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The effects of marketing strategy of travel products on Taiwan tourists' behavior

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้จะสำรวจการจัดการเชิงกลยุทธ์ของจุดหมายปลายทางด้านการท่องเที่ยวเชิงเกษตรในไต้หวัน โดยเน้นที่ความท้าทายและโอกาสที่เกิดขึ้นจากการระบาดของ COVID-19 การท่องเที่ยวเชิงเกษตรซึ่งบูรณาการกิจกรรมทางการเกษตรเข้ากับการท่องเที่ยวได้กลายเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญในการฟื้นตัวทางเศรษฐกิจในชนบทและการพัฒนาอย่างยั่งยืน การวิจัยนี้มุ่งหวังที่จะทำความเข้าใจการเติบโตของการท่องเที่ยวเชิงเกษตรในไต้หวัน ระบุอุปสรรคสำคัญที่อุตสาหกรรมต้องเผชิญ และเสนอมาตรการเชิงกลยุทธ์สำหรับการกำกับดูแลและการฟื้นฟูที่มีประสิทธิภาพในยุคหลังการระบาดใหญ่ โดยใช้แนวทางการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ รวมถึงการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกกับผู้ประกอบการและผู้ดูแลการท่องเที่ยวเชิงเกษตร การศึกษานี้จะตรวจสอบปัจจัยที่มีส่วนสนับสนุนความสำเร็จและความยั่งยืนในระยะยาวของวิสาหกิจการท่องเที่ยวเชิงเกษตร โดยเน้นที่ศักยภาพของภาคส่วนในการสนับสนุนเกษตรกรรายย่อยและชุมชนในชนบท โดยเน้นย้ำถึงความสำคัญของการวางแผนเชิงกลยุทธ์ การตลาดที่สร้างสรรค์ และแนวทางการจัดการแบบองค์รวม นอกจากนี้ การวิจัยยังศึกษาผลกระทบของ COVID-19 ต่อการท่องเที่ยวเชิงเกษตร โดยระบุกลยุทธ์การปรับตัวเช่น มาตรการด้านสุขภาพและความปลอดภัยที่เข้มงวดยิ่งขึ้น แนวทางปฏิบัติที่ยั่งยืน และการมีส่วนร่วมของชุมชน นอกจากนี้ การศึกษานี้ยังวิเคราะห์การเปลี่ยนแปลงความชอบของนักท่องเที่ยวที่มีต่อประสบการณ์การท่องเที่ยวภายในประเทศและธรรมชาติ โดยกำหนดให้การท่องเที่ยวเชิงเกษตรเป็นแนวทางตอบสนองต่อความต้องการของตลาดที่เปลี่ยนแปลงไป โดยการให้ข้อมูลเชิงปฏิบัติแก่ผู้กำหนดนโยบาย ผู้ประกอบการด้านการท่องเที่ยวเชิงเกษตร และผู้พัฒนาพื้นที่ชนบท งานวิจัยนี้มีส่วนสนับสนุนด้านการจัดการการท่องเที่ยวและการพัฒนาพื้นที่ชนบท โดยในท้ายที่สุด งานวิจัยนี้ยังเน้นย้ำถึงบทบาทของการท่องเที่ยวเชิงเกษตรในฐานะรูปแบบการท่องเที่ยวที่มีความยืดหยุ่นและเป็นมิตรต่อสิ่งแวดล้อม สามารถปรับให้เข้ากับแนวโน้มของตลาดได้ ขณะเดียวกันก็ส่งเสริมการฟื้นตัวทางเศรษฐกิจและการฟื้นฟูพื้นที่ชนบทในระยะยาวในไต้หวัน

คำสำคัญ: การท่องเที่ยวเชิงเกษตร การจัดการเชิงกลยุทธ์ การฟื้นฟูหลังการแพร่ระบาด การท่องเที่ยวไต้หวัน

Abstract

This study explores the strategic management of agritourism destinations in Taiwan, focusing on the challenges and opportunities emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. Agritourism, which integrates agricultural activities with tourism, has become a vital driver of rural economic recovery and sustainable development. This research seeks to understand the growth of agritourism in Taiwan, identify key obstacles the industry faces, and propose strategic measures for effective governance and revitalization in the post-pandemic era. Using qualitative research methods, including in-depth interviews with agritourism operators and administrators, the study examines factors contributing to agritourism enterprises' success

and long-term sustainability. It highlights the sector's potential in supporting small-scale farmers and rural communities, emphasizing the importance of strategic planning, innovative marketing, and holistic management approaches. Additionally, the research investigates the impact of COVID-19 on agritourism, outlining adaptive strategies such as enhanced health and safety measures, sustainable practices, and community engagement. The study also analyzes shifting visitor preferences toward domestic and nature-based tourism experiences, positioning agritourism as a viable response to changing market demands. By providing practical insights for policymakers, agritourism entrepreneurs, and rural developers, this research contributes to tourism management and rural development. Ultimately, it underscores agritourism's role as a resilient and eco-friendly tourism model capable of adapting to market trends while fostering economic recovery and long-term rural revitalization in Taiwan.

Keywords: Agritourism, Strategic Management, Post-Pandemic Recovery, Taiwan Tourism

Introduction

The worldwide dissemination of the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected economic sectors worldwide, with the tourism industry being among the most severely impacted. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reports that international visitor arrivals experienced a 20-30% decline in the initial quarter of this year and are projected to decrease by 60-80% for the entire year of 2020. The worldwide state of the pandemic continues to be disorderly. A comprehensive assessment of the duration and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the tourism sector has yet to be conducted. UNWTO has envisioned various scenarios for the recovery of the tourism industry. Furthermore, these forecasts underscore the notion that the speed at which destinations regain control of the pandemic will determine the nature of the recovery; domestic tourism is anticipated to rebound before international tourism. Foreign visitor arrivals to Taiwan are expected to reach their lowest level in four decades this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following a sustained effort spanning six months, the pandemic situation in Taiwan has been brought under control. Transportation, business operations, tourist attractions, and locations are progressively resuming their regular activities. This is an encouraging omen for reviving the nation's tourism industry. Destinations and enterprises must meticulously develop recovery strategies corresponding to market trends in this context. This necessitates that domestic travel companies closely monitor the trends and behaviours of travellers following the COVID-19 pandemic. Numerous inquiries are examined, including "Has the

influence of COVID-19 altered the preferences of tourists when it comes to destination selection?” and “What are the intentions of Taiwanese tourists for the remainder of 2021?” as well as “Has tourist behavior changed?” As a result, this research will provide invaluable insights that will aid agritourism enterprises in Taiwan in promptly comprehending the market landscape and making necessary preparations for the post-pandemic recovery of the tourist industry (Yepez & Leimgruber, 2024).

Taiwan is one of the most sought-after travel destinations, as the number of visitors has increased significantly in recent years. The consumer profile and destination image are the primary determinants that impact marketing strategies and visitor attraction within the tourism industry. Over the past few years, the agricultural sector in Taiwan has experienced a comparatively slower growth rate than other industries, including service and engineering. Agriculture’s value encompasses non-market functions, such as the provision of verdant scenery and environment and the ecological function of safeguarding subterranean water, natural resources, and other resources. The situation is comparable to that of the United States, where agricultural crises and economic restructuring have drastically reduced the economic opportunities of rural communities since 1970. The primary impetus behind the Council of Agriculture of Taiwan’s efforts to integrate the agriculture and tourism sectors since 1981 was the low income and value of agricultural productivity, which prompted the development of agriculture tourism in rural areas. As per the Leisure Farm Guiding Regulations, agriculture tourism in Taiwan is characterized as an industry that integrates fishery and ranching production, agricultural activities, farmland culture, and farmland lifestyle by utilising natural ecology, bucolic views, and environmental resources. This allows Taiwanese to engage in farming activities during their free time.

There are numerous varieties of recreational agriculture in Taiwan, including tourist orchards, educational farms, and leisure farms. For instance, leisure farming has substantial untapped growth potential despite its current limitations. The advancement of agricultural tourism is fraught with challenges and requirements. The Council of Agriculture designated 31 rural farms to establish leisure farms beginning in 1989; however, only a quarter of these farms subsequently submitted applications for operating licences and presently function as leisure farm enterprises. Farmers have an inadequate understanding of leisure farms’ marketing and administration aspects and a limited comprehension of agriculture travellers and customers (Ornin, 2024).

Furthermore, extensive time lags exist in acquiring financial assistance and the requisite authorization for establishing recreational farms. In addition, the desires and

requirements of visitors (consumers) have grown increasingly complex. Skill and knowledge in leisure farm management have become crucial in current circumstances. To augment profits and income, expand their customer base, and fulfil consumer demands, leisure farms must additionally implement marketing management strategies. Taiwan has successfully shifted from its traditional model of agricultural production to one that combines agriculture with entertainment and experiences, transforming it into a one-of-a-kind agritourism destination that annually attracts many tourists. As of July 31st, 2017, Taiwan had eighty-two designated agritourism zones. The leisure farm model is the most prevalent, with approximately 400 registered farms offering experiential learning opportunities for travellers to gain knowledge about agriculture.

Additionally, a website that offers comprehensive information on agritourism in Taiwan was introduced, featuring content in both English and Japanese, to broaden the outreach to prospective target clients. In Taiwan, agritourism zones are categorized according to their sizes and categories to facilitate government oversight and assistance in promoting the development of agritourism by farmers, capitalizing on local advantages. Government-issued regulations provide assistance to businesses to generate employment opportunities, augment local income, and allow tourists to experience the agricultural way of life (Kuo et al., 2024; Lin et al., 2020). Consequently, this research aims to investigate the strategic tourism attraction management for agritourism destinations in Taiwan.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine and gain a deeper comprehension of the progression of agritourism in Taiwan.
2. To determine the level of visitor contentment regarding the agritourism destination's performance.
3. To investigate the appeal of agritourism destinations in Taiwan after the pandemic crisis.

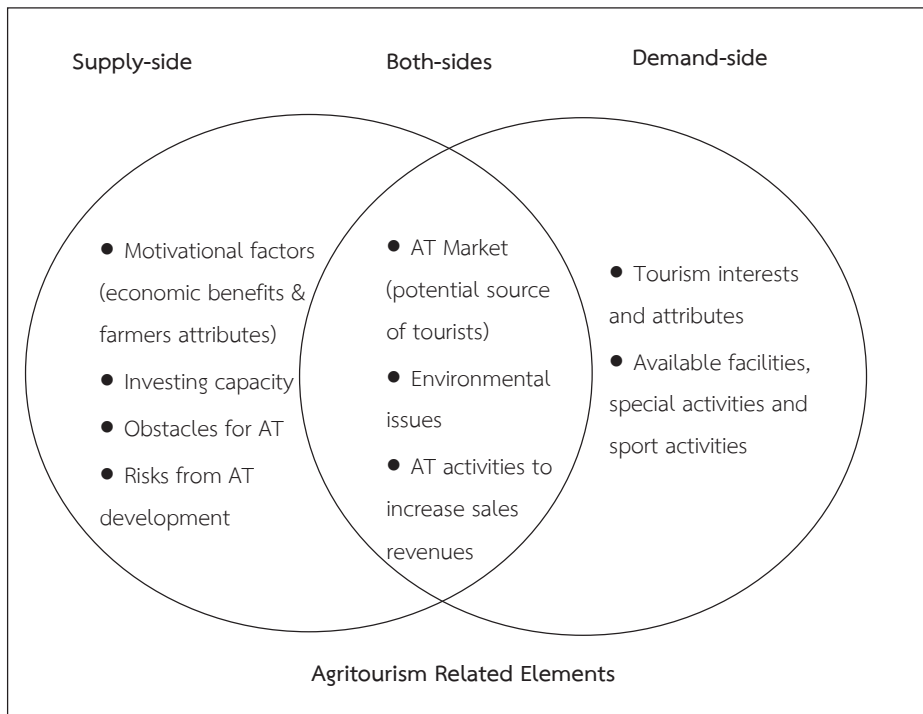
Literature Review

Agritourism is required to generate economic, social, and ecological sustainability. Consequently, farms ought to strive to steer the provision of the agritourism approach by generating numerous economic, sociocultural, and environmental advantages—benefits that extend beyond the individual farmer to the greater society. Nevertheless, the progression of agritourism exhibits variability. The variations in carrying capacity, destination

connectivity, categories of accessible attractions, and level of government support cause substantial disparities between regions. Thus, it is necessary to determine the general implications for agritourism development in light of the supply and demand for such development. Given that agritourism is still in its nascent stage in developing nations, it is imperative to comprehend the requisite conditions and critical factors that must be scrutinised to facilitate its development and modification. Consequently, guidelines for developing agritourism can be evaluated from the perspectives of supply, demand, and both (Figure 1) (Bhatta & Ohe, 2020).

Aspects that encourage farmers to establish agritourism, such as economic factors or their characteristics, farmers' investment capacities, and challenges and dangers associated with agritourism development, are encompassed in supply-side perspectives. Similarly, the demand for agritourism can vary according to the characteristics of the visitors themselves, including their spending capacity, time availability, and expectations. Tourists' interests, including those related to demographics and society, may differ (Bhatta & Ohe, 2020).

Additionally, the attributes of travellers can influence the choice of a specific form of agritourism, as their motivations for participating in such activities may vary depending on the characteristics of the destination. For example, individuals visiting for educational purposes or on family vacations may have distinct expectations compared to those searching for culinary or adventurous experiences. Additional factors can be evaluated from both the supply and demand sides. Environmental factors, activities to increase sales revenue, access to farms, and agritourism activities can all impact suppliers and tourists (Bhatta & Ohe, 2020). Sustainable tourism in agrotourism emphasizes environmentally friendly practices that enhance local agricultural communities' economic and social well-being. This approach focuses on environmental conservation, community engagement, cultural preservation, and financial viability by integrating agricultural experiences into tourism. Sustainable agrotourism allows visitors to connect with local farming cultures while supporting local economies and preserving ecosystems (Woods, 2006). Academic literature indicates that agrotourism can promote sustainable development, demonstrating its capacity to benefit rural areas and the environment (Kasim, 2007; R. Sharpley & J. Sharpley, 1997).

Figure 1*Important Elements for Agritourism Development (AT=Agritourism)***Research Methodology**

The study investigates Taiwan's agritourism sector, focusing on the perspectives of proprietors and administrators of agritourism destinations through focus groups. A combination of convenience and purposive sampling techniques is employed, allowing for selecting participants based on accessibility and relevance. As articulated by Vaus, the research design is established to ensure that the gathered evidence effectively addresses the research inquiries, distinguishing the design as a methodological framework rather than merely a data collection tool. Primary data is collected via unstructured and semi-structured interviews, providing respondents with the opportunity to share their insights freely. In contrast, secondary data is sourced from existing literature, reports from the Taiwan Agritourism Association, and relevant research documents. The analysis will apply statistical methods for quantitative data and descriptive techniques for qualitative insights, aiming to construct a comprehensive understanding of the agritourism phenomenon in Taiwan. This explanatory and naturalistic approach seeks to authentically portray the experiences and perceptions related to agritourism, establishing a foundation for further exploration of the topic.

Research Population

To ensure that the focus group fully understood the development strategy of agritourism and was experienced in the implementation of innovation activities, purposive sampling was used for selecting focus groups, including Experts in agritourism in Taiwan, proprietors; administrators of agritourism

Sample Size

Qualitative research will be done through focus groups. Referring to Krueger (2014) In “Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research (5th ed.)”, the recommended sample size for focus groups is 6 to 12, which ensures both diversity in the discussion and sufficient time for each participant to speak (Krueger, 2014). Therefore, the sample size for this study is 10.

Sample Group

This study’s sample consists of experts, proprietors, and administrators of agritourism in Taiwan. The information discussed concerns Regularizing and upgrading the recreational farm industry, developing experiential niche agricultural activities, Marketing agritourism to tourists abroad, Increasing tourist numbers to local areas, and Providing subsidies to support agribusiness enterprises.

Data Collection

The main data collection methods during a focus group discussion include audio and tape recording, note-taking and participant observation (Stewart et al., 2007). However, each of these methods presents different advantages and disadvantages and researchers should consider context-specific issues in selecting a method of data collection (Krueger, 1994; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Regardless of the number of focus group discussion meetings, it is essential to consider the duration of the meetings. Participants are likely to suffer from fatigue when discussions are more extended. The rule of thumb is c. 1–2 hours, based on the complexity of the topic under investigation, the number of questions and the number of participants.

Results and Discussion

Agritourism is a burgeoning sector in Taiwan, bolstered by the nation's substantial and congested urban populace. These inhabitants frequently visit agritourism farms to engage in agricultural tasks, such as fruit picking, and to escape the bustle of Taiwan's major cities (Liang et al., 2021). As defined by Phillip et al. (2010), Agritourism is a form of commercial enterprise that integrates agricultural activities with tourism to attract visitors to a farm or other agrarian setting to entertain or educate them while generating revenue for the farm enterprise. In Taiwan, agritourism is a thriving industry. *According to COA completed amendments to "regulations for the guidance and administration of recreational agriculture" to help legalize recreational farms (2006)*, licenses were issued to 486 leisure farms across Taiwan as of 2020. A cross-section of a catalogue of agribusiness enterprises, as compiled by the Taiwan Leisure Farm Development Association (TLFDA), is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

List of Agritourism Businesses Supported by Taiwan's Government

Agritourism Enterprise Type	Farm Name	Farm Location	Farm Size	Year of Establishment	Activities
Farm	Toucheng Leisure Farm	Yilan County	>120 ha	1979	Rice culture exhibition; orchids, DIY fruit-processing
	Sanfu Leisure Farm	Yilan County	14 ha	1989	Pomelo cultivation; pomelo byproducts
	Lucky Time Leisure Farm	Taoyuan County	1.5 ha	2011	Rice-farming
Fram	Chienhu Chuanchi Ecological Farm	New Taipei City	10 ha	1987	Ecological fish farm
	Mei-Jia Tea Garden	Taipei City	2.5 ha	1987	Tea farm
	Bamboo Culture Park	Nantou	1.92 ha	1997	Bamboo farm and living museum
Forestry	Dakeng Leisure Farm	Tainan city	10.62 ha	1989	Chicken farm; Formosan Silka deer farm
	Forest 18 Leisure Farm	Nantou County	1.3 ha	1999	Eucalyptus farm
	Long Yun Farm	Chiayi County	400 ha	2001	Bamboo shoots and tea farm
	Wuhxiu Leisure Farm	Nantou County	>10 ha	2005	Bamboo and tea farm
	Li Chuan Aquafarm	Hualien County	104 ha	1971	Freshwater clam farm
Fishery	Haha Fish	Changhua County	50 ha	2009	Beach seining, shrimp catching, and clam digging
	Xiang He Leisure Fish Farm	Chiayi County	100 ha	2008	Fish farm

Table 1 (Cont.)

Agritourism Enterprise Type	Farm Name	Farm Location	Farm Size	Year of Establishment	Activities
Fishery	Shuei Yue Leisure Blue Whale Fish Hu	Hsinchu	481 ha	2008	Industrial-style fish farm
	Orz Shrimp Club	Yunlin County	1 ha	2015	Fish farm
Husbandry	Flying Cow Ranch	Miaoli County	120 ha	1975	Cow ranch
	Tainan Duck Leisure Farm	Tainan City	3 ha	2007	Duck farm
	Nong Chun Chen Ecological Education Farm	Kaohsiung City	5 ha	2000	Educational chicken plus Butterfly farm
	Honey Museum	Yunlin County	4.62 ha	2006	Bee farm and museum
Husbandry	Hwayi Leisure Farm	Kaohsiung	2.5 ha	2014	Demonstration goat ranch

Source: Hsieh and Antoine (2023)

Agritourism is a long-standing sector in Taiwan, dating back to 1979 when one of the earliest farms was established. In Taiwan, recreational farms are abundant in variety and provide a vast array of activities. Such establishments as living farm museums, fish farms, produce orchard farms, animal sanctuaries, bee farms, and tea farms are among them. Specific farms exhibit considerable scale, exemplified by the Long Yun Farm's expansive 400 ha. In contrast, others conform to the prototypical family farm size in Taiwan, measuring no more than 2 ha, as in the Forest 18 Leisure Farm case. As of 2019, COA completes amendments to "regulations for the guidance and administration of recreational agriculture" to help legalize recreational farms (2006) reported that 27.8 million tourists visited destinations for leisure and pastoral travel, of which 77,000 were international. Furthermore, these excursions generated a production value of NT\$10.9 billion, equivalent to approximately \$341 million. The analysis of policy local community-based agritourism from the focus group is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Analysis of Policy Local Community-Based Agritourism

Administrators of Agritourism In Taiwan Answer	Policy Local Community-Based Agritourism									
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1. Regularizing and upgrading the recreational farm industry	√	√	√	√		√		√		√
2. Developing experiential niche agricultural activities	√		√		√	√		√	√	
3. Marketing agritourism to for tourists abroad	√	√	√		√	√			√	
4. Increasing tourist numbers to local areas	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
5. Providing subsidies to support agribusiness enterprises.	√		√	√		√	√		√	√

The Role of Agritourism in Rural Development

Agritourism has been recognized as an essential pillar of alternative agriculture. Furthermore, it has been linked to values and strategies that promote sustainable development, including value-added production, the direct marketing of agricultural products, and assistance for small producers and rural development (Holland et al., 2022; Joo et al., 2013; Leelapattana & Thongma, 2022). Numerous justifications exist for farmers implementing agritourism, as documented in the literature. The factors mentioned earlier comprise the following: 1. heightened endorsement of environmentally friendly and sustainable development endeavours (Pratt et al., 2022), 2. the imperative for farmers to achieve more excellent stability and diversification (McGehee and Kim (2004), an increased aspiration to bolster employment opportunities and revenue inflows into local economies to support rural communities. Existing literature has demonstrated that agritourism has effectively addressed a number of the difficulties encountered by small-scale producers. The objectives above encompass enhancing the financial viability of small farms (Schilling et al. (2012), augmenting the household incomes of farmers, safeguarding ethno-culinary heritage, and advancing sustainability.

Agriculture in East Asian nations (specifically, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and China) presents distinct challenges and attributes compared to Western countries. Small family farms and smallholders frequently dominate agriculture in these nations; farms often span between one and three hectares, as in Japan (COA completes amendments to “regulations for the guidance and administration of recreational agriculture” to help legalize recreational farms, 2006; USDA, 2020). These nations also encounter comparable challenges, including the diminishing significance of agriculture in the domestic economy, labour constraints caused by rural emigration, and the aging population (Puchala & Staveley, 2019). Nevertheless, these challenges have been brought about both directly and indirectly by increased industrialization and urbanization. Paradoxically, these developments have also created novel prospects in agritourism. Much of the agritourism market in East Asian nations consists of highly urbanized populations. East Asian policymakers are becoming more cognizant of the potential of agritourism to revitalize farmers’ incomes and support agriculture (Awan et al., 2016; Chang, 2011; Hiramatsu, 2023)

Although Taiwan hosts limited commercial agritourism enterprises, the modest family farm remains the prevailing farm model nationwide. On average, a family farm spans an area of 1-2 ha (COA completes amendments to “regulations for the guidance and administration of recreational agriculture” to help legalize recreational farms, 2006). Family

farms in Taiwan encounter distinctive obstacles that necessitate the formulation of approaches to enhance income diversification and foster interest in the agricultural vocation among future generations. Taiwan's policymakers have recognized the potential of agritourism as a means to address these challenges.

Agritourism as a Preferred Tourism Model in the Post-COVID-19 Period

According to the Global Web Index on GlobalWebIndex (2020), more than forty per cent of the world's population remains optimistic that they will travel within the next six months in the post-COVID-19 era, despite the worldwide tourism industry crisis. Although tourists are highly motivated to utilize tourism services, they are incredibly cautious about tourism models that do not prioritize their health and safety (Williams & Baláz, 2013). Present-day travellers wishing to embark on journeys after COVID-19 exercise extreme caution regarding their and their family's health. Consequently, they would support a tourism paradigm that mitigates the risk of contracting the coronavirus.

Many tourists are now more interested in domestic travel to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and infection. This is due to the widespread belief among the general public that international travel has been the primary cause of the coronavirus outbreak. There has been a significant increase in public interest regarding domestic goods and services, including individuals seeking to travel for educational, recreational, and leisure purposes (Wojcieszak-Zbierska et al., 2020). Many individuals who have indicated a desire to travel in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic have endorsed agritourism as a model of domestic tourism that mitigates the likelihood of contracting the virus (Gössling et al., 2021).

Agritourism frequently mandates a restricted number of visitors within a specified period. Thus, the potential for coronavirus infection, often amplified in communal settings, is circumvented. Additionally, agritourism exclusively depends on locally produced agricultural goods, which are more likely to attract visitors than imported products designated as coronavirus-infected. Agritourism-providing organic farms feature these regionally sourced goods (Srisomyong, 2010). According to a study conducted in Italy by Rusciano et al. (2020), traveller preferences have shifted towards procuring more affordable fresh agricultural produce compared to what is available in supermarkets. Agritourism is a secure tourism model with a reduced likelihood of contracting coronavirus due to its uncomplicated operations and domestication attributes (Wojcieszak-Zbierska et al., 2020).

As a form of domestic travel, agritourism is predominately supported by individuals who are not inherently restricted from doing so due to the widespread relaxation of local

restrictions on a global scale. Domestic travellers' apprehension regarding coronavirus infection is significantly diminished or entirely eradicated, according to Schaal and Matthews (2020), because agritourism facilities are sometimes accessible from their backyards. Consequently, excursions would not invariably require visitors to undertake extensive journeys and circumvent engagements with sizable communities.

Furthermore, visits to agritourism destinations can be completed in a single day, eliminating the need to make lodging arrangements and restricting the duration of stay (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013). This approach is thought to mitigate the potential for contracting the coronavirus. In addition to being a sustainable method of promoting local agricultural services and production that generates substantial revenue, the localization of agritourism serves as an economic recovery strategy for rural communities experiencing economic decline. Domestic visitors to agritourism facilities in Finland (Gössling et al., 2021 Wojcieszak-Zbierska et al., 2020) are more inclined to partake in brief excursions due to the minimal health hazards involved. This increasing interest in agritourism in the years following COVID-19 indicates the future of tourism provisions in nations.

Agritourism Development in the Post-COVID-19 Period: Challenges and Solutions

Both domestic and international visitors continue to harbour concerns regarding potentially acquiring contagious illnesses (Williams & Baláz, 2013). Despite the considerable attention garnered by agritourism in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, apprehensions regarding health and safety remain prevalent on agricultural properties where agritourism endeavours are implemented. Agritourism frequently facilitates increased human-wildlife and livestock-animal contact, a circumstance that may contribute to the transmission of the coronavirus disease (Wu et al., 2017). Due to the high risk of disease transmission associated with tourism, all tourism activities necessitate extreme vigilance (Hon, 2013; Nicola et al., 2020).

Agriculture food production has historically significantly transmitted COVID-19, SARS, and MERS (Labonte et al., 2011). Hence, effective strategizing for agritourism after the COVID-19 pandemic is critical

For its sustained viability and prosperity, notwithstanding encouraging empirical evidence of tourist preference. Initially, it is the responsibility of agricultural entrepreneurs and producers overseeing agritourism centres to ensure strict adherence to safety and health protocols. For instance, it is a proven fact that the proliferation of any contagious illness is accelerated in areas frequented by sizable gatherings. In most agritourism establishments,

inadequate service delivery is a common consequence of high visitor numbers (Srisomyong, 2010).

Daily visitor cutoff times must be established and rigorously observed to rectify this circumstance. Prior reservations are required for visits to agritourism sites to ensure the necessary arrangements are in place to deliver high-quality services to guests. Eshun and Tettey (2014) recommend that farmers and administrators of agritourism be provided with sufficient training to address safety and health concerns to instill confidence in visitors and eliminate the risk of contracting infectious diseases. It is imperative that hand-sanitizing supplies and equipment, including thermometer firearms, be conveniently located at the entrances of the agritourism facility. It is essential to disinfect the entire agritourism centre daily by placing hand sanitizers and hand-washing stations at strategic locations within the centre at brief intervals.

Also, proper social distancing protocols must be followed to prevent the coronavirus's spread and/or outbreak. Meals meticulously prepared and cooked in a sanitary environment must be served at agritourism sites. Utilizing locally cultivated agricultural products is advisable in the execution of all traditional culinary procedures, while visitors and service providers are required to don facial shields consistently. Displaying a sanitary and epidemiological safety certificate obtained from the Food and Drugs Authority under the Ministry of Health Wojcieszak-Zbierska et al. (2020) visitor would instil confidence and reassurance that the agritourism establishment has completed all stringent health and sanitation evaluations.

Agritourism Policies in Taiwan

To execute its rural revitalization initiative, the Taiwan government has enacted several policies. The policies mentioned above pertain to the following goals: 1) standardization and enhancement of the leisure farm sector; 2) promotion of experiential niche agriculture activities; 3) distribution of agritourism information to international tourists; 4) augmentation of tourist influx to domestic regions; and 5) provision of subsidies to bolster agribusiness enterprises. The initiatives included in Table 5 are those implemented by the COA as part of its most recent rural revitalization strategy. To promote agritourism in Taiwan, the organization has given precedence to marketing, public relations, and the establishment of several hundred rural social enterprises.

Policymakers in Taiwan have incorporated agritourism as a critical component of their initiatives to revitalize rural areas. The National Development Council (NDC) of Taiwan intends

to enact land use regulations for tourism. At present, the ability of farmers and indigenous villages to engage in the marketing and sale of excursions is prohibited, a regulation that “restricts their development”. At this time, the NDC is engaged in deliberations regarding the amendment of this legislation. Furthermore, “Tourism 2020-Taiwan’s Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy-Program for Building an Experiential Tourism Environment” is one of the agritourism-related revitalization initiatives.

Tourism 2020 aims to leverage the increasing significance of digitalization, localization, and globalization in the tourism industry. The primary destinations it caters to are local and regional tourism markets, encompassing Australia, Vietnam, Taiwan, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, and Thailand. The approach aims to foster intelligent tourism, encourage experiential tourism, broaden and diversify market presence, and enhance domestic tourism. The motif of localization is well-suited to facilitate rural revitalization due to its reliance on the indigenous communities’ resources and culture. Given the critical nature of agriculture for these rural communities, agritourism seems like a viable strategy to mitigate the challenges currently confronting Taiwan’s rural regions.

Table 3

A List of Policies Implemented by the Council of Agriculture (COA) for Local Community-Based Agritourism

Objectives	Policies Implemented by the COA
Regularizing and upgrading the recreational farm industry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Awarded licenses to 486 leisure farms by the end of 2020 2. Designated 96 “recreational agriculture areas” 3. Implemented a system to evaluate and score leisure farms
Developing experiential niche agricultural activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guided the establishment of 114 Tian Mama’s cuisine units to link tourism to the local food industry 2. Selected 30 rural souvenir and special agricultural products to differentiate and “localize” agro-tourism destinations. 3. Created 69 themed travel itineraries (e.g., seafood, flowers, rural kitchen, etc.)

Table 3 (Cont.)

Objectives	Policies Implemented by the COA
Developing experiential niche agricultural activities	4. Developed “fruit travel” tours that coordinated tourist trips with locales famous for certain fruits when in season
Marketing agritourism to tourists abroad	1. Provided modern websites in multiple languages (English, Chinese, and Japanese) to promote agritourism (ezgo.coa.gov.tw) 2. Targeted New Southbound Policy partner countries, such as Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, etc. 3. Catering to the taste, food, and cultural requirements of Muslim visitors
Increasing tourist numbers to local areas	1. Marketed agritourism destinations to locals and foreigners (27.8 million tourist journeys to rural leisure areas). 2. Promoted 283 ticket packages for independent travelers
Providing subsidies to support agribusiness enterprises	80 firms received NT\$104 to 127 million in investment as of 2017

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to conduct a comprehensive review of the empirical and theoretical literature concerning agritourism to determine whether it could be recommended as a secure and capable domestic tourism model that can stimulate the economies of rural communities during the phase following COVID-19 when countries are gradually easing restrictions on human mobility. The research results validate that agritourism is the favoured tourism framework during this period of the coronavirus pandemic because of its focus on locally produced goods, adherence to domestic attributes, and limited visitor influx.

The research has demonstrated the considerable advantages that agritourism offers in bolstering rural economies, fostering the growth of local craft industries, safeguarding the esteemed cultural heritage of rural communities, and engaging young people in agricultural production. Nevertheless, to ensure the continued success of agritourism as a viable source of

income for rural communities, all COVID-19 safety protocols must be consistently followed. Each country's Ministry of Food and Agriculture is responsible for supporting producers and providing them with the necessary training to manage agritourism establishments effectively. Although establishing agritourism facilities does not entail significant operating expenses, many rural farmers who own such establishments are indigent and would necessitate financial assistance to commence operations. Governments must provide rural producers with such support via entrepreneurship assistance programs and initiatives. Without delay, the Ministry of Foods and Agriculture must establish community engagement committees for agritourism development. These committees should provide technical support, training, and mentoring to farmers interested in converting their agricultural properties into agritourism establishments. Such assistance is crucial for farmers to qualify for and apply for entrepreneurship assistance programmed. Implementing these initiatives would assist rural farmers in understanding the sustainable and innovative methods of establishing agritourism centres on their farms to recover from the financial devastation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further Studies

this study provides key insights into the strategic management of agritourism in Taiwan, further research is needed to enhance industry sustainability. Future studies could focus on comparative analyses with other regions, quantitative economic impact assessments, and long-term evaluations of post-pandemic recovery. Additionally, exploring the role of technology, evolving consumer preferences, policy frameworks, and sustainability initiatives will be crucial. Research on crisis management strategies can also strengthen agritourism's resilience against future disruptions. These areas will contribute to the continued growth and strategic development of agritourism.

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