



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Assessing Gender-Wise Preferences Towards Agri-Tourism in Tamil Nadu

Sarath S^{1*}, Sivakumar S D² and VenkatesaPalanichamy N¹

¹ Department of Agricultural and Rural Management, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore- 641 003

² Directorate of Agri-Business Development, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore- 641 003

ABSTRACT

Gender is one of the important socio-demographic variables affecting tourist behaviour and preferences. The prime objective of this study was to identify the attractive features in agricultural landscapes and to know about gender preferences in agri-tourism. Data were collected in farm resorts located in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Forty customers were randomly selected as respondents in ten resorts with total arrival of 400 respondents. Results showed that customers liked primarily natural features than agricultural and cultural features. Native plants and flowers, historical elements, a variety of specialty crops, water resources, wetlands, and intensive crop farms were the most preferred features by customers. Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) showed significant differences between males and females. Mean scores for significant variables showed that females preferred native plants and flowers, grassland and pastures, intensive crop farms, and petting animals more than males.

Received :11th March, 2022

Revised :23rd March, 2022

Revised:11th April, 2022

Accepted :20th April, 2022

Keywords: Gender; Customer Preference; Agri-tourism; Landscape

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a process composed of gendered societies, and every segment of tourism-related development and activity has gender. Even though it's thought that men's and women's travel habits are not as different as they used to be, there are still many gender differences in travel and tourism (Pettersson, 2014). According to recent studies, women are more likely than males to be the principal holiday planners and 'gatekeepers' of household tourism decisions among western couples and families (Pritchard and Morgan, 2017). Even though males still dominated the corporate travel industry, women were taking as many and even more vacations as men, on average. As a result, it is critical for the development and promotion of tourist destinations to have a gendered perspective on the interests and activities of prospective customers. However, there has only been a small amount of study done to address the views of gender. Pritchard (2018) has also emphasized the need to include a gender perspective in tourism studies and commit to the systematic study of women and tourism.

Many studies have examined the differences between men and women in travel choices, but only a few have examined agri-tourism preferences. Research focusing on agri-tourism from a gender viewpoint is rarer in the literature. As a relatively new phenomenon, agri-tourism has gained increased attention from destination marketers and planners in Western nations during the last decade (Pritchard, 2018). However, still, it is a nascent stage in developing countries like India. Sustainable development will become an increasingly important problem for natural and farm-based destinations as demand for travel to flawless regions and tourist experiences in natural settings grows. In order to better understand customers, we need to look at agri-tourism from a gender perspective.

Therefore, this study is an attempt to assess customer gendered preferences in terms of the selected three different landscape features such as natural, agricultural and cultural features in agri-tourism



MATERIALS AND METHODS

To examine gender-wise customer preferences in agri-tourism, three distinct features like natural, agricultural and cultural features were selected. Variables were selected from past studies Gao *et al.*, (2014); Kasliwalet *al.*, (2015); Gralaet *al.*, (2010), Tyndall and Colletti, (2007) and Rogge *et al.*, (2007). Coimbatore district in Tamil Nadu was selected as the study area due to the presence of more farm resorts. Ten farm resorts were selected based on the maximum customer footfalls and in each resort, forty customers were randomly selected and asked to fill out the questionnaire. Descriptive analysis was performed to gather socio-demographic features. MANOVA has been used to determine whether there are any differences between selected independent groups such as gender on more than one categorical dependent variable. Natural, agricultural, and cultural features were considered the dependent variables.

Gender with two categories (Male and female) was selected as the independent variable. As applicable, significant MANOVA results were adopted with post hoc analyses of variance or independent t-tests. Wilks' Lambda is used to know significant differences between selected independent variables. If the significance level is less than 0.05, we can conclude that our groups have a difference. The selected variable's significant levels were measured based on Bonferroni adjustment. It involves dividing the original alpha level of 0.05 by the number of analyses we intend to do. In this case, if we have two dependent variables to investigate; therefore, we would divide 0.05 by 2, giving a new alpha level of 0.025. We will consider our results significant only if the probability value (Sig.) is less than 0.025.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic profile

The socio-demographic profile of customers is presented in Table 1. Most of the respondents in this study belong to the female category (56.50 per cent).

On average, respondents were in the youth level (M=33.64) falls between 26-35 (45.75 per cent) followed by the 36-45 (23.25 per cent) age category. More than half of the respondent's education qualifications were graduate-level (60.50 per cent) followed by post-graduate (35.75 per cent).

In terms of occupation, 52.75 per cent of respondents were employees followed by housewives (23.00 per cent), business people (9.50 per cent) and students (14.75 per cent). Overall customers annual family income (Mean=Rs.12,37,125) with 5-10 lakh (38.50 per cent) was high, followed by 11-15 lakh (32.25 per cent) and 16-20 lakh (18.50 per cent).

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of respondents

Socio-demographic indicators	N= 400	Percentage to total for each indicator
Gender	174	
Male	226	43.50
Female		56.50
Age		
<25	73	18.25
26-35	183	45.75
36-45	93	23.25
>45	51	12.75
Education		
Secondary	3	0.75
Higher secondary	12	3.00
Undergraduate	242	60.50
Postgraduate	143	35.75
Occupation		
Student	59	14.75
Employee	211	52.75
Business (own)	38	9.50
Housewife	92	23.00
Annual household income (Rs.)		
Less than 5 lakhs	14	3.50
5-10 lakh	154	38.50
11-15 lakh	129	32.25
16-20 lakh	74	18.50
>20 lakh	29	7.25



Family decision-makers in agri-tourism

The family continues to be the primary social group in which individuals spend their leisure time, especially their holidays. According to Pritchard, (2018), family decision-making falls into one of three categories: husband-dominant, woman-dominant, or collaborative decision-making between husband and wife. Typically, husband and wife share two-thirds or more of all vacation choices, such as problem identification, information gathering, and final destination selection. Couples' decisions on travel routes and commercial accommodations are important.

Rogge *et al.*, (2007), revealed that parents are willing to utilize vacation time to reconnect as a family and to include children in decision-making. Based on the pilot study process, sample respondents commented on five possible combination sets of decision-makers including husband, wife, adult, husband and wife, and joint decisions. The percentage level of five possible combination sets is presented in Figure 1.

Fig. 1 shows that husband and wife (30 per cent) dominated in decision making while visiting agri-tourism. It was followed by wives (26.50 per cent) as decision-makers in agri-tourism. Vacation decision generally results from husband-and-wife decision-making (Gao *et al.*, 2014).

Customer preferences toward landscape features

Customer preferences toward landscape features are presented in Table 2. Natural features (M=4.03) have the highest mean value, followed by agricultural (M=3.88) and cultural features (M=3.58). Natural features (M=4.03) have the highest mean value, followed by agricultural (M=3.88) and cultural features (M=3.58).

It shows that respondents would like to see more natural features like trekking in forests, seeing wild animals, bird watching, ponds, lakes, native plants, flowers, and wetlands. Overall, preferring natural features like wildlife, native flora, and fauna revealed that customers were most likely enjoying more vegetation cover and availability of water resources like ponds and lakes for their recreation (Rogge *et al.*, 2007).

The most preferred particular features that customers would like to see were native plants and flowers (M=4.23) followed by historical elements (M=4.13), a variety of specialty crops (M=4.11), and water resources (M=4.10). Historic elements appeared as the highly preferred feature in the agricultural landscape because it offers a unique experience (Gao *et al.*, 2014). The least preferred features include farm equipment (M=3.26), followed by farm-related buildings (M=3.41) and farm animals (M=3.52).

Comparison of landscape preferences between male and female customers

Landscape features such as natural, agricultural and cultural features were compared with male and female respondents shown in Table 3. Past studies revealed that male and female tourists have different expectations and attitudes towards tourism products (Kasliwal and Agarwal, 2015). The majority of previous studies indicate those female customers have higher levels of eco-friendly consumption intention, while male customers are more willing to pay premium prices for ecotourism products.

Moreover, women are considered more ecologically conscious, socially responsible, and more frequently engaged in eco-friendly consumption. Female customers usually have higher expectations and perceptions regarding tourism services than males (Kang *et al.*, 2012). Women tend to demonstrate a higher level of loyalty to an individual service provider than men.

Landscape features were compared between male and female respondents (Table 3). There was a statistically significant difference between male and female customers on the combined dependent variables: $F = 4.80$, $P = 0.000$; Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.842$. When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, variables such as native plants and flowers, grassland and pastures, intensive crop farm, and petting animals were found a statistically significant difference between male and female customers.

Mean scores for significant variables indicated that female customers reported slightly higher levels of preferences towards native plants and flowers (M=4.27), grassland and pastures (M=4.02), and intensive crop farms (M=4.31), and petting animals (M=62) than males. This result was supported by Gao *et al.*, (2014) study, agricultural landscape preferences for developing agri-tourism in the USA found that females have more preference than males in agri-tourism. Non-significant variables also show that primarily females preferred wildlife (M=3.88), water resources (M=4.13), farm animals (M=3.56), and historical elements (M=4.18), trails (M=3.74), and farm-related buildings (M=3.47) than males.

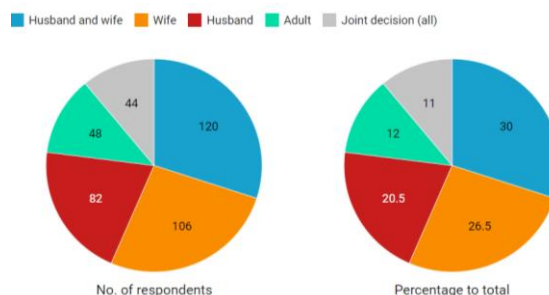


Figure 1: Family decision-makers in agri-tourism



Table 2. Preferences for landscape features in agri-tourism

Landscape features	Dislike very much (%)	Dislike (%)	Neither like nor dislike (%)	Like (%)	Like very much (%)	Mean*	SD
Natural features (M=4.03)							
Wildlife	1.25	2.75	28.75	47.00	20.25	3.83	0.82
Water resources	0.25	4.00	17.25	42.00	36.50	4.10	0.84
Native plants and flowers	0.25	1.25	21.50	28.75	48.25	4.23	0.84
Forests	0.50	2.50	29.50	40.75	26.75	3.90	0.83
Wetlands	0.50	3.25	19.50	39.50	37.25	4.09	0.85
Agricultural features (M=3.88)							
Farm animals	3.25	12.25	33.25	31.5	19.75	3.52	1.04
Planted trees	0.25	4.50	21.00	48.00	26.25	3.95	0.82
Variety of specialty crops	0.50	2.25	19.00	41.50	36.75	4.11	0.82
Grassland and pastures	2.25	10.25	24.00	34.25	29.25	3.78	1.04
Intensive crop farm	1.00	5.50	18.00	37.75	37.75	4.05	0.93
Cultural features (M=3.58)							
Historic elements	0.25	2.00	23.50	33.00	41.25	4.13	0.85
Trails	0.50	5.00	46.25	31.75	16.50	3.58	0.83
Petting animals	2.00	9.50	34.00	38.75	15.75	3.56	0.93
Farm-related buildings	1.00	20.75	29.75	33.25	15.25	3.41	1.01
Farm equipment	3.00	22.50	34.75	25.00	14.75	3.26	1.05

*Measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1(dislike very much) to 5 (like very much)

Table 3: Comparison of landscape preferences between male and female customers

Landscape features	Preference Mean		Statistical values	
	Male (43.50 %)	Female (56.50 %)	F	P-value
Natural features				
Wildlife	3.75	3.88	2.573	0.110
Water resources	4.08	4.13	0.397	0.529
Native plants and flowers	4.19	4.27	10.992	0.001*
Forests	4.06	3.79	0.883	0.348
Wetlands	4.18	4.05	2.010	0.157
Agricultural features				
Farm animals	3.47	3.56	0.743	0.389
Planted trees	4.01	3.94	0.221	0.639
Variety of specialty crops	4.13	4.12	0.097	0.755
Grassland and pastures	3.64	4.02	5.721	0.017*
Intensive crop farm	3.87	4.31	22.985	0.000*
Cultural features				
Historic elements	4.09	4.18	0.972	0.325
Trails	3.39	3.74	1.347	0.247
Petting animals	3.51	3.62	18.721	0.000*
Farm-related buildings	3.33	3.47	2.047	0.153
Farm equipment	3.34	3.16	3.036	0.082

Measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1(dislike very much) to 5 (like very much)

*p<0.025 (based on Bonferroni adjustment)



CONCLUSION

This study shows that most of the customers were female and their participation level was more when compared to male customers. Customers highly preferred natural features to agricultural and cultural features in landscape features. Comparison of landscape features with male and female respondents showed significant with native plants and flowers, grassland and pastures, intensive crop farm, and petting animals. The preference means the score was high for female respondents among all significant variables. Both husband and wife's joint decision was predominant in family decision making towards agri-tourism.

Thus, agri-tourism service providers and farm resort owners may benefit from the findings of this research by better understanding the needs of both male and female guests and developing methods to meet those needs. Increasing total revenues and the number of supplementary items and services offered is critical for the tourist and hospitality industries. This may be accomplished by marketing each gender group separately using a personalization approach. At the same time, agri-tourism service providers and farm resort owners would gain competitive advantages by maximizing customer value, contributing to a better corporate image and enhancing performance by knowing male and female groups' preferences and purchasing behaviour.

Funding and acknowledgment

The author acknowledges the financial support provided by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi through ICSSR full-term doctoral fellowship (No. RFD/2019-20/GEN/MGT/66).

Ethics statement

Specific permits were not required for the above field studies because no human or animal subjects were involved in this research.

Originality and plagiarism

Authors ensured that only original works were written and submitted and that any work and/or words borrowed from others were properly cited.

Consent for publication

All the authors agreed to publish the content.

Competing interests

There was no conflict of interest in the publication of this content.

Data availability

All the data of this manuscript are included in the MS. No separate external data source is required. If anything is required from the MS, certainly, this will be extended by communicating with the corresponding author through the corresponding official mail: saraths1995@gmail.com

REFERENCES

- Gao, J., Barbieri, C. and C. Valdivia. 2014. Agricultural landscape preferences: Implications for agritourism development. *J. Travel Res.*, **53(3)**: 366-379.
- Grala, R. K., Tyndall, J. C. and C.W. Mize. 2010. Impact of field windbreaks on the visual appearance of agricultural lands. *Agrofor.Syst.*, **80(3)**: 411-422.
- Kang, K., Stein, L., Heo, C. Y. and S. Lee. 2012. Consumers' willingness to pay for green initiatives of the hotel industry. *Int. J. Hosp. Manag.*, **31(2)**: 564-572.
- Kasliwal, N. and S. Srishti Agarwal. 2015. An exploratory study on women's perception and choice of preference towards the green attributes of the hotel industry. *Int. J. Eng. Technol. Manag. Appl. Sci.*, **3(1)**: 304-312.
- Pettersson, K. and S.H. Cassel. 2014. Women tourism entrepreneurs: doing gender on farms in Sweden. *Gen. Manag. Int. J.*, **29(8)**: 487-504.
- Pritchard, A. 2018. Predicting the next decade of tourism gender research. *Tour. Manag. Perspect.*, **25(3)**: 144-146.
- Pritchard, A. and N. Morgan. 2017. Tourism's lost leaders: Analysing gender and performance. *Ann. Tour. Res.*, **63(4)**: 34-47.
- Rogge, E., Nevens, F. and H. Gulinc. 2007. Perception of rural landscapes in Flanders: Looking beyond aesthetics. *Landsc. Urban Plan.*, **82(4)**: 159-174.
- Tyndall, J. and J. Colletti. 2007. Mitigating swine odor with strategically designed shelterbelt systems: a review. *Agrofor.Syst.*, **69(1)**: 45-65.