Agritourism from the perspective of providers and visitors: a typology-based study

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, international studies have improved understanding of how agritourism is practiced. However, studies are founded on a range of definitions based on different combinations of key characteristics, which have been synthesised in our recent typology (Phillip, Hunter, & Blackstock, 2010). The typology provides a foundation for this study, which further develops conceptual understanding of agritourism by integrating empirical understandings of agritourism with the original typology, which was based on the literature. Our revised typology presented here incorporates three discriminating characteristics, which are fundamentally consistent with the original version: the nature of interaction between visitors and agriculture; whether the product is based on a working farm; and whether the visitor experiences authentic working agriculture. This paper makes two important contributions to the agritourism literature: 1) it integrates stakeholder perspectives to the agritourism literature; and 2) it exemplifies and examines one way that the typology can be used to underpin further agritourism research.

1. Introduction

The concept of agritourism has been discussed in a variety of ways in the international literature relating to tourism and rural development. However, limited attention has been given to understanding the key features that define agritourism as a concept. This suggests a vital step has been missed in the systematic study of agritourism in practice, despite the importance of the link between theory and practice being recognised two decades ago (Evans & Ilbery, 1992). Studies continue to apply wide-ranging definitions of agritourism resulting in a ‘complex and confusing picture’ (Phillip et al., 2010). In our earlier paper, a proposed ‘agritourism typology’ identifies key characteristics of agritourism\textsuperscript{2} for the first time (a working farm; contact with agricultural activity; authenticity of tourists agricultural experience) and applies them in a systematic way to demonstrate a series of agritourism ‘types’ that incorporate the wide range of products discussed across the literature (Phillip et al., 2010) (see Fig. 1). The agritourism typology makes a significant contribution to the literature by providing an effective structure for differentiating between agritourism products. This allows authors to position their work in a meaningful way (e.g. Gillespie, 2011) and provides a coherent starting point for further research.
study to improve understanding of agritourism as a concept and practice. However, our original typology did not include input from key stakeholders involved in the everyday practice of agritourism. This input is fundamentally important in order to ensure that “ordinary, everyday common sense consciousness [is at the] centre of social theory” (Turner & Rojek, 2001:150). The research presented in this paper is based on a case study, which investigates how agritourism is understood by those directly involved, i.e. providers (including farmers, farm families, and off-farm suppliers of agritourism products) and visitors (including local and tourist markets). Consideration of both supply and demand-side perspectives is an important feature of this study for a number of reasons. First, a key principle underlying all tourism is the inseparability of production from consumption, which means visitors co-produce tourism products at the time of consumption (Cooper & Hall, 2008; Smith, 1994; Swarbrooke, 2002). Second, the agritourism literature is dominated by studies that focus on aspects of agritourism supply (e.g. Bowler et al., 1996; Evans & Ilbery, 1992; Forbord, Schermer, & Grießmair, 2012; Ilbery, Bowler, Clark, Crockett, & Shaw, 1998; McGehee, 2007; McGehee & Kim, 2004; McGehee, Kim, & Jennings, 2007; Nickerson, Black, & McCool, 2001; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Sharpley & Vass, 2006; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Demand-side perspectives are more limited in the literature (see Fleischer & Tchetchik, 2005; McIntosh & Bonnemann, 2006; Pearce, 1990 for examples). However, there were no published studies of agritourism from both supply and demand-perspectives when this study was carried out.

The primary objective of this paper is to address the gap in the literature described above, by investigating the perspectives of agritourism providers and visitors in twenty-five locations across Scotland. These perspectives allowed us to make revisions to the original agritourism typology, thus illustrating how it can provide a “more solid foundation for future empirical research” (Phillip et al., 2010:757). An additional objective is to consider the wider implications of using the agritourism typology as a tool to facilitate agritourism research. The paper therefore illustrates how the agritourism typology can be utilised in empirical research and how such an approach can contribute to the debates in the literature. Following a brief literature review, the methodology section includes details of how the typology-based approach was applied in this study. Subsequently, the results sections discuss our revisions to the typology and participant perceptions of its three key discriminators, which are fundamentally consistent with those in the original typology. Finally, the implications of this study are discussed, conclusions are presented and suggestions for further agritourism research building on the agritourism typology-based approach are made.

2. Literature review

Over the past two decades, agritourism has been discussed in a variety of contexts in the international literature. Within this literature a variety of definitions have been used, which has resulted in a somewhat chaotic picture in terms of a basic conceptual understanding of what agritourism entails. Because agritourism lies at the nexus of several bodies of literature, the relative emphasis of definitions often corresponds with the topic being studied. For example, the implications of farm diversification are often reflected in the literature relating to agriculture and rural development (e.g. Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; Ilbery et al., 1998), whereas the importance of visitor experience is more often reflected in the tourism literature (e.g. Clarke, 1999; McIntosh & Bonnemann, 2006). Although these are logical distinctions, it was this emphasis on different characteristics of agritourism that prompted us to develop a conceptual typology for defining agritourism (Phillip et al., 2010).

Our original agritourism typology identified three key debates that relate to the ways that agritourism has been defined. These are: 1) whether or not the product is based on a working farm; 2) the nature of contact that visitors have with agriculture; and 3) the authenticity of visitors’ agricultural experience (Phillip et al., 2010). In the context of the first of these three debates, a working farm was the most frequently cited requirement of agritourism in the literature (e.g. Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; Clarke, 1999; McGehee & Kim, 2004; Ollenburg, 2006; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Wall, 2000; Weaver & Fennell, 1997). However, studies where a working farm is not required were also identified (Fleischer & Tchetchik, 2005; Jaworski & Lawson, 2005). In the second debate, the tangibility of agriculture in the context of visitor experiences of agritourism is discussed. Distinctions are drawn between: agritourism products such as farm accommodation and activity products that are simply
based in agricultural settings (e.g. Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; Bowler et al., 1996; Evans & Ilbery, 1989; Ilbery et al., 1998; Oppermann, 1996; Walford, 2001; Wall, 2000); agritourism that incorporates agricultural produce or commodities into the visitor product, for example, in crop mazes, food processing, farm shops and cafes (e.g. Butts, McGeorge, & Briedenhann, 2005; Gladstone & Morris, 2000; Sonnino, 2004); and thirdly, agritourism products where agriculture per se is a noteworthy feature of the product being consumed, through activities such as harvesting crops or having contact with farm animals (e.g. Di Domenico & Miller, 2007; Marques, 2006; McIntosh & Bonnemann, 2006). Finally, in the context of the third debate, an important distinction is identified between products where visitors experience genuine (or ‘authentic’) agricultural activity (e.g. WWOOFing) and those where agriculture is ‘staged’ in some way for visitors’ benefit (e.g. model farms). These three debates underpin key discriminators in the agritourism typology, resulting in five agritourism types (Fig. 1) that incorporate the range of products discussed across the literature as a whole.

In the context of the authenticity debate, the agritourism typology drew on MacCannell (1973). A degree of confusion can occur between the concepts of ‘object’ and ‘experiential’ authenticity (Wang, 1988). Object authenticity relates to the genuineness of artefacts or events, whereas experiential authenticity relates to ways in which individual visitors interpret what they are seeing or experiencing (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). The term authenticity in this paper relates to object authenticity, which is consistent with the way it is used in the original typology (Phillip et al., 2010) and MacCannell (1973). A range of studies of object authenticity can be found in the literature, covering the natural environment (Cohen, 2002), a local community (Cole, 2007), or a traditional event or ritual (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003). In this study, ‘agriculture’ is the toured object. A toured object (e.g. model farm) does not have to be ‘authentic’ for a visitor to perceive that they have had an ‘authentic experience’. This is consistent with Cohen’s (1988:383) suggestion that commoditisation resulting in staged authentic agriculture for tourism does not necessarily “destroy the meaning” for visitors. Although there may be negative connotations associated with ‘staging’, it is often synonymous with creating capacity (through reproduction or organisation) for visitors to experience agriculture.

The agritourism typology has been used to inform and underpin research in a variety of international contexts (e.g. Gil Arroyo, Barbieri, & Rozier Rich, 2013; Gillespie, 2011; Kotulek, 2011; Nielsen, Aae Nissen, & Just, 2010; SNH, 2011; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Interestingly, these studies consider different aspects of the typology; for example, Kotulek (2011) refers to ‘working farm direct contact authentic’ agritourism in their conceptualisation of WWOOFing; whereas Nielsen et al. (2010) advocate the ‘analytical value’ of the typology, but find the inclusion of authenticity in the typology to be ‘challenging’ in the context of their own research. A number of these studies also refer directly to the typology in their research methodology (Gillespie, 2011) and/or in key research objectives (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013). The agritourism typology is empirically-tested as a central component of Gil Arroyo et al.’s (2013) study, which aims to further develop conceptual understanding of agritourism in the American context. Thus, the typology serves as a flexible conceptual framework, which can be used in a variety of ways; such as to bring greater understanding to agritourism in context. Gil Arroyo et al. (2013) suggest that further context-specific empirical-testing should be conducted, in order to establish which aspects are relevant in particular localities. In the next section, the methodology used to implement the agritourism typology in the context of Scotland is described.

3. Methodology

This research was undertaken in five geographical areas across Scotland, incorporates the perspectives of agritourism providers and visitors in twenty-five locations across Scotland, and includes a wide range of agritourism and product types. This paper is based on a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews, which were guided by the original agritourism typology (Phillip et al., 2010) in a number of ways: 1) to underpin participant selection; 2) to inform the thematic guides used in interviews; and 3) as a foundation for analysis.

The agritourism typology was used as one of three purposive selection criteria to identify providers (and their visitors) to participate in the research. In other words, providers were selected from the five categories of agritourism illustrated in Fig. 1: non-working farm agritourism; working farm passive contact agritourism; working farm indirect contact agritourism; working farm direct contact staged agritourism; and working farm direct contact authentic agritourism. The two other criteria that informed selection of providers were: product type (accommodation, day trip and working farm stay providers) and geographical area. Fig. 2 illustrates the five geographical areas where data was collected: North Aberdeenshire, South Aberdeenshire, Perthshire, the Trossachs and mainland Argyll. These areas were selected to ensure that differences in geography, agriculture, local culture, proximity to cities and tourism potential across Scotland were taken into account.

3 i.e. Participation in ‘World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms’ (www. wwoof.org).
Fig. 2 also illustrates that one provider of each agritourism type was selected in each of the five areas (twenty-five providers in total), which included accommodation (farmhouse bed and breakfasts, holiday cottages, caravan and camping sites); outdoor activities (children's parks, trail riding, quad biking); retail and hospitality (farmers market, farm shops and cafés); farm attractions (model farm, farm tours); and working farm stay providers. Ten accommodation providers, ten day-trip providers, and five working farm stay providers were selected.

The individual characteristics of providers varied considerably, in terms of agriculture types (livestock, arable, mixed, organic, hill farm); farm sizes (between 4 and 54,000 acres; mean 200–300 acres); employee numbers (from 1 to 220 staff; predominately <10); and visitor numbers (<10–35,000 visitors per year; varying according to product type). Provider interviews were conducted in the winter months at the start of 2009. Subsequently, one visitor was selected for interview at each provider location, during a return visit to each location in the summer of 2009. At the ten day-trip providers, visitors were selected at random by the researcher. However, accommodation and working farm stay providers identified visitors that were willing and able to participate in interviews. The difference in recruitment tactics reflects the nature of products involved (i.e. overall visitor numbers and duration of stay). Greater difficulties in recruiting accommodation visitors were experienced, bringing the total number of visitor participants down to twenty-two. However, this was not believed to be a problem as experience indicated that saturation was far outweighed by the importance of ‘saturation’ (i.e. “the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data”, Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). We were satisfied that saturation was reached in the forty-seven interviews conducted, in terms of the themes, commonalities and differences in perceptions being identified.

The importance of depth and detail, in terms of exploring participants understanding of agritourism, underpinned the selection of a qualitative approach in this research. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they are most suitable for collecting “detailed, information rich and extensive” data (Snape & Spencer, 2003:5) that can be used to understand social practices such as agritourism. Interviews allowed us to explore provider and visitor understandings of agritourism through a number of stages. First, participants were asked to explain what they understood agritourism to mean, which also involved discussion of other terms, such as ‘farm tourism’. This first stage allowed them to describe their perceptions of agritourism in an open way that was uninfluenced by existing ideas of the researcher. Second, participants were prompted for their perceptions in relation to the three characteristics in the agritourism typology, which allowed them to discuss whether they believe them to be important in their understanding of agritourism. Third, participants were asked to consider the original typology as a whole, using a photo-board to illustrate the different agritourism types in association with examples. This provided a further opportunity for participants to consider the things that they found most important in defining the concept and an additional prompt for them to consider it in terms of the breadth of products that have been discussed in the agritourism literature. Visualisation of agritourism in the photo-board also stimulated further recall by participants and allowed them to comment directly on the structure of the original typology. At each stage, participants were asked about their perceptions of agritourism per se, to improve understanding of the concept, as opposed to how agritourism is practiced in Scotland.

Systematic thematic analysis of interview transcripts was conducted using the ‘Framework’ approach (Ritchie, Spencer, & O’Connor, 2003), assisted by NVivo 8 (qualitative data analysis software). This involved going through key stages of data management and establishing descriptive accounts (i.e. ‘coding’ interview transcripts according to themes followed by creating thematic charts that provide an overview of the data) before generating more explanatory accounts based on patterns in the data collected. Ultimately, this resulted in our revisions to the typology.

Using a typology to structure a qualitatively based methodology may suggest an epistemological conflict. This study takes an interpretivist perspective (Snape & Spencer, 2003; Tribe, 2004; Veal, 1997) reflecting the authors’ belief that individual actors interpret and assign meaning to the world in different ways. Therefore, the concept of ‘agritourism’ is understood and defined subjectively by individual actors. However, it is possible to find common themes within multiple individual interpretations of agritourism and to use these to make revisions to the typology. We believe that it is important to recognise that shared understanding can exist between actors in order to improve understanding of concepts such as agritourism. Although the typology we present is representative of our participants’ perceptions of agritourism (i.e. not those of the wider population), recognition of common themes and differences in our case study allows for the concept to be described in a way that is also accessible to policy-makers and practitioners. The synthesis of individual perspectives in this way provides a constructive platform for lessons learned in our case study to be explored, in terms of potential implications for policy and practice.

External structures influence how individuals assign meaning to concepts. A variety of different factors influence individual interpretations of agritourism, such as context (geography, culture), perspective (provision, consumption, regulation), and relationship to the concept (direct stakeholders, general public). Recognising the interplay of structural influences with individual perspectives reflects ‘structuration theory’ (Giddens, 1984). Structuration theory recognises the connectedness of human actions in terms of producing and re-producing social practices and also acknowledges the importance of structural influences on human actions (Goodwin, 1999; Scott & Marshall, 2005; Sewell, 1992; Turner & Rojek, 2001). Structuration theory also provides for “everyday common sense” to be integrated to theory (Turner & Rojek, 2001:150). Thus the paper presents agritourism as a form of social practice, where combined understandings from providers and visitors in our case study are framed and analysed using existing conceptualisations of agritourism from the academic literature. In the next section, our revised typology is presented, followed by discussion of the three key characteristics that underpin it in Section 5.

4. A revised typology for defining agritourism

This research explores how providers and visitors in our case study perceive agritourism, including perceptions of three discriminating features of different types of agritourism products (Phillip et al., 2010):

- A working farm (is the product based on one?)
- Contact with agriculture (is contact passive, indirect or direct?)
- Authenticity of agriculture (is agriculture in the product ‘staged’ or authentic?)

The findings of this case study substantiated the importance of these three characteristics in the context of the agritourism typology. The case study also revealed support for using a typology framework to conceptualise agritourism. This included considerable differentiation made between types of agritourism products (e.g. products with or without direct interaction with agriculture)
and also justification of products being defined as agritourism on the basis of different combinations of criteria. For example, it was suggested that any product based on a working farm could be identified as agritourism. However, participants (visitors in particular, but also providers) also suggested that, although agritourism is normally based on a working farm, there are also circumstances where it can be based in off-farm locations if the product has some degree of interaction with agriculture (e.g. historical associations, educational opportunities).

However, some problems were identified with regard to terminology, structure and categorisation of some products in the original agritourism typology. As a result, the typology has been altered and revisions have been made that integrate our providers and visitors perspectives. Changes to the original typology layout are illustrated in Fig. 3 and the revised typology based on our case study is illustrated in Fig. 4.

The first discriminator in our revised agritourism typology considers the nature of interaction between visitors and agriculture. This discriminator is comparable to the second discriminator in our original typology, which considers the nature of contact with agricultural activity. This change in terminology (from contact to interaction) illustrates a problem identified in the empirical study, whereby some participants interpreted the term ‘contact’ to connote only physical contact. An additional terminology-related problem was confusion over the difference implied by the terms ‘passive’ and ‘indirect’ contact in the original typology. Therefore the revised typology only distinguishes between indirect (which subsumes passive) and direct interaction. It was also suggested that the ‘non-working farm’ agritourism category was too broad and it should be subject to distinction based on the nature of interaction between visitors and agriculture in the product. As a result of this split there are two categories of agritourism products based in non-working farm locations in our revised version.

It is important to note that our revised typology is based on recurring themes in our data collected by means of qualitative case study. Therefore it may only be representative of the perceptions of the twenty-five agritourism providers and their visitors who participated. Different contextual circumstances may have produced different results. Each of the types in our revised typology is described next followed by more detailed discussion of the three discriminators in Section 5.

4.1. Non-working farm indirect interaction agritourism

In our original agritourism typology, ‘non-working farm’ (NWF) agritourism incorporates a broad range of agritourism products that make a connection to farming in some way other than a working farm location. NWF agritourism included products based on agricultural imagery and heritage such as ex-farm properties (e.g. ex-farmhouse accommodation) and also products that demonstrate past and present agricultural practices in off-farm locations (e.g. sheep shearing demonstrations located at a woolen mill). However, the empirical study reinforced the significance of these two fundamentally different branches of NWF agritourism, based on the nature of interaction between visitors and agriculture.

“Perhaps you should still have it...working farm/non-working farm yeah, but ask the same questions of the non-working farm. 'What is the nature of tourist contact with agricultural activity?’ It fits both doesn’t it?”

Sandra4 – non-working farm indirect interaction agritourism provider.

As a result, ‘non-working farm indirect interaction’ (NWFII) agritourism is the first of two agritourism types in our revised typology that are based in non-working farm locations (Fig. 4); ‘non-working farm direct interaction’ (NWFDI) agritourism is described in the next Section.

Accommodation and other tourism activities (e.g. horse riding) based in ex-farm properties are key examples of NWFII agritourism, as are farmers markets, farm shops and restaurants selling local farm produce in nearby towns or villages. Jaworski and Lawson (2005) discuss products that can be classed as NWFII agritourism, more specifically products that build on traditional farming lifestyles and imagery to attract visitors but are not run by farmers. Fleischer and

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4 Pseudonyms used to ensure participants’ anonymity.
Tchetchik (2005) suggest that a working farm is not required from the visitors’ perspective, a finding reflected in our data:

“If the chickens weren’t there and the geese weren’t running around you know… And as I say, it wasn’t even a proper working farm. [Laughs] Even my dad said ‘oh there is a tractor over there, do you think that’s just placed there you know for the look of it’? So yes I suppose that made it agritourism; you know the fact all these things were there. If none of that had been there it would have just been a house in the middle of the countryside.”

Donna – non-working farm indirect interaction agritourism visitor.

Products classified as NWFDI agritourism are arguably the most controversial inclusion in our revised typology based on their likeness to generic rural tourism. It is important that NWFDI is included to ensure that the range of ways that agritourism is understood by our participants is comprehensive. However, it is also important to distinguish this form of agritourism from others in the typology. The drivers of NWFDI agritourism and the potential implications for agritourism policy are quite different from other types of agritourism product – particularly products that are based on working farms related to farm diversification, but also products that include direct interaction with agriculture, and therefore influence visitor perceptions of agriculture practices.

In summary, NWFDI agritourism products are not physically based on working farm properties but make a connection to agricultural or cultural heritage in terms of imagery or location rather than having a direct connection to farm animals, crops, machinery, or processes.

4.2. Non-working farm direct interaction agritourism

‘Non-working farm direct interaction’ (NWFDI) agritourism is the second type resulting from the division of NWF agritourism into two discrete types based on the nature of interaction between visitors and agriculture (see Fig. 3). Products based in off-farm or ex-farm locations, such farming demonstrations, model farms, farm heritage attractions, agricultural shows, and agricultural sales marts could be classified as NWFDI agritourism. In terms of the literature, Di Domenico and Miller (2007:23) provide support for NWFDI agritourism products, stating that it is “sufficient” for farm attractions to be based on former working farms as long as they portray an ‘authentic’ image of agriculture from the visitors’ perspective. Relative to NWFDI agritourism, NWFDI agritourism was perceived by our participants as a more acceptable form of agritourism based on interpretation-based links to agricultural practices (past and present).

“The farming museum is dealing directly with the history of farming. Whereas the B&B… it’s just providing accommodation and that B&B could be located anywhere. It’s just by chance it happens to be located in a former farmhouse.”

Paul – non-working farm direct interaction agritourism provider.

In summary, NWFDI agritourism allows visitors to engage with agriculture in a range of off-farm and formerly working farm settings, often promoting public awareness and understanding of agriculture or agricultural heritage.

4.3. Working farm indirect interaction agritourism

‘Working farm indirect interaction’ (WFII) agritourism in our revised typology (Fig. 4) is an amalgamation of ‘working farm passive contact’ (WFPC) and ‘working farm indirect contact’ (WFIC) agritourism in the original typology (Fig. 3). Products that could be classified as WFII agritourism include: farm-based accommodation (e.g. farmhouse bed and breakfast, self-catering cottages, camping sites); farm shops, cafés and food-processing attractions; outdoor activities (e.g. quad biking, horse riding, country field sports); leisure facilities (e.g. golf driving ranges, fishing ponds, bike tracks); and visitor attractions (e.g. children’s play parks, nature attractions) based on farm land. In the context of farm diversification, WFII agritourism is usually the most logical option available to farmers as it allows them to capitalise on existing farm-based resources in a way that doesn’t interfere with agriculture as a discrete activity.

Participant responses in our case study suggested that WFII agritourism characterises basic understanding of agritourism:

“It’s not just the accommodation providers it’s the likes of the farm shop, or cafés, or open farms or anything like that.”

Jennifer – working farm indirect interaction agritourism provider.
“Whether it’s just having some holiday cottages or whether it’s… You know they have open days, or whether they have full-blown kind of historical working farms.”

Natalie – working farm indirect interaction agritourism visitor.

These examples suggest different degrees of interaction with agriculture, but farm-based tourism products that indirectly interact with agriculture were perceived by our participants to be the most common form of agritourism available. Participants generally believed that direct interaction with agriculture is not necessary in agritourism products as long as they are based in agricultural surroundings; or include interaction with farm people; or incorporate farm produce in the agritourism product. This resonates with many definitions of agritourism in the literature that refer to working farms as a baseline requirement for agritourism without stipulating the need for direct interaction with agriculture in the visitor product (e.g. Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; McGehee & Kim, 2004; Wall, 2000).

In summary, WFDI agritourism comprises an extensive range of generic tourism products based on farm resources and agricultural outputs located in working farm environments.

4.4. Working farm direct staged interaction agritourism

The final two types of agritourism in our revised typology effectively mirror categories in the original typology. ‘Working farm direct staged interaction’ (WFDI) agritourism in the revised typology (Fig. 4) is directly comparable to ‘working farm direct contact staged’ (WFDCS) agritourism in the original version (Fig. 1). The discriminating features underpinning this type of agritourism are direct interaction with agriculture, whereby interaction with farm animals, crops, machinery, or processes are ‘staged’ (i.e. reproduced or organised) for the benefit of tourism (based on MacCannell, 1973). Products such as farm attractions, open farms and farm tours can be classified as WFDI agritourism according to the revised typology.

Our data suggests that there are significant parallels between this type of agritourism and agricultural education, particularly relating to children:

“I would also say it’s about education […] little kids go there and they get exposed to different ways of life. And they understand what…agriculture in the books more visually and more first-hand I guess.”

John – working farm direct authentic interaction agritourism visitor.

“If you go to a farm and you have a sort of ‘learn how to milk a cow’ kind of experience then that’s maybe a bit old fashioned, rather than seeing rows of cows in the milking parlour that you would recognise. But I think that’s a perfectly reasonable starting point because you are learning that milk comes from a cow. That’s really the key thing and then after that we just get a bit more sort of […] and learn about how it’s actually done.”

Natalie – working farm indirect interaction agritourism visitor.

This suggestion is also supported by Wilson (2007) in the context of open farms, whereby opportunities for hands-on experience and practical demonstrations are said to be particularly appealing to children. However, more broadly WFDI agritourism was identified as the provision of opportunities for visitors to experience agriculture in a way that is safe from the intrinsic hazards of authentic working farm activities. There are also circumstances where risk and regulations relating to visitor health and safety inhibit the provision of WFDI products. For example, direct physical interaction between visitors and farm animals may be prevented due to concerns relating to the transmission of disease (Access to Farms, 2012; Pritchard, 2011).

In summary, WFDI agritourism comprises the range of products that allow visitors to interact directly with aspects of farming in a working farm environment. In the context of WFDI agritourism, visitor interaction with agriculture can be defined as ‘staged’ based on physical or temporal variations made to normal working agriculture, which allow visitors to experience it in a safe and accessible manner.

4.5. Working farm direct authentic interaction agritourism

‘Working farm direct authentic interaction’ (WFDAI) agritourism in our revised typology (Fig. 4) is synonymous with ‘working farm direct contact authentic’ (WFDCA) agritourism in the original typology (Fig. 1). WFDAI agritourism is essentially comprised of volunteer tourism in the context of working farms and is based on the premise that visitors have authentic working involvement in the farm and ultimately make a physical investment in the farm economy.

The existing literature relating to WFDAI agritourism is small and awareness of opportunities to participate in WFDAI agritourism is also limited. As a form of tourism, the principles underpinning WFDAI agritourism have been contested based on perceived contradictions between the concept of ‘authenticity’ and definitions of ‘tourism’. However, we argue that ‘tourism’ should not be solely defined in terms of recreational motivations (Cohen, 1979). Therefore WFDAI agritourism (following WFDCA agritourism) is an acceptable inclusion to the typology that is supported by our data.

By nature, WFDAI is an inherently niche form of tourism (e.g. McIntosh & Bonnemann, 2006). Our participants also recognised the alternative nature of WFDAI products:

“It’s organic travel. We wanted to travel a lot because [we] like it, but we know that it’s not good for the environment so we chose a way to travel and to learn English and of course learn about agriculture, but not with impact on [the] environment.”

Charlotte – working farm direct authentic interaction agritourism visitor.

Predominance of the organisation ‘WWOOF’ in the context of the WFDAI agritourism market has resulted in considerable synonymy between WFDAI agritourism and the concept of ‘WWOOFing’. In this context, participants suggested that the degree of labour involved in organic farming makes WFDAI agritourism attractive to providers:

“It’s mostly small farms who do it because of this problem of machinery, bigger farms are run by a few people who are highly expert in doing what they do mechanically and helpers actually just get in the way. Whereas if you are doing a lot of hand weeding and hoeing, and throwing dock in the fields rather than spraying it you can employ someone who is not skilled.”

David – working farm direct authentic interaction agritourism provider.

However WFDAI agritourism is not specifically restricted to organic farming and can also be extended to other types of agriculture that are characterised by their degree of labour intensive-ness, for example seasonal harvesting of fruit and vegetables (Hanson & Bell, 2007; Marques, 2006).

In summary, WFDAI agritourism was conceived as a niche form of tourism, which is based on working farms and provides opportunities for visitors to interact directly with working agricultural practices. In the context of MacCannell’s (1973) continuum of
staged authenticity, WFDAI agritourism is the only type of agritourism that allows visitors to experience agricultural ‘back regions’ in an authentic way.

5. Perceptions of the typological discriminators

This section illustrates the range of perceptions that influenced development of the revised typology. Differences in perceptions are intrinsic to qualitative inquiry and are explored below; including key differences between points of view expressed by our providers and visitors and the relative importance assigned to different characteristics by these different groups and individuals within the study. It is important to consider such heterogeneity in participant responses, although sufficient commonalities were recognised across the data to underpin revisions to the typology, presented in Section 4. On the basis of the study as a whole, it appears that our providers and visitors assign importance to different characteristics. In particular, providers were more likely to focus on the importance of a working farm whereas visitors were more likely to emphasise the importance of direct interaction with agriculture in the product. While logical, attention to this distinction is important to understand relationships between agritourism supply and demand.

5.1. Interaction between visitors and agriculture in agritourism

During the study, providers and visitors discussed their perceptions regarding the nature of interaction between visitors and agriculture. In this context it was suggested that direct interaction with agriculture is not a fundamental requirement of agritourism. However, visitors (as opposed to providers) were more likely to believe that direct interaction is necessary. For example, before being prompted for their views on interaction with agriculture, the following interpretations of agritourism were suggested:

“Educational experiences: hands on; you know, come to the farm and see the animals”

Steven — non-working farm direct interaction agritourism visitor.

“Letting [children] see cows and letting them maybe feed sheep, and feed the pet lamb and things like that.”

Yvonne — working farm indirect interaction agritourism visitor.

These views are consistent with some agritourism studies (e.g. Gil Arroyo et al., 2013; Wilson, 2007), whereby products include opportunities for ‘hands-on’ experiences and practical demonstrations for education and entertainment purposes.

When prompted for their views relating to interaction as a defining feature of agritourism, a range of responses were given. The main reason proposed by participants (including providers and visitors) for including direct interaction with agriculture was that farm location alone is ‘a slightly tenuous link’ between tourism and agriculture; therefore agritourism must include a tangible connection to agricultural activities in the visitor product.

“I think I would anticipate an agricultural component definitely; more than just being on a farm.”

Michael — non-working farm indirect interaction agritourism visitor.

“I mean they could go out and help [the farmer] feed cattle in the morning, you know and just see what goes on.”

Debbie — working farm indirect interaction agritourism provider.

These examples also illustrate other suggestions made by participants, including that agritourism should include observation of agriculture, or perhaps include opportunities for visitors to get involved in the farm. Ultimately, the importance of interaction with agriculture in the context of agritourism appears to be commonly associated with education and awareness of agriculture — particularly for children. Our data also suggested that interaction with agriculture is especially important for increasingly urbanised societies:

“If it wasn’t for going to [the agritourism provider] the kids would have no contact with [agriculture] apart from watching it on telly. And telly you can’t smell it, you can’t touch it, you can’t experience it.”

Donna — non-working farm direct interaction agritourism visitor.

This is consistent with suggestions in the literature that the majority of demand for agritourism per se comes from urban areas (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; Jaworski & Lawson, 2005; Kizos & Losifides, 2007; Timothy, 2005).

However, a key argument of our participants (especially providers) in the study was that direct interaction with agriculture is not actually necessary in agritourism. They suggest that products that are physically based in agricultural surroundings (i.e. on a working farm) fulfill the baseline requirement to be labelled as agritourism, therefore they do not also need to include direct interaction:

“Most tourists like the location rather than wanting the contact. They don’t actually want to go and feed the cows, but they like the fact the cottage is where it is because it’s part of the farm, its surrounded by beautiful scenery, beautiful countryside.”

Stephanie — working farm direct staged interaction agritourism provider.

“You know having a cup of coffee is different there if the chickens are out and you see how they are behaving.”

Fiona — working farm indirect interaction agritourism visitor.

The debate over whether direct interaction with agriculture is required is paralleled by ambiguity over whether agritourism should be based on a working farm, discussed below.

5.2. A working farm location for agritourism

Examples were suggested by both providers and visitors in this study to support the suggestion that a working farm location is not always required for an agritourism product. This is an important finding in the context of the literature, whereby the majority of agritourism definitions suggest that a working farm is the baseline requirement for agritourism (e.g. Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; Clarke, 1999; Evans & Ilbery, 1989; Marques, 2006; McGehee, 2007; McGehee et al. 2007; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Wall, 2000; Weaver & Fennell, 1997).

A recurring suggestion by providers and visitors in our study was that agritourism is predominately based on working farms, but there are also circumstances where products based on off-farm locations could be defined as agritourism. However, providers in particular believed that a working farm location is a fundamental requirement for agritourism. For example, recurring associations were made between agritourism and farm diversification by providers in this study, by suggesting that agritourism businesses are founded on the physical or financial symbiosis of agricultural and tourism businesses, and also by suggesting that agritourism providers are also farmers and/or farm families. This resonates with literature on rural development and agriculture, whereby farm diversification provides the conditions for agritourism to be
developed (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; Che, Veeck, & Veeck, 2005; Evans & Ilbery, 1992; Ilbery et al., 1998; Nickerson et al., 2001; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Sharpley & Vass, 2006; Veeck, Che, & Veeck, 2006). Some providers also believed agritourism should be based on a working farm to ensure visitors were not given a false impression of farming:

“If we are going to be honest about the product we produce it’s got to be on a working farm; yeah definitely!”

Tom — working farm indirect interaction agritourism provider.

A range of value-laden terms (e.g. ‘authentic’, ‘genuine’, ‘true’, ‘honest’, ‘pretend’ and ‘false’) were also used by providers in our study to emphasise why agritourism should be based on a working farm. It was also felt that a working farm is implied in the term ‘agri’ and the concept would have to be labelled differently (e.g. rural/countryside tourism) if the product was not based on a working farm:

“If it’s not a working farm it’s ‘tourism’, not ‘agritourism’, because there is not agriculture there.”

David — working farm direct authentic interaction agritourism provider.

Visitors in our study also suggested that a working farm location plays a significant role in the context of agitourism products, for example by creating opportunities for visitors to learn about the day-to-day workings of agriculture:

“I think seeing the daily going …on-going is important. People just want to come and maybe one day they’ll ‘oh we will just sit in and watch what’s going on and read a book; and they’ll see tractors, they will see the cattle moving around, I think that gives you an understanding of…what the farm is all about.”

Brian — working farm indirect interaction agritourism visitor.

Conversely, visitor education was also suggested by participants as justification for why a working farm location is not always required for a product to be classified as agritourism. Indeed, this study suggests that products that include an informational element could be the exception to the general rule that agritourism should be based on a working farm:

“Most of agritourism would be based somewhere around or situated with a working farm. [But] you are going to have certain elements like the farming museum that are sort of a little bit more tangential.”

Paul — non-working farm direct interaction agritourism provider.

Other non-working farm products that were classed as agritourism by participants included the sale of locally-produced food or demonstrations of farming in off-farm locations, and products based on the environment rather than farms (e.g. conservation work, habitat management, home gardens). There were also participants who believed that agritourism can be based in the countryside more widely. In this respect, our findings conflict with a recent study in the USA (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013) where the authors rejected the inclusion of non-working farm products in their definition of agritourism. However, there are a small number of existing studies that also subscribe to the perspective that agritourism doesn’t have to include a working agricultural component (e.g. Fleischer & Tchetchik, 2005; Jaworski & Lawson, 2005). So far, there has been little exploration of the potential for non-working farm products to be included within definitions of agritourism.

It is particularly important to understand participants’ perspective in their responses to the issue of working farms – notably supply versus demand. Our study showed that providers were more likely to focus on the importance of working farms as the economic and physical foundations for agitourism (supply), whereas visitors were more likely to focus on a working farm in the context of visitor experience (demand). This ambiguity supports the use of a typology to illustrate this distinction and provide a framework to explore variation in perspectives.

5.3. Authentic agriculture in the context of agritourism

Some belief that authentic agriculture is necessary as a defining feature of agritourism was revealed in this study. In this context, arguments were made by providers and visitors that agriculture should not be reproduced, sanitised or presented in a selective manner as it gives a false impression to the general public. Derogatory terms such as ‘pretend farm’, ‘artificial’, and ‘twee’ were sometimes used to describe products where agriculture has been reproduced for the benefit of tourism:

“Farming is a very professional, major contributor to the rural economy and should be shown as such as opposed to being this rather twee ‘oh look there are a few lovely lambs in that pen!’”

Tom — working farm indirect interaction agritourism provider.

Suggestions were also made that ‘model farm’ attractions might be more appropriately labelled as ‘petting zoos’.

However, other participants (providers in particular) believed that authentic agriculture is not required in the context of agritourism, suggesting that there are some circumstances where agriculture should be sanitised or portrayed in selective manner in order to ‘shield’ visitors from the less appealing aspects:

“We tend to be over protective I suppose […] if it’s a calving or a castration or whatever, it’s sort of kept away as much as possible, you know”

Keith — working farm direct staged interaction agritourism provider.

“I think it’s quite important to keep dead lambs…its quite interesting that the people who don’t keep the dead lambs away from the public they are not thinking about what they are doing…it’s really stupid.”

Julia — working farm direct authentic interaction agritourism provider.

Some of our participants suggested that sanitisation and/or selection is necessary in order to appeal to visitor demand, as visitors might be ‘overwhelmed’ by the scale of agriculture or be put off by the ‘harder’ and ‘gorier’ aspects of farming. Although these participants’ perspectives lie in direct contrast to those who stated that authentic agriculture is a fundamental requirement, the rationale underpinning their perspectives is very similar: to maintain an appropriate image and the integrity of the agricultural industry. Furthermore, these arguments can also be linked to rationales relating to the need for agritourism to be based on a working farm.

However, proponents of staged-authentic agriculture tended to focus on opportunity and accessibility. Authenticity becomes a feature of agri-tourism, suggesting that there are some circumstances where

“Both [authentic and staged] are equally important because both are educational and I think it is important that people become educated about agriculture in general”
Annie — working farm direct authentic interaction agritourism visitor.

Providers’ reluctance to provide authentic agritourism products relate to concerns for safety, sanitation and agricultural productivity on the farm; which is consistent with Gil Arroyo et al. (2013:45):

“Being primarily agricultural facilities rather than tourist ones, visiting farms can inflict risks to the farm production (e.g. damaging crops, transmitting diseases to farm animals) or to visitors.”

Although this study revealed examples where both providers and visitors believe that authenticity is a compulsory requirement for agritourism, the results also suggest that ‘staged authentic’ agriculture can be justified in the agritourism product. Therefore it is important to acknowledge that a distinction exists between products that include authentic and staged authentic agriculture, from the perspective of participants in this case study. However, there is an interesting tension in our data regarding the best way to ensure that an appropriate image, and thus the integrity, of the agricultural industry are maintained.

Discussions of authenticity are fairly limited in the agritourism literature, although authenticity is raised more frequently in recent studies, including Busby and Rendle (2000), Ollenburg and Buckley (2007), Phillip et al. (2010), Di Domenico and Miller (2012) and Gil Arroyo et al. (2013). Although it is not the purpose of this paper to become fully engaged in debates on authenticity, several elements raised by our participants (e.g. health and safety difficulties associated with authenticity versus misapprehension issues associated with staging) suggest the importance of further research to deconstruct ideas relating to object and experiential authenticity in agritourism.

6. Conclusion

This paper revises our existing typology for defining agritourism (Phillip et al. 2010) using empirical perceptions of agritourism. This paper makes two main contributions to the agritourism literature: 1) it presents a revised conceptualisation of agritourism based on a case study incorporating perceptions of providers and visitors from locations across Scotland; and 2) it demonstrates how the agritourism typology can be used as a flexible research tool. The qualitative approach taken acknowledges the importance of individual perceptions to deepen understanding and the benefits of recognising and building on shared conceptual understanding.

Our revised agritourism typology presented in this paper (Fig. 4) combines provider and visitor understandings of agritourism with themes derived from the literature (Phillip et al., 2010). Provider and visitor perspectives were gathered by means of semi-structured interviews in twenty-five case study locations across Scotland; forty-seven interviews in total. The principles of structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) provided a useful framework for this study, in terms of acknowledging competing influences on providers’ and visitors’ conceptual understanding of agritourism. For example, pressures relating to farm diversification may influence the way that providers (who are predominately, but not exclusively, farmers) conceive agritourism; pressures which visitors are less likely to be aware of. This suggests that context dependent structures and culture may be a significant influence on how agritourism is defined.

The three typological discriminators identified in the original version of the agritourism typology were supported by our empirical findings. These are: the nature of interaction between visitors and agriculture (direct or indirect); whether (or not) the product is based on a working farm; and whether visitors have authentic (or staged-authentic) interaction with agriculture. This strengthens our earlier proposal that these three typological discriminators are important in terms of understanding agritourism as a concept (Phillip et al., 2010:754). Furthermore, variation in how agritourism is perceived became more visible when using the typology approach to data collection and analysis. This supports our earlier assumption that agritourism is a series of types of products rather than one homogenous entity (Phillip et al., 2010).

An important feature of the methodological approach was the focus on dual perspectives of supply (providers) and demand (visitors): recognising the inseparability of the two components in the production/consumption of tourism products (Cooper & Hall, 2008; Smith, 1994). Prior to a recent comparative analysis of different stakeholders’ perceptions of agritourism in the USA (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013) parallel consideration of supply and demand-side perspectives had been missing from this literature. There was some differentiation between providers and visitors perspectives in our study, particularly relating to the necessity for interaction with agriculture and also rationales for and against authenticity. Using a typology helps illuminate these differences in perceptions. Better understanding of the similarities and differences between the perceptions of those who supply and demand agritourism in our case study is an important outcome of this research and it raises questions and suggests implications for practice. For example, providers and visitors may have different expectations of the same product; which may have implications for the way that product is marketed if those differences were recognised.

While the results of our research cannot be deemed as representative of Scotland as a whole, understanding differences and commonalities in perceptions within our case study suggests some interesting lessons for agritourism management and wider agritourism policy. For example, our data suggests that grant support to agritourism enterprises in Scotland could be extended beyond those working farms, if the product still made a contribution to public understanding of agriculture. Agricultural interest groups might wish to pay closer attention to how agriculture is portrayed by agritourism products, as one way of managing public perceptions of their industry. Providers might want to undertake market research to see to what extent offering an ‘authentic’ experience is desired, and by which demographic. More generally, providers might advertise their products more effectively if they knew that visitors staying in farmhouse accommodation may not conceive the product to be agritourism unless they have direct interaction with agriculture during their stay; even if this is considered as agritourism from the provider’s perspective. Greater understanding of different agritourism types may contribute towards more effective marketing strategies (e.g. emphasising opportunities for children or urban residents to interact with farm animals) and policy development (e.g. providing support for products that incorporate educational or local food components). Thus we believe our revised agritourism typology can be used in a way that is informative, accessible and practically-useful to audiences outside academia.

This paper exemplifies how the agritourism typology can be used as a conceptual framework for data collection and analysis. Other studies have referred to the typology including examples where it has been used to position (e.g. Gillespie, 2011) or underpin analysis (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013). In combination, this study and that by Gil Arroyo et al. (2013) demonstrate a major benefit of the agritourism typology, namely the ability to draw connections across studies thus preventing inconsistency in the literature. The typology-based approach allows different agritourism types to be explored separately, comparatively, or as one overarching phenomenon; recognising the multiple forms that agritourism can take without suggesting any type is superior to the others.
This study used our original agritourism typology (Phillip et al., 2010) to underpin key aspects of data collection and analysis including: the sampling structure; the topic guides used to explore providers’ and visitors’ understandings of agritourism; and the thematic structure used for data analysis. However, our revised version of the typology demonstrates that the way in which the three typological discriminators are structured and the terminologies used are not fixed. Thus other studies can also explore how agritourism and the three typological discriminators are understood and develop their own contextually-grounded version of the typology. In this respect, we are not suggesting that our revised agritourism typology is representative of empirical perceptions of the concept internationally or even nationally, but it is a valuable representation of agritourism based on perceptions within our case study. Although participants were asked to describe their understanding of agritourism as a generic concept (i.e. not specific to Scotland), the contextual influences on participants’ perspectives is acknowledged. Therefore, our revised agritourism typology can be considered as a useful framework to inform and facilitate further agritourism research in Scotland. Forthcoming research by the authors utilises the typology to explore drivers of supply and demand for agritourism across Scotland. Gil Arroyo et al. (2013) exemplify an alternative contextually-grounded interpretation developed in the USA, whereby certain types were rejected based on their lack of perceived relevance to stakeholders in Missouri and North Carolina.

Publication of the original typology has started a new ‘conversation’ in the agritourism literature, emphasising the benefits of greater conceptual clarity and definition in agritourism studies (e.g. Gil Arroyo et al., 2013; Gillespie, 2011; Nielsen et al. 2010; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). This paper builds on our previous work and adds to that conversation, by illustrating the flexible nature of the typology and its capacity to underpin studies to improve understanding of how agritourism is perceived by those who supply and demand it in different countries and contexts. Framing agritourism in terms of a typology does not imply that an objective definition of agritourism exists. Instead, the typology framework provides a foundation for exploring multiple perspectives and understandings of agritourism, as exemplified in this study. In conclusion, we maintain that agritourism can be understood on the basis of three key characteristics that underpin a flexible framework of agritourism types; the agritourism typologies underpinning, presented and discussed in this paper provide the foundations for a research tool that may be used to support future agritourism research; and consideration of supply and demand, structure and agency provides for a more holistic understanding of agritourism as a concept.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jourman.2013.07.004.

References
