

An Assessment of the Factors Influencing Tourist Willingness to Participate in Agritourism in South Africa

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received: April 14, 2026 Accepted: June 10, 2026 Published: June 30, 2026</p> <p><i>JEL Classification:</i> Q13</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Agritourists, Agritourism, Willingness to participate, Convenience Sampling, Probit Analysis, Mpumalanga province</p>	<p>Agritourists are considered tourists who visit rural destinations and consume goods and services associated with agriculture. Agritourism providers offer goods and services in the form of educational, recreational and nature-based activities for tourists. The study aims to examine the factors influencing tourists' willingness to participate (WTP) in agritourism. Convenience sampling was used to conduct a face-to-face interviewer-completed survey with 300 respondents visiting selected tourist attractions in the Mpumalanga province. Using a probit model, the study found that countries of origin, educational experiences, agritourism activities, learning about farming, social media, and customer service positively influenced tourists' WTP for agritourism. Whereas paying for agritourism activities was found to be negatively influencing tourists' WTP. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the provincial government collaborate with tourism authorities and service providers to formulate a dedicated agritourism strategy to encourage tourists to participate in agritourism.</p>

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1. Introduction

Agritourism is a hybrid concept that combines farming-based recreational activities, farming education and outdoor recreational opportunities to tourists (Barbieri, 2014; 2023). Moraru (2019) defines agritourists as those tourists whose primary motivation to travel is to purchase goods and services from an agriculturally aligned business. Viewed from the lens of agrarian production, agritourism connects alternative farming systems, value-added processing, direct farm product marketing and rural communities' advancement (Wu et al. 2024). From a tourism perspective, agritourism encompasses agriculture-based destinations, broader non-agricultural destinations and stand-alone agritourism sites. Agritourism development may assist in creating jobs, increasing income, enhancing the standard of living, reducing poverty levels of local communities, while sustaining and promoting culture in rural areas (Lago, 2017; Manalo et al., 2019; Dinh et al., 2022; Mangwiroti et al., 2025).

A successful agritourism enterprise is characterised by its strategic investment in local and natural resources, coupled with its capacity to attract tourists who seek authentic experiences connected to nature (Magno & Cassia, 2021; Zawadka et al., 2022).

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Agricultural environments offer distinctive attributes and rich resources that are difficult to replicate in urban contexts (Joyner et al., 2018) thus providing unique consumptive opportunities for agritourists. Consequently, agritourists' needs are shaped by specific attributes required for their consumption experiences in primary rural settings. Baby and Kim (2024) found a significant relationship between agritourist motivation, environmental behaviour and satisfaction particularly in relation to destination characteristics, risk and food attributes. Moreover, direct tourist involvement in agritourism activities contrasts with the more passive engagement associated with traditional nature-based attractions such as nature park visits (Barbieri et al., 2019). While both provide unique experiential value, they differ in underlying goals, the degree of physical participation required, and the desired outcomes sought by travellers (Liang et al., 2021). Jęczmyk et al. (2015) highlight the growing attractiveness of agritourism attractions and destinations as places that allow tourists to move away from crowded cities, to stay in a natural environment and enjoy an authentic leisure experience. Agritourists may find different types of agritourism activities attractive in different ways. According to Suhartanto et al. (2020), identify sightseeing, experiencing new things, enjoying the open space, harvesting fruits and vegetables, attending on-farm festivals and participating in day-trip activities creates products for agritourists. Hai et al. (2022) also identify day visit to experience rural life, traditional craft villages, rural landscapes and cultural heritage as activities available for agritourists. To expand on the, agritourism activities offered in settings such as Italy include products such as accommodation and outdoor activities such as walking, hiking, horse riding, cycling or fishing and gastronomic experiences (food and wine), which provides a unique experience such as farm dining (Antenucci et al., 2015). Agritourism farmers in Italy often provide three levels of services: snacks and light meals, full-course meals or farm holidays, which include meals, accommodation and recreational activities that tourists could utilise (Everts, 2020). Regarding agritourism in South Africa, ostrich farms and game farming for hunting were some of the first to be recognised as agritourism providers (Grillini et al., 2022). Van Zyl and Van der Merwe (2021) studied South African farmers' motives for offering agritourism and identified two primary motives in this regard: economic motives and the need to preserve heritage and culture. Furthermore, the same study by Van Zyl and Van der Merwe (2021) found that most motives such as conservation of culture and heritage, education, revenue generation and diversifying farm activities were confirmed as commonly found in different countries with an agritourism industry. Through an analysis of previous agritourism research, we found that most studies focussed on the supply-side perspective of agritourism, whereas the demand side has received little attention (Lan et al., 2023). There is also a seeming lack of effective awareness of agritourism at the national, provincial and local levels for all stakeholders, which leads to the question of whether enough efforts to promote agritourism in South Africa are being made. Another critical question is whether tourists are aware of agritourism and its potential in South Africa, specifically in the Mpumalanga province. It is important to understand the preferences and experiences of tourists to identify factors influencing their willingness to engage in agritourism (Varmazyari et al., 2017). Hence, this study aims to examine the factors influencing tourists' willingness to participate (WTP) in agritourism in Mpumalanga province.

2. Literature review

Horner and Swarbrooke (2016) define visitor motivation in tourism as a collection of traits that explain why travellers may choose to visit a particular place, buy a specific commodity or service or partake in a specific activity. Visitor motivations have been extensively studied in a variety of contexts and there

are multiple theoretical frameworks and conceptual models that describes the motivation of tourists (Huang, 2021). Some of these models include the push-pull model, travel career ladder model and the escape-seeking model (Huang, 2021). Initially, Dann (1977) and Crompton (1979) noted two primary motivations, namely the pull (extrinsic) and push (intrinsic) forces. The forces are widely adopted as a tourist motivation measurement model (Yousaf et al., 2018; Pestana et al., 2020). The term "push" factors describe the internal motivation behind tourists' decisions to seek out tourism experiences. On the other hand, "pull" factors describe the extrinsic attraction of a specific location that appeals to a tourist's tastes (Ma et al., 2018).

The push-pull theory is a widely applied framework in tourism motivation research. It focuses on tourists' needs by integrating intrinsic motivations (push factors) with destination attributes (pull factors), thereby establishing a link between tourism demand and supply (Yang et al., 2023).

A framework for understanding the variables influencing human behaviour and decision-making is provided by push and pull theory. According to this approach, tourists are simultaneously motivated by external pull factors and internal push elements (Moraru, 2019).

The individual traits of the tourists and their desire to meet their own needs, such as relaxation, adventure, health and fitness and social engagement, are strongly associated with the push-type motivational factors. On the other hand, the attractiveness of tourist destinations, including their features such as landscape, beauty, climate, recreational opportunities, cultural events and the kinds of facilities available, such as accessibility, quality of services and facilities, are examples of the pull type of motivational factors (Ngondo et al, 2024).

Understanding tourist preferences are essential for identifying agritourism characteristics, which in turn, helps destinations tailor their offerings to effectively satisfy tourists' expectations (Sumanapala et al., 2023). In terms of tourist expectations, Bronswijk (2024) divides agritourism activities into two groups. The first group includes activities that require direct tourist participation. In these activities, tourists engage in farm tasks such as harvesting crops, feeding animals, shearing sheep and gathering fruit. Participating in activities associated with the farmer's life indirectly is the second category of agritourism activities. Since these activities entail going to farmers' markets, they are also related to the farm activities linked to product distribution (Suhartanto et al., 2020).

The motivations behind tourists' travels may greatly impact their choice of activities, actions while there and degree of satisfaction with the services perceived (Ramukumba & Setokoe, 2024). Apart from tourism motivations to travel and their expectations of agritourism services, demographic characteristics have also been identified as potential influencers of agritourism demand.

According to Muresan et al. (2016), age has no significant impact on choosing leisure agricultural tourism based on the demographics of the tourists. According to Man and Aspany (2020), agritourism caters to all age ranges so that they are exposed to new knowledge and experience through agritourism activities and products. Tourists with higher ages tend to develop common consumption ideas, communication and interaction. Middle aged travellers are more likely to be interested in leisure agricultural tourism whereas other age groups are more concerned with the scenic locations' infrastructure (Shuai et al., 2022).

Muresan et al. (2016) found that age does not influence the residents' support for tourism development.

Tourists' WTP in leisure agriculture may be influenced by educational attainment. Lan et al. (2023) discovered that tourists with a higher education status have higher decision-making power to participate in agritourism activities. In addition, Mogomotsi et al. (2023) emphasise that education is integral for creating awareness levels towards the tourism industry specifically through the promotion of domestic tourism. As a result of this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H1): A higher education level positively influences tourist WTP in agritourism.

Place of origin and travel characteristics may positively influence tourists' WTP in agritourism. Looking at the travel patterns, Kelso and Giddy (2023) found that more European tourists travel for tourism purposes with their families.

Furthermore, Wike et al. (2023) indicated that African tourists are more likely to travel with immediate family members as a group rather than only with their partner or spouse. Sanchezo-Rivero and Pulido-Fernández (2020) argue that through international tourist spending, it is possible to promote higher tourism revenues by encouraging more spending on purchases of souvenirs and handicrafts per capita.

Baruah and Sarma (2016) emphasise that rural tourists spend more money on souvenirs and handicrafts compared to other tourists in urban settings. Ingrassia et al. (2023) determined that tourists from European countries prefer to stay longer at a destination, often extending their visits to surrounding areas, heritage villages, sites of historical archaeological or naturalistic significance with agritourism being the base for accommodation and dining. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H2): Place of origin has a positive effect on the tourists from Europe WTP in agritourism.

Liu et al. (2023) emphasise educational experiences as a place to develop tourist skills through education of their minds and bodies. Back et al. (2019) assert that agritourists may have psychological and social reactions towards agritourism. Accordingly, the experience perceived by tourists of an attraction is not limited to the attraction itself but includes the experiences prior to and following the visit. Kastenholtz et al. (2018) assert that tourist experiences may be viewed as unique and subjective, which could factor in arousal and satisfaction with the attraction. When considering the educational experience from the previous visits to agritourism establishment, the study suggests that more educated tourists are motivated by reasons, such as wanting to relax and escape, knowledge seeking and socialising to be engaged in agritourism activities (Ma et al., 2018). Pull motives are stronger motivators influencing tourists' decisions to visit farm tourism destinations. Attributes such as natural beauty, pastoral settings, scenic landscapes and the opportunity for rest and relaxation are key attractions drawing visitors to these destinations (Valencia et al., 2022).

Agritourism allows farmers to educate the public and customers about agriculture, farming practices and supporting local food systems (Brune et al., 2020). Therefore, combining tourism and agriculture benefits rural areas, mainly traditional farms by creating opportunities for sustainable tourism (Mangwiro, et al., 2025).

Leisure and tourism settings offer opportunities for tourists to learn about agriculture and agricultural issues (Van Winkle & Bueddefeld, 2021). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H3): Educational activities encourage tourists' WTP in agritourism.

Access to the internet and social media significantly influences tourists' WTP in agritourism. Social media platforms have become instrumental for tourists to learn more about other tourists' travel experiences and to obtain authentic information about tourist destinations (Hussain et al., 2024). Tourism enterprises, national and local destination marketing organisations distribute considerable online information through social media. To ensure that the internet is effective, the information on the internet may contain information that communicates to local identity and the specific nature of the farm (Platania, 2014). Furthermore, the internet deeply affects the decision-making of tourists because it plays a vital role in travel information searching (Amaro et al., 2016). Liu et al. (2019) and Schuckert et al. (2016) indicate that tourists may also use the internet to manage their accommodation arrangements before travelling. Social media allows agritourism operators to disseminate information and influence many people, including tourists (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014; Wang et al., 2016). Based on the analysis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H4): Social media use and internet access positively influence tourist WTP in agritourism.

Brune et al. (2020) suggests that agritourism positively influences tourists' purchasing decisions and fosters a wider interest in agriculture, which may benefit local food systems and increase direct-to-consumer sales. Tourism activities can extend farm production by incorporating on-farm experiences and direct sales aimed at rural markets (Tafari, 2021). The presence of agritourists in a rural setting may allow direct sales of agricultural products such as fruits, vegetables, eggs, milk and some local cuisine by farmers to these tourists, bypassing the need to distribute the produce to urban locations for selling. As a result of the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H5): Direct sales to the market has positive effect on the extension of farm production and participation of agritourism.

Tourists frequently report that their primary motivation for engaging in agritourism is the opportunity to enhance their knowledge. Many visitors perceive a general lack of public awareness regarding the origins of food and the processes involved in its production; consequently, they are motivated to interact directly with farmers to gain deeper insights into agricultural practices (Meyer & De Crom, 2013). Tourist satisfaction is particularly significant, as it contributes to sustainability outcomes and fosters destination loyalty (Hermann & Nemaorani, 2023). Understanding the factors that shape visitor experiences is therefore essential for optimising agritourism offerings (Dean et al., 2019). Educational encounters, characterised by meaningful interactions, memorable activities and emotional engagement, are central to the experiences sought by agritourists (Hung, 2021). Based on this perspective, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H6): Educational experiences have a positive effect on tourists' WTP in agritourism.

Zawadka et al. (2022) point out that visiting an agritourism farm during a vacation offers a great opportunity to learn more about agricultural production. Tourist interactions with farm animals increase ecological awareness, tourists are educated about culture and discover regional customs still practised in many areas. Joyner et al. (2018) state that tourists also seek agritourism attractions and other experiences that allow them to interact with and learn from nature. In contrast, Moraru (2019) found

that among the services provided by agritourism farms, such as experiencing farm activities was the least popular in their sample. This indicates that tourist experiences are not homogeneous, requiring agritourism providers to customise their offerings based on the expectations of tourists to ensure satisfaction (Hermann et al., 2025).

Effective customer service is core to tourist satisfaction, as it may determine whether they are willing to revisit the attraction. Dethloff et al. (2024) found that customer service is crucial for agricultural producers looking to grow or maintain their customer base. Customer satisfaction is impacted by service quality, a significant aspect of consumer perception. This means that tourists are more likely to return to an agritourism establishment if they receive higher quality services (Indrayanti et al., 2020). As a result of this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H7): Perceived customer service quality positively influences WTP in agritourism.

This literature review provides a systematic examination of theoretical perspectives related to tourists' WTP. The literature highlights that tourists' motivations are primarily shaped by their desire for meaningful experiences and the fulfilment of various needs. These needs may be intrinsic (operating as pull factors) or extrinsic (functioning as push factors). Tourists are often drawn to destinations to experience natural landscapes, aesthetic beauty, favourable climates, recreational opportunities and cultural events.

Motivation is widely recognised as a key determinant of both the quality of tourists' experiences and their overall satisfaction with agritourism destinations. However, Ferdiyanti et al. (2024) found that motivation driven specifically by pull factors does not exert a statistically significant influence on customer satisfaction. This finding suggests that while motivational elements are important, their effects may vary depending on the type and context of the motivating factors.

The Mpumalanga province offers ideal environments for tourists to satisfy their intrinsic and extrinsic motives to participate in agritourism. The lack of research on the tourists' WTP within the province gives the study an opportunity to fill the gap that exists in the literature.

3. Research methodology

The section below presents research demarcation, research design, population sampling and utilisation of the probit model for the study.

3.1. Research demarcation

Mpumalanga is divided into three district municipalities: Ehlanzeni, Nkangala and Gert Sibande. The province is the second smallest province in the country, covering 76 495 km² and contains half of the country's arable land (Simpson et al., 2019). In terms of the economy, it is the fourth largest in the country. The province houses around 5.05 million inhabitants (Statistics South Africa, 2024), which equates to a population density of 58 people per km². The province was chosen because of its premier international and domestic appeal as a tourist destination.

Primary tourism attractions in the province which includes attractions such as the Kruger National Park, Blyde River Canyon, Bourke's Luck Potholes, God's Window, pristine wetlands and several cultural and

historical heritage sites. In addition, Mpumalanga is adjacent to Gauteng, the economic hub of the country, making it an accessible destination for both domestic and international tourists.

3.2. Research design

The study made use of a positivist philosophical paradigm structured around the use of a face-to-face survey by means of interviewer-completed questionnaires to collect empirical data. The questionnaires included questions relating to knowledge about agritourism, tourists' WTP in agritourism and their willingness to pay for such agritourism activities or products, should they be available. The questionnaire covered the demographic items (age, level of education, ethnic group) and agritourism variables (education experience, farm sales, more agritourism activities, pay for agritourism activities, learn about farming, family learning experience, social media, internet and customer service). The questionnaire was designed around a previous study done by Lan et al. (2023) who investigated factors influencing tourists' WTP in agritourism activities. Gatekeeper permission was granted by the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) and the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Administration (DARDLA) to access the tourist attraction sites and engage the tourists and ethics approval was granted by the TUT Human Research Ethics Committee with ethics number FCRE 2021/02/006 (SCI) (FCPS 01).

3.3. Population and Sampling

As there was no sample frame available for the purpose of this study, we used Adam's (2020) table for determining the minimum returned sample size for a given population. Adam's table adopted the Cochran's (1977) sample size formula to develop the sample size table. With a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 5%, when the population is 1500 or more, the sample size required is 300 (Faber & Fonseca, 2014). Hence, we aimed for a sample of 300 respondents to have significant and reliable data, this number was subsequently achieved. According to Wampold and Freund (1987), the sample size in regression analysis must be sufficient so that a reasonable chance of detection is observed and the distributed questionnaire was deemed fit. Convenience sampling was used to conduct a face-to-face survey with 300 tourists who visited tourist attractions in Mpumalanga. Golzar et al. (2022) emphasise that convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that allows respondents to be selected from the target population based on accessibility and availability. Furthermore, the method allows data to be collected within budget and timeframe (Lohr, 2021). Hermann and Nemaorani (2023) used the same sampling method to determine visitors' intentions to revisit a natural history museum in a national park. In practice, the approach saves time and money on data collection by allowing the researcher to concentrate on individuals who are most likely to supply pertinent data (Thomas, 2017; Stratton, 2024). The face-to-face survey was administered from June-July 2024 at Bourke's Luck Potholes. The site was preferred as it serves as a major attraction for tourists visiting Mpumalanga, on their way to the Kruger National Park.

3.4. Utilisation of the Probit model

A probit model was employed to statistically evaluate the factors that influence agritourists' WTP in agritourism. The model is dichotomous, with a value of 1 if the tourist is WTP for agritourism and 0 if the response is negative. The probit model was previously successfully employed by Alabi et al. (2014)

to analyse smallholder farmers' decision to use agrochemical inputs. The following equation (1) provides a summary of the model:

$$y_{1,i} = 1 \text{ if } y_{1,i} = \alpha_1 y_{2,i} + x_i \beta_1 + \epsilon_{1,i} > 0, \quad (1)$$

with α_1 and β_1 as the (vector of) parameters and $\epsilon_{1,i}$ as the error term. We only observe whether an agritourist is WTP in agritourism ($y_{1,i} = 1$), which is the case if the latent variable $y_{1,i} > 0$, i.e., if an agritourist is WTP, i is positive. Therefore, rather than estimating the (unobserved) latent variable $y_{1,i}$ in Equation (1) directly, we estimate the probability of agritourists participating, i.e., $\text{Prob}(y_{1,i} = 1 | y_{2,i}, x_i)$. The relationship is discussed in detail in the results section. According to Wulff (2015), the marginal effects are the change in predicted probabilities brought about by a change in a specific predictor and the slope of the prediction function for a given value of the explanatory variable. Each variable's marginal effects were examined using the econometric program STATA, while the sample mean values were held constant. Factors influencing tourists' WTP in agritourism, and their level of participation, include tourists' demographics, product attributes, agritourism activities and income spent on products and services of agritourism, and possible interaction between these factors. The tourists' demographic characteristics, such as country of origin, ethnic group, gender, age, educational level, monthly income, price of the products and services offered on the farm, and reasons to utilise agritourism services, are handled as explanatory variables. The description of the variables used in the study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of Variables in the Probit Analysis

Variable	Description	Unit
Dependent Variables		
WTP	1 if tourist is willing to participate in agritourism; 0 otherwise	Dummy
Independent variable		
Demographic characteristics		
AGE	Age of the tourist	Years
EDUCLEVEL	1 if the tourist has a tertiary qualification, 0 otherwise	Dummy
ORGN	The place the tourist originated from	Continent
Agritourism Variables		
EDUCEXP	1 if the educational experiences are a motivator, 0 otherwise	Dummy
FARMMAKRT	1 if direct farm markets are a motivator, 0 otherwise	Dummy
AGRITOURPRDCT	1 if agritourism activities to participate is a motivator, 0 otherwise.	Dummy
PAYAGRITOURPRDCT	1 if more agritourism activities is a motivator, 0 otherwise.	Dummy
LEARNFARM	1 if to learn farming is a motivator, 0 otherwise.	Dummy
FAMILEARNEXPER	1 if family learning experience is a motivator, 0 otherwise.	Dummy
SOCNETWORK	1 if access to social media is a motivator, 0 otherwise.	Dummy
INTERNET	1 if access to the internet is a motivator, 0 otherwise.	Dummy
CUSTOMSERVIC	1 if customer service is the motivator, 0 otherwise.	Dummy

Source: Authors

4. Results and discussion

This section provides insight into the empirical results of the study. The results discuss the descriptive analysis of tourist results from the study area and the factors influencing tourists' WTP in agritourism.

4.1. Descriptive results

The results of the study are presented in both tabular form and a graphical figure illustrating the continents of origin of the respondents, thereby providing insight into the demand side of agritourism products. The data shown in Table 2 and Figure 1 reflect responses from individuals who approached the agritourism site. The average age of respondents was approximately 41 years, and a substantial majority (91%) reported having attained some level of university education across various fields. These findings suggest that individuals with higher educational attainment may be more inclined to participate in agritourism activities. Furthermore, 56% of respondents identified educational experiences as a key motivator influencing their WTP for agritourism offerings. The results further indicate that 43% of respondents considered access to the internet an important factor shaping their WTP for agritourism. This aligns with the findings of Sun, Law and Luk (2022), who note that internet access plays a critical role in tourism by stimulating individuals' interest in travel, enabling cultural exploration and facilitating the search and purchase of necessary tourism products and services. In addition, a significant proportion of respondents (61%) expressed a willingness to pay for the opportunity to purchase farm products and services directly through agritourism channels. Moreover, 52% reported that increased availability of diverse agritourism activities would further motivate their participation.

Table 2. Descriptive results

Variable	All participants (n=300)	WTP (n=243)	Not WTP (n=57)
AGE	42.12	40.78	47.84
EDUCLEVEL	0.860	0.914	0.910
EDUCEXPER	0.48	0.564	0.14
INTERNET	0.377	0.430	0.200
FARMMARKT	0.530	0.612	0.163
AGRITOUR	0.440	0.522	0.727
PAYAGRITOUR	0.973	0.634	0.439
FARMLRN	0.610	0.646	0.403
FAMLRNEXP	0.603	0.642	0.439
SOCMED	0.060	0.656	0.182
CUSTSERVIC	0.560	0.550	0.640

Source: Authors

Approximately 63% of the respondents who may be WTP in agritourism are willing to pay for agritourism activities, should they be available. To provide tourists with the conditions and opportunities to enjoy agritourism, Lan et al. (2023) emphasise that farmers should adopt competitive and acceptable pricing policies. This would increase tourists' WTP in agritourism activities. In addition, 65% of the respondents noted that learning about farming may encourage them to participate in agritourism. Most respondents seek a better understanding of agriculture, such as planting crops and even harvesting crops.

Approximately 64% of respondents indicated that family learning experiences serve as a key pull factor motivating their WTP in agritourism. This finding is consistent with broader tourism trends in which many tourists prefer to visit attractions as family groups rather than as individuals, confirming the view of Wike et al. (2023). The descriptive results further show that 66% of tourists WTP in agritourism identified social media as an important enabler of engagement. Social media plays a central role in destination marketing by providing accessible information that influences tourists’ decision-making processes, a point also emphasised by Wen-Ta (2025) and Sun, Law and Luk (2022), who argues that social media significantly shapes the promotion and visibility of tourism destinations. Lastly, 96% of respondents reported that high-quality customer service influences their intention to revisit agritourism sites, underscoring the importance of service excellence in sustaining tourist loyalty. Figure 1 indicates that most respondents originated from Europe (47%), followed by Africa (40.7%), North America (10.67%) and Asia (1.66%). These results suggest that the largest proportion respondents were European rather than African, highlighting the need to strengthen local marketing efforts for agritourism products and services to enhance market diversification.

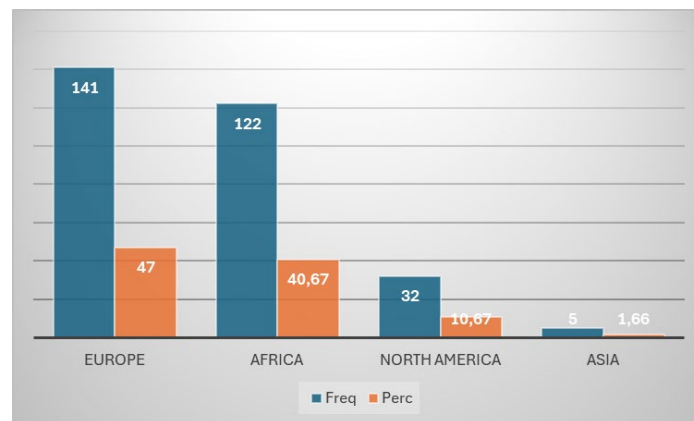


Figure 3. Tourists place of origin

Source: Authors

As shown in Figure 2, 81% of respondents expressed a willingness to pay for agritourism experiences, reinforcing the viability of agritourism as a business strategy that can benefit farms economically while simultaneously providing visitors with meaningful opportunities to learn about agricultural practices.

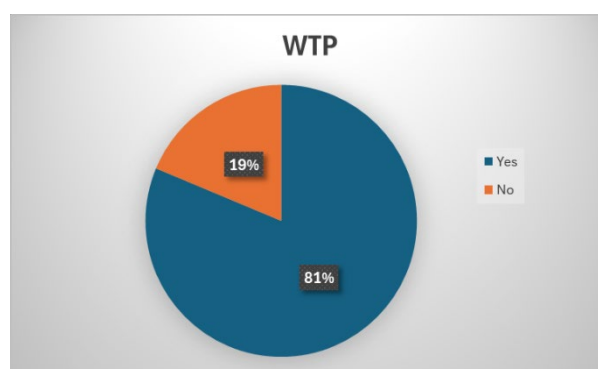


Figure 2. Tourist willingness to participate in agritourism

Source: Authors

4.2. Factors influencing willingness to participate in agritourism

Table 3 discusses the results from the probit regression analysis. This table indicates the maximum likelihood estimates of the probit model in terms of respondents' WTP in agritourism. The value of the Pseudo R² is 42%, the log-likelihood is -34.53 and the LR Chi² is 49.21%. The Prob > chi² is 0.000, showing that the model fits the data well. Seven out of twelve variables listed in the model show the expected effects on the respondents' WTP in agritourism. From the seven significant variables, six variables are positively significant to the study, while one is found to be negatively significant to the study.

Table 3. Results of Probit Regression Analysis

WTP	Coef.	Std. Err	Dy/dx	z	P> z	Std. Dev
AGE	-0.0108	0.0109	-0.0004	-0.99	0.324	15.2832
EDUCLEVEL	-0.1674	0.4653	-0.0059	-0.36	0.719	0.4653
ORIGIN	1.1535***	0.4144	0.0467	2.78	0.005	0.4144
EDUCAEXPER	1.4854***	0.5646	0.1338	2.63	0.009	0.5646
INTERNET	-0.6864	0.4886	-0.0215	-1.40	0.160	0.4886
FARMMAKRT	-0.4121	0.5640	-0.0161	-0.73	0.465	0.5640
MAA	1.2429***	0.4125	0.0896	3.01	0.003	0.4125
PAA	-1.2552*	0.7245	-0.0237	-1.73	0.083	0.7245
LEARNFARM	1.8736***	0.6175	0.3006	3.03	0.002	0.6175
FLEXP	-0.3746	0.6380	-0.0111	-0.59	0.557	0.6380
SOCMED	0.4753***	0.7056	0.0295	0.67	0.001	0.7056
CUSTSERVIC	1.4916*	0.8901	0.2245	1.68	0.094	0.8901
_cons	-1.2327	1.0938		-1.13	0.260	
Number of obs = 300						
LR chi ² (12) = 49.21						
Prob>chi ² = 0.0000						
Pseudo R ² = 0.4160						

*P < 10%; **P < 5%; ***P < 1%.

Source: Authors

The study shows that ethnicity is statistically significant and positively influences the willingness of respondents to participate in agritourism at a 1% level. The origin of the tourists increases the chance of tourists participating in agritourism by 5%. The results imply that the origin, mostly Europeans, visit the country for leisure or other reasons. The results concur with the study done by Kelso and Giddy (2023), found that agritourism experiences attract different demographic groups who are inherently different. Educational experience positively influenced WTP at a 1% statistically significant level. The results imply that farms that offer educational agritourism activities will be able to provide tourists with environmentally friendly agricultural products and practical knowledge required for the new technology and agritourism activities. Even during their visit, they may increasingly engage in nature and tourist activities. The results concur with Petroman et al.'s (2016) findings that agritourism may be an educational tool through direct experience and observation of agritourism activities.

The provision of more agritourism activities is significant and positively influences the respondents' WTP in agritourism at 1% level. Having more agritourism activities increases the opportunity for tourists to engage in agritourism by 7%. The results imply that tourists visit the tourist attraction sites to learn and

enjoy themselves as much as possible by engaging with numerous activities. More agritourism activities on the farm will resonate with that ambition since it will make their visits worthwhile. Agritourism activities make visits more engaging and increase tourist participation by offering hands-on, memorable and interactive experiences. The results accord with the results of Ferdiyanti et al. (2025) that tourist's motivation on their loyalty to agritourism destinations motivate tourists to take the opportunity to participate in agritourism activities offered by farms.

The findings indicate that the cost associated with participating in agritourism activities is statistically significant and exerts a negative influence on respondents' WTP at a 10% significance level. Specifically, the requirement to pay for agritourism experiences reduces the likelihood of participation by approximately 8%. One possible explanation is that tourists compare the value of agritourism experiences to the cost structures of high-priced destinations, such as national parks, where accommodation and related expenses may diminish the perceived enjoyment or affordability of additional tourism activities. These results align with the findings of Martinus et al. (2024), who observed that high-end tourism offerings may be less appealing to tourists and are often not sustainable in the long term.

The variable of learning about agriculture was found to be positively influencing the respondents' WTP in agritourism and was significant at 1% level. The results show that having agritourism with different activities will encourage tourists to visit the farm to learn the ways of farming, such as ploughing, planting and even harvesting of crops, since most of them are open to learning. The results concur with the findings of Valencia et al. (2022) that farmers should include agritourism activities like planting, harvesting, visiting farm/orchards and visiting farm stands as part of their packages when offering the agritourism so that tourists can learn more about the nature of agriculture. The results show that having access to social media is statistically significant and positively influences the WTP in agritourism by respondents at 1% level. For the tourist to travel to the desired destination, prior knowledge is essential. The results align with the study by Liu et al. (2019) who argue that social media may act as an approver of the destination before the travel choice is made and affect the options within a destination. It is easy for tourists to get attracted to the destination if the information is readily available on social media, as most tourists have the required level of education to navigate such instruments. Furthermore, competent customer service at the farm is significant and positively influences respondents' WTP in agritourism at the 10% level. Tourists visit the tourist attractions for the sole purpose of education and leisure and for them to visit the area more than once, satisfaction is paramount, as customer service plays a role in their decision-making as highlighted by Hermann and Nemaorani (2023). Hence, the agritourism businesses must provide better quality services to their customers. The results concur with the findings of Sugandini et al. (2017), who found that a community's ability to satisfy tourists affects their propensity to travel to a particular location and promote the business through word-of-mouth.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Agritourism plays a critical role in advancing sustainable tourism, particularly in developing countries such as South Africa, where vast agricultural landscapes and rich rural cultures offer significant untapped potential (Hermann, 2025). Research shows that agritourism contributes to rural development, diversifies tourism products, and enhances agricultural productivity, positioning it as a strategic pathway toward sustainability in regions seeking inclusive economic growth. Moreover, sustainable rural

tourism, including agritourism, has been identified as an essential mechanism for improving local livelihoods, generating employment and reducing poverty, especially in rural South African communities where economic opportunities remain limited. By integrating environmental stewardship, community empowerment and authentic visitor experiences, agritourism offers South Africa a viable route to achieve long-term sustainable tourism while simultaneously strengthening rural resilience and supporting broader development objectives (Mangwiro et al., 2025). This study examined the determinants of tourists' WTP for agritourism experiences in Mpumalanga using a probit regression model. Drawing on relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, the study demonstrates that tourists' WTP for agritourism is multifaceted and influenced by a constellation of motivational constructs. Chief among these drivers is the pursuit of authenticity, opportunities for experiential and educational engagement and access to distinctive recreational activities. The findings further underscore the dynamic nature of tourist preferences, which shift in response to evolving trends, thereby requiring agritourism providers to diversify and innovate in their product offerings.

The results reveal that tourists' place of origin plays a significant role in shaping agritourism demand. European visitors in the sample indicated a higher propensity for nature-based tourism products and services, indicating that international markets continue to perceive South Africa as an appealing destination for landscape-oriented and authentic rural experiences. In addition, the study confirms that learning and knowledge enhancement remain primary motivations for visitation, suggesting that agritourism holds strong potential as an educational tourism niche. Therefore, agritourism service providers should enhance their offering by enhancing the educational value for consumers.

Customer service quality also emerged as an essential determinant of repeat visitation, highlighting its centrality in shaping tourists' behavioural intentions and potential revisit intentions and positive word-of-mouth. However, the findings point to a persistent gap in awareness of agritourism offerings, especially regarding local food practices and production processes. This indicates the need for targeted marketing efforts and enhanced visibility of agritourism experiences to open the market to growth. This may be either private sector driven through for example an agritourism route development or through public-private partnerships. Once the target market is penetrated and quality services are provided there is an opportunity for sustainable growth. Overall, the study concludes that the success of agritourism in the province depends on the development of sophisticated, safe and authentic experiential products that foster meaningful visitor engagement.

This research contributes to the agritourism literature and theory in several important ways. First, it provides empirical evidence from a South African provincial context where agritourism remains under-researched, thereby offering insights applicable to emerging agritourism markets in the Global South. Second, by integrating motivational theory with econometric modelling, the study deepens the understanding of how both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence tourists' WTP. Third, it highlights the strategic importance of product diversification, service quality and market-specific promotion, key considerations for policymakers and agritourism operators seeking to enhance sector sustainability. Collectively, these contributions advance scholarly knowledge while offering practical implications for tourism development, rural livelihoods and agrarian innovation. This theoretical contribution also serves as a platform promoting further research in field especially in other parts of the country, continent and other developing country contexts.

Based on the empirical findings, the study recommends that the Mpumalanga provincial government collaborate with tourism authorities to develop a dedicated agritourism pricing strategy that supports market competitiveness and encourages visitor expenditure. Establishing a provincial agritourism grading system would further enhance quality assurance and build consumer trust. Strengthening the digital presence of agritourism providers, particularly through social media, should be prioritised to improve access to potential source markets and enhance tourist awareness. Finally, the study identifies significant potential for integrating agritourism into tertiary education curricula, thereby supporting skills development and strengthening industry, academia linkages.

We acknowledge several limitations. These include the use of non-purposive sampling, reliance on single-season data collection, and the focus on one province, all of which may constrain the generalisability and biasness of the results. Future research should expand the geographical scope to include other South African provinces, explore seasonal variations in agritourism demand and assess the feasibility of developing specialised agritourism niche markets. Further investigation into educational agritourism targeted at tertiary institutions also represents a promising avenue for advancing both theory and practice.

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