Farming and Tourism Enterprise:

Authenticity in the Diversification of Independent Small-Scale Farming

ABSTRACT: This article examines the business choices made by independent family farmers, when confronting the need to diversify away from traditional agricultural activities by starting farm-based tourism businesses. Based on interviews with farmers and drawing upon the concept of authenticity, the article explores the farmer’s conceptions of self and identity. In so doing, it addresses the dilemmas facing farm families who attempt diversification through this tourism entrepreneurial 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 ethical choices and challenges which face the farmer through the conceptual lens of authenticity.

KEY WORDS: authenticity, diversification, entrepreneurship, ethics, family farm, tourism enterprise.
This paper outlines the findings from an empirical investigation into the challenges faced by independent farming families in the Yorkshire and East Anglia regions of the United Kingdom as a consequence of diversification into tourism attractions. Using the conceptual lens of authenticity, the paper’s focus is on tourism businesses run independently by farming families as opposed to large-scale corporate modernised farms. It is concerned with the actions and interactions of individual farming families in relation to the businesses they own and manage. Farmers’ views and priorities are explored through their personal depictions of their businesses, and the extent to which they choose to adapt themselves and their farms, and the consequent projection of authenticity, or instead to offer a staged, contrived or even vacuous alternative.

The context of this research is UK farming. On almost every measure, this industry is showing a continued decline in its fortunes. According to the UK government Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (Defra, 2008a), 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). 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 the income from the farm (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.

Despite these impressive figures, extant research has tended to focus narrowly on the economic value of diversification for farmers (Defra, 2002). Such a focus is not sufficient to understand the effects and complexity of the change to the farming family and their continued relationship with farming. Indeed, diversification may seem an obvious solution to the well publicised impacts upon farmers of recent economic pressures such as high levels of stress, depression and even suicide, particularly during the recent crisis periods at the height of Foot and Mouth Disease for instance (Lloyd, 2000; Peck, 2005). However, diversification raises important challenges to the individuals, their identity and the dilemmas faced in terms of their ties with farming. This is even more so the case in terms of the focus of this article upon diversification into farm attractions as farmers need to critically reflect upon their desire or otherwise to project an authentic working
farm. The economic pressure for diversification will inevitably lead to difficult ethical choices for farmers when a farm attraction enterprise is opened based upon a pre-existing farm. The contribution of this study is to examine these pressures and challenges, thereby providing much-needed insights into the standpoints of the farmers themselves, by unearthing their experiences and tensions during this process of flux for the business and ultimately their way of life.

AUTHENTICITY

It is argued that a useful lens for examining the views of these farmers and their desire or otherwise to diversify through tourism enterprise, is the concept of authenticity (MacCannell, 1976; Taylor, 1992). This concept provides a framework for exploring the extent to which the new tourism enterprise results in a commodification, or even dissolution, of the traditional working family farm. It raises questions as to whether diversification may result in inauthentic projections of the farm, which reflect an underlying unease or ambiguity on the part of the farming family. Is the diversified farm viewed by farmers as the erosion of their traditional way of life for the purpose of survival, or do they embrace it in an entrepreneurial spirit with a focus on success?

Authenticity is a long-standing arena of concern in philosophy and ethics. For instance, Heidegger viewed authenticity as inherently related to 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 and mass consumerism (Ritzer, 1995). Authenticity is also a key issue of contention for tourism attractions, and particularly cultural heritage, where the exploitation of a place, site or person for tourism purposes necessitates reflection on the rearticulating created (Ferrara, 1998). Although there has been interest in authenticity in terms of consumption (e.g. Cohen, 1979), there is limited attention paid to the desire to project authenticity or otherwise by the producer of the experience, in this case the family farm. Therefore, within the context of the research, the standpoint of the farmers and their families as actors and producers of farm attraction products becomes germane.

Various studies have examined diversification through tourism (see for example Clarke, 1996; Fleischer & Tchetchik, 2004; Getz & Carlsen, 2000; Ilbery, et al. 1998; Nilsson, 2002; Walford, 2001), although none have considered farm attractions. This study addresses this shortcoming. However, the overlapping boundaries and complexity inherent in the farm attraction arguably pose interesting, and hitherto largely unexplored, questions in terms of 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 the farm and the new enterprise. There is essentially little overlap 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 everyday reality of the farm. It exposes the farmer’s work, family and identity. However, the farm may 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
authentic 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 authenticity but is really concerned with audience and
effect. Such staging may present a caricature of the farm, the end result of which may be
counterproductive and far removed from the reality of a working farm.

Place, space and the aesthetic are key aspects of perceptions of relative authentic or inauthentic
experiences as outcomes, and challenges, of change (Taylor, 1994). For the farming family 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). Furthermore,
farmers and their families 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 almost inseparable from the tourism business. The latter stems from and is
projected as an extension of the former. Ergo, all tourism which is farm-based is inseparable from
the farm setting, in its broadest sense, and the context of rurality as a whole.

The farmer may be engaged in a debate over whether the farm tourism offered requires as part of
a broader rural image an actual working farm with its traditional agricultural activities and farmer
and other individuals present as visible, if somewhat stereotypical elements (Fleischer &
Tchetchik, 2004). For the farming family, 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) note 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 for the individual farmer
might be. Burton (2004) suggests that farmers may resist changing to the new industry because of
the risk to self-identity. The farming family must negotiate the delicate balance between the
domain of the working farm as an agricultural production unit and the domain of the tourist
attraction.

The research presented herein explores the identities and self-projections of these farm attraction
owners. Although farming and tourism may be interdependent, each has differing needs and
emphases, which cause farmer and family 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 farming families adapt themselves
and their farms in terms of authenticity or otherwise. In so doing, we propose a conceptual model
which unpacks the dominant self-identities of those choosing to diversify by opening a farm
attraction and the implications for projections of authenticity.
METHODS

The empirical research adopted a multiple embedded case study design. This was 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 families to diversify. There were three key criteria determining the selection of cases; 1) The farms needed to be, or have been, working farms. 2) The research was limited to tourism businesses run independently by a ‘farming family’, as opposed to a large-scale agribusiness corporation. 3) The two regions of Yorkshire and East Anglia were chosen as the geographical areas within which cases would be selected. The empirical data collection was divided into two phases. The first involved a detailed analysis of ten cases in the Yorkshire region, and the second six cases in East Anglia.

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. In each case multiple family members were interviewed to add to the reliability of the research. These included farmer, spouse, and as many other members of the immediate family as possible, such as children involved in the farm and/or farm attraction. In all cases families 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 data collection is the most appropriate as it allowed for the appreciation of context and the social realities of the individual actor. Both researchers also 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. The analysis employed allowed for a grounded understanding of the nature of the individual actors engaged in farm diversified 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. The findings presented in this paper use selected excerpts from interview transcripts in order to support arguments. These are anonymous to ensure confidentiality.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Farming and Tourism Relationship: (In)authentic Interactions

A precursor to discussing the dilemma of authenticity in farm tourism, is understanding the degree of enthusiasm which farmers felt for diversification. From the research carried out, it is evident that economic pressure is the main reason that initially instigated the recognition of the need to diversify among the farmers. This was the dominant motivation cited by all participants. Participants 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. 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/acyemen (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 other activities of tourism and conservation, with overriding importance being attributed to the family and 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 in 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 ‘custodians’ or ‘wardens’. Indeed, this was a 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’

‘… 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 by 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 it is the self-identity of those farmers who saw themselves primarily as farmers as opposed to managers of tourism enterprises, that led to comments which appeared both disdainful of the tourism industry and resentful that farming had declined to such a point as to necessitate such an ignominious choice. Many participants characterised themselves primarily as farmers rather than tourism business owners. There was a feeling of resentment at having to pursue an alternative strategy characterised in some cases as ‘alien’ in order to increase financial revenue generated by the farm.

Participants were often very vocal about how they viewed their farm attraction and felt a responsibility to present 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 allowing less interaction between the tourist and the farm environment (Nilsson, 2002). The following interview excerpts are from those embracing the former approach whereby there was a desire to integrate everyday farm activities into the experience of the attraction in order to provide what they deemed to be an authentic experience. These illustrate the still dominant self-identity of some of the owners as farmers:

‘…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’.

Therefore, the self-identity of the participants 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 being a farmer, and a resentment of what were seen to be the lower status and less inherently altruistic 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 or value in the countryside when compared to more directly defined 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 by some participants to move into tourism, a strategy that would involve a fundamental and highly personal renegotiation of their sense of self (Burton, 2004) and how they define, 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…'

'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'.

Some 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 also a psychological need for physical boundaries to be preserved in order to maintain a distinction between ‘front’ and ‘back’ locations. This is demonstrated by the following view 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
Many examples were found of farmers who sought to project a farming identity but who relied on the income from tourism, were forced to co-locate farming and tourism on the same site, and who consequently struggled to accommodate the two industries together. The following excerpts illustrate the perceived clash to be inherent in any attempt to combine both domains, with farming activities being seen as undesirable from a tourism perspective. Similarly, the need to tend to tourists was 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’.

*Farming and Self-identity: A Model of Authenticity and the Farm Attraction*
The dilemma for the farmer seeking to retain and project the identity of an ‘authentic farmer’ is to combine both farming and tourism and to manage any inherent conflict between the two industries. Figure 1 presents a model for farmers of this dilemma towards their diversified businesses and the consequent authenticity projected.

The label of ‘modifier’ is apportioned by the authors to those farmers describing the need to diversify but essentially wishing to remain in farming. Modifiers recognise the need to diversify their business model temporarily, but identify 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 and Potter, 2004). Modification to the farm may take the form of a separation of the tourism and farming activities and so the authenticity of the farm can be retained while the tourism attraction seeks to earn the income necessary to support the farm. Modifiers may then successfully balance the need to project themselves as farmers and earn 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 possible to separate farming and tourism, so the authenticity of the farm needs to be staged in order to allow for the farmer to project a self-identity as a farmer, but at the same time ensuring the safe entertainment of visitors.

This determination to continue farming, and to be seen as a farmer 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 farmers interviewed appeared to lack focus and found it difficult to operate their multiple diverse activities, unable to exploit opportunities successfully to meet their 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 type of entrepreneur is the ‘switcher’, 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. 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 attraction. For switchers, having suggestions of farming co-located with the tourism attraction may be the ideal situation and allows farmers to project a vacuous 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 a farm. What is different between the modifiers and switchers is that for switchers none of the need for any degree of authenticity comes from the farmers, but is only derived from what the visitors expect.

Freed from the constraints of trying to maintain an authentic working farm, there were several examples encountered of switchers who have been extremely economically successful and manage 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’.

‘I mean in three years we had one butcher and now we’ve got about six. So, that has shot up. 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 owner concerned primarily with running a profitable rural attraction, the need for authenticity was seen to be of secondary importance, while for the owner concerned with still being a farmer, the desired projection of authenticity can be seen as an impediment to the ability to run a profitable business. There was a general recognition 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 pretence or 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 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. This leaner portfolio of activity is unproblematic from an
operational perspective but has dramatic implications from an authenticity perspective. It could result in the projection of contrived authenticity (see Figure 1) which involves the staging of scenes by the owners as ‘switchers’ whose dominant self-identity is that of entrepreneur/enterprise owner rather than farmer, and where there is a distinct separation between the original working farm and the farm attraction. An example of this was when the authors 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 permanent structures had been built to replace former farm buildings, 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.

CONCLUSION

This article explores the case of farm attractions and the views of members of the farming families in terms of the 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 authenticity with the self-identity of the farmers has been modelled and takes into account the discomfort farmers feel in their transition to a diversified business and the subsequent pressure to project an inauthentic product in order to be financially successful.

By using the self-definitions and frames of reference of members of the farming family, 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 farmer. What this shows is that a more sophisticated understanding is required of farmers’ attitudes to farm attractions and how this affects their perception of self, family farming as a way of life, and tourism diversification. As such, the complexity and ambiguity experienced by some farmers 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 to staged authenticity and even a state of anomie (Orru, 1983). This is reflected by those who reported feelings of unhappiness, resentment or even depression in relation to the diversification route chosen. Perhaps this staging reflects a resistance strategy by the farmers, an articulation and visible expression of how the current economic and agricultural system is eroding a pre-existing authenticity once enjoyed during some halcyon age.
Authenticity is usually defined as trueness to oneself (Trilling, 1972). Modifiers who stage scenes are not enacting this truth as they are wedded to their dominant identity as farmers and regard tourism as an unwelcome intrusion, the arrival of which threatens to cannibalise the farm. They 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 attraction. However, this is likely to 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 attraction is its articulation with a farm, whether or not the latter continues to exist. On the other hand, the ‘switcher’ holds the dominant self-identity of an entrepreneur and relishes in the new business venture. The results are either vacuous or contrived articulations of authenticity depending upon the degree of overlap permitted between agricultural production and the farm attraction.

The research outlined in this paper provides for greater understanding of both the perceived potential and the risks of farm-based tourism attractions as a diversification strategy by farmers. It probes the viewpoints and aspirations of the farmer 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 farmers seeking to diversify. In terms of the differences, all participants embrace the label of ‘farm tourism attractions’ 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 farmers had diversified 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 authentic working farm. These epitomise the contrived projections of authenticity implicit in our arguments.

The crux of our theorising is that to achieve an ‘authentic’ state of being, one must reconcile our sense of self with our social roles and way of life. This implies a relational state between two entities and a narrowing of the gap between the manifestation and essence of these entities. In a similar vein to Taylor’s (1992) theorising, authenticity is only a concern and source of tension for farming families if their projections of the farm attraction do not fit their preferred, dominant self-identity whereby they have reluctantly embarked upon this mode of diversification.
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Modifier: Dominant self-identity as farmer

Figure 1: Authenticity and the Farm Attraction

Staged authenticity

Authentic

Contrived authenticity

Vacuous authenticity

Switcher: Dominant self-identity as entrepreneur/enterprise owner

High level of overlap between traditional working farm and farm attraction

Limited overlap between traditional working farm and farm attraction