

**Farming and Tourism Enterprise: Experiential Authenticity in the  
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# **Farming and Tourism Enterprise: Experiential Authenticity in the Diversification of Independent Small-Scale Family Farming**

## **Abstract**

This article examines the business choices made by independent farming families, when confronting the need to diversify away from traditional agricultural activities by starting farm-based tourism businesses. Based on interviews with farm family members who have set up tourism attractions on their farms, and drawing upon the concept of experiential authenticity, the article explores their self-conceptions of their family identities. In so doing, it addresses the choices and dilemmas facing farm families who attempt diversification through the tourism attraction route, and considers how this affects their attitudes towards more traditional farming activities. Using qualitative case study data, an empirically grounded framework is proposed that expresses the choices and challenges facing tourism entrepreneurial family farm members in the UK, through the conceptual lens of experiential authenticity.

*KEY WORDS:* experiential authenticity, diversification, entrepreneurship, farm family identity, tourism business enterprises.

## 1. Introduction

This paper outlines the findings from an empirical investigation into the views of independent farming families in the Yorkshire and East Anglia regions of the United Kingdom in terms of the choices and challenges which they face as a consequence of taking an entrepreneurial route to diversification into farm-based tourism attractions. It also considers how this affects their attitudes towards more traditional farming activities and identities. Using the conceptual lens of experiential authenticity, defined as trueness to oneself (Trilling, 1974), the focus is on the family farm as opposed to large-scale corporate modernised farms, and is concerned with the actions and interactions of individual farming families in relation to the tourism businesses which they own and manage. The views and priorities of farm-based family business entrepreneurs are explored through their personal depictions of their farms and related tourism attractions, the extent to which they choose to change and adapt themselves and their farms in the light of their new ventures, and their consequent projection of the type of experiential authenticity which their own particular farm-based tourism attraction offers. As Getz and Carlsen stress: 'Rural and peripheral areas are especially influenced by family business, so research directed at these settings should be a priority' (2005: 261).

The context of this research is UK family farming, but the subject is one that applies to family farming across the more economically advanced nations of the world where large-scale industrial farming is placing pressure on smaller-scale traditional family farming practices, thereby creating stress among farm families (Davis-Brown and Salamon, 1987). In order to stay in business, farmers have been encouraged to diversify into various other areas of entrepreneurial family-based business activities including farm tourism (Haugen & Vik, 2008; Kinsella et al., 2000; Kneafsey, 2000; Sharpley & Vass, 2006). Diversification raises important challenges for farm families, including issues surrounding their identities, life-

styles and choices (Getz & Carlsen, 2000; Ilbery, et al. 1998) and the dilemmas they face especially in terms of issues relating to their perceptions and experiences of authenticity and their ties with farming. Indeed, Haugen and Vik (2008) based on a survey of Norwegian tourism entrepreneurs/ farmers, Fleischer & Tchetchik (2005) in a survey of Israeli farmers who provide tourism accommodation, and Burton and Wilson (2006) based mainly on an analysis of a survey of farmers in Bedfordshire, conclude that farmers are keen to maintain their 'agricultural' and 'production-oriented' identities despite undertaking many non-farming tourism-related activities. However, the maintenance of an 'agricultural' identity may be easier if diversification is restricted to more traditionally accepted farm-tourism provision such as B&B accommodation (Oppermann, 1996; Fleischer & Pizam, 1997) which tends also to reflect a more traditional gendered division of labour (Caballé, 1999), Indeed, many studies to date, unlike the present study, have focused solely on tourism accommodation provision as a key method of farm pluriactivity, or portfolio entrepreneurialism (e.g. Clarke, 1999; Sharpley, 2002), rather than more diversified farm attractions. However, being keen to maintain and project a particular agricultural or farming identity may not always be so easy for farmers setting up visitor attractions on their farms given the economic and other pressures involved in diversification. This dilemma inevitably leads to difficult choices for farm families when a farm attraction enterprise is opened based upon a pre-existing farm. Thus, the focus of this article is upon diversification into farm attractions as farm families need to critically reflect upon their desire or otherwise to present themselves to the world as basically production-oriented farmers, though with tourism enterprises on their farms, or as farm-based consumer-oriented tourism entrepreneurs offering diverse tourism attractions.

On almost every economic measure, the UK farming industry is showing a continued long-term decline in its fortunes. According to the UK government Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), total income from farming per head has

fallen from £26,172 in 1973 to £13,349 in 2007 with baseline projections showing income of £11,100 by 2012 (in real terms at 2007 prices) and total income from farming has fallen from £8.2bn to £2.5bn over the same period. The total number employed by farming has fallen from 322,200 in 1984 to 182,100 in 2007, while the total labour force in farming (including farmers, partners and directors) has reduced from 698,200 to 526,200. Most worryingly for the future, the average age of farmers is increasing, with those under 35 years of age now comprising less than 3% of all farmers (from 7% in 1990) and those over 65 years of age representing nearly one third of all farmers (from 23% in 1990) (DEFRA, 2008a). These figures are a result of many factors such as change in land use with pressure for more housing in rural and semi-rural areas, increase in imports, growth in power of the principal supermarkets, reductions in subsidies through reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy, as well as food related scares such as Foot and Mouth Disease, BSE, salmonella and Blue Tongue. Such pressures have led to the point where 50% of UK farms now derive some income from a non-farming, diversified business, and in almost 30% of farms, the income from the diversified business exceeds that from the farm (Carter, 1998; DEFRA, 2008b). Amongst the available opportunities, tourism has been promoted by government-financed schemes as an alternative source of income (Walford, 2001). This support for tourism stems from evidence which shows that in 2007 there were 23.4 million day trips made by UK residents to the countryside, 87 million nights spent in the countryside, generating a spend of £3.7bn (UK Tourism Statistics, 2007). The Countryside Agency (2005) estimates the worth of rural tourism to be £14bn Gross Value Added, compared to farming's contribution of £5bn. Bowler et al. (1996) argue that the most common option for farm diversification into the tourism arena has been found to be accommodation provision. Busby and Rendle (2000) estimate farm accommodation to be worth £70m in England and Wales in 1995, while research for South West Tourism (2002) into farm diversification shows that of 36,400 farms in the region, 16% (5800) had diversified into some form of accommodation. However,

another 2,600 farms had diversified into other forms of tourism. More tellingly, more farm families had moved out of accommodation than had remained in this area of tourism provision, and of those still considering developing a tourism-related business along with their farm business, a greater number were considering areas other than accommodation than were looking to move into tourism accommodation.

Despite these impressive figures, extant research has tended either to focus narrowly on the economic value of diversification for UK farmers (DEFRA, 2002), their diversification through tourism accommodation rather than tourist attractions (e.g. Clarke, 1996; Walford, 2001), or adopt quantitative methodologies, such as the survey approach, to study farmers' attitudes to tourism, farming and diversification (e.g. Burton & Wilson, 2006; Sharpley & Vass, 2006). Such foci are not sufficient for an in-depth understanding of the effects and complexity of the change to the lives of farming family members and their continued relationship with farming in terms of diversification into tourism attractions. Indeed, such diversification may seem an obvious solution to the well-publicised impacts upon farm families of economic pressures, such as high levels of stress, depression and even suicide among UK farmers, particularly during the relatively recent crisis periods at the height of Foot and Mouth Disease, for instance (Lloyd, 2000; Peck, 2005).

The contribution of this study is to take an in-depth qualitative research approach to examine the pressures, choices and challenges faced by UK farm families who have developed tourist attractions on their farms, and how it affects farm family members' own sense of identity. The study thereby provides much-needed insights into the farm family standpoints and priorities in relation both to the farm and their tourism attraction enterprise, and perceptions of the different types of experiential authenticity in which they now engage and offer. This is done by unearthing their own experiences and tensions during this time of flux for their production-

based family farm, as not only a business but ultimately a way of life, and their tourism enterprise either perceived as an aid to farm survival or as a new, exciting, social and life-style consumer-based family business venture.

## **2. Experiential Authenticity and Farm-based Attractions**

Busby and Rendle (2000) emphasise the demand-led nature of farm tourism and the fact that the specific place of tourist consumption acts as an integral part of the overall tourism product and is essentially the primary 'pull' factor. Farm-based tourism is therefore inseparable from experiencing the farm setting and the context of rurality as a whole. In this way, tourism holds the potential to allow visitors to obtain the 'feel' of the rural environment and create their own understanding of the farming way of life. There is general consensus in the literature on farm-based tourism that tourists desire the rural setting and its associated imagery, although this is often related to romanticised ideas about nature and idyllic scenery (Busby & Rendle, 2000; Nilsson, 2002; Walford, 2001). Nevertheless, there is some debate over whether the farm tourism experience requires as part of this broader rural image an actual working farm with its traditional agricultural activities and the farmer present as a visible, if somewhat stereotypical, element (Fleischer and Tchetchik, 2005; Morris & Romeril, 1986). Pearce (1990) believes the appeal of rural tourism is derived from the ordinary and everyday happenings of a rural community. While, from their findings on farm-based and other rural accommodation enterprises in Israel, Fleischer and Tchetchik (2005) argue that the working farm, although important for farmers, is not a necessary attribute for tourists, but leave unasked the question of whether tourists need to know or at least imagine (Hughes, 1995) that a related 'authentic' farm does exist at least to some extent somewhere in the back region even if not in the front region of the tourism attraction stage (Goffman, 1959; MacCannell, 1973). However, South West Tourism (2002: 41) is of the opinion that, 'While visitors will

want some kind of farm experience with animals, they are looking for a sanitised version, reinforcing the rural idyll imagery'. Busby and Rendle (2000) also question the extent to which a working farm is necessary and consider various issues of authenticity. This also relates to tourism experiences of the workplace and debates about the concept of *staged authenticity* (Chhabra et al., 2003; Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1973; 1976) and to the *staged* quality of experiential encounters between farm hosts and guests (Morris & Gladstone, 2001: 244). This *staged* aspect of authenticity which is often incorporated into the experiential strategies of tourism businesses (Harkin, 1995) is a key aspect of the model of experiential authenticity developed in this paper. We explore how *staged authenticity* can often suit the needs of both the tourist as 'guest' and the 'hosts' of farm-based attractions or events (Bruner, 1991; MacCannell, 1976; Smith, 1989).

It is argued here that a useful lens for examining the views of farmers, with their desire to diversify through tourism enterprise, is the concept of authenticity (MacCannell, 1976). However, Steiner and Reisinger (2006) argue that authenticity is a muddled concept in which we can understand the term either as applying to the genuineness, or realness of artefacts, involving object authenticity, or instead as an ability to know oneself and to live in accord with oneself free from constraints, which Wang (1999) describes as 'existential authenticity', and Selwyn (1996) as 'hot' authenticity', or authenticity as feeling, rather than knowledge. Indeed, Steiner and Reisinger (2006), Reisinger and Steiner (2006), and earlier Bruner (1991), even suggest abandoning the concept of object authenticity altogether as it has proven to be impossible to agree on meanings, although Lau (2010) in contrast suggests conceptualising authenticity solely as object authenticity, thereby delinking the concept from tourist experiences. However, consistent with the views of Bruner, Reisinger, Steiner, Wang and Selwyn, this paper focuses on the more existential forms of authenticity rather than on object authenticity. Wang (1999) describes how existential authenticity relates to the activity, that



for tourists is the extent to which they are able to experience a product that allows them to be true to themselves. However, in the case of this study, the related concept of ‘experiential authenticity’ is used.

Experiential authenticity involves helping the individual or group to ‘define their sense of self, foster family or team dynamics’ (Hinch and Higham, 2004: 71), often implying a sense of creativity, imagining or creative understanding. This concept has been used in relation to music, dance and even sport tourism experiences involving groups as well as individuals (Daniel, 1996; Bigenho, 2002; Hinch & Higham, 2004). In this case, as well as referring to the tourist experiencing farm-based attractions, it also involves farm family members and the extent to which they are able to provide a tourism product that allows them to define their own sense of the family farm along with their tourist enterprises, and thereby to work and live in accordance with their own wills. This also involves their sense of multifaceted family practices, connections and identities (Morgan, 1996), and their experiences of farm family work-life. Morgan discusses the problems associated with the use of the term ‘family’, and in this paper we follow his strategy of using it to refer to sets of connections and practices ‘which may colour other practices which might overlap with them’ (1996: 11). Although this broad definition of the term ‘family’, and use of the idea of family practices and connections, allows scope for exploring different practices, connections and identities which may overlap with them, including those involving gendered practices and identities (Di Domenico, 2008; 2010), this paper focuses upon relationships between farm family business and tourism family business practices and identities in the self-defined farm family unit. In terms of our research participants’ definitions of their family identities, situations and contexts, there is also a clear awareness that people express themselves both verbally and through their behaviour ‘in order to indicate their preferred identity, and to act strategically in the service of their interests’

(Branscombe et al., 1999). This involves both 'impression management' (Goffman, 1959) and is a central component of 'self-categorization' theory (Turner et al., 1987).

Authenticity involving experience and emotion or feeling is a long-standing arena of concern in philosophy and ethics. Thus, Heidegger viewed such authenticity as inherently related to experiencing the natural world, the antithesis of technological modes of existence. Often bound up with the pressures of modernity, and increasing separation from nature and sanitized living, it also carries with it notions of the conscious self, distinctions between the self and the other, and the real and imagined (Garrety, 2008; Jackson, 2005; Liedtka, 2008). Concerns include sincerity as a central aspect of moral life (Trilling, 1974) and self-fulfilment and projection (Taylor, 1992). It has been an important theme in research on services as well as mass consumerism (Ritzer, 1995). Experiential authenticity is also a key issue of contention for tourism events and attractions, and particularly cultural and arts heritage, where the exploitation of an attraction, event, place, site or person for tourism purposes also necessitates reflection on the rearticulating created (Ferrara, 1998). Although there has been much interest in authenticity in terms of consumption (e.g. Cohen, 1979), there has been limited attention paid to the desire for experiential authenticity on the part of the producer of the experience, in this case the farm family members. Therefore, within the context of the research, the standpoint of farm family members as actors and producers of farm attractions becomes germane. This concept also provides a framework for exploring the extent to which the new tourism enterprise results in changes in defining experiences and relationships for farm family members in terms of their farm-based tourism attractions from those related to the traditional working family farm. It raises questions as to whether or not diversification may result in projections of the farm which reflect an underlying ambiguity on the part of farm family members in terms of their own identities. Is the diversified farm viewed by farm family members as the erosion of their identities and traditional way of life for the purpose of

survival? Or do they embrace it in an entrepreneurial spirit with a focus on success and providing a service?

The overlapping boundaries and complexity inherent in the farm attraction arguably pose interesting, and hitherto largely unexplored, questions in terms of experiential authenticity for farming families and their continued relationship with farming, agriculture, the countryside and their way of life (Tregear, 2005). Alternative methods of diversification provision, including alternative employment outside agriculture, allow distinct boundaries to be maintained between them and the farm. There is essentially little overlap needed between both domains, and familial roles can be organized according to the distinct needs of each. In the case of tourism attractions, however, there is a blurring of both areas as the farm becomes an attraction in itself. The farm attraction provides a window into the dynamic reality of the farm. It exposes the farmer's work and identity. However, the farm may also become significantly altered to accommodate the co-presence of tourists. This raises issues about the extent to which modifications are carried out and whether farming or tourism remains the dominant activity. When it is the latter, it is likely that the traditional nature of the working farm could be compromised if it no longer operates in such a capacity. The use of stylized farm artefacts for the sole purpose of simulation may provide a false representation that gives the appearance of the traditional farm but is really concerned with audience and effect. This may present a caricature of the farm, the end result of which may be far removed from the reality of a working farm.

Place, space and the aesthetic are key aspects of perceptions relating to the experiencing of authenticity in the outcomes, and challenges of change (Taylor, 1992). For the farmer as producer, a process of creative imagining takes place whereby the expectations of the visitor are anticipated and their own wants and ambitions are considered (Ricoeur, 1992). In

response to the view of 'authentic tourist or 'authentic product' put forward by Yeoman et al. (2007: 1128), Hall (2007) and King (2007) are clear that it is incorrect to think of tourists, or indeed products, as being 'authentic' or 'inauthentic', instead, all products and people can potentially be experienced as authentic and inauthentic. Hall (2007) describes how authenticity lies in the connections people are able to make through their experiences, rather than in feeling separation and distance from their true selves. Farm family members are inherently aware of their sense of place and continuously engage in a process of dynamic and omnipresent interaction with their surroundings due to the fact that the family farm is nearly always felt to be almost inseparable from the tourism business. The latter tends to stem from and be projected as an extension of the former. Ergo, tourism which is farm-based becomes to be perceived as inseparable from the farm setting, in its broadest sense, and the context of rurality as a whole.

For farming family members, the decision of whether to retain the working farm in its original state and the extent to which this would be adapted or *staged* for visitors would be a consideration based upon factors including their own lifestyle, income, business focus and attachment to place. Lane (1994: 105) describes how '...farmers are the guardians of the rural landscape'. DEFRA (2005) notes that 'it is useful to think of diversification as a transition rather than an end-state', but the question remains as to what the desired end-state is for the family farm and for its members. We cannot assume there is a consensus. Indeed, if farm family members are struggling to establish a new identity for their farm, then it is difficult to be clear about what is a true manifestation of their new identity (King, 2007). What we can be clearer about is whether a product matches or fits in with a previous incarnation of the farm. As such, farm attractions deemed inauthentic in comparison with the defined stereotypical identity of the traditional farm, may come to be seen as authentic in the way they fit with the

new projected identity of the farm as a base for rural tourism entrepreneurship, what Bruner (1991) describes as ‘emergent authenticity’.

The research presented herein explores the identities and self-projections of these farm family members as tourism attraction owners. Although farming and tourism may be interdependent, each has differing needs and emphases, which cause farm family members to reflect on their relationship with both. It is therefore concerned with exploring the ongoing relationship between the two industries once the choice to diversify into tourism has been made and the extent to which farm family members adapt themselves and their farms in terms of their perceptions of experiential authenticity. In so doing, we propose a conceptual model which unpacks the dominant farm family identities of those choosing to diversify by opening a farm attraction and the implications for projections of authenticity.

### **3. Methods**

Haugen and Vik (2008: 333) conclude that because of the complexity of the topic of farm-based tourism entrepreneurship, there is a need for ‘in-depth studies using interviews and observations’. Hence, the empirical research adopted for this paper employs a multiple embedded case study design. This was also considered to be the most appropriate method as the phenomenon under study was not easily distinguishable from the framing context (Eisenhardt, 1989). Individual farm-based attractions stem from similar pressures on farm family units to diversify. There were three key criteria determining the selection of cases. The first is that the farms need to be, or have been at some point in the recent past, a working farm. The second is that the research is limited to tourism attraction businesses run independently by a ‘farming family’ or by clearly identifiable family members, as opposed to a large-scale agribusiness corporation. The third is geographical location as the two regions of

Yorkshire and East Anglia were chosen as the areas within which cases would be selected. The empirical data collection was divided into two phases. The first involved a detailed analysis of 10 cases in the Yorkshire region whilst the latter involved 6 cases in East Anglia.

The nature of the sample was determined by the three selection criteria above. The rationale for research locations is based on a number of important characteristics pertaining to each geographical region, characteristics found widely around the world. Yorkshire was chosen as the first research context as it is a highly rural region, dependent on farming. Agriculture contributes £1.35bn to the regional economy (fifth largest regional industry) through 19,000 holdings, and directly supports 40,000 farmers in employment, despite being badly affected by foot and mouth disease (DEFRA, 2005). East Anglia is described as the 'bread basket of the UK' (NFU, 2004) and contributes £2.07bn to the regional economy (4<sup>th</sup> largest regional industry) and employs 53,000 on 20,000 farms (DEFRA, 2005), but has suffered from the decline in prices for agricultural products, so creating a greater incentive for diversification.

Using the three criteria outlined above for case selection, sample frames were derived from the online database directory hosted by the National Farm Attractions Network (an adjunct to the UK National Farmers Union). Contact was made with the farms identified as meeting the research criteria, and face-to-face in-depth interviews and on-site visits were consequently arranged. There was no attempt made to select a certain type of farm attraction. Interviews were conducted by both researchers together with all those family members with whom we were able to secure interviews. In each case multiple family members were interviewed all together to add to the reliability of the research. These included as many members of the 'immediate farm family' as possible, including those children involved in the farm and/or farm attraction. In all cases family members presented themselves as cohesive family units and supported each other's viewpoints and sentiments.

To ensure internal validity and cross case comparison between farms, an interview guide containing topic headings ensured that the same key areas were covered with all participants. The average length of interviews was two hours, and all interviews were recorded and later fully transcribed to facilitate the analysis process. This approach to qualitative data collection was deemed the most appropriate as it allowed for the appreciation of context, setting and the social realities of the interviewees. Both researchers were always present at all the interviews, and also both took observational notes whilst in the field. These were duly compared and incorporated into the primarily inductive research framework.

In line with established procedures for inductive, theory-building research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994), we worked recursively between the data arising from each case and the existing literature (Eisenhardt, 1989). The analysis involved an examination of the collated text oriented by the guiding research problem, the review of the extant literature and preliminary stages of data immersion by the researchers. This enabled a grouping of text segments across the data set in relation to identified patterns, and the sentiments expressed by farmers.

Raw textual data were analysed by the use of the MaxQDA qualitative analysis software package for the purposes of data management, coding and retrieval. This qualitative software analysis package was used to systematically evaluate and interpret the text-based interview transcripts. The data was analysed using the code or category system functionality. In addition, carrying out data management and interpretation in this way allowed for the original electronic transcripts to be readily available, which facilitated a constant appreciation of context even after coding and data reduction had been performed. Also, the analysis process enabled the authors to create, retrieve and compare both codes and data segments within and

across the collated interviews. This helped with theory building through the development and refinement of emergent concepts. Thus, MaxQDA was employed particularly for the dissection and comparison of data segments according to the creation and indexing of thematic codes relating to emergent issues. These included the codes; 'primary identity as farmer', 'primary identity as entrepreneur', 'tourism attraction integrated with farm' and 'tourism attraction more separate from farm'. All these data categories emerged from initial analyses, data familiarisation, embeddedness and immersion in the field. Importantly, the analysis employed allowed for a grounded understanding of the nature of the actors engaged in diversified farm-tourism businesses. A vital component of the research involved the use of the actors' own definitions and views as categories by which the data were coded and interpreted, ensuring that the findings are necessarily context-driven and reliable.

Subsequent refinement through conceptual interrogation of the data through the lens of experiential authenticity and the inductive recursive approach allowed for further layers of deeper theoretical extraction from the interviews and the development of a model of experiential authenticity and the farm-tourism attraction. This was informed by, but also moved beyond, the previous coding process to a higher interpretive level of theorisation, as discussed next. The findings presented in this paper also use selected excerpts from interview transcripts in order to support arguments. These are anonymous to ensure confidentiality.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### *4.1 Views on Choices and Dilemmas and the Experiential Authenticity of Farm-based*

#### *Tourism*



A precursor to discussing views about the choices and dilemmas involved in the experiential authenticity of farm tourism is to understand the degree of enthusiasm which farmers feel for diversification. From the present research, it is evident that economic pressure is the main reason that initially instigated recognition of the need to diversify among the farmers. This was the dominant motivation cited by all participants. They recounted feelings of anxiety and a sense of desperation which resulted in the decision to adopt a diversification strategy. This is exemplified by the following interview excerpts:

‘We had a big overdraft. The bank wouldn’t lend us any more money, so we had to do something different. In fact, one bank foreclosed on us ... ’

‘we are a dairy farm ... we dropped down to about 13p a litre at one point, and it needs to be about 18, 19 to break even, and it’s about 18 and a half now. So we’re only at break-even point at the moment and they keep trying to push a bit more to screw more out of the dairies ... ’

Other reasons were also cited in addition. These relate to issues of lifestyle choice and desire to inform others about their views on conservation and the characteristics and values of the countryside. Lifestyle was particularly important for those who worked on a farm and had been part of a ‘farm family’ for generations. Such a ‘way of life’ is viewed as an attachment to the land and rural life rather than denoting any ‘softer’ connotations, such as an easier pace of life, work alleviation or lack of business growth orientation/acumen (Tregear, 2005). These characteristics are excluded from their definitions of preferred lifestyle, which involves links to the land and notions of rurality, whether this takes the form of farming or other activities. For instance, the following excerpt illustrates the importance of maintaining farming

alongside the other activities in which they were involved, tourism and conservation, with overriding importance being attributed to family farming as a vocation and way of life:

‘... we combined our farming, the tourism and the conservation ... that’s why we’ve kept the farm going because the whole idea was to keep the farm going if we could, as a family farm ...’

Imparting to others a greater awareness and knowledge about their farming lifestyle, as well as of the wider countryside was expressed by participants in their roles as ‘educators’, ‘custodians’ or ‘wardens’. Indeed, this was a major theme raised inductively by the participants, and emerged as significant in terms of how they characterised the importance of what they do. This is exemplified in the following interview excerpts;

‘The first year we opened, this one little kid jumped off the bus and he’d never been in a field ... and I said “what do you mean you’ve never been in a field?” He was an eight year old and it was the only time he’d ever been out of Hull and he didn’t know what a field was ... they’ve no idea about animals. They have no idea the size of pigs. They’ve seen pictures of pigs, they know what a pig looks like, but when they go down and see the pigs, they stand back and stare. It’s sad, but it’s the way it is’

‘... I mean the majority of people that come here are all townspeople. They don’t really understand animals. They like to see them and they like to touch them, but there’s nothing nicer for a kiddie out of the town to touch them. We have some sheep and lambs and a calf and things like that. They love to just put their hands in and of course the calf licks their hand, and they love it ...’

‘... Most things in the countryside [involve] looking after the countryside. My dad used to say that we’re only custodians. We only look after this bit of land that we have, and somebody else is going to have it later on. So you look after it and hopefully try to leave it in a better state than when you took it over ...’

For those driven to diversify largely because of economic motivations, and who harbour the aim of maintaining their traditional farming activities, decisions to move into tourism are difficult to make and there was resentment of the need for change. It is argued that those families who identity themselves primarily as farmers as opposed to managers of tourism enterprises, were more likely to make comments which appeared somewhat resentful of the tourist presence and that farming had declined to such a point as to necessitate such a choice.

‘People don’t understand this is the part time job, we have got the full time job to do after they leave’.

‘It would be nice to live on a farm that was just a farm, probably, wouldn’t it, but needs must, I think’.

Such participants characterised themselves primarily as farmers rather than tourism business owners (Haugen and Vik, 2008; Burton and Wilson, 2006). There was a feeling of resentment among such farmers at having to pursue an alternative strategy characterised in some cases as ‘alien’ in order to increase financial revenue generated by the farm. This is an interesting extension of the findings by Haugen and Vik (2008) that traditional farmers are more satisfied with farming income than farm-based entrepreneurs. Taken together, this would suggest that

farmers are willing to recognise non-financial benefits from farming and so be satisfied with a lower level of income, but cannot find similar satisfaction from income derived from tourism.

Participants were often very vocal about how they viewed their farm attraction and felt a responsibility to allow tourists to enjoy what they regarded as an '*authentic*' farm experience. Some attractions were highly integrated into normal farming activities while others were kept separate from the farm, and often run by different members of the family, allowing less interaction between the tourist and the farm environment, reflecting MacCannell's (1976) 'front' and 'back' locations. Thus as an example of the latter, a farmer and son who had been in partnership as farmers divided the partnership up when they diversified with the father setting up and managing the tourism attraction business while the son kept going with the farm. The following interview excerpts are from those embracing the former approach whereby there was a desire to integrate everyday farm activities into experiencing the attraction in order to provide what they deemed to be an '*authentic experience*'. These illustrate the still dominant identity of these owners as farm families:

'... we are still a working farm, and hopefully that's what keeps attracting them'.

'We've tried to keep ours as much a farm. It's not a farm park, it's not a museum ... it's a working farm. But we are now being pushed into the play areas and the pedal trucks'.

The projected definition of the business was found not to be dependant upon the level of income generated by a particular activity, be it tourism or farming, or the time devoted to that

endeavour, or even recognition of the future direction of the countryside. Instead, it was found to depend upon those highly emotive and intangible elements associated with running a farm, and a resentment of what were seen to be the lower status and less important pursuits involved in a tourism enterprise. Tourism as an industry was afforded less legitimacy by the farmers, particularly those who had only recently sought a diversification strategy. It was perceived as having an indirect purpose in the countryside when compared to what were regarded as more directly relevant agricultural activities. Tourism enterprise was regarded by some as a means to an end and therefore more transient in nature in terms of its inherent value to the countryside. This view is reflected in the following interview excerpts which demonstrate the reluctance of some participants about their move into tourism, a strategy that would involve a fundamental and highly personal renegotiation of their definition of self (Burton, 2004) and how they characterise and project their role;

‘I’m a farmer, a simple farmer, you can imagine, and we were a small farm, only 50 hectares, and it was fairly obvious we had to do something, so we decided to open to the public and we did our homework as best we could’.

‘I should maybe have said, look, I’m not a farmer anymore. I’m going to be an attraction land. You see ... Flamingo Land started as a farm and when they started, it was a pig house and a chicken house, and now of course it’s come along. We had never any intention of going down that way ...’

Some older family members recounted feelings of nostalgia for the days when they were purely a working farm and did not operate as a farm attraction for the public. Some preferred working on traditional farming chores rather than dealing with visitors who might interfere

with or restrict agricultural activity. Reasons for this included legal concerns and health and safety, as well as the view that more rigid separation would be operationally superior in terms of efficiency. However, the boundaries between the working farm and the farm attraction are essentially difficult to demarcate due to their physical interdependence (Busby & Rendle, 2000). Despite this, there was a view expressed for physical boundaries to be preserved in order to maintain a distinction between 'front' and 'back' locations. This is demonstrated by the following description which shows boundaries set up between both functions. Whilst this may not always involve a physical separation due to practical restrictions, the coping mechanisms adopted to separate the two domains involved strategies such as creating greater temporal distance in order to restrict overlapping boundaries;

'They fit in fairly well because we're milking at seven in the morning and we go through all the feeding and milking by ... half past nine and then we're ready for opening at half past ten. We don't milk until half past five, and we shut at five, so the two fit together fairly well'.

There were frequent examples of farm families who sought to project a farming identity but who relied on the income from tourism, and so said that they were forced to co-locate farming and tourism on the same site. Consequently they said that they often struggled with accommodating the two industries together. The following excerpts illustrate the perceived clash in attempting to combine both domains, with some farming activities being seen as undesirable from a tourism perspective. Similarly, the need to tend to tourists was often viewed as impeding 'proper farming' activity;

‘Steve built an ice-cream parlour ... he’s the best cowman in the county – he’s superb. But he built an ice-cream parlour in the middle of the farmyard. The silo smells, there’s muck-spreading smells. Who’d want it? I’m sorry but who’d want it?’

‘You can’t farm and have an open farm ... No way, not proper farming’.

‘To be frank with you, tourism and the farming side don’t mix. You cannot be working at something on a farm and take a few minutes out to deal with the public. Your focus when you’re dealing with the public has got to be public, not farming’.

Hence, as an alternative to a more explicit ‘switch’, these individuals are more likely to attempt to ‘modify’ temporarily their farming activities through the diversification route in order to accommodate both farming and tourism activities together. This is exemplified by the following excerpt;

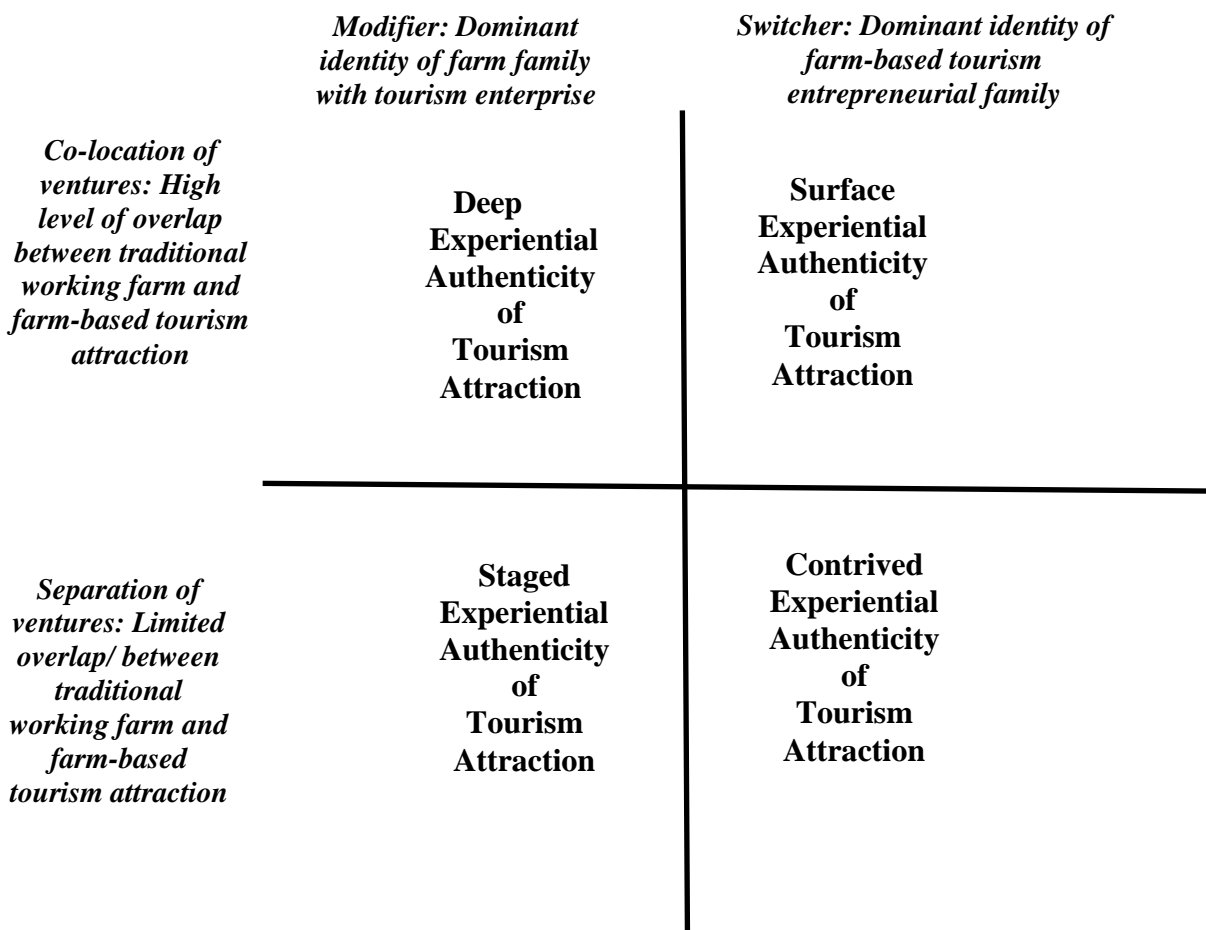
‘Our main income now is from the diversification, but the farm side is so important because that’s what attracts them here ... the farm, the conservation, the tourism, it’s a triangle that works quite well together’.

‘A lot of them now, it’s either a tourism business or it’s a farming business, and we don’t want to do that if we can’.

4.2 A Model of Experiential Authenticity: Family Identities and Farm-Tourism Attractions

The dilemma for farm family members seeking to retain and project a desired identity, whether based on farming or tourism entrepreneurship, is to combine both farming and tourism and to manage any inherent conflict between the two industries. Figure 1 presents a model of experiential authenticity for farm family members in terms of their definitions of their family farms and tourism enterprises and their own identities.

**Figure 1: Experiential Authenticity and the Farm-based Tourism Attraction**





The label of 'modifier' is apportioned by the authors to those farm families describing the need to diversify but essentially wishing to remain in farming as their primary self-categorization (Turner et al., 1987). Modifiers recognise the need to diversify their business model temporarily, but define themselves strongly as farmers. The long-term aspiration for modifiers is to have the financial means to return exclusively to farming, ideally through changes that allow farming to become economically viable. Such individuals use their new businesses in order to support, and to try to maintain, their traditional farming activities. They are often labelled as 'pluriactive farmers' (Burton, 2004; Carter, 1998; Lobley & Potter, 2004). Modification to the farm may take the form of a separation of the tourism and farming activities and so the experiential authenticity (for the farmers at least) of the farm can be retained while the tourism attraction is there because they seek to earn the income necessary to support the farm. Here distinction can be drawn between the way the adaptations to the farm leave the farmer feeling in terms of experiencing the farm and the attractions, and the way in which these adaptations may change the way in which the tourists experience the farm and attractions. Yet, modifiers may successfully balance the need to experience, and project themselves, as farmers whilst earning enough money in order to subsidise the farming side of the business. However, some farms face a range of barriers (physical, planning, human skills), meaning it is not always possible to separate farming from tourism, so the dilemma for the farm family is whether to have a successful business by adapting the farm to meet the needs of the tourists, or to maintain a farm which provides the farm family with a *deep* sense of experiential authenticity, but which may not allow for the safe entertainment of visitors, and so, a profitable business.

This determination to continue farming and to be defined primarily as a farm family created strategic challenges. Investment decisions were skewed against tourism as this was hoped to be a short term diversification, while larger investments were made into farm machinery not warranted by the likely relative returns. Even in terms of attention and interest, some farm family members interviewed appeared to lack focus and found it difficult to operate their multiple diverse activities, unable to exploit opportunities successfully to meet business goals:

‘I’ve got to identify bad spots in my business. We’ve had our heads down, particularly me; perhaps so much that we haven’t seen the whole of the picture’.

‘... maybe I should cut out a couple of branches, but I don’t know which branch to cut out’.

The second is the entrepreneurial ‘switcher’ type, for whom the long-term goal is to be separate from farming altogether. Having faced economic pressure to diversify, switchers now positively embrace this new direction and define themselves as tourism business entrepreneurs. This group is consistent with the research by Busby and Rendle (2000) who conclude that many farm-based entrepreneurs tend to quit farming when the tourism activity grows as they find it difficult to manage the two businesses. The physical resources of the farm may mean that it is impossible to co-locate tourism and farming effectively and so a decision has been made to move away from farming to the extent that all that remains is what is necessary for the purposes of the tourism attraction. For switchers, having suggestions of farming co-located with the tourism attraction may be the ideal situation and allows farm families to project a *surface authenticity* (see Figure 1), which may or may not be accepted by the visitors. Where these representations of farming are seen as important for the visitor, but

cannot be co-located with tourism, so the farmer must create a *contrived authenticity* sufficient to convince visitors that the attraction deserves to be labelled as farm-based. Some became completely freed from the constraints of self-definition as being primarily a ‘traditional’ farming family on a working farm, but rather a tourism entrepreneurial family. Indeed, there were several examples encountered of switchers who were extremely successful economically and managed purpose-built, growth-oriented farm-based tourism attractions.

‘On any one given day you’ve got about 35 to 40 people working here in the café and the shops ... We’re going to put a two-storey building up for the small animals; we’re going to knock down the old small animal building and put a two-storey building there and a single storey. We’re going to do more people shelters, school groups having their dinner and things like that’.

‘The farm is more or less steady at 200,000 and 220,000 visitors, but then there are lots of under-threes and we’ve done a new playground, which has been very, very popular. The café gets its regulars ... The toyshop is fairly new, but again, kids who go round the farm, they always like to buy a little something. There are train sets and lots of cameras, everything with our name on’.

For the farm families concerned primarily with running a profitable farm-based tourism attraction, the need to show the farm as a traditional working farm was seen to be of secondary importance, while for those concerned with still being farmers, this type of experiential authenticity can be seen often as an impediment to the ability to run a profitable business. There was a recognition among these families that the ideal business model from the perspective of operational efficiency and profitability was either to abandon farming

production altogether or ensure a rigid separation of farming and tourism activities. The latter division was seen possibly to result in creating only a sanitised veneer of farming within the realms of the attraction for the purposes of tourism consumption. As a result, this could constitute a type of *staged experiential authenticity* (see Figure 1) whereby scenes and activities are *staged* for tourists, such as milking cows or feeding livestock, and the experience is projected as a real reflection of genuine activities taking place on a farm, albeit on a different scale or modified to facilitate their viewing/interaction. Such overt and explicit staging was orchestrated by ‘modifiers’ who restricted the overlap between the traditional working farm and the farm attraction. At the extreme, particularly in cases where purpose-built attractions are implemented as part of a growth-oriented business diversification strategy where the farm bends to the wishes of the tourists, there is the possibility that the farm disappears completely, or becomes entirely separate. This leaner portfolio of activity could result in the projection of *contrived authenticity* (see Figure 1) which involves the staging of scenes by the owners as ‘switchers’ whose dominant definition of themselves was that of entrepreneurs/ enterprise owners rather than farmers, and where there is a distinct separation between the original working farm and the farm attraction. An example of this was when the researchers visited a farm attraction which had diversified to such an extent that the remaining animals were used purely to serve the interests of the tourists rather than being valued for themselves. Foot and mouth disease (FMD) had also played a strong role in influencing the design and layout of the proximity of tourists relative to the animals, as well as the numbers of animals kept by many attractions. Yet the farmers pointed out that FMD had only speeded up a trend that was happening as a result of increased costs from vets and health and safety and insurance. As an example, at one farm a strict path had been devised to orient people around the attraction and, to replace former farm buildings, permanent structures had been built, such as the one which housed a large all-weather cafeteria, retail shop and garden centre. One of the highlights of the attraction, that was purported to be highly popular with

children, comprised a life-sized fibreglass replica cow possessing replica rubber teats filled with baby milk to allow for children to practice 'milking' the cow. This too was housed in a small all-weather building, ideal for tourists.

## 5. Conclusion

This article explores the case of farm attractions and the views of farming family members in terms of the choices and dilemmas they face while attempting diversification through a tourism entrepreneurial route. It also considers how this affects their attitudes towards more traditional farming activities. The findings, relating to the intersection of experiential authenticity with the farm family identity, has been modelled and takes into account how farmers view their transition to a diversified business and the subsequent pressure to project a *staged* or even *contrived* product in order to be financially successful.

Hall (2007: 1140) argues that "The issue of authenticity in tourism ... has a significant moral dimension, but replication is not intrinsically immoral unless there is a deception". Such an approach takes a deontological perspective to establishing what is moral and immoral. Hence, many of the 'switchers' saw their role as stewards of the countryside and hence striving to achieve a higher goal than farming, which had previously been the industry through which the countryside was protected. This more utilitarian perspective would suggest that even with a degree of deception of the tourist, it may be possible to argue that this was not only for the greater good but also, despite being *contrived experiential authenticity*, also for the tourist's enjoyment of the experience, and so not immoral. Here, Taylor's (2001) contribution is helpful in describing 'sincerity' in the way products are provided, reflecting the intention to provide an experiential authentic experience, but at the same time protect important 'back-stage' locations from intrusion. In this way, the utilitarian approach to considering

experiential authenticity allows us to escape from a pejorative description of 'inauthentic experience'. Hence, while the model presented uses the words 'deep', 'surface', 'staged' and 'contrived', it does so without values attached to those words, and supports the notion that farmers are able to offer a product designed for tourists, which could become an experientially authentic projection of the farm family's new identity, although still based on an identity of traditional family farming. Steiner and Reisinger (2007: 311) remind us, "It is important in talking about authenticity to remember that it is always about free choices, not about maintaining traditions or being true to some past concept of individual, social or cultural identity". Claiming this freedom to define our own identity is the ultimate expression of experiential authenticity.

By using the self-categorizations (Turner et al., 1987), definitions of their situations (Goffman, 1959) and frames of reference of farming family members, the research has allowed for the development of a more coherent picture of the nature of farm tourism to be refined in order to deepen our understanding of this business segment from the perspective of the farm family. What this shows is that a more sophisticated understanding is required of farmers' attitudes to farm attractions and how this affects their perception of family farming as a way of life, and farm-based tourism enterprise diversification. As such, the complexity and ambiguity experienced by some farm family members who feel the need to diversify through such a tourism route due to economic pressures and the recent difficulties befalling agriculture is evident. Some feel that they have succumbed to pressures to take this diversification strategy, but are ill at ease with the new venture (Lansing & De Vries, 2006). This can lead in extreme cases to farm families describing experiences verging on a state of *anomie* (Orru, 1983), reflected by those who reported feelings of unhappiness, resentment or even depression in relation to the diversification route chosen. Perhaps this reflects a resistance strategy, an articulation and visible expression of how the current economic and

agricultural system is eroding what some perceive in hindsight to be a more 'golden' halcyon age in the past. At the other extreme, in contrast, some have embraced with enthusiasm an entrepreneurial future for the family farm in the tourism attraction business.

Experiential authenticity has been defined as trueness to oneself (Trilling, 1974). Modifiers as farming families who stage scenes for tourists are not always enacting this truth for themselves as they are often wedded to their dominant family identity as farmers and regard tourism as an unwelcome intrusion, the arrival of which threatens to cannibalise the farm. They can fear being part of this process. These 'modifiers' arguably tread the most difficult path in reconciling and managing their relationship with farming and tourism enterprise. Mechanisms that may be used to deal with this tension are *staged* projections of the farm in an attempt to protect and separate the domains of farm and tourism attraction. However, this can cause increased tensions to become manifest as the attempt is one of separating something that is inherently overlapping in nature. The *raison d'être* of the farm-based tourist attraction is its articulation with a farm, whether or not the latter continues to exist. On the other hand, 'switchers' hold a dominant entrepreneurial family identity and relish in new business ventures. The results are either *surface* or *contrived* articulations of experiential authenticity depending upon the degree of overlap permitted, or desired, between agricultural production and the farm-based attraction.

The research outlined in this paper provides for greater understanding of both the perceived potential as well as the risks of farm-based tourism attractions as a diversification strategy by farm families. It probes the viewpoints and aspirations of the farm family members in order to unearth their articulations and frames of reference. Further research is necessary in the specific area of farm-based tourism attractions, and agricultural diversification more broadly.

The implications of the research relate to both the commonality and difference of views

among farm families seeking to diversify. All participants embrace the 'farm tourism attractions' label and collectively identify their diversified businesses as such. Yet, it was also found that a number of attractions using the label of 'farm tourism attraction' had very tenuous links with traditional forms of farming, as diversification had sometimes been achieved by switching away from farming to such an extent that the 'farm' was retained as a projective theme underpinning the attraction rather than as an actual working farm. These epitomise the *contrived* projections of experiential authenticity and the consequent creative leap of understanding required by both entrepreneurs and tourists.

The crux of our theorising is that in order to be true to ourselves in terms of experiential authenticity, one must reconcile our own sense of our true state of being with our social roles and ways of life. In a similar vein to Taylor's (1992) theorising, experiential authenticity is only a concern and source of tension for farming family members if their projections of the farm attraction do not fit into their preferred, dominant family identity, whereby they have proceeded with reluctance to embark upon this mode of diversification into the tourism attraction business.

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