

## FACTORS AFFECTING VISITORS' ATTRIBUTES TO THEME FARMS IN TAIWAN

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*This study examines consumption patterns, attributes, and consumer satisfaction in visiting theme farms in Taiwan. Four hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed and 432 completed questionnaires returned. Descriptive, factor analysis and regression analysis is used in this study. Base on the results, only 55.9% of respondents visit a theme farm at least once in the past year. They spend 2 to 6 hours at the theme farm. They prefer to be accompanied by family and friends when they visit the theme farm. Factor analysis results indicate that the underlying factors consumers' attribute when they select theme farms includes: experience, education, and extensibility. Visitor satisfaction has the most effect on the attribute factors of experience and education as shown by the regression analysis.*

*Theme farm, visitors' attribute, behavior.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industry in the world. Tourism is often a display of social status, as tourism relates with excess leisure time and high discretionary income. Farm tourism can be defined by the declining labor force, changing farm structure, increasing intensification and specialization of farming activities, together with a decline in farm income (Frater, 1982). The inability to generate sufficient revenue has, in many cases, led farmers to diversify and undertake major tourism activity (Fleischer & Pizam, 1997). Farm tourism primarily develops for its economic benefits and represents a symbiotic relationship for areas where neither farming nor tourism could independently justify. Two other primary concerns of the farmer are the generation of additional income, and increased the local economy (Inskeep, 1991). Taiwan is an island with a long agricultural tradition. The development of farm tourism and upgrading of rural life is a major target in these years. Theme parks are one of the most typical products that collectively support by various facets of the commercial recreation industry. In order to attract more tourists, an overall marketing project prepared with a marketing strategy combining the features, entertainment, service, and multiple functions of farms with local resources. A plan of a theme farm provides to offer the owners of the leisure farms some ideas. According to the related research above, influences on leisure and travel destinations can be classified into previous experiences, climate, friendliness, family, friends, cost, culture, geographic beauty, proximity, time, and distance. However, there are few related studies that discuss the leisure destination choices of theme

farm visitors. To get the support of government, data were collected from visitors of one famous theme farm in the north of Taiwan. The purpose of this study is to determine the major visitor's attributes to visiting theme farms, in order to provide information to develop new activities and improve the environment of the theme farms.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Farm tourism

Farm tourism, has clear ingredients of small scale enterprises with local roots based on local traditions. The farmer represents the old idealized concept, is located in rural areas, and also requires a rural lifestyle—all packaged and sold as farm tourism. Farm tourism also stresses the relationship between host and guest, the interaction between the host's private life and the guest's experiences. Such interaction is the basic concept of social tourism, which became popular during these years (Nilsson, 2002). It organizes as a truly noncommercial form of tourism. It is cheap and aims to make people feel friendship with each other. Farm tourism comprises two principal forms: non-accommodation and accommodation-related activities; some farms participate in both (Shaw & Williams, 1994). Davies and Gilbert (1992) identify similar components, segmenting farm tourism into accommodation-based and activity based. The definitions for farm tourism narrowed down to a demand-led basis where there is no doubt that the consumer recognizes the farming environment as part of the overall tourism product (Busby and Rendle, 2000). Prices and sales in the farm tourism market determine simultaneously by supply and demand. The supply side reflects the cost structure of the firm and its level of efficiency. The more efficient the production process is, the less it will cost the entrepreneur to produce the farm tourism services. Profits can increase if visitors are willing to pay a higher price for an attribute or if the business operates more efficiently. Some of these attributes are similar to those of a hotel, such as the level of luxury of the unit or a special view, but some are unique to farm tourism.

### Leisure behavior

Leisure defines as what people do when they are not working. Activities become leisure primarily because they are carried out in a period designated as free-time. Some free-time activities may be relaxing or entertaining but are not so easily recognized as leisure (Hills *et al.*, 2000). There are some related studies that improve our understanding of leisure-related behaviors. This information includes motivation, information sources, destination choices, and attributes (Hsu, 2000; Oh *et al.*, 2002). Kaplan (1975) considers that the functions of leisure include self-determination and the encouragement of pledge, as well as providing opportunities for recreation, personal development, and service to others. Others suggest that leisure activities have a formative effect on character and personality (Hills *et al.*, 2000). Crandall (1980) identifies 17 empirical factors of motivation to engage in leisure activities. These include achievement, altruism, creativity, self-actualization and social contact, as well as the avoidance of boredom. Neulinger (1981), and Deci and Ryan (1985) identify the importance of perceived freedom in leisure and distinguish extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivation which is doing something for the pleasure of doing it shows to be a major characteristic of activities which people define as leisure. Hills *et al.* (2000) shows leisure motivation by three intrinsic factors of stimulation, accomplishment, and the acquisition of knowledge and three extrinsic factors of social development, the constructive use of free-time, and avoidance of doing something else. Attitudes, which are relatively permanent and stable evaluative summaries about an item, are an important psychological construct because they found to influence and predict many behaviors. One must, however, exercise caution when reviewing the impact of attitudes on behaviors. Carr (2002) indicates that a visitor may display a different behavior than would be displayed in one's country of origin. Once an individual arrives at a destination, he sheds the culture of his home environment and assumes a tourist culture.

It is focused on tourists' subjective experiences highlighted (Vitterso *et.al.*, 2000; Gnoth *et.al.*, 2000) by the need to integrate cognitive and emotional concepts (Zins, 2002). To explain tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions. In fact, one of the objectives of marketing and applied social sciences is to develop knowledge to influence behavior. Work on behavioral intentions goes back to research carried out by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), who investigate the relationship between beliefs, attitudes, intention and behavior. Although researchers agree on the importance of relationships between emotional variables, consumer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, there are no conclusive findings.

### **Segmentation of theme place**

Market segmentation is a procedure of dividing a heterogeneous market into homogeneous groups of people who share similar needs and characteristics. Consumers' needs and characteristics are similar within each segment and different between segments. Visitors' various preferences for theme place attributes may represent the heterogeneous needs of the theme place market. Therefore, a market segmentation procedure can be used to analyze the divergent variation of visitors' preferences for theme place attributes (Chuo, 2004). There is a possibility to segment this tourism sector by categories of products/activities. This would be of limited interest since it would not translate how visitors perceive the rural offer. Visitors' perceptions of the rural areas can vary tremendously; therefore it might be more appropriate to use a segmentation technique that base on psychographic criteria rather than one base on socio-economic or activity-choice data. Opaschowski (2001) suggests that tourists are looking for emotional stimuli, they want to buy feelings and not products.

According to Milman (2001), the popularity of theme place and attractions will continue to grow, as they are increasingly associated with new vacation experiences. Theme places are business units of commercial recreation with unique forms of design. Theme places locate where three main components (e.g. travel/transportation, hospitality, and local commercial recreation) of the commercial recreation industry converge. This shows that theme places are one of the most typical commercial products. One of the most distinctive characteristics of theme places is their entirely artificial interior environment. These artificial environments' attributes are integrated around a particular theme. Visitors achieve their personal experiences in a theme park by participating and interacting with those theme places attributes. Therefore, to create a positive value theme is very important. Worth (1997) reports that one farmer who established a tourism business considers it to be more reliable and better than traditional farming activities. Stewart (1995) drew particular attention to the increasing professionalization of farm tourism, moving away from activities to one with a multi million pound turnover (Miller, 1993). Theme places consider a form of leisure activity because they provide an opportunity for entertainment during an individual's discretionary free time (Milman, 1991). The theme farm defines the special activities other than traditional activities for the visitors the farm activities. Visitors are willing to pay a higher price for a firm located in a region that is rich in tourist attractions. Additionally, a firm locates in such a region demonstrates a higher productivity level (Fleischer and Tchetchik, 2005). Economic dependency on tourism emerges as significant variable underlying residents' positive perceptions of the impact and favorable attitudes towards tourism development. (Pizam 1978; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Snaith & Haley, 1999).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Design and Development of questionnaires**

The questionnaire develops base on a comprehensive review of leisure attributes from the literature (Hsieh and Chang, 2006; Huang and Tsai, 2003). In this study, the questionnaire consists of three sections. The first section contains behavior questions; such as how often the tourist visits the

resort farm in one month, amount of time spent at the farm, transportation modes, expenditure, and companions. The second section measures the customers' attribute to the theme farm, comprising of 13 determinants. Using 5-point-Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly unimportant) to 5 (strong important). The third section designed to obtain the respondent's demographic data including age, gender, economic status, marital status, and vocation.

### **Sampling**

One hundred questionnaires were distributed for the purpose of pre-testing. Final design of questionnaire is based on the comments collected during the pre-testing period. The questionnaires were distributed to guests over the age of 15 visiting the egg theme farm in Taiwan. The questionnaires collect from farm visitors over the age of 15. Out of 450 questionnaires, a total of 432 (96 %) returned which questionnaires 8 were eliminated due to an excessive amount of missing data.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected analyze using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) *Version 10.0*. Descriptive Statistics. The socio-demographic characteristics and the raking of the attribute items summarize by descriptive statistics. Principal component factor analyses with varimax rotation perform to identify underlying dimensions associated with visitor motivations. Only items with factor loadings greater than 0.5 retain for each factor grouping. Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 will report in the final factor structure. Regression analysis use to measure the relationship of visitor's satisfaction relative to the attitude factor. Experts including 2 teachers and 2 farm managers evaluated the content validity of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha is applied to test the reliability of factor groupings. Cronbach's alpha was applied to test the reliability of each group. Using this method, the survey items were found to have reliability coefficients well above the typically accepted level of 0.5 (Hair *et.al.*, 1995).

## **RESULTS**

### **Sample profile and consumption quantities**

Of the 432 returned questionnaires, 424 are valid and usable. The socio-demographic characteristics are shown in Table 1. The respondents are 43.3% male and 56.7 % female. The age is mainly 31 to 40 year old (41.1 %). The average income of the respondents is about NT\$ 25,001-60,000(72.2%). Respondents with an education level above senior high school are dominant (91.4 %). Most of the respondents already marry and with children (67.9%). Their occupations are predominately in the service industry (38.2%) and sales (22.2 %). More than 44 % of the respondents visit a theme farm only once per year. Approximately 20% of the respondents visit theme farm over 3 times per year. For respondents who spend 2-6 h in the theme farm annual expenditures are NT\$ 301-500. Family member are the major companions for the respondents (Table 2).

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**Table 1.**  
**The socio-demographic characteristics of visitors**

Characteristics	Description item	N	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	184	43.3
	Female	240	56.7
Age	Under 20	36	8.5
	21-30	129	30.7
	31-40	174	41.1
	41-50	70	16.5
	51-60	13	3.1
	Above 60	2	0.4
Average monthly income(NT)	Under 20000	61	14.4
	25001-40000	204	48.1
	40001-60000	102	24.1
	60001-80000	32	7.5
	50001-100000	16	3.8
	Above100000	9	2.1
Education	Under junior high school	36	8.6
	Senior high school	122	28.7
	College	112	26.3
	University	124	29.2
	Graduate school	30	7.2
Marital status	Married without children	62	14.6
	Married with children	288	67.9
Occupation	Single/divorced	74	17.5
	None	20	4.8
	Government office	29	6.8
	Technician	16	3.8
	Sales	95	22.2
	Student	47	11.2
	Service industry	162	38.2
	Self employed	48	11.3
	Other	7	1.7

**Table 2.**  
**The behavior of visitors to theme farm**

Regencies	Visitor statistics	2003		2004	
		Dom.	Inter.	Dom	Inter.
Banyuwangi (15)	Total tourist arrivals	527,368	7,030	322,023	10,684
	Tourist to NBTD	496,338	5,574	286,037	8,987
	Percentage to NBTD	94.11	79.28	88.82	84.11
	TDR	92.40		57.53	
Malang* (20)	Total tourist arrivals	2,887,449	4,052	2,975,708	12,396
	Tourist to NBTD	2,301,292	1,872	1,742,344	8,881
	Percentage to NBTD	79.69	46.2	58.55	71.69
	TDR	908.70		939.06	
Jember (3)	Total tourist arrivals	679,789	6220	313,034	1,989
	Tourist to NBTD	536,162	3,543	125,879	896
	Percentage to NBTD	78.87	56.96	40.21	45.05
	TDR	276.83		127.17	
Situbondo (2)	Total tourist arrivals	343,725	256	130,870	707
	Tourist to NBTD	343,725	256	130,870	707
	Percentage to NBTD	100	100	100	100
	TDR	209.87		80.27	
Probolinggo (2)	Total tourist arrivals	164,550	1,715	138,015	7,430
	Tourist to NBTD	113,255	1,684	99,353	7,178
	Percentage to NBTD	68.82	98.19	71.98	96.61
	TDR		100.40		87.82
Bondowoso (6)	Total tourist arrivals	27,579	1,111	27,209	1,194
	Tourist to NBTD	27,579	1,111	27,209	1,194
	Percentage to NBTD	100	100	100	100
	TDR	17.07		18.17	

### Attribute towards visiting a theme farm

As mention earlier, the importance levels of visitors' attributes were expressed with a five-point Likert scale. The importance rankings of the attributes items are presented in Table 3. The first-ranked item is 'Colored drawing on eggs is a rich educational experience' with a mean value of 4.09. The other three items ('I want to understand the purpose of the egg theme park', 'A guided tour is a rich educational experience', and 'I want to experience activities and education') scores are above 4.0. On the other hand, the least important item, 'The leisure farms' marketing is adequate ', the mean score is 3.57. It is noted that among these items, it is still slightly above 3.0.

**Table 3.**  
**The rank of visitors' attributes to the theme park**

Item of attribute	Mean	S.D.	Ranking
Colored drawing on eggs is a rich educational experience	4.09	0.76	1
I want to understand the purpose of the egg theme park	4.05	0.74	2
A guided tour is a rich educational experience	4.02	0.80	3
I want to experience activities and education	4.00	0.81	4
It is salubrious to eat organic food	3.97	0.73	5
The egg museum is educational	3.97	0.80	6
I want to eat more health foods	3.93	0.78	7
I want to enjoy nature	3.91	0.72	8
DIY products are a rich educational experience	3.91	0.78	9
I want to acquire new life knowledge	3.86	0.75	10
Extending leisure farm to the domestic market is effective	3.76	0.73	11
Extending leisure farm to government activity is effective	3.66	0.77	12
The leisure farms' marketing is adequate	3.57	0.87	13

### The attribute factor analysis for visitors to theme farm

Factor analysis is a common statistical technique used to uncover patterns or constructs. Prior to multiple regression analysis, the 13 determinants using factor analysis using principal component analysis with orthogonal varimax rotation. The number of factors determined by retaining only the factors with an eigenvalue of 1 or higher. Three factors derived from the factor analysis of 13 items (Table 4) and label; experience, education and extensibility. These factors explain 57.073 percent of the variance, and the KMO was 0.864. Out of the three underlying factors, education items emerge as the most important factors, with mean importance scores of 4.00, followed by experience and extensibility. The reliability alphas for internal check within each factor range from 0.64 to 0.80.

Table 5 presents the relationship of the three independent variables to the visitor's satisfaction. It observes that two variables; experience and education had beta coefficients that are statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ).



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**Table 4.**

**Description of the attribute scales describing consumers' willingness to go the theme farm**

<b>Factors (reliability alpha)</b>	<b>Factor loading</b>	<b>Eigenvalue</b>	<b>Variance explained</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Factor 1: Experience (0.78)		4.934	37.953	3.95
I want to experience activities and education	0.750			
I want to understand the purpose of the egg theme park	0.681			
I want to acquire new life knowledge	0.662			
I want to enjoy nature	0.646			
It is salubrious to eat organic food	0.576			
I want to eat more health foods	0.403			
Factor 2: Education (0.80)		1.344	10.341	4.00
Colored drawing on eggs is a rich educational experience	0.824			
A guided tour is a rich educational experience	0.777			
The egg museum is educational	0.768			
DIY products are a rich educational experience	0.487			
Factor 3: Extensibility (0.64)		1.141	8.779	3.67
Extending leisure farm to the domestic market is effective	0.756			
Extending leisure farm to government activity is effective	0.719			
The leisure farms' marketing is adequate	0.607			
Total variance explain			57.073	

\*KMO is 0.864

**Table 5.**

**The relationship of satisfaction with the factor of visitor's attribute**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Standardized Beta Coefficient</b>	<b>T Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Experience	0.421	8.629	0.000
Education	0.265	5.342	0.000
Extensibility	0.023	0.533	0.594

## DISCUSSION

From previous studies (Ko *et.al.*, 2006), one of the motivations to visit a leisure farm is to acquire knowledge. Knowing motivations will allow travel service providers to be ready to meet or even exceed visitor's expectations. To have a leading edge in the competitive travel industry, destination marketers need to keep abreast of motivational changes and trends and enhance their understanding of visitors. As Cha *et.al.* (1995) suggest, periodic surveys of the same market may be effective in capturing trends, adjusting advertising messages, and subsequently matching the motivations with travel programs, physical facilities, and destinations. Knowledge and experience of visitor's motivations are critical to predict future visitor patterns. Guinn (1980) observe in his travel motivation included rest and relaxation, social interaction, physical exercise, learning, excitement, and nostalgia. Education may be a good way to stimulate the visitor's motivation.

Ouiroga (1990) mention that the reasons for choosing a given tour package were the itinerary offered, the price, a friend's recommendations, and convenient departure dates. Chon (1991) observe that package tours are a popular and useful promotional tool for destination marketing. Rural teaching and education are very important motivations for the visitors. Package tours are a convention for visitors to the theme farm. Studies on destination choices show that previous experience is a critical factor in the choice of destination (Chon, 1990; Mansfeld, 1992; Crompton, 1992). However, theme places are a special destination idea. Theme farms must be professional counselors that possess not only sufficient marketing and product design knowledge, but also immediate access to information to meet the needs of visitors. Theme farms are important recreational and tourist attractions to domestic visitors and international tourists. The nature of the tourism experience exists within a dynamic local to global context, and thus, as Varley and Crowther (1998) point out that successfully providing the creative space for the consumer's aesthetic personal projects to unfold is surely the challenge facing the late-modern entrepreneur. Various research conducted in the sphere of cultural tourism reveal that the prime motivators for visiting museums and historic buildings are curiosity and a desire for diversion (Davies, 1994; Merriman, 1989; Thomas, 1989). According to Milman (2001) the popularity of theme parks and attractions will continue to grow, as they are increasingly associated with new vacation experiences.

These results will help the tourism industry to develop effective marketing programs to attract more travelers to the theme farms. This study also indicates that wealthy business groups or school teachers will be the appropriate target markets for future advertising. Theme activities are unique destinations for relaxing company (school) travel. More importantly, by doing so, the marketers would expect the word-of-mouth effect since visitors like to talk about their experiences when they return home. This is a notable finding that service providers in travel destinations should be aware of, they have a key role in producing positive word-of-mouth transmission in this specific travel segment. The finding that knowledge by education and experience is the most important factor may be biased because respondents in classrooms for continuing education inherently seek knowledge and so may differ from the population of Taiwan. Thus, in any future study, motivations should be separately examined by age, locality, and so on. In the previous studies about Leofoo theme park (Chuo, 2004), it offers special discounts for its neighborhood patrons. It seems to attract a certain number of visitors who have characteristics similar to the passive visitors. In other words, the findings imply that a well- designed strategy of discriminative pricing may attract a certain number of less intentional visitors. However, the theme farms are new marketing businesses in Taiwan. It is important to plan to introduce the theme farms to other cities.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present study sheds some new light on the study of tourism in rural areas. Tourism in farm areas is a vast topic that heavily studied from the supply outlook but remains to be further analyzed from the consumers' perspective. The study aims at bringing a deeper insight into those visitors, and to investigate whether potential consumer segments might exist within visitors. Using factor analyses, this study identify attribute factors based on three factors including 'experience', 'education' and 'extensibility'. 'Colored drawing on eggs is a rich educational experience' view as the biggest attribute to visit the egg theme farm.

The most evidence for marketing material in most countries; material is not produced by the single farmer but by central organizations like the Farmers' Union. Marketing is a problem for all small businesses, but especially for small tourism businesses. It does not improve the situation that most of the enterprises lack both tourism and service sector experience. According to these results, residents supportive of tourism development are generally young (Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Weaver



& Lawton, 2001), affluent (Pizam, 1978), and educated (Korca, 1998; Teye *et.al.*, 2002). It is a major job to create new products and activities to meet visitors' wants and needs. Some limitations in this paper need to be addressed. Recognition of these should help to refine future research efforts. The farm locates in northern Taiwan. Therefore, the generalization of results to other locations is in doubt. Future researchers also need to focus on visitors more thoroughly, providing theory and applications to tourism. Another, variables such as the purpose of different visitors should be more control. Therefore, the sampling unit encourages to extension to other groups.

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