansas (Miller, 2014).

The registration also includes limited liability protection and appropriate signage to display to visitors about possible risks (Kansas Agritourism, 2022). Limited liability warnings include the inherent risks of agritourism activities (Miller, 2014). Operators are protected from

participant negligence and failure to follow instructions, as well as injury caused by another participant's negligence (Miller, 2014).

The Kansas Agritourism Promotion Act offers a unique provision involving a tax credit to agritourism operators. The five-year tax credit for 20 percent of the liability insurance is paid by the operator (Miller, 2014). This benefits both the current operator and future ones by encouraging start-up investment. To make diversifying operations easier for business owners, state tax credits are available for insurance, building construction or renovation, processing, and marketing (Miller, 2014).

In Kansas, agritourism provides local and out-of-state visitors with an opportunity to support Kansas agricultural producers. Visitors also gain opportunities, knowledge, and experience about what Kansas agritourism means and how rural America plays a vital role (Kansas Agritourism, 2022). They can do so by visiting one of the currently 434 businesses registered with the Kansas Agritourism program (Kansas Agritourism, 2022). Businesses include pumpkin patches, Christmas tree farms, apiaries, u-pick operations, orchards, vineyards/wineries, hunting/hunting lodges, working ranches, event barns, sunflower fields, farms of all varieties, livestock operations (cattle, goats, horses, buffalos, alpacas, llamas, sheep, pigs, etc.) and cabins (Kansas Agritourism, 2022).

The Kansas Agritourism program was designed to assist with the promotion of agritourism operators. Kansas Agritourism offers free registration to agritourism business owners (Kansas Agritourism, 2022). Registered Kansas Agritourism business owners have access to exclusive business promotion through social media channels and events. Limited liability protection is also an exclusive benefit when registering with the Kansas Agritourism program which can provide signage and additional protection to agritourism businesses (Kansas

Agritourism, 2022). Additional resources and educational opportunities are available for registered businesses to utilize and expand their network (Kansas Agritourism, 2022).

The Benefits of Agritourism

Agritourism produces benefits for farms, operators, surrounding communities, and society. Combining two industries, agriculture and tourism, alleviates labor shortage issues (Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Agritourism can be used “in times of economic distress, such as a poor harvest or depressed prices, receiving visitors for agritourism activities may provide an avenue for generating alternative or supplemental income for the farm family” (Tew & Barbieri, 2012, para. 10). Additional employment opportunities can also be made possible for family members, improving the likelihood of family farm businesses for generations forward (Tew & Barbieri, 2012).

Current worries exist about the average age of farmers and producers in the agriculture industry (Schilling et al., 2012). Demographic evolutions in the agriculture industry present the problem of who will continue the business after the older generation is gone (Schilling et al., 2012). Agritourism provides a unique route to continuing agriculture-related businesses. Studies have shown “that, because of the gain of skill development and income, many young people were staying in the community to become agritourism entrepreneurs rather than migrating to urban areas for employment”(Peroff et al., 2022, p.10, para. 15). Agritourism profits may provide incentives for individuals to continue farming, thus contributing to small family farms' conservation (Peroff et al., 2022).

The younger generations, millennials and Gen Z, are more conscious and interested in environmental issues that can potentially impact them (Globaldata Travel and Tourism, 2022). An increase in agriculture-related interest can contribute to the steady increase of agritourism

and rural community development (Globaldata Travel and Tourism, 2022). Increasing the public awareness of agricultural lifestyle and culture provide family farms the opportunity to generate income while providing goods and services to the local community (De Vasconcellos Pegas et al., 2013).

Trends of participating in activities as a family that are both fun and educational without having a heavy technology base continue to increase (Roshan, 2021). The term “unplugged” is often used to describe what both local and distant visitors in communities seek to find. Instead of taking long extended vacations, individuals have begun to favor exploring what the local agriculture-related community has to offer (Roshan, 2021). When personal income decreases consumers seek less expensive alternatives closer to home like agritourism (Sandt & McFadden, 2016).

In recent studies, “approximately 90% of all farms and ranches in the U.S. are family-owned (USDA Census of Agriculture, 2007) the younger generation may often not be inclined to continue working in this sector due to limited economic opportunities; hence, agritourism can be an appealing employment alternative to younger generations” (De Vasconcellos Pegas et al., 2013, pg. 5). Agritourism presents the opportunity to spread knowledge about agriculture with the possibly of encouraging others to pursue a similar business entity (De Vasconcellos Pegas et al., 2013).

In the past, “farms and ranches have long generated income from both agriculture and farm-based accommodations, agricultural restructuring has escalated agri-tourism development” (Che, 2007, pg. 3). Agritourism allows for the unique opportunity to utilize existing resources without the requirement of large investments in infrastructure (Andereck and Vogt, 2000).

Saving on expenses allows producers to accommodate activities that represent the rural lifestyle (Andereck & Vogt, 2000).

By utilizing existing resources to offer activities, farm operators do not have to drastically change their current farm operations (Torres & Momsen, 2004). Research regarding agritourism in Michigan found, “temporary entertainment facilities (i.e. corn/sorghum mazes operating later into the fall, fishponds, a petting zoo, or a strawberry U-pick for fall harvest markets) to be important in extending the season and generating income” (Che, 2007, pg. 3). A diversification of product and service offerings allowed farms to extend the period during which they were able to sell value-added products directly to consumers (Che, 2007). Being able to utilize resources that are already available increases the likelihood of operators extending their visitation season and increasing profits (Che, 2007).

Agriculture-based producers have struggled with the costs and resources needed to interest and sell their products successfully to the public (Kline et al., 2015). Financial burden is created by traveling out of close proximity or paying additional fees to sell products in stores. Agritourism has been shown to, “help to mitigate some of these challenges, specifically by bringing potential customers to the agritourism farm, reducing farmers’ need to sell at outside venues, and supplementing their income from offering agritourism products” (Kline et al., 2015, para. 5). Having the opportunity for the customer to come to the producer increases the chance of a larger profit margin (Kline et al., 2015).

Data from the Census of Agriculture reflects that between the years 2002 and 2017 agritourism in the United States has more than tripled in revenue. Revenue grew from \$704 million in 2012 to \$950 million in 2017. The 2022 data from the Census of Agriculture is expected to exceed the previous amount due to the increased interest in agritourism. Agritourism

is, “a rural economic development strategy as it generates direct economic opportunities for other businesses within a local economy” (Schilling et al., 2012, p. 201).

The increase in income is one of the many motivations operators cite as a reason for starting or continuing their agritourism business (Quella et al., 2021). Other motives include nonmonetary goals such as providing agricultural educational resources, employment opportunities for family, social interaction with guests, and education to the public about agriculture (Quella et al., 2021). In the literature it explains how “agritourism does not always meet the goal of economic self-reliance, it is a powerful tool for community control and building community culture” (Quella et al., 2021, pg. 291).

Members of rural communities are eager to preserve the habitat and lifestyle agriculture provides to their community (Ciolac et al., 2020). Some fear the risk of abandonment or loss of traditional ways if agriculture was to vanish from their community. Agriculture businesses provide local communities with local attractions and additional opportunities to increase the impact the rural community has in further development and expansion (Ciolac et al., 2020).

Rural community members often collaborate with farmers and agritourism operators. Long-term relationships become established through aligned interests, resources and goals (Whitt et al., 2019). Well-developed agritourism systems in rural areas have the potential to reverse negative economic trends by bringing in visitors and creating new jobs and local business ventures for rural residents (Ramsey, 2006, pg. 6). The rural network expands in size and resources when the community participates and supports the endeavors. Rural communities and agritourism operators working together have the opportunity to create a unique community for tourists and local residents to experience (Matos & Scherer, 2013).

Most Americans, whether young or old, have limited knowledge about agriculture and food production (Hardesty et al., 2018). Agritourism offers the unique component of educating all generations about the many sections of agriculture (Parker & Wagner, 2016). Agritourism provides real-world and hands-on experience to convey the importance of agriculture now and in the future. Agriculture literacy will continue to become an important concept when discussing the growing population of the world (Parker & Wagner, 2016).

Owners of agritourism businesses consider increasing agriculture literacy a vital component for both visitor experience and business success (McGehee & Kim, 2004). Agriculture literacy refers to knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs about agriculture (Peroff et al., 2022). Owners of agriculture businesses viewed agritourism as a way to educate the public about agriculture, where food comes from, and the passion business owners have for their land and for agriculture (Peroff et al., 2022).

Agritourism increases agricultural literacy among public individuals by providing educational resources and information while visiting agritourism businesses (Barbieri et al., 2019). Visitors to agritourism businesses often consist of young adults, children and families. When interaction takes place between family members, a conversation is initiated regarding the topic of agriculture. Barbieri et al. (2019) discovered that the value of educating the public is a top motivator for agritourism business owners. Families often choose to visit an agritourism business to gain knowledge they are unfamiliar with regarding agriculture (Barbieri et al., 2019).

Agritourism creates the increased viability of agricultural businesses (Rilla et al., 2011). Agribusiness owners who used to produce agricultural products can now diversify their resources more (Rilla et al., 2011). By combining aspects of the tourism and agriculture industries, agritourism offers tourists, producers, and communities a variety of financial, educational, and

social benefits (Trukhachev, 2015). Produced goods can be directly sold to consumers through agritourism, allowing producers to generate additional income (Veeck et al., 2006). Tourism is enhanced by the increase in visitors and their length of stay in an area. Communities can also benefit from agritourism by increasing their tax bases and creating new employment opportunities. Agritourism is also beneficial for educating the public, preserving agricultural lands, and developing business enterprises in the state (Veeck et al., 2006).

Communication Channels

A communication channel is a means of delivering a business's offer and value to its target audience (Danaher & Rossiter, 2011). The first step to a successful marketing campaign is identifying your target audience (Danaher & Rossiter, 2011). As businesses build and establish their brand image, they connect with their audience, making them feel like it is part of their everyday lives. Print, digital and in-person communication channels are often used by businesses for promoting and marketing their business (Danaher & Rossiter, 2011).

Print communication historically was one of the most effective means of communicating with customers, both existing and prospective within tourism businesses (Mieli & Zillinger, 2020). Magazines, newsletters, brochures, newspapers, and other printed materials are examples of print channels. Business owners continue to use print publications to communicate with their audience and offer discounts, coupons, and special promotions, even though online avenues can be more cost-effective (Mieli & Zillinger, 2020). Print communication has the advantage of allowing your customers to read and respond at their own convenience (Mieli & Zillinger, 2020).

The continued growth of technology and innovation has caused the use of digital resources to become more popular (Peter & Vecchia, 2021). Digital communication is the use of online

tools such as email, social media and other web-based platforms to reach a target audience and encourage visitors (Peter & Vecchia, 2021). Business owners use digital communication to share messages and content fast with potential visitors (Peter & Vecchia, 2021). The increased use of social media has cause businesses to create business profile and footprint on digital communication channels (Peter & Vecchia, 2021).

Traditional methods of communication still consider in-person communication channels an effective way of reaching targeted audiences (Spears et al., 2015). Even though technology has transformed how visitors interact with businesses, many still prefer face-to-face interactions because it provides instant feedback and satisfaction (Spears et al., 2015). In-person communication can help understand whether the business's message is clear and effective or needs modification (Spears et al., 2015).

Communication Strategies

Paid, owned, and earned media are the three types of communication strategies that businesses can use to market their products (Mattke et al., 2019). Paid media is when the product or company pays for a message to appear. It includes advertisements, sponsorships, and paid membership sites (Mattke et al., 2019). Owned Media are those owned by self a blog or website. Earned media is when guest/visitors share your content with their audience, which can cause an increase in reaching multiple potential customers (Mattke et al., 2019).

Paid media can help reach a larger audience quickly, while owned media allows for control in the messaging and branding (Mattke et al., 2019). Earned media helps businesses build trust and credibility because it is coming from recommendations of other individuals. Paid media can also help generate leads and sales while owned media allows brands to communicate directly with customers using creative content marketing efforts (Mattke et al., 2019). Earned media

provides an unique opportunity for word-of-mouth marketing which can assist in the reach and impact businesses have (Mattke et al., 2019).

Within businesses, communications have the role of providing information, persuading and reminding visitors of the products and activities available at the business (Amin, 2019). Expanding communication strategies within a business can lead to a larger market of visitors being aware of the business. Communications creates the opportunity for businesses to increase their business awareness amongst the public and increase physical amount of visitors (Amin, 2019).

Communications are valued from agritourism business owners for social, economic and emotional benefits for their business (Canovi & Pucciarelli, 2019). Business owners are able to customize the strategies of communication to the needs they best desire for promoting their business (Canovi & Pucciarelli, 2019). A positive impact on how business owners feel moving forward and continuing their business is based on the communication strategies they utilize. Communications allows for business owners to feel and be confident in what their business has to offer to public visitors (Canovi & Pucciarelli, 2019). The feeling of transparency allows business owners to show all components of their operation to the public and what they have to offer (Canovi & Pucciarelli, 2019).

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework for this study consisted of one theory: the theory of planned behavior. The theory of planned behavior explains individual behavior as resulting from intentions, which in turn are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) states an individual's behavioral intentions are shaped through perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and attitude (Brune et al., 2020). It is important to understand how TPB is applied to agritourism producers in connecting with customers and promoting of their businesses (Brune et al., 2020). Through understanding, producers can better perceive their intentions and goals for achieving their objectives (Zhao et al., 2022). The producer can then analyze their current performance and adjust to better fit their business, visitors, and future goals in the industry (Zhao et al., 2022).

TPB was first proposed by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen in 1980. The purpose of introducing TPB was to improve the predictive power component missing from the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Madden et al., 1992). Fishbein and Ajzen developed TRA to suggest a person's behavior is determined by their intention to perform the behavior, as a function of their attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms (Bosnjak et al., 2020). The missing component, perceived behavior control, was the new addition that created TPB (Bosnjak et al., 2020).

TPB has three basic components that represent an individual's control over his or her behavior:

1. Attitudes toward the behavior – The degree to which a person evaluates the behavior of interest favorably or unfavorably. Evaluation involves considering the outcomes of conducting the behavior (LaMorte, 2016).
2. Subjective norms regarding the behavior – The belief about whether the majority of people approve or disapprove of a particular behavior. Whether a person should

engage in a particular behavior is determined by what peers and significant others think about it (LaMorte, 2016).

3. Perceived control over the behavior – A person's perception of how easy or difficult it is to perform the behavior of interest. Depending on the situation and action, a person's perception of behavioral control may vary (LaMorte, 2016).

Theory of Planned Behavior and Agritourism

Studies have utilized the theory of planned behavior to investigate advertising, public relations, and campaigns (Quintal et al., 2010). Attitudes toward the behavior related to agritourism pertain to the attitudes an agritourism business owner currently possesses regarding their business. These attitudes can be related to how favorable or unfavorable of a view they have towards a behavior such as business skills and development plans. The outcome of the behavior can determine what business and communication practices they utilize currently and plan for future ventures.

Subjective norms as it relates to agritourism refer to the views or opinions of someone from a viewing perspective. These would be referred to as visitors, local community members or other businesses as they see the agritourism business. Often behavioral decisions will be influenced by others who have significant value to them. Based on personal experience and influence, subjective norms are determined to conclude how an individual will choose to control their interest in behavior.

Perceived behavioral control refers to the individual's self-perception of how challenging it is to perform an interest based on their agritourism business. Agritourism business owners will often be faced with challenges or barriers that limit their ability to accomplish goals. Based on

how agritourism business owners perceive the behavior determines if it limits or exceeds their current interest or ability.

The research questions for this study utilize the components of the theory of planned behavior to explore how agritourism businesses . Research question one utilizes the importance of communication channels as the attitude relation. The degree to which agritourism business owners evaluate the behavior of interest favorably or unfavorably for print, digital and communication channels.

Research question two utilized the importance of communication channels as the attitude relation. The degree to which agritourism business owners evaluate the behavior of interest favorably or unfavorably for print, digital and communication channels based on their business type.

Research question three utilizes the overall importance of communication and marketing practices as the attitude and the intention of business expansion as the intention. The degree to which agritourism business owners evaluate the behavior of interest favorably or unfavorably for communication and marketing practices and the motivational factors that influence the intention to expand.

Research question four utilizes the community perception agritourism business owners believe as the subjective norms and the intention of business expansion as intention. The belief about whether the majority of community members approve or disapprove of the agritourism business owner and the motivational factors that influence the intention to expand.

Research question five utilizes the confidence in the ability to market their business as the perceived behavioral control and the intention of business expansion as intention.

Agritourism business owners' perception of how easy or difficult it is to promote their business and the motivational factors that influence the intention to expand.

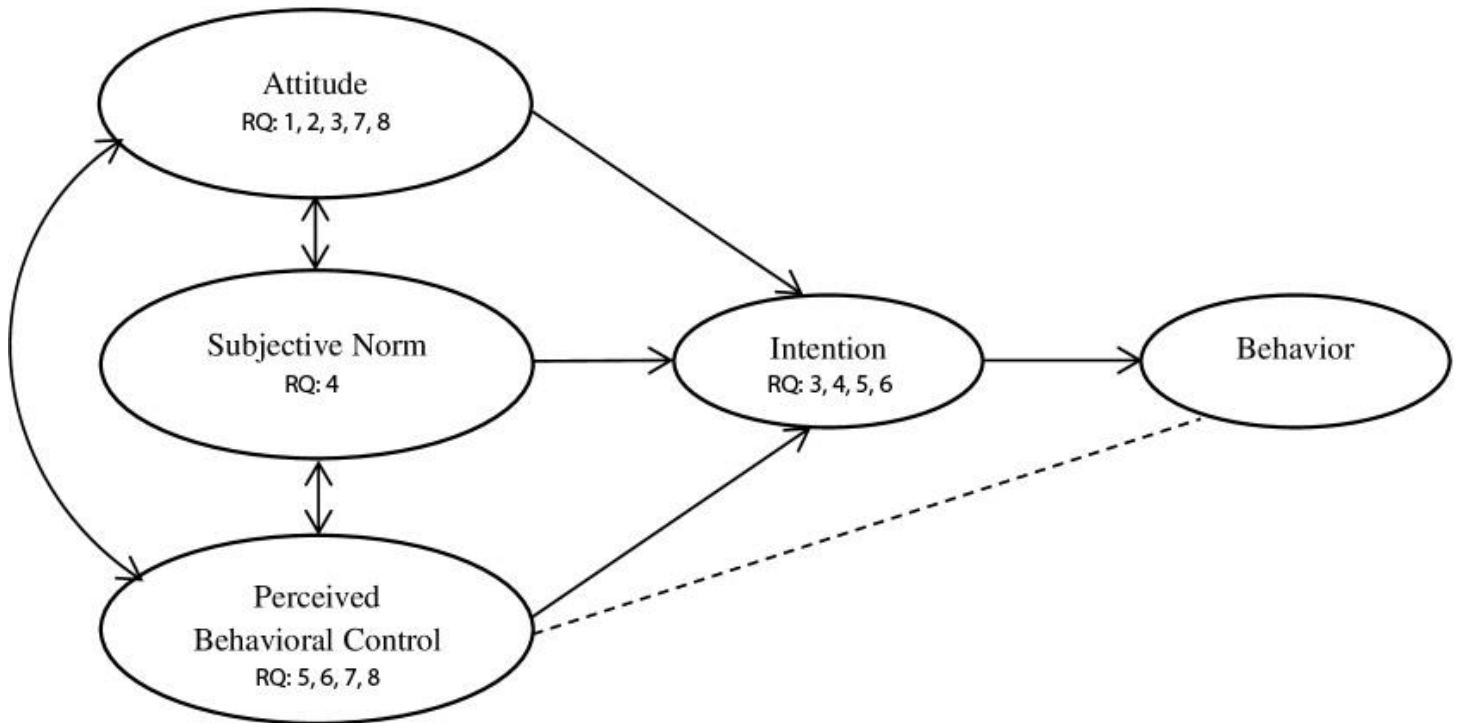
Research question six utilizes the barriers faced starting up or operating the business as the perceived behavioral control and the intention of business expansion as intention.

Agritourism business owners' perception of how easy or difficult barriers affect the motivational factors that influence the intention to expand.

Research question seven utilizes the perceived success of the business as the attitude and the confidence in their ability to promote as perceived behavioral control. The degree to which agritourism business owners evaluate success and their perception of how easy or difficult it is to promote their business.

Research question eight utilizes the importance of communication channels as the attitude and their ability to promote as perceived behavioral control. The degree to which agritourism business owners evaluate the behavior of interest favorably or unfavorably for communication and marketing practices and their perception of how easy or difficult it is to promote their business. Figure 2.1 exhibits the model of the theory of planned behavior as it is used with the research questions of this study.

Figure 2.1. *Theory of Planned Behavior model and Research Questions (Ajzen, 2005)*



Certain limitations are present with TPB, such as not accounting for the space between intention and behavior. TPB also does not account for motivational or behavioral intentions based on past experiences or moods (Mathieson, 1991). Both economic and environmental factors that may influence an individual behavioral performance are not considered with TPB (Liao et al., 2007). Behavior changing over time is not considered in this theory. Instead, the theory provides the assumption that the decision process is linear (Notani, 1998). In TPB, the assumption is made that individuals already possess the correct assets to perform the desired behavior successfully (Mathieson, 1991).

Despite these limitations, TPB holds that people are more likely to engage in a certain type of behavior if they believe that such behavior will result in a particular and valuable outcome. TPB is still a valuable lens in this case because the examination is regarding current

agritourism business owner behavior. Agritourism producers relate to utilizing tools and marketing tactics to promote their agritourism business (Brune et al., 2020). TPB was utilized from a producer's perspective to determine what consumer's attitude toward local food products was before and after an agritourism experience (Brune et al., 2020). The results showed that consumers' intention was to gain knowledge about the agriculture industry by experiencing and gaining knowledge from agritourism operators. The study concluded there was a positive correlation related to agritourism experiences and consumer's intention to participate and purchase products (Brune et al., 2020).

The theory of planned behavior has been utilized in research regarding the agritourism industry to identify the correlation between agritourism experience and consumers intention to expand (Brune et al., 2020). The identification of the correlation between agritourism experience and consumer intention informs business owners that visitors seek to learn about agriculture and their businesses when visiting (Brune et al., 2020). Collectively agritourism business owners' attitudes toward their intention to expand can be positive when visitors experience a positive visit. Agritourism business owners intention to expand can assist with increasing visitors and income to their business (Brune et al., 2020).

Senger et al. (2017) used TPB to determine the intention small farmers possessed in diversifying their agricultural production to visitors. Intention was defined as the farmer's plans to diversify their agricultural production in the next five years (Senger et al., 2017). The study sought to find the correlation between the farmer's intention and the TPB constructs of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (Senger et al., 2017). This study concluded that the TPB constructs had a positive and significant correlation with intention. Of the constructs, the correlation between direct attitude and intention had the highest correlation. The

positive relationship indicates that farmers' evaluation of agricultural diversification influenced their intention to diversify. Farmers' decision to diversify their agricultural production was impacted by psychological constructs (Senger et al., 2017).

Attitudes that agritourism business owners have toward agricultural diversification has a direct relationship with the intentions they have of diversifying their operations (Senger et al., 2017). Agricultural diversification can allow for business owners to utilize existing resources located on the property of their business. This informs agritourism business owners that their attitude toward diversifying their property or agricultural-related business can assist in the business development and expansion (Senger et al., 2017). Attitudes towards agricultural diversification can contribute to an agritourism business owners' confidence in continuing their business (Senger et al., 2017).

Bergevoet et al. (2004) conducted research on farmers regarding the goals, intentions, and decisions that influenced their business decision-making process. The results showed farmers behavior had a strong correlation with their personal and farm-related goals and objectives (Bergevoet et al., 2004). This influenced their attitudes, subjective standards and observed behavior control. It was concluded that the goals, objectives and attitudes of the farmers determine what their strategic and entrepreneurial behavior will be (Bergevoet et al., 2004).

The theory of planned behavior can be utilized to identify the goals, objectives and attitudes agritourism business owners seek related to their business (Bergevoet et al., 2004). The behaviors agritourism business owners can have a positive correlation with the goals of both personal and business-related (Bergevoet et al., 2004). Quella et al., (2023) examined the motivations of agritourism business owners from five different states within the United States.

The purpose of the research was to determine the non-economic motivations that contribute to their intentions to continue and expand their business (Quella et al., 2023). The results showed that community engagement, leadership and quality of life were the popular recurring themes. Business owners enjoyed the public engagement and being able to promote agriculture through educational methods(Quella et al., 2023). Financial considerations were still considered the top motivator for business owners however, the non-economic drivers served as an important motivation related to behavior (Quella et al., 2023).

Motivations agritourism business owners possess toward running their business can showcase common themes (Quella et al., 2023). These themes can determine key motivational factors between the relationship established with the local community. Financial motivations are important for agritourism businesses to stay in good financial standing, however nonfinancial themes can assist with the increase of popularity and relationship with the local community(Quella et al., 2023).

Summary

Environmental, social and economic reasons account for the benefits agritourism offers to business owners and communities. Agritourism business owners engage in agritourism for purposes such as educating the public, increasing or generating more income, continuing family traditions, conserving rural America and amplifying everyday life (Barbieri et al., 2019). The attraction of rural exploring to farms and other agriculture entities has increased as individuals attempt to escape city life or are seeking fun alternatives to lengthy vacations (Chikuta & Makacha, 2016). Parents' increased engagement in educating their children about agriculture while also spending quality time as a family has accounted for the increased demand for agritourism (Sandt & McFadden, 2016).

The literature also suggests that for agritourism businesses to succeed, local and afar communities need to be made aware of the agritourism industry (Quella et al., 2021). Developing information on the agritourism business owners in Kansas will assist in the continual growth and development of Kansas agritourism as a state (Amanor-Boadu, 2013). In this regard, the present study hopes to fill in this vital gap within the agritourism literature regarding agritourism business owners' perspectives and insights on agritourism in Kansas.

Chapter 3 - Methods

Overview

Chapter three discusses the procedures and methods used to conduct this study. It details the research design, population and participant selection, preparation, and statistical analysis used for this study.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore how Kansas agritourism business owners' perceptions of communications practices relate to their intentions to expand their business. Communication strategy importance and implementation can provide insight into the future growth, business motivation and community impact Kansas agritourism business owners possess. Identifying the barriers agritourism business owners face related to expansion and communication strategies will provide future solutions to expand and improve the agritourism industry in Kansas. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What were the most important communication channels agritourism business owners perceived importance of print, digital and in-person communication channels?

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in importance of communication channels between types of agritourism businesses?

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' perceived importance of communication and marketing practices and their intention to expand business development?

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between how agritourism business owners' believe they are perceived in their local community and owners' intention to expand business development?

Research Question 5: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' confidence in the ability to promote their business and intention to expand business development?

Research Question 6: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' barriers faced and intention to expand business development?

Research Question 7: What is the relationship between how successful agritourism business owners perceive their business and confidence in the ability to promote their business?

Research Question 8: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' perceived importance of communication and marketing practices and confidence in the ability to promote their business?

This research focused on registered Kansas agritourism business owners and their insight into agritourism business motivations, barriers and communication strategies. Recent studies and research were used as references in evaluating Kansas agritourism businesses. This study provides descriptive data on the definition of Kansas agritourism business owners. Marketing techniques of agritourism business owners will be discovered and compiled to construct a guide in the future. Agritourism business owners have the opportunity to share topics or interests in which they need to promote and grow their business with potential visitors from local communities and tourists. A quantitative survey was deployed for agritourism business owners to answer.

Research Design

A quantitative research design approach was used to address the purpose and research questions (Mills, 2019). Quantitative research “involves either identifying the characteristics of an observed phenomenon or exploring possible correlations among two or more phenomena” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001), p. 182). This was the best method to capture meaningful data regarding Kansas agritourism business owners because it collected quantitative data on agritourism business and communications owner characteristics. This method also collected the overall impact and importance of agritourism to the state of Kansas. An electronic questionnaire through Qualtrics was utilized to collect data from this study. Data was collected using an electronic questionnaire. This survey research is descriptive-relational in nature (Sirakaya-Turk et al., 2011).

Instrumentation

A questionnaire addressing the study objectives was developed using instruments adapted from previous studies of agritourism (Amoako, 2020; Boyd, 2006; Hassan et al., 2022; Lorenzo, 2017; Maksymovi, 2017; Miller et al., 2012).

The questionnaire included information from the following areas: (1) perceived importance of print, digital, in-person communication strategies of the respondent as well as overall perceived importance of communication strategies, (2) intentions to expand Kansas agritourism operations, (3) motivations and current business success, (4) respondent’s barriers related to business expansion and communication strategies and (5) profile of the responding agritourism business owner. The order of the sections is based on the total design method, which is to place in the order of interest and comfort level of response (Babbie & Dillman, 1982).

Section I collected information on the current importance level of communication strategies and their use by the respondent for their agritourism business (Amoako, 2020; Maksymovi, 2017). Social platforms and marketing methods were listed in three separate sections based on if they were print, digital media and in-person methods. Each section asked the respondent to indicate the level of importance for using each method on a Likert-type scale in (1) *Not at all important* and (5) *Extremely important* with the additional option of (6) *Do not use*, if the respondent does not use that method at all. The questions that followed asked for the respondent to indicate their level of agreement on their confidence in utilizing communication strategies on a Likert-type scale in (1) *Strongly disagree* and (5) *Strongly agree*.

Section II collected information on the respondent's intentions and goals to expand their agritourism operation (Maksymovi, 2017). Statements regarding the respondent's intentions and goals to expand were asked. Each statement asked the respondent to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a Likert-type scale in (1) *Strongly disagree* and (5) *Strongly agree*.

Section III collected information on agritourism business success and perceived impact on the local community (Hassan et al., 2022; Lorenzo, 2017). Respondents were asked about the percentage of income that comes from their agritourism business, as well as the number of visitors they receive yearly. The level of success the respondent felt they had for the business was asked on a Likert-type scale in (1) *Not at all* and (5) *Extremely*. Following, multiple statements regarding how the respondent thinks the community perceives their business was then asked on a Likert-type scale of agreement in (1) *Strongly disagree* and (5) *Strongly agree*. The last question in this section listed a series of motivational factors for involvement in agritourism

in which the respondent was asked on a Likert-type scale in (1) *Not at all important* and (5) *Extremely important*.

Section IV collected information regarding what barriers the respondents may have encountered in the start-up or operation of their agritourism business (Maksymovi, 2017; Miller et al., 2012). Respondents were asked to rate each issue based on how much of a problem it has been on a Likert-type scale in (1) *Not a problem* and (5) *A serious problem*.

Section V collected information on the demographic profile of each agritourism business owner and his or her business (Miller et al., 2012; Boyd, 2006). Gender was asked and respondents were able to choose from *male*, *female*, *non-binary/third gender* or *prefer not to say*. The age of the respondent was asked and provided by a text submission. Respondents were asked to identify the highest degree or level of education they have completed based on the following options *less than high school*, *high school graduate*, *some college*, *2 year degree*, *4 year degree*, *professional degree* and *doctorate*. Geographic locations were assessed by asking the respondent to indicate the region in which they operate. The regions of Kansas were based on the Kansas Agritourism program grid. The following regions were the choices available to pick *northeast*, *south-central*, *north-central*, *southeast*, *northwest* and *southwest*. The number of years each respondent has owned/operated their agritourism business was assessed by the respondent providing a text submission. The type of business was assessed by asking the respondent to indicate the category of their business based on their registration with the Kansas Agritourism program. The following categories were the choices available to pick *apiaries*, *cabins/bed & breakfast*, *Christmas tree farms*, *event barns*, *farms of all varieties (fruits, vegetables, nuts, produce stand)*, *hunting/hunting lodges*, *livestock operations (cattle, goats, horses, buffalos, alpacas, llamas, sheep, pigs, etc.)*, *orchards*, *pumpkin patches*, *sunflower fields*, *u-pick*

operations, vineyards/wineries, working ranches, historic sites/museums, lavender farms, greenhouse/botanical garden, campgrounds, honey farms, dairy farms and other. What respondents believed the purpose of their agritourism business was asked with the options of *direct sales, education, entertainment, hospitality and outdoor recreation.* Following, the respondent was asked what the busiest season for their agritourism business was with the season options of *winter, spring, summer and fall.*

Measure of Validity and Reliability

Reliability and validity of the survey instrument were important considerations in determining the overall selection of the instrument and the overall credibility of the study. Reliability refers to the consistency of the instrument measure (Taherdoost, 2016). Validity describes the level of accuracy measured in a quantitative study (Heale & Twycross, 2015). The degree to which an instrument appears to measure a specific attribute is referred to as face validity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The degree to which the instrument accurately measures the content area is referred to as content validity (Gay & Airasian, 2000). The content and face validity of the instrument were assessed by using Dillman's (2007) pre-testing approach, which includes the following stages:

Stage I: Review by knowledgeable colleagues and analysts.

Stage II: A small pilot study.

Stage III: A final check.

During stage I, the instrument was evaluated by a panel of experts composed of Kansas State University faculty and Kansas Agritourism program personnel. This panel of experts was asked to identify confusing statements, grammar errors, leading questions, and appropriate

changes to content. The panels' observations and suggestions for changes were for the order of survey presentation and question clarification.

During Stage II, a pilot test of the survey was administered to professionals within the agritourism industry. Oklahoma agritourism business owners were asked to participate via email to complete the survey. The pilot survey was available for 8 days, January 23 – 30, for Oklahoma agritourism business owners to complete. The pilot test included an additional section that included the following questions: (1) Did you have any challenges completing this survey, (2) How long did it take you to complete the survey, (3) Were any of the questions unfamiliar/confusing to you, (4) Do you think all the questions listed are relevant to the research topic. The purpose of the pilot test was to determine whether any substantial revisions needed to be made to the survey design (Dillman, 2007). A total of 15 Oklahoma agritourism business owners completed the pilot study. The only change resulting from the pilot test was minor changes to the instrument for clarity. Questions pertaining to the Kansas Agritourism program, geographic location, and types of agritourism businesses were further clarified.

The final stage of the pretesting was to ask a small number of individuals who had nothing to do with the development, materials, or revisions of the instrument to individually complete the survey (Dillman, 2007). A selection of fellow graduate students from previously shared courses of varying demographics, who had no role in the development of the instrument and had not previously been in contact with the instrument, completed the survey and provided feedback on the format, grammar, and appearance. The individuals were able to complete the survey without questions and expressed no need for revisions to be made.

Population and Sample

This study's focus was on the agritourism business owners registered with the Kansas Agritourism program. Participation in the study was limited to individuals 18 years of age or older with current business registration. The sample population for this study was sourced from a compiled list of registered agritourism business owners provided by the Kansas Agritourism program. A census method allows for all members from a certain population to be listed (Ammirato & Felicetti, 2013). The population in this study is specific to registered Kansas agritourism businesses. The initial study population included 434 Kansas agritourism businesses. Of the population, some 51 agritourism business owners were unable or declined to participate due to the following reasons: emails that returned as invalid or nonexistent ($n = 26$), agritourism businesses that did not have an email address listed with the Kansas Agritourism program could not be reached ($n = 13$), agritourism business owners who no longer operated or owned their business ($n = 7$) and agritourism business owners who declined to participate ($n = 5$). The actual study population included 383 Kansas agritourism businesses. Of the population, 165 respondents participated in the study by completing the survey. A final response rate of 43.1% was reached which is within the suggested response rate by Ary et al. (2009) of 40 to 75 percent for questionnaires. In a similar study, Amoako (2020) recorded a 33.3% response rate for their survey research on agritourism operators.

Demographic Characteristics of Kansas Agritourism Owners

The demographics of the Kansas agritourism business owners were defined by the respondents' ($N = 165$) answers to questions asked in the fourth section of the survey. In terms of gender, female respondents accounted for 50.9% ($n = 84$) of the sample, with males representing 48.5% ($n = 80$) and 0.6% ($n = 1$) preferring not to say. Respondents who had earned

a four-year degree represented 40% ($n = 66$) of the sample followed by 20% ($n = 33$) who earned a professional degree. The average age of the respondents was in the range of 44 – 56 years old with the average age being 52.6 years old, which represented 33.9% ($n = 56$) of the sample. The majority of the sample has been operating an agritourism business for less than 10 years, with 32.1 % ($n = 53$) who have owned an agritourism business in the range of 1 – 5 years and 30.3% ($n = 50$) owning an agritourism business in the range of 6 – 10 years. The average ownership duration for an agritourism business was 12.4 years. Table 3.1 presents the demographic profile (gender, level of education, age and years operating an agritourism business) of the respondents.

Table 3.1. Socio-Demographics of Kansas Agritourism Business Owner Respondents

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	84	50.9
Male	80	48.5
Prefer Not to Say	1	00.6
Highest Level of Education		
High School Graduate	16	9.7
Some College	28	17.0
2 Year Degree	17	10.3
4 Year Degree	66	40.0
Professional Degree	33	20.0
Doctorate	5	3.0
Age		
18 – 30	5	3.0
31 – 43	41	24.8
44 – 56	56	33.9
57 – 69	47	28.5
70 – 82	15	9.1
83 – 95	1	0.6
Years of Operating an Agritourism Business		
1 – 5	53	32.1
6 – 10	50	30.3
11 – 15	26	15.8
16 – 20	15	9.1
21 – 25	5	3.0
26 – 30	9	5.5
Over 30 Years	7	4.2

Note: N = 165.

Of the 165 agritourism businesses responding, 40.7% ($n = 67$) were located in Northeast Kansas, 16.4% ($n = 27$) were located in Southeast Kansas, 15.2% ($n = 25$) were located in North Central Kansas, 13.3% ($n = 22$) were located in South Central Kansas, 10.3% ($n = 17$) were located in Northwest Kansas and 4.2 % ($n = 7$) were located in Southwest Kansas shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Regional Location of Kansas Agritourism Business Owner Respondents

Region	<i>n</i>	%
Northeast	67	40.7
Southeast	27	16.4
North Central	25	15.2
South Central	22	13.3
Northwest	17	10.3
Southwest	7	4.2

Note. *N* = 165.

Of the sample, 12.7% (*n* = 21) were farms of all varieties (fruits, vegetables, nuts and produce stands) followed by 11.5% (*n* = 19) were livestock operations (cattle, goats, horses, buffalo, alpacas, llamas, sheep, pigs, etc.). Table 3.3 presents the respondents' type of agritourism businesses owned and operated in Kansas.

Table 3.3. Type of Kansas Agritourism Businesses

Type	<i>n</i>	%
Farms of all varieties (Fruits, Vegetables, Nuts and Produce Stand)	21	12.7
Livestock Operations (Cattle, Goats, Horses, Buffalo, Alpacas, Llamas, Sheep, Pigs, etc.)	19	11.5
Events Barns	18	10.9
Cabins / Bed & Breakfast	14	8.5
Pumpkin Patches	13	7.9
Vineyards / Wineries	13	7.9
Historic Sites / Museums	12	7.3
Campgrounds	9	5.5
Hunting / Hunting Lodges	8	4.8
Honey Farms	7	4.2
U-Pick Operations	7	4.2
Sunflower Farms	6	3.6
Christmas Tree Farms	4	2.4
Dairy Farms	3	1.8
Greenhouse / Botanical Garden	3	1.8
Orchards	3	1.8
Working Ranches	3	1.8
Lavender Farms	2	1.2

Note. *N* = 165.

To analyze if there is a difference in importance of communication channels between types of agritourism business types, research question two, the business types need to be reduced in order to properly run statistical test. Business types were regrouped together in order to represent a larger categorical type. The following lists the new representative name for each types and the businesses it represent: Farms of all varieties includes fruits, vegetables, nuts, honey farms and produce stands; Livestock operations includes cattle, goats, horses, buffalo, alpacas, llamas, sheep, pigs, working ranches and dairy farm operations; Accommodation operations includes campgrounds, cabins and hunting lodges; Seasonal operations include pumpkin patches, Christmas tree farms and greenhouse / botanical garden operations; Specialty farms include u-pick, orchards, sunflower and lavender farms. Event barns, vineyard / winery, and historic sites / museums remained the same because they did not in any other category. A total of eight business types were utilized to analyze the data for research question two. Table 3.4 presents the respondents' type of agritourism businesses owned and operated in Kansas after being regrouped into larger categories.

Table 3.4. *Types of Kansas Agritourism Businesses Regrouped for Analysis*

Type	<i>n</i>	%
Farms of all varieties (Fruits, Vegetables, Nuts, Honey Farms and Produce Stand)	28	16.9
Livestock Operations (Cattle, Goats, Horses, Buffalo, Alpacas, Llamas, Sheep, Pigs, Working Ranches, Dairy Farms, etc.)	25	15.3
Events Barns	18	10.9
Accommodation Operations (Campgrounds, Cabins and Hunting Lodges)	31	18.7
Seasonal Operations (Pumpkin Patches, Christmas Tree Farms and Greenhouse / Botanical Garden)	20	12.1
Vineyards / Wineries	13	7.9
Historic Sites / Museums	12	7.3
Specialty Farms (U-pick, Orchards, Sunflower and Lavender Farms)	18	10.9

Note. *N* = 165

Procedures for Data Collection

Prospective study participants were first introduced to this study at the Kansas Agritourism Summit on January 5, 2022. The Kansas Agritourism Summit took place in Manhattan, KS, where current and prospective registered agritourism business owners had the opportunity to network and learn more about the Kansas Agritourism program. The prospective study participants had the opportunity to ask questions and receive more information about the study at the event. Approximately one month after the summit, on February 2, 2023, participants were invited to participate in this study via e-mail. The email described the purpose of the study, procedures and instructions. The email invite included a link to the survey. Registered Kansas agritourism business owners were offered to participate in this study.

This study collected data via a web-based survey built in Qualtrics, an online survey platform, following the total design method (Dillman et al., 2014). Data were collected in a 22-day period from February 2 – 22, 2023. The questionnaire took approximately 12 minutes to complete. The ideal web-based survey time is under 20 minutes (Sharma, 2022). Maintaining

participants' interest and attention requires a short survey time (Sharma, 2022). When the number of minutes increases, participants tend to speed up, which negatively affects the quality, reliability, and response rate of the survey (Sharma, 2022). Because the questionnaire were web-based, data was gathered instantly from participant responses and stored in Qualtrics. To maximize the response rate from study participants, four points of contact were made as recommended by Dillman et al. (2014). Reminder emails were sent to email contacts at 8-, 15-, 19-day intervals.

Data Analysis

Data collected electronically were stored online by the host company, Qualtrics. After data collection was complete, data were exported for analysis. Responses were examined to determine eligibility for further analysis based upon study criteria: 1) respondents were actual agritourism owners; 2) they were currently in business; 3) they were located in Kansas; and 4) they were receiving visitors for recreation and agritourism.

For this study, analysis was conducted using the Statistical Packages for the Social Science (SPSS). Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the data.

For research question one, descriptive statistics were used to report the mean, standard deviation and interpretation of the perceived importance of communication channels within print, digital and in-person. Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *do not use*; 2 – 2.99 = *not at all important*; 3 – 3.99 = *slightly important*; 4 – 4.99 = *moderately important*; 5 – 5.99 = *very important*; and 6 – 6.99 = *extremely important* (Lawson et al., 2018). Each type of business was transcribed in SPSS from the number associated with it to a categorical value (Lawson et al., 2018).

For research question two, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the difference in importance of communication channels; print, digital and in-person between the different types of agritourism businesses. The revised eight business types were used to analyze the data. Post hoc Tukey analysis was then used to determine the mean difference and statistical difference. If the assumption of normality was violated, Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance was used to analyze with the post hoc pairwise comparison using Dunn's test to indicate any significant difference.

For research question three, Spearman's Correlation analysis was used to analyze the relationship between agritourism business owners' perceived importance of communication and marketing practices and their intention to expand business development. Intention to expand business constructs were configured to the same Likert-type scale of agreement for data analysis in (1) *Strongly disagree* and (5) *Strongly agree*. Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *strongly disagree*; 2 – 2.99 = *somewhat disagree*; 3 – 3.99 = *neither disagree nor agree*; 4 – 4.99 = *somewhat agree*; 5 – 5.99 = *strongly agree* (Lawson et al., 2018). A survey was employed to measure different underlying constructs. One construct, 'intention to expand business development', consisted of five questions. The scale had a high level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.948.

For research question four, Spearman's Correlation analysis was used to analyze the relationship between how agritourism business owners' believe they are perceived in their local community and owners' intention to expand business development. Intention to expand business constructs were configured to the same Likert-type scale of agreement for data analysis in (1) *Strongly disagree* and (5) *Strongly agree*. Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *strongly disagree*; 2 – 2.99 = *somewhat disagree*; 3 – 3.99 = *neither disagree nor*

agree; 4 – 4.99 = *somewhat agree*; 5 – 5.99 = *strongly agree* (Lawson et al., 2018). A survey was employed to measure different underlying constructs. One construct, ‘intention to expand business development’, consisted of five questions. The scale had a high level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.936. The other construct, ‘belief of local community perception’, consisted of five questions. Community perception constructs were configured to the same Likert-type scale of agreement for data analysis in (1) *Strongly disagree* and (5) *Strongly agree*. Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *strongly disagree*; 2 – 2.99 = *somewhat disagree*; 3 – 3.99 = *neither disagree nor agree*; 4 – 4.99 = *somewhat agree*; 5 – 5.99 = *strongly agree* (Lawson et al., 2018). The scale had a high level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.929.

For research question five, Spearman’s Correlation analysis was used to analyze the relationship between agritourism business owners’ confidence in the ability to promote their business and intention to expand business development. Intention to expand business constructs were configured to the same Likert-type scale of agreement for data analysis in (1) *Strongly disagree* and (5) *Strongly agree*. Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *strongly disagree*; 2 – 2.99 = *somewhat disagree*; 3 – 3.99 = *neither disagree nor agree*; 4 – 4.99 = *somewhat agree*; 5 – 5.99 = *strongly agree* (Lawson et al., 2018). A survey was employed to measure different underlying constructs. One construct, ‘intention to expand business development’, consisted of five questions. The scale had a high level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.941. The other construct, ‘confidence in the ability to promote’ only consisted of one question. Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *strongly disagree*; 2 – 2.99 = *somewhat disagree*; 3 – 3.99 = *neither disagree nor agree*; 4 – 4.99 = *somewhat agree*; 5 – 5.99 = *strongly agree* (Lawson et al., 2018).

For research question six, Spearman's Correlation analysis was used to analyze the relationship between agritourism business owners' barriers faced and intention to expand business development attributes and relationships between variables. Intention to expand business constructs were configured to the same Likert-type scale of agreement for data analysis in (1) *Strongly disagree* and (5) *Strongly agree*. Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *strongly disagree*; 2 – 2.99 = *somewhat disagree*; 3 – 3.99 = *neither disagree nor agree*; 4 – 4.99 = *somewhat agree*; 5 – 5.99 = *strongly agree* (Lawson et al., 2018). A survey was employed to measure different underlying constructs. One construct, 'intention to expand business development', consisted of five questions. The scale had a high level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.948. Barriers faced while starting up or operating business constructs were configured to the Likert-type scale of degree the barrier was for data analysis in (1) Not a problem and (5) A serious problem. Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *not a problem*; 2 – 2.99 = *a minor problem*; 3 – 3.99 = *somewhat a problem*; 4 – 4.99 = *a moderate problem*; 5 – 5.99 = *a serious problem* (Lawson et al., 2018). The other construct, 'barriers faced', consisted of sixteen questions. The scale had a high level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.884.

For research question seven, Spearman's Correlation analysis was used to analyze the relationship between how successful agritourism business owners perceive their business and confidence in the ability to promote their business. Confidence in the ability to promote construct were configured to the same Likert-type scale of agreement for data analysis in (1) *Strongly disagree* and (5) *Strongly agree*. The construct, 'confidence in the ability to promote' only consisted of one question. Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *strongly disagree*; 2 – 2.99 = *somewhat disagree*; 3 – 3.99 = *neither disagree nor agree*; 4 – 4.99

= *somewhat agree*; 5 – 5.99 = *strongly agree* (Lawson et al., 2018). The other construct, ‘perceived success of agritourism businesses’ only consisted of one question. Perceived success of agritourism business construct were configured to the Likert-type scale of agreement for data analysis in (1) *Not at all* and (5) *Extremely*. Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *not at all*; 2 – 2.99 = *slightly*; 3 – 3.99 = *moderately*; 4 – 4.99 = *very*; 5 – 5.99 = *extremely* (Lawson et al., 2018).

For research question eight, Spearman’s Correlation analysis was used to analyze the relationship between agritourism business owners’ perceived importance of communication and marketing practices and confidence in the ability to promote their business. The construct, ‘confidence in the ability to promote’ only consisted of one question. Confidence in the ability to promote construct were configured to the same Likert-type scale of agreement for data analysis in (1) *Strongly disagree* and (5) *Strongly agree*. Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *strongly disagree*; 2 – 2.99 = *somewhat disagree*; 3 – 3.99 = *neither disagree nor agree*; 4 – 4.99 = *somewhat agree*; 5 – 5.99 = *strongly agree* (Lawson et al., 2018). The other construct, ‘perceived importance of communication and marketing practices’ only consisted of one question. Perceived importance of communication and marketing practices were configured to the Likert-type scale of agreement for data analysis in (1) *Not at all important* and (5) *Extremely important*. Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *not at all important*; 2 – 2.99 = *slightly important*; 3 – 3.99 = *moderately important*; 4 – 4.99 = *very important*; 5 – 5.99 = *extremely important* (Lawson et al., 2018).

Chapter 4 - Results and Discussion

Overview

In this chapter, the findings of this research study, which analyzed the characteristics of Kansas agritourism business owners and how they relate to the current agritourism industry in Kansas. Utilizing a survey, data was collected and subsequently run through SPSS in order to answer the eight research questions and demographic profile outlined in Chapter I.

The findings are presented in the order of the objective they answer.

Research Question 1: What were the most important communication channels agritourism business owners perceived between print, digital and in-person?

Respondents indicated the most important communication channel to promoting their agritourism business was in-person, word of mouth ($M = 5.73, SD = 0.60$). The digital communication channel Facebook was indicated as the second most important communication channel ($M = 5.11, SD = 1.37$), followed by in-person special events/festivals ($M = 4.19, SD = 1.80$). The print communication channel of printed handout materials was indicated as the most important print channel ($M = 4.19, SD = 1.46$). Respondents indicated the least important communication channel was digital, online deals ($M = 1.50, SD = 1.22$). Coupons were indicated as the least important print channel ($M = 2.12, SD = 1.57$). The in-person communication channel of locals farmers market was indicated as the least important in-person communication channel. Table 4.1 presents the respondents' perceived importance of communication channels used to promote their agritourism business.

Table 4.1. *Kansas Agritourism Business Owners Perceived Importance of Communication Channels*

Communication Channels	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
Print			
Printed Handout Materials	4.13	1.46	Moderately Important
Tourism Attraction Road Signage	3.66	1.79	Slightly Important
Region / Local Tourism Guide	3.45	1.69	Slightly Important
Agricultural Publications	2.68	1.71	Not at all important
Billboards	2.62	1.90	Not at all important
Direct Mail	2.38	1.74	Not at all important
Newspaper Ads	2.21	1.55	Not at all important
Coupons	2.12	1.57	Not at all important
Digital			
Facebook	5.11	1.37	Very Important
Facebook Ads	3.67	2.07	Slightly Important
Email List	3.43	1.88	Slightly Important
Instagram	3.26	1.87	Slightly Important
Google Ads	2.19	1.71	Not at all important
TikTok	2.04	1.53	Not at all important
Instagram Ads	1.95	1.57	Do not use
Blogs	1.75	1.31	Do not use
Radio Ads	1.72	1.31	Do not use
Twitter	1.69	1.29	Do not use
TV Ads	1.61	1.33	Do not use
Online Deals	1.50	1.22	Do not use
In-person			
Word of Mouth	5.73	0.60	Very Important
Special Events / Festivals	4.19	1.80	Moderately Important
Kansas Agritourism	3.76	1.37	Slightly Important
Locals Farmers Market	3.21	2.12	Slightly Important

Note. Communication Channels were measured using a Likert Scale (0 = *Do not use*, 1 = *Not at all important*, 2 = *Slightly Important*, 3 = *Moderately Important*, 4 = *Very Important* and 5 = *Extremely Important*). Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *do not use*; 2 – 2.99 = *not at all important*; 3 – 3.99 = *slightly important*; 4 – 4.99 = *moderately important*; 5 – 5.99 = *very important*; and 6 – 6.99 = *extremely important*.

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in importance of communication channels between types of agritourism businesses?

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there is a difference in importance of in-person communication channels between business types. Participants were classified into eight different agritourism business types. There was a significant difference of agritourism

business type on the importance of in-person communication channels at the $p < .05$ level for the three conditions $F(7, 157) = 3.71, p = < .001$ as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. *One-Way Analysis of Variance of In-person Communication Channels Between Agritourism Business Type*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	7	24	3.56	3.71	< .001
Within Groups	157	150	.960		
Total	164	175			

Tukey post hoc analysis revealed that the mean increased for the importance of in-person communication channels from farms of all variety businesses to accommodation businesses (1.02, 95% CI [0.23, 1.80]) was statistically significant ($p = .003$), as well as the increase in importance of in-person communication channels from vineyard/winery businesses to accommodation businesses (1.11, 95% CI [0.11, 2.10]) was statistically significant ($p = .017$, but no other group differences were statistically significant).

The nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance test was computed to determine if there was a significant difference in the importance of the print communication channel on the type of agritourism business. This test was used as the assumption of normality was violated. The results indicated that there were significant differences in the importance of print communication channels and the type of agritourism business $\chi^2(7, 165) = 15.92, p = .026$.

Pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test indicated that vineyard/winery businesses were significantly different from accommodation businesses on the importance of print communication channels ($p = .043$). No other differences were statistically significant.

The nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance test was computed to determine if there was a significant difference in the importance of the digital communication channel on the type of agritourism business. This test was used as the assumption of normality was violated.

The results indicated that there were significant differences in the importance of print communication channels and the type of agritourism business $\chi^2(7, 165) = 27.38, p = <.001$.

Pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test indicated that vineyard/winery businesses were significantly different from accommodation businesses ($p = .006$) and livestock operations on the importance of digital communication channels ($p = .013$). No other differences were statistically significant.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' perceived importance of communication and marketing practices and their intention to expand business development?

Respondents indicated their highest level of agreement with the intention of being optimistic about the future of agritourism in Kansas ($M = 4.43, SD = 0.77$). Attracting more customers to their enterprise was indicated as the second highest in agreement ($M = 4.34, SD = 0.88$), followed by expecting sales to increase from their agritourism business ($M = 4.28, SD = 0.92$). Respondents indicated the highest level of disagreement on exiting the agritourism industry in the next five years ($M = 1.96, SD = 1.29$). Table 4.3 presents the respondents' intentions to expand their agritourism business.

Table 4.3. *Kansas Agritourism Business Owners Intentions to Expand Their Agritourism Business*

Intentions	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
I am optimistic about the future of the agritourism industry in Kansas	4.43	0.77	Somewhat Agree
My goals include attracting more customers to my enterprise	4.34	0.89	Somewhat Agree
I expect my sales from agritourism to increase in the future	4.28	0.92	Somewhat Agree
I plan to expand the number of products, attractions, or services offered at my business in the next 5 years	4.08	1.07	Somewhat Agree
I plan to exit the agritourism industry in the next 5 years	1.96	1.29	Strongly Disagree

Note. Intentions were measured using a Likert Scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Somewhat disagree*, 3 = *Neither disagree nor agree*, 4 = *Somewhat agree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*). Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *strongly disagree*; 2 – 2.99 = *somewhat disagree*; 3 – 3.99 = *neither disagree nor agree*; 4 – 4.99 = *somewhat agree*; 5 – 5.99 = *strongly agree*.

A Spearman's rank-order correlation determined there was a statistically significant, low association correlation between agritourism business owners' perceived importance of communication and marketing practices and their intention to expand business development, $r_s(163) = .273, p < .0001$ (Davis, 1971).

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between how agritourism business owners believe they are perceived in their local community and owners' intention to expand business development?

Respondents indicated the most agreed community perception was that their business contributes to the growth and success of the local community ($M = 4.03, SD = 0.94$).

Agritourism businesses providing educational resources was indicated as the second community perception ($M = 3.98, SD = 1.20$), followed by contributing increased recreational facilities ($M = 3.77, SD = 1.26$). Table 4.4 presents the respondents' perceived view of how the local community views agritourism businesses.

Table 4.4 *Kansas Agritourism Business Owners Perceived View of How The Local Community Views Their Agritourism Business*

Community Perceptions	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
My business contributes to the growth and success of the local economy	4.03	0.94	Somewhat Agree
My business provides educational resources for the local community	3.98	1.20	Neither Agree nor Disagree
My business increases recreation facilities for the local community	3.77	1.26	Neither Agree nor Disagree
My business creates job opportunities for the local community	3.50	1.33	Neither Agree nor Disagree
My business gives incentives to preserve historical buildings and places	3.03	1.47	Neither Agree nor Disagree

Note. Community Perceptions were measured using a Likert Scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Somewhat disagree*, 3 = *Neither disagree nor agree*, 4 = *Somewhat agree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*). Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *strongly disagree*; 2 – 2.99 = *somewhat disagree*; 3 – 3.99 = *neither disagree nor agree*; 4 – 4.99 = *somewhat agree*; 5 – 5.99 = *strongly agree*.

A Spearman's rank-order correlation determined there was a statistically significant, low association correlation between how agritourism business owners' believe they are perceived in their local community and owners' intention to expand business development, $r_s(163) = .206, p = .008$ (Davis, 1971).

Research Question 5: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' confidence in the ability to promote their business and intention to expand business development?

A Spearman's rank-order correlation determined there was no statistically significant, negligible association correlation between agritourism business owners' confidence in the ability to promote their business and intention to expand business development, $r_s(163) = .078, p = .320$ (Davis, 1971).

Research Question 6: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' barriers faced and intention to expand business development?

Respondents indicated the biggest barrier faced when starting up or operating their business was deciding how to promote their business to the targeted audience ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.21$). Developing advertisement and promotional material was indicated as the second biggest barrier faced ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.19$), followed by having enough capital infrastructure ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.43$). Respondents indicated the smallest barrier was working with family members ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 0.97$). Table 4.5 presents the respondents' barriers faced in the start-up or operation of their agritourism business.

Table 4.5. *Kansas Agritourism Business Owners Barriers Faced in the Start-Up or Operation of Business*

Barriers	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
Deciding how to promote the business to target customers	3.02	1.21	Somewhat a Problem
Developing advertisement and promotion materials	2.87	1.19	A Minor Problem
Having enough capital for infrastructure	2.83	1.43	A Minor Problem
Staying current with new promotion methods	2.79	1.31	A Minor Problem
Attracting customers	2.76	1.16	A Minor Problem
Identifying target customers	2.67	1.24	A Minor Problem
Having enough capital for operations	2.58	1.30	A Minor Problem
Having enough capital for marketing	2.58	1.33	A Minor Problem
Dealing with increased competition	2.56	1.32	A Minor Problem
Obtaining liability insurance	2.32	1.37	A Minor Problem
Obtaining permission for roadside signage	2.24	1.40	A Minor Problem
Maintaining visitor safety	2.24	1.08	A Minor Problem
Obtaining required permits or licenses	2.14	1.14	A Minor Problem
Providing excellent customer service	2.11	1.21	A Minor Problem
Maintaining good relationships with neighbors	1.97	1.15	Not a Problem
Working with family members	1.67	0.97	Not a Problem

Note. Barriers were measured using a Likert Scale (1 = *Not a problem*, 2 = *A minor problem*, 3 = *Somewhat a problem*, 4 = *A moderate problem*, 5 = *A serious problem*). Real limits were set for the interpretation of responses: 1 – 1.99 = *not a problem*; 2 – 2.99 = *a minor problem*; 3 – 3.99 = *somewhat a problem*; 4 – 4.99 = *a moderate problem*; 5 – 5.99 = *a serious problem*.

A Spearman's rank-order correlation determined there was a statistically significant, low association correlation between agritourism business owners' barriers faced and intention to expand business development, $r_s(163) = .162, p = .037$ (Davis, 1971).

Research Question 7: What is the relationship between how successful agritourism business owners perceive their business and confidence in the ability to promote their business?

Respondents indicated their level of agreement was *neither disagree nor agree* on the survey for the statement, “As an agritourism operator I am confident in my ability to promote my agritourism business through communication and marketing practices” ($M = 3.87, SD = 0.89$).

Respondents also indicated how successful they felt their agritourism business was as *moderately successful* ($M = 3.50, SD = 0.89$).

A Spearman's rank-order correlation determined there was a statistically significant, low association correlation between how successful agritourism business owners perceive their business and confidence in the ability to promote their business, $r_s(163) = .256, p < .0001$ (Davis, 1971).

Research Question 8: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' perceived importance of communication and marketing practices and confidence in the ability to promote their business?

Respondents also their perceived importance of communication and marketing practices as *very important* ($M = 4.01, SD = 0.96$).

A Spearman's rank-order correlation determined there was a statistically significant, moderate association correlation between agritourism business owners' perceived importance of communication and marketing practices and confidence in the ability to promote their business, $r_s(163) = .396, p < .0001$ (Davis, 1971).

Chapter 5 - Conclusions

Overview

Chapter five provides the findings with regard to the literature, theoretical contribution and future research recommendations. The purpose of this study was to explore how Kansas agritourism business owners' perceptions of communications practices relate to their intentions to expand their business. The findings of this research emphasize the importance communication strategy and implementation can provide for insight into the future growth, business motivation and community impact Kansas agritourism business owners possess. The conclusions, theoretical contributions and recommendations presented in this chapter are guided by the eight research questions introduced in Chapter I.

Key Findings

The findings are presented in the order of the research question they answer.

Research Question 1: Is there a difference between agritourism business owners' perceived importance of print, digital and in-person communication channels?

The findings indicate that agritourism business owners perceive in-person communication channels as the most important to their communications and marketing efforts. Furthermore, the vast majority of Kansas agritourism business owner respondents indicated placing a high importance on using word-of-mouth communication strategies. Following word of mouth, the results indicated the digital communication channel, Facebook was the second most important, followed by the third most important communication channel being in-person, special events/festivals. Within the theory of planned behavior, an individual's attitude toward a behavior is determined by his or her beliefs about the behavior. Agritourism business owners'

pre-established beliefs about communication channels can be the cause of their behavioral outcome, as suggested by the TPB model (Ajzen, 1985).

Previous studies on agritourism business owners also found that the usage of word of mouth was the most important communication strategy for business expansion and awareness (Bernardo et al. 2013; Miller et al., 2012). Word of mouth outperforms conventional marketing and communications strategies due to low cost, consumer relation interaction and rapid influence (Zhang et al., 2019). Consumers consider their experiences with hospitality products and services as interesting conversation topics and are in the habit of telling others about their experiences concerning tourism (Stokes & Lomax, 2002). Agritourism business owners have historically indicated using word of mouth as a communication strategy because the quality experience visitors receive is then relayed to friends and family via word of mouth (Hilchey & Kuehn, 2002). In contrast, Talwar et al. (2021) found that negative word of mouth can have a more pronounced effect because of the consumer's dissatisfaction with their experience. However, positive word of mouth experiences in larger quantity overrides the negative contributions (Naylor & Kleiser, 2000).

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in importance of communication channels between types of agritourism businesses?

In terms of perceptions of communication channels' importance, the findings suggest that the importance of communication channels can differ between business types. Within the digital communication channel vineyard/winery, livestock operations and accommodation businesses were found to be significantly different. Within these business types, each offers drastically different activities and events for visitors. Livestock operation businesses can tend to focus more on selling meat and dairy products to visitors. In this study, livestock operations rely less on

digital communication channels. The livestock operations in this study reported lower importance of digital communication channels than vineyard/winery businesses. The vineyard/winery businesses offer more activities and events that are related to entertainment. Vineyard/winery businesses will often offer wine tours, tasting events and opportunities for visitors to gain education on the wine-making process. These activities are often enjoyed with friend groups. Digital communication channels are important to vineyard/winery businesses in order to reach their target audience age group and spread awareness. Accommodation businesses include campgrounds, bed and breakfasts, and hunting lodges. The accommodation businesses in this study reported lower importance of digital communication channels than vineyard/winery businesses. Accommodation businesses often offer more leisure/relaxation activities. The targeted audience for this business type may not be on social media. This suggest that agritourism business owners' importance of digital communication channels can depend on their targeted audience and the activities they offer. Within the theory of planned behavior, agritourism business owners' attitudes about communication channels can relate to their behavior in marketing their business.

Consistent with the findings in this study, Miller et al. (2021) concluded that digital communication channels were of high importance due to the level of comfort in operation for the agritourism business owner and the business's target audience. The digital channel Facebook was mentioned in the study by Miller et al. (2021) to be considered the majority of agritourism businesses' use as a main point of contact.

Within the print communication channel vineyard/winery and accommodation businesses were found to be significantly different. Vineyard/winery businesses in this study

reported higher importance of print communication channels versus accommodation businesses which reported lower importance.

In support of this study, Strickland et al. (2013) concluded that winery businesses' main form of communication was print communication channels. The print communication emphasized the importance of wineries through strong images and wording (Strickland et al., 2013). As a result, business owners at wineries believed that the winery could establish credibility that could help future wine sales (Strickland et al., 2013).

Within the in-person communication channel vineyard/winery, farms of all variety and accommodation businesses were found to be significantly different. Farms of all variety businesses tend to focus on selling produce and hosting event to showcase their farms. In this study, farms of all variety businesses reported a higher level of importance of in-person communication channels than accommodation businesses. Farms of all variety businesses rely on in-person communication channels such as farmers markets and special events in order to market and promote their business to the public. This study suggests that accommodation businesses do not consider in-person communication channels to be as important as other communication channels.

In support of this study, in-person channels such as special events are very appealing as they can generate traveler interest but don't require the kind of sustained services and labor that rural areas might lack (Wicks & Merrett, 2003). Farmers' markets were also found to be effective in a study conducted by Onyango et al. (2015). In-person communication channels allow for the agritourism business owner to build a profile of the consumer interested in their product. Based on the theory of planned behavior, agritourism business owners intention to

expand business development and increase visitors can be influenced by their attitude toward in-person communication channels.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' perceived importance of communication and marketing practices and their intention to expand business development?

The findings indicated a low relationship between agritourism business owners' intention to expand business development and their perceived importance of communication and marketing practices. The results suggest that the vast majority of agritourism business owners' perception of communication practices is not related to their intention for business expansion. This suggests that agritourism business owners do not rely on communication and marketing practices in order to intend to expand their business development. The theory of planned behavior suggests that an individual's attitude will lead to motivation in regard to their intentions (Ajzen, 1985).

In contrast to the findings, Colton and Bissix (2005) found that agritourism business owners' low importance of communication practices was directly related to the lack of their intention to expand. This study concluded that because the agritourism business owners did not have the resources to utilize and understand communication practices, they were not strong in their intentions to expand (Colton & Bissix, 2005).

The results from this study showed that agritourism business owner respondents' intention to expand business development is not related to the level of importance they possess towards communication practices. These results differ from the previous study by Colton and Bissix (2005) because, importance of communication strategies are attitudes agritourism

business owners perceive whereas intention to expand business development are goals that they are seeking to achieve.

Agritourism business owners have strong intentions towards expanding their business, however, are left with mixed importance levels towards communication and marketing practices. The results should be used by state agritourism programs to understand what the current level of importance is towards communication and marketing practices. In addition, defining the relationship with agritourism business owners intention in the future expansion of their business. Future research should examine what agritourism business owners define as their communication and marketing practices and the relationship it has with the level of intention to expand their agritourism business.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between how agritourism business owners' believe they are perceived in their local community and owners' intention to expand business development?

The findings indicated a low relationship between agritourism business owners' intention to expand business development and their perception of how their local community perceives them. The results suggest the vast majority of agritourism business owners' perception of how their community views them does not relate to their intention for expanding their business. Subjective norms in the theory of planned behavior refer to the belief of if individuals approve or disapprove of behavior (Ajzen, 1985). A behavioral intention can be attributed to its perception of social pressure in accordance with subjective norms (Ajzen, 1985). From this study's perspective the subjective norms are referring to the community members impression or attitude of agritourism businesses located nearby. The perception is how agritourism business owners believe they are perceived and how that relates to their business intentions.

In contrast to the findings, Naidoo and Sharpley (2016) found that local community perceptions had a high relationship with agritourism businesses' intention to expand. Local residents and community members were perceived by local agritourism businesses as a positive contribution to the community (Naidoo & Sharpley, 2016). The agritourism businesses felt the businesses' contribution to the community created job opportunities, preserved historic landmarks and increased income for other local businesses (Naidoo & Sharpley, 2016).

In this study, agritourism business owners felt their business had a lower contribution effect to the local community in relation to their level of intention to expand. These findings indicate that agritourism business owners plans to expand business development are not based on their current relationship with the local community. Agritourism business owners plan their intentions of business development based on their current operations.

Research Question 5: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' confidence in the ability to promote their business and intention to expand business development?

The findings indicated there was no relationship between agritourism business owners' intention to expand business development and their confidence in the ability to promote their business. The results exhibited a negligible association between the variables, suggesting that agritourism business owners' confidence in the ability to promote had no relationship to their intentions to expand business development. Perceived behavioral control within the theory of planned behavior refers to a person's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior of interest (Barbera & Ajzen, 2020). In the theory of planned behavior, the perceived behavioral control would then influence the intention to perform behaviors (Brune et al., 2020). The perceived behavioral control in this study is the agritourism business owners' perception of ease they have on their ability to promote their business with ease or difficulty. Based on how

agritourism business owners perceive their ease of promotion can impact their intentions of business development.

Contradictory to the findings, Jensen et al. (2014) found that agritourism business owners had a positive influence on their confidence level in promoting their business and expansion intentions. Agritourism business owners felt their high ability in promoting their business had a motivation towards the behavior of their intention to expand their business (Jensen et al., 2014).

Agritourism business owners in this study did not associate their ability in promotion with the intentions they had on business development because the intentions were established based on the goals they envisioned for their business. Agritourism businesses do not base what their future goals and intentions are off of their current confidence in promoting. The current state of their ability to promote can grow and change without affecting their expansion intentions.

In this study, it is possible Kansas agritourism business owners felt their confidence level was low under the assumption of not knowing what is classified as a promotion tool.

Research Question 6: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' barriers faced and intention to expand business development?

The findings indicated a low relationship between agritourism business owners' intention to expand business development and the barriers faced. The results suggested agritourism business owners' intention to expand business development had no relationship to the current barriers they faced as business owners. Within the theory of planned behavior, this study relates directly to perceived behavioral control and intention. Ajzen (1985) refers to perceived behavioral control as an individual's perception of the extent to which performance of the behavior is easy or difficult. In this study, agritourism business owners' barriers are identified as perceived behavioral control. The intention of agritourism business owners to expand their

business development is based on the strength of the intention. When the intention is strong, the more likely the behavior will be performed (Ajzen, 1985).

Research by DeLay et al., (2019) supported this study and found that regardless of barriers faced by agritourism business owners, they still had a positive intention to expand business development. Barriers are common for any business to face and overcome when intending to expand or continue a business (Ocampo, 2007). Agritourism business owners often operate by trial and error in order to improve their business success in the future (Miller et al., 2021).

Research Question 7: What is the relationship between how successful agritourism business owners perceive their business and confidence in the ability to promote their business?

The findings indicated a low relationship between the success agritourism business owners perceive to have and their confidence in promoting their business. The results suggested agritourism business owners' perceived success of their business does not associate with their confidence in the ability to promote their business. Perceived behavioral control and attitude are direct relationship in this study to the theory of planned behavior.

Opposing the study results, Wilson et al. (2001) found a direct relationship between perceived business success and the promotion of business. Agritourism business owners felt the need to invest and find additional resources for promotion in order to be successful (Wilson et al., 2001). To increase their confidence in their ability a community was created to use resources and share promotional ways to be successful.

The indifference to the study results could be due to the personal definition of how success is defined. Each individual could have a different perspective and meaning of success in a business.

Research Question 8: What is the relationship between agritourism business owners' perceived importance of communication and marketing practices and confidence in the ability to promote their business?

The findings indicated a positive relationship between agritourism business owners' ability to promote their business and their perception of communication and marketing practices' importance. The results showed a moderate association, suggesting that agritourism business owners' confidence in the ability to promote their business has relationship to how they perceive the importance of communication and marketing practices. Perceived behavioral control and attitude are direct relationship in this study to the theory of planned behavior. Perceived behavioral control refers to a person's perception of ease or difficulty in performing the behavior of interest (Ajzen, 1985). Perceived behavioral control in this study is the level of confidence of agritourism business owners promoting their businesses. Within the theory of planned behavior, attitude refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behavior of interest (Ajzen, 1985). Agritourism business owners perceived importance of communication and marketing practices is measured as the attitude aspect.

In support of the study results, Barbieri and Mshenga (2008) also concluded that agritourism business owners' ability to promote their business had a direct similarity to their confidence in communication practices. Agritourism business owners strongly feel that utilizing communication practices is important in order to successfully promote their business with the increase in technology development (Bourgouin, 2002). Within the past decade, technology has continued to become increasingly popular in demand and use for business promotion (Bourgouin, 2002).

Implications and Recommendations

Kansas Agritourism and Agritourism Business Owners

Research regarding Kansas Agritourism is limited in existence (Amanor-Boadu, 2013). Research before this study primarily focused on the economic impact, consumer motivations and purchasing decisions (Amanor-Boadu, 2013; Cullop, 2019; Thorp, 2015). Previous research has focused on the communication perspective only investigated demographic information and communication practices (Arroyo et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2012). This study's addition identified what Kansas Agritourism business owners' perceptions of communications practices are and how they relate to their intentions to expand their business. Research on the topic of Kansas Agritourism is needed for further explanation on how to continue the growth of agritourism in Kansas.

It is recommended that agritourism programs within each state investigate agritourism business owners based on their perception of success in promoting and operating an agritourism business. By investigating agritourism business owners, state program can identify success measures of businesses. These success measures can then be utilized to inform prospective, new and existing agritourism businesses of potential and achievable goals they can strive towards. Having success measures can increase the interest in agritourism business owners to continue and expand their businesses. Research conducted by previous states has been used to implement resources and workshops to assist agritourism business owners in successfully starting, continuing and growing their businesses (Lane, 2018).

The next steps for the Kansas Agritourism program is to further investigate the barriers of Kansas agritourism business owners. This study identified key barrier topics that agritourism business owners feel have impacted their business. However, further discussion with the business

owners is needed to understand the reasons why they consider those barriers. By identifying their past experience with those barriers, solutions can be developed by providing resources on preventing future similar barriers. The Kansas Agritourism program should also explore the demographic difference in age of agritourism businesses. This can encourage and motivate more younger generations to become interesting in the agritourism sector. One reason agritourism can continue to grow and increase in popularity is by promoting agritourism across all age generations.

Material development can also provide important details from this study for both agritourism business owners and state agritourism programs. For agritourism business owners, material development such as an infographic can relay key demographic information. Business types, educational level, gender and years in operating can provide current and prospective agritourism business owners with an overview of what the current agritourism industry look like. The importance of communication channels can also provide agritourism business owners with a current look at the marketing and promotional methods being utilized in current time. For agritourism state programs, material development such as a report can assist in understanding the current profile of agritourism business owners. By building a profile state programs can build additional resources and workshops that would assist in favor of the agritourism business owners. A report that contains key information regarding barriers, intentions and community perspective can assist in identifying key themes that can be improved to improve agritourism business owners success with their businesses.

Agricultural Communications

Agricultural communications research contains a variety of subjects that are studied. The research topic of agritourism can be considered at a small scale but has recently increased

(Santeramo & Barbieri, 2017). Previous research focused on visitors' experience, activities being offered and rural community development (Flanigan, 2014). This study has added the unique topic of discovering the barriers, motivations and intentions of agritourism business owners from their perspective. Research on the topic of agritourism needs to be continued in order to increase the awareness and effectiveness it has in the United States. Additional research can also assist in identifying how agritourism can stand alone from the overall component of tourism.

Limitations

Participants in this study were limited to agritourism businesses within the state of Kansas. Specifically, only agritourism businesses registered with the Kansas Agritourism program were invited to participate in this study.

Future Research

In-person communication channels are perceived as the most important to agritourism business owners. The results should be used by state agritourism program staff to determine the current level of importance of communication strategies perceived by agritourism business owners. Future research should examine the various communication channels and how agritourism business owners use the channels to promote their business materials. Specifically, identifying what types of word-of-mouth communication strategies are utilized to promote and marketing businesses. Word-of-mouth communication strategies have been identified as but are not limited to influence marketing, user generated content, reviews, referrals, and giveaways. By identify word-of-mouth communication strategies current businesses can adopt more word-of-mouth communication strategies to improve their business promotion tactics.

The results should be used by agritourism business owners to show an updated trend on communication channels being used by business types. In past studies, research has only focused

the majority on the implementation of print communication channels (Arroyo et al., 2013). Future research should examine the exact methods business types are using to market and promote their business.

Agritourism business owners have strong intentions towards expanding their business, however, are left with mixed importance levels towards communication and marketing practices. The results should be used by state agritourism programs to understand what the current level of importance is towards communication and marketing practices. In addition, defining the relationship with agritourism business owners' intention in the future expansion of their business. Future research should examine what agritourism business owners define as their communication and marketing practices and the relationship it has with the level of intention to expand their agritourism business.

It is possible that Kansas agritourism business owners did not associate a relationship with the local community because they have no personal communication with or establishment of who the local community is. The results should be used for agritourism business owners to encourage establishing a positive relationship with the local community. With the expectation to have an increase in community support and business expansion as a result of establishing a positive relationship. Future research should analyze the perceptions from the local community's point of view to provide a two-way perspective of the agritourism business effect on communities and future expansion successes.

The results should be used to expand future studies in defining what agritourism business owners classify as their promotional material for prospective visitors. Future research should examine the key reasons that contribute to the confidence level of agritourism business owners

promoting their business. Identifying the key reasons can assist with developing additional resources and guided information through the named uncertainties for business owners.

Agritourism business owners continue to plan for the expansion of their business development even with barriers along the process. The results should be used for state agritourism programs to understand the common barriers faced by agritourism business owners. This can assist in creating resources to mitigate barriers and resolve common issues when owning and operating an agritourism business. Future research should be conducted on how barriers can affect visitor experience.

Success of a business can be interpreted and measured in different ways. Agritourism business owners measure success to identify the progression they have made. The results should be used to implement how state agritourism programs measure success within each business. Future studies should measure success by conducting interviews with agritourism business owners to uncover additional success measures.

Communication and marketing practices continue to grow in the diverse way they are used. The results could be used to utilized to compare with previous studies how much communication and marketing practices have increased. Future studies should identify if communication and marketing practices differ in confidence level based on state agritourism resources available.

Future research should look at agritourism business owners' perceptions of communications practices as it relates to their intentions to expand their business with a broader population. This recommendation is based on the response contribution and participation during the study. Future studies in regard to the population should detail the differences between

registered and non-registered agritourism businesses' familiarity and confidence with communication practices and intent to expand their business.

If this study was to be replicated it should include a population and section dedicated to past agritourism business owners in the survey. This recommendation is based on participants who requested to be removed from consideration in this study, indicating they had sold or are no longer involved with agritourism. Future research should define what the reasons are for individuals leaving the agritourism industry. Schilling and Sullivan (2014) have shown economic impact causes business owners to close their businesses. However, future research should establish if there are other reasons for agritourism businesses to close or sell.

This study examined solely the perspective of agritourism business owners. Ingram (2002) has examined the motivations of both the agritourism business owners and consumers in Australia. Consumers were motivated to visit agritourism businesses as a means to escape the busy city life Ingram (2002), whereas agritourism business owners were motivated to build relationships with the local community Ingram (2002). Future research in this subject area should focus on discovering the relationship between the consumer and agritourism business owners in the United States.

The motivations of agritourism business owners were collected in the survey, but not utilized in this study. A future study on the motivations of agritourism business owners can be conducted to identify the relationship of economical and communication motivations. This study can help bridge the gap of the economics portion of operating a business with the marketing/promotional side. The motivational factors identified can be used to assess if Kansas agritourism business owners are more motivated by economic factors or communication involvement. In a previous study, economic factors were found not to be the dominant reason for

operating an agritourism business (Mace, 2005). The motivation for agritourism is a complex combination of economic and social variables rather than just one predominant factor (Mace, 2005).

The theory of planned behavior was utilized in this study to identify how attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral controls relate to the intention that results in behaviors. It is recommended that future studies adopt the rational comprehensive theory to investigate the decision-making process of agritourism business owners. The subject of rational decision making is choosing among alternatives in a way that is in accordance with the preferences and beliefs of the individual decision-maker or those of a group making a joint decision; in particular, the subject as developed in decision theory (Doyle, 1998). By using logical steps, rational decision-making selects the best possible solution. Choosing among options involves analyzing multiple alternatives and using credible data or facts. Previous study by Zhang et al. utilized the decision-making process to identify key decisions in supporting rural tourism and solutions for the future potential of the tourism industry from visitors perspectives (2020).

This recommendation can be implemented by including a qualitative component, such as focus groups, in the study. Focus groups will allow agritourism business owners to discuss their process and reasoning as it relates to their agritourism business.

Summary

Research within agricultural communications has not been conducted from the agritourism business owners' perspective at large. Agritourism businesses are becoming an increasing interest and topic. Building a dual research topic will assist in understanding what

both agritourism business owners need to be successful and what consumers need when visiting need to leave with a positive experience.

This research was able to provide the perspective of the agritourism business owner. The research questions were answered by: identifying the highest perceived importance levels of communication channels were in-person, word of mouth; concluding that both digital and in-person communication channels are to be more significant than print communication channels to agritourism business owners; agritourism business owners' intention to expand their business had low or no relationship with the perceived importance of communication and marketing practices, confidence in the ability to promote their business, barriers faced and perception from the local community; agritourism business owners perception of how the community views them had a low relationship to their confidence in promoting their business; and agritourism business owners have a positive relationship with their perceived importance of communication practices and confidence in their ability to promote their businesses. The findings of this study present a unique perspective of agritourism and should continue to be further researched to improve the agritourism industry.

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Appendix A - IRB Approval Letter



TO: Nellie Hill
Communications & Ag Education

Proposal Number: IRB-11495

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 01/30/2023

RE: Proposal Entitled, "The Benefits and Impact of Agritourism on Kansas Agritourism Business Owners."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written – and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §104(d), category:Exempt Category 2 Subsection ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 01/30/2023 11:05 AM ET

Appendix B - Survey Instrument

Kansas Agritourism Business Owners

Start of Block: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

Please read this document carefully before you decide to participate in this research study. Your participation is voluntary, and you can decline to participate or withdraw consent at any time, with no consequences.

Study Title: The Benefits and Impacts of Agritourism Business Owners in Kansas

Persons conducting the research: Dr. Nellie Hill, Department of Communication and Agricultural Education, nlhill@ksu.edu, (785) 532-5804. Lauren Raley, Graduate Student, Department of Communication Agricultural Education.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to discover the business owner's perspective of operating an agritourism business. The purpose of this research is to: discover the current implementation of communication strategies agritourism businesses are using, identify barriers that may affect those agritourism businesses and reveal the intentions to expand agritourism businesses in the future. In hope to gain valuable insight from this research to help the current agritourism business owners and promote Kansas agritourism to any potential agritourism business owners.

What you will be asked to do in the study: You will be asked to participate in a survey that will ask questions about your agritourism business communication strategies, barriers, intentions to

expand and business success related to your agritourism business. Your information collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Time required: It will take no longer than 15 minutes to complete the survey.

Risks and Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you in participating in this study. However, your participation could provide insights for scientists, science communicators, Kansas agritourism business owners, and other professionals about agritourism. There are no risks to you in participating in this study.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participating in this research.

Confidentiality: No identifying information will be connected with your responses, which will be anonymous.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.

Withdrawal from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence.

Questions about the study: If you wish to discuss the information above or any discomforts you may experience, please ask questions or contact one of the research members listed at the top of this form. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the Institutional Review Board.

IRB chair contact information: For the subject should he/she have questions or wish to discuss on any aspect of the research with an official of the university or the IRB. These are: Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Brad Woods, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, 785-

532-3224.

If you'd like to learn more about this study, please contact : Lauren Raley – Graduate Student, by e-mail at lraley@ksu.edu

By continuing, you have read the procedures described above and agree to participate.

End of Block: Informed Consent Form

Start of Block: Age



Q16 What is your age in years?

Skip To: End of Survey If Condition: What is your age in years? Is Less Than 18. Skip To: End of Survey.

End of Block: Age

Start of Block: Kansas Agritourism Program Business

Q1 Do you have a registered agritourism business with the Kansas Agritourism Program?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Do you have a registered agritourism business with the Kansas Agritourism Program? = No

End of Block: Kansas Agritourism Program Business

Start of Block: Communication Practices

Q2 How important do you think communications and marketing are for your agritourism operation?

- Not at all important (1)
 - Slightly important (2)
 - Moderately important (3)
 - Very important (4)
 - Extremely important (5)
-

Q3 Please indicate your agreement with the following statement:

As an agritourism operator I am confident in my ability to promote my agritourism business through communication and marketing practices.

- Strongly disagree (1)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Strongly agree (5)
-

Page Break

Q4 Please rate the importance of print communications and marketing methods you currently use to promote your business.

	Do not use (1)	Not at all important (2)	Slightly important (3)	Moderately important (4)	Very important (5)	Extremely important (6)
Direct mail (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regional/local tourism guide (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Printed handout materials (business cards/brochures/flyers) (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Agricultural publications (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Newspaper ads (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tourism attraction road signage (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Billboards (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coupons (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5 Please rate the importance of digital communications and marketing methods you currently use to promote your business.

	Do not use (1)	Not at all important (2)	Slightly important (3)	Moderately important (4)	Very important (5)	Extremely important (6)
TV ads (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Radio ads (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blog (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Email list (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook page (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook ads (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TikTok (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Instagram (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Instagram ads (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Google ads (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Online deals (Groupon, Living Social, etc.) (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Q6 Please rate the importance of the in-person communications and marketing methods you currently use to promote your business.

	Do not use (1)	Not at all important (2)	Slightly important (3)	Moderately important (4)	Very important (5)	Extremely important (6)
Kansas Agritourism Program (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special events or festivals (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local farmers market (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Word of mouth (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Communication Practices

Start of Block: Intentions to Expand

Q7 Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I am optimistic about the future of the agritourism industry in Kansas (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I plan to expand the number of products, attractions, or services offered at my business in the next 5 years (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My goals include attracting more customers to my enterprise (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I expect my sales from agritourism to increase in the future (4)

I plan to exit the agritourism industry in the next 5 years (5)

End of Block: Intentions to Expand

Start of Block: Business Success

Q8 What percentage of your total household income is accounted for by your agritourism business?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Slide to percentage ()



Q9 How many customers does your agritourism business serve annually?

Q10 Please rate how successful you think your agritourism business is.

- Not at all (1)
 - Slightly (2)
 - Moderately (3)
 - Very (4)
 - Extremely (5)
-

Q11 Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with how the local community perceives your agritourism business.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
My business creates job opportunities for the local community (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My business gives incentives to preserve historical buildings and places (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My business increases recreation facilities for the local community (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My business contributes to the growth and success of the local economy (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My business
provides
educational
resources for
the local
community
(5)



Q12 Please rate the importance of the following motivational factors for your involvement in agritourism.

	Not at all important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)	Extremely important (5)
Generate additional income (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continue the business (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decrease business revenue fluctuations (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interact with customers (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Educate consumers about agriculture (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide current customers with new services/products (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meeting a need in the recreation/vacation market (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keep you active (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Capture new customers (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Observing successes of other businesses (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better utilize the business in the family (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enhance personal/family quality of life (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide employment for family members (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keep the family business in the family (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Business Success

Start of Block: Barriers

Q13 The following is a list of potential challenges you may have faced in the start-up or operation of your agritourism business. Please rate each issue based on how much of a problem it

has been for your business.

	Not a problem (1)	A minor problem (2)	Somewhat of a problem (3)	A moderate problem (4)	A serious problem (5)
Obtaining permission for roadside signage (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtaining liability insurance (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dealing with increased competition (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying target customers (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deciding how to promote the business to target customers (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing advertisement and promotion materials (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attracting customers (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Providing excellent customer service (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staying current with new promotion methods (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having enough capital for infrastructure (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having enough capital for operations (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having enough capital for marketing (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtaining required permits or licenses (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Maintaining
visitor safety
(14)

Maintaining
good
relationships
with
neighbors
(15)

Working with
family
members (16)

End of Block: Barriers

Start of Block: Demographic Information

Q15 What is your gender?

- Male (4)
 - Female (5)
 - Non-binary / third gender (6)
 - Prefer not to say (7)
-

Q17 What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

- Less than high school (18)
 - High school graduate (19)
 - Some college (20)
 - 2 year degree (21)
 - 4 year degree (22)
 - Professional degree (23)
 - Doctorate (24)
-

Q18 What region is your agritourism business located in according to the Kansas Agritourism Program?

- Northeast (1)
 - South Central (2)
 - North Central (3)
 - Southeast (4)
 - Northwest (5)
 - Southwest (6)
-



Q19 How many years has your agritourism business been in operation?

Q25 Which of the following best describes the primary type of your agritourism business?

- Apiaries (1)
- Cabins / Bed & Breakfast (2)
- Christmas Tree Farms (3)
- Event Barns (4)
- Farms of all varieties (Fruits, Vegetables, Nuts, Produce Stand) (5)
- Hunting / Hunting Lodges (6)
- Livestock Operations (Cattle, Goats, Horses, Buffalos, Alpacas, Llamas, Sheep, Pigs, etc.) (7)
- Orchards (8)
- Pumpkin Patches (9)
- Sunflower Farms (10)
- U-Pick Operations (11)
- Vineyards / Wineries (12)
- Working Ranches (13)
- Historic Sites / Museums (14)
- Lavender Farms (15)
- Greenhouse / Botanical Garden (16)
- Campgrounds (17)
- Honey Farms (18)
- Dairy Farms (19)
- Other: (21) _____

Q21 Which of the following best captures the way you view the purpose of your agritourism business?

- Direct Sales (1)
 - Education (2)
 - Entertainment (3)
 - Hospitality (4)
 - Outdoor Recreation (5)
-

Q22 When is the busiest season for your agritourism business?

- Winter (1)
- Spring (2)
- Summer (3)
- Fall (4)

End of Block: Demographic Information

Appendix C - Recruitment Email

Subject: Agritourism Business Owners - An Invitation to Shape the Future of Agritourism

I am writing to you to request your participation in a brief survey on your perspective as a Kansas agritourism business owner.

Agritourism businesses in Kansas are increasing in numbers and size. I am interested in how your agritourism business is successful. I would appreciate your feedback on the communication strategies you utilize, the barriers you may face as an agritourism business owner, and your intentions to expand in the future. Your response to this survey will provide valuable insight to help support agritourism business owners in Kansas. My intention is that this survey will inform the creation of needed materials and resources for the agritourism industry.

The survey is brief and will not take longer than 15 minutes complete.

Your participation in the survey is completely voluntary, but highly valued. Your responses will be anonymous. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your responses or reports of the data. The Kansas State University Institutional Review Board has approved this survey.

Should you have any comments or questions, please feel free to contact me at lraley@ksu.edu or my advisor, Dr. Nellie Hill, at nlhill@ksu.edu

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,
Lauren Raley