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## Women Tourism Entrepreneurs and the Survival of Family Farms in North East England

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# **Women Tourism Entrepreneurs and the Survival of Family Farms in North East England**

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## **Abstract**

Farm tourism can enhance the sustainability of farming and rural economies, and this creates new roles for women in family farms. This paper investigates the experiences and start-up motives of women providers of commercial hospitality on family farms in North East England. An interpretative approach explored the lived experiences of 16 women providing accommodation on their family farm. Findings indicate complex motives, encompassing a mix of personal, economic, family and farm business reasons for starting their businesses. The research informs rural policymakers and provides an understanding of the intrinsic factors and entrepreneurial traits that motivate women to start farm-based hospitality.

**Keywords:** rural enterprise; farm tourism; hospitality; female entrepreneurship

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## **1.0 Introduction**

This paper investigates the motivations of women operators of hospitality businesses on family farms. An entrepreneurial orientation framework is applied to analyse 16 farm hospitality enterprises in North East England to assess whether these women are displaying entrepreneurial characteristics. The qualitative approach draws out issues of farm women's identities and roles, the value of their hospitality enterprises for the sustainability of the farm, and their potential for wider contribution to rural development in the region.

The North East is one of the most rural regions of England and has a number of rural tourism assets including Hadrian's Wall, Northumberland National Park, and the historic coastline of Northumberland. Such upland regions, characterised by a dominance of small farms, have been linked with declining returns to conventional agriculture, a scenario that could worsen with uncertainty over the future of agricultural policy in the UK (Dwyer, 2018). For the North East, the decreasing economic power of agriculture has seen a regional policy emphasis on the rural economy and the regional marketing campaign 'Passionate People, Passionate Places' recognises the importance of rural tourism and broader rural enterprise potential.

Against the backdrop of a declining share of employment in agriculture, now just 1.35% of the UK workforce (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [DEFRA], 2016), tourism is considered an effective catalyst for socio-economic development and regeneration within rural regions (Bosworth & Farrell, 2011; Sharpley 2002). In Western societies, multifunctional rural

economies are increasingly seen as a natural part of the socio-economic fabric, where leisure, tourism and other types of economic activities are juxtaposed with agriculture (Fleischer & Tchetchik, 2005). As a sub-set of rural tourism, farm-based hospitality encompasses a range of businesses including those where the tourist experience is fully integrated into a working farm as well as those where the farm business is more segregated (Karampela & Kizos, 2018; Di Domenico & Miller, 2012).

It is widely recognised that farm-based hospitality is dominated by female operators; previous research has examined women's entrepreneurial learning and competences (Seuneke & Bock, 2015; Phelan & Sharpley, 2012), their re-framing of family gender dynamics (Heldt Cassel & Petterson, 2015; Gasson & Winter, 1992), the nature of their 'hosting' role (Brandth & Haugen, 2010), and their desire for flexible work to accommodate their multiple family roles and responsibilities (Heldt Cassel & Petterson, 2015; Caballé, 1999). The aim of the paper is, therefore, to deepen the understanding of the complexity of entrepreneurial motivations of farm-based women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial development processes. In the next section, we summarise some of the key literature about women's roles in farm tourism before developing a framework that draws from entrepreneurial orientation theory (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996) and the 5M model of female entrepreneurship (Brush, De Bruin and Welter, 2009). This framework informs our analysis and subsequent presentation of findings which can provide guidance for farm-based entrepreneurs and for rural development policy more broadly.

## **2.0 Women's Roles in Farm Tourism**

Research has examined motivations for agri-tourism entrepreneurship from both the perspectives of male and female farm workers. McGehee, Kim, and Jennings (2007) found that, compared to men, farm women are often more strongly motivated towards agri-tourism development, but their motives are similar. One distinction is that women view the role of 'host' as providing satisfaction and economic independence (Sharpley & Vass, 2006) as well as alleviating the isolation of working at home (Lynch, 1998). It has long been recognised that these motivations can influence host-guest interactions and ultimately impact upon guests' experiences of rural hospitality and, thus, the performance of the rural business (Getz & Carlsen, 2000).

Gender divisions in agriculture are "particularly clear and direct" (Brandth & Haugen, 2007, p. 379), often with "an unequal division of labour in the sphere of farm production...matched by women's greater responsibility in the domestic sphere" (Gasson & Winter, 1992, p. 387). Studies have shown that within family farming the gendered division of work continues through to farm tourism and that tourist activities and business reinforce the traditional separation of work and assumed roles by gender (Canoves, Villarino, Priestly, & Blanco, 2004; Garcia-Ramon, Canoves, & Valdovinos, 1995). Women's roles in agri-tourism continue to mirror their domestic roles, providing two types of domestic labour on the farm: partly on behalf of the family (reproductive labour) and partly for tourists' (productive labour) accommodation within the house (Bouquet, 1982).

The patriarchal tradition continues where farms are passed through the generations 'father to son' (Seuneke & Bock, 2015; Beach, 2013; Whatmore, 1991) and with women's entry into farming tending to be through marriage rather than inheritance (Brandth, 2002; Elliot, 2010). A recent Scottish study has identified that the role of women is also limited by a lack of representation in national farming organisations, a lack of time due to the juggling of other commitments, and a lack of appropriate training opportunities (Shortall,

Sutherland, McKee, & Hopkins, 2017). However, the growth of multifunctionality in agriculture has created opportunities for women to take the lead in new non-farming business activities while the management of production remains in the male domain (Seuneke & Bock, 2015). Farm tourism can elevate women's position within the family (Nilsson, 2002) and improve gender equality (Brandth, 2002).

Declining rural economies and difficulties of finding suitable employment, together with issues of transport access and childcare in rural regions, have coincided with a growth in the service sector which has provided opportunities for women to create new roles for themselves within rural economies. There is a wealth of literature which focuses upon women creating wealth through entrepreneurship in rural areas (Warren-Smith & Jackson, 2004), including tourism, local food production, and home-based businesses or 'side activities' (Markantoni & van Hoven, 2012). Di Domenico (2008), however, argues that reconciling work responsibilities with family life may also prove a double-edged sword, providing social and financial independence for women but bringing the commercial into the home environment.

At the community or destination level, the new mobilities paradigm is leading some authors to question the 'host' and 'guest' dualism (Moscardo, Konovalov, Murphy, & McGehee, 2013) but at the family farm level, the 'host' role of the farm family, and especially the farmer's wife, continues to be strongly recognised as a key element of the tourist offer. In the extreme, research in Sweden has identified farm women dressing up in traditional clothes and exaggerating their roles as "homemaker and housewife" to enhance the tourism offer (Heldt Cassel & Pettersson, 2015, p.147). Creating simulacra of the rural idyll to match the expectations of guests reinforces stereotypes and arguably makes it more difficult to identify the entrepreneurial capabilities and ambitions of farm women. However "by performing archetypical versions of farm gender identities" (Cassell & Pettersson, 2015, p.149) the women entrepreneur will gain control over their production of the guest experience through their embodiment of performing rural hospitality. Farm women, although still performing multiple roles on the farm (Brasier, Sachs, Kiernan, Trauger, & Barbercheck, 2014), can be recognised for a role that is more central to their individual identity and ensures a greater influence in farm decision making beyond traditional rural gendered roles. In addition, other professional, customer-focused aspects of managing a hospitality business demand quite distinctive competencies such as marketing, accounting, and interpersonal skills (Phelan & Sharpley, 2012). These tend to be quite different from the skills of male, production-oriented farmers (Seuneke & Bock, 2015), so it is important that their value is not overlooked.

### **3.0 Entrepreneurial Orientation, Motivation and Farm Tourism**

Bosworth & Farrell (2011) defined entrepreneurship in the rural tourism context as "the strategic investment of all forms of capital, whether human, social or financial, in the pursuit of planned business development goals" (p. 1491). This broad definition, recognising the importance of multiple forms of capital (Bosworth & Turner, 2018) or resources (Müller & Korsgaard, 2018) in rural economies, ensures that rural entrepreneurship research is inclusive of activities that may be undervalued/downplayed by mainstream, urban-centric approaches. In the case of women developing agri-tourism enterprises, these forms of capital might include their knowledge and skills (potentially enhanced through training), their personal time and effort, their network resources (formal and

informal) and their alertness to valuable opportunities and assets on the farm as well as financial investment. The importance of understanding the nature of demand in the sector and the ability to promote local cultural products as well as the landscape as part of an ‘authentic’ offer to farm-tourists (Brandano, Osti, & Pulina, 2018) must become part of the entrepreneur’s capability—something which demands alternative networks and skills when compared to traditional farming enterprise.

It has been argued that new venture creation emerges from “the interplay of entrepreneurs’ social networks and cognitive biases” (De Carolis, Litzky, & Eddleston, 2009, p. 528) but entrepreneurial development is also influenced by a range of external factors outside the control of the individual entrepreneur. External factors include the governance and external profile of the territory (Dana, Gurau, & Lasch, 2014), competition, climate, and macro-economic fluctuations (Bosworth & McElwee, 2014). For agri-tourism, changing conditions within the agricultural economy and agricultural disasters such as the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the early 2000s (Phillipson, Bennett, Lowe, & Raley, 2004)—effectively closing large parts of rural England—add to the vulnerability of farm-based hospitality enterprises. Opportunities for business development are perceived in response to a combination of internal and external factors, resulting in combinations of push and pull factors influencing strategic decision making (Methorst, Roep, Verhees, & Verstegen, 2017; McElwee & Bosworth 2010).

As well as the new skills and competencies discussed above, farm hospitality businesses also require new outward-facing networks and identities to support their development. The opportunities that this provides for women are now increasingly recognised (Seuneke & Bock, 2015) and are in stark contrasts to a lot of older literature on female entrepreneurship which emphasised women’s family constraints and lack of industry experience (Loscocco, Robinson, Hall & Allen, 1991). However, James (2012, p. 237) has argued, the problem-oriented focus of much women’s entrepreneurship research has stunted understanding of the factors “that contribute to the flourishing and optimal functioning of women entrepreneurs.” In line with the hegemony of a “masculinized characterization of entrepreneurship” (Marlow & McAdam, 2015, p. 669), Ahl (2006) found that female entrepreneurs were uniformly represented as inferior to their male counterpart and effectively needed “fixing” to enable them to emulate and reproduce the behaviours of men. When rural entrepreneurs are also researched in a relational sense against their supposedly more productive and economically dynamic urban counterparts, it becomes apparent that female rural entrepreneurs face a double set of negative portrayals.

Taking a broad definition of entrepreneurship and recognising the distinctive skills and traits demanded by hospitality enterprises compared to those of productionist agriculture, the scope for women to adopt new roles becomes apparent. Existing literature has highlighted the challenges of balancing multiple roles wherein the new venture may be a lower priority (Markantoni & Van Hoven, 2012). Seen as a ‘third shift’ (Gallagar & Delworth, 1993), off-farm employment or additional income generation for farm women has often been viewed as the invisible workforce. The socio-economic context in which family farming is increasingly valued—yet with declining economic rewards (Dreby, Jung, & Sullivan, 2017)—may result in further exploitation of family labour as a means to ensure farm viability through non-farm income generation. Commitment to the family farm regardless of greater income availability from off-farm work may mean a farm hospitality business is undervalued and as a result, farm women’s contributions to the sustainability of family farms may also

be underestimated. Balancing multiple roles reduces the inclination for risk-taking, and new ventures of this kind are often seeking stability rather than growth. Mainstream theory might question whether such activity is ‘entrepreneurial’ at all, but by employing distinctive skills (human capital) and external connections (social capital) to achieving the interconnected goals of the farm household, such activity clearly fits into our working definition above.

Adding to the traditional 3Ms of market, money and management, Brush, Bruin, and Welter (2009) propose a 5M framework for women’s entrepreneurship with the inclusion of ‘motherhood’ (referring to motherhood and wider household characteristics as well as gender-based power relations) and the ‘meso/macro environment’ that lies outside of women entrepreneurs’ control. Combining this with Lumpkin and Dess’ (1996) five dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation (autonomy; innovativeness; risk-taking; proactiveness; and competitive aggression), we create an analytical framework to examine each dimension of the farm women’s entrepreneurial orientation. We do this in the knowledge that these dimensions are shaped by the internal identity and motivations of the entrepreneur as well as by her external networks and wider socio-economic and political factors. Table 1 summarises some of the existing perspectives from the literature that are explored later in the paper. This approach recognises that women are a fundamental driver for growth but also that they play key social roles and challenge gender stereotypes (Caputo, De Vita, Mari, & Pogessi, 2017).

Previous research has identified a range of personal and economic motives for diversification (Barbieri, 2010). Perhaps the most comprehensive list comes from Nickerson, Black, and McCool (2001) whose study of North American farm/ranch diversification outlined 11 motivations for diversification: fluctuations in agricultural income, employment for family members, additional income, loss of government agricultural programs, meeting a need in the recreation market, tax incentives, companionship with guests, interest or hobby, better use of farm resources, success of other farm businesses and commitment to educating the consumer. In a UK study of farm stays, 60% of respondents in North East England cited ‘extra income’ as the principal reason for diversification, with 62% citing tourism as offering the best opportunity for generating extra income (Sharpley & Vass, 2006). By contrast, Getz and Carlsen’s (2000) study in Western Australia, found more socially-based reasons for family farm tourism development, together with family-related goals.

The multiplicity of motivations is further complicated by the “complex intertwined and divergent” nature of family farm experiences that shape the development of agri-tourism, which is often a very incremental process (Ainley, 2014, p. 327). For example, in Australia, Ollenburg and Buckley (2007) found that neither income nor social motivations were uniformly dominant. Different landowners, at different stages in their farm, family and business cycles, reported multiple, overlapping motives, with social motivations marginally more important than economic motivations. These findings have been reinforced among other studies of women who often reported stronger motivations based on personal satisfaction (McGehee et al., 2007) and family and childcare needs (Garcia-Ramon et al., 1995) as well as more economically-based reasons such as limited alternative employment in rural areas as well as the aforementioned pressures of family farm incomes.

Table 1: *Entrepreneurial Orientation Applied to Women Entrepreneurs on Family Farms (Developed from Lumpkin and Dess, 1996)*

Entrepreneurial Trait	As felt by women entrepreneurs in the farm household
Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal autonomy for the woman in a male-dominated sector</li> <li>- Family/household autonomy to secure the family farm and generational succession</li> <li>- Safeguarding against uncertainties in the farm-sector</li> </ul>
Innovativeness/creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pursuit of personal fulfilment and application of skills and new ideas</li> <li>- Adopting ideas from beyond the farm</li> <li>- Recognising new consumer demands associated with rurality</li> </ul>
Risk-taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dependent on the balance between farm performance and the potential returns to investing in the new venture</li> <li>- Often a personal and social reputation risk more than a financial risk</li> <li>- Spurred on by family aspirations which change the weighting of risk calculations for each individual</li> </ul>
Pro-activeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires recognition of competences (Phelan and Sharpley, 2012)</li> <li>- Requires family support</li> <li>- Requires an external orientation for marketing and business growth</li> </ul>
Competitive aggression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ‘Need for achievement’ (McClelland, 1961) but ‘achievement’ may be judged on quality and reputation or lifestyle objectives as much as pure profitability</li> </ul>

While it is clear that women’s roles in farm families cannot be wholly divorced from the farm, there is a growing recognition of their potential to engage in new activities and generate new income to strengthen the farm enterprise as a whole. Moreover, as agri-tourism has developed and become more competitive as an integral part of the rural consumer economy, the recognition of the skills required to be successful and the diversity of offerings across the sector have also grown. Having identified a number of themes of research, but also a number of areas where the motivations, entrepreneurial orientations and skills needs of women agri-tourism operators are found to be ‘complex,’ the remainder of this paper reports on findings from qualitative research in North East England to address some of these current shortcomings in our understanding. The framework in Table 1 forms the basis for examining how motivations are shaped by different traits and different internal and external drivers for establishing farm hospitality enterprises.

#### **4.0 Data Collection and Methodology**

This research is based on a qualitative investigation of 16 farm-based hospitality enterprises located in North East England, each run by women. The businesses were selected from the Farm Stay UK website based on whether they were working farms that offered either Bed and Breakfast (B&B) or self-catering accommodation. This sampling approach identified 16 farms, with 18 women providers of home-based commercial hospitality interviewed (16 original business owners and two daughters now continuing the hospitality business). Data was collected through ‘in-depth’ interviews to gain insight into the participants’ motivation for starting and developing their businesses. At times the narratives also shed light on some of the challenges and barriers encountered along their journeys.

The researcher adopted a social constructionist approach and interpretive stance, “to understand the subjective nature of the ‘lived experience’ from the perspective of those who experience it, by exploring the meanings and explanations that individuals attribute to their experiences” (Cope, 2005, p. 168). Hosts were asked open-ended questions relating to the establishment of the hospitality enterprise, their motivation, the experience of operating the commercial home, challenges, benefits, management of private/public zones within the home, work-life balance and intentions for the future. The interviews lasted between 1 and 2½ hours and were recorded for ease of conversation while capturing an accurate narrative. These narratives encompassed details about the importance of personal circumstances and contributing events, motivation and business opportunity, internal and external support, lifecycle factors, and farm sustainability. For the purposes of this paper, the data were re-analysed against the entrepreneurial traits identified in Table 1.

Details of the 16 women who established the hospitality business are found in Table 2 (pseudonyms were used to protect participants identities). The age of the women (indicated in parentheses after the names) ranges from early 40s to late 60s, and all of the women have children, with the younger participants’ children attending junior or senior school. The older participants have university or adult aged offspring, many still living on the farm. Two of the participants also have parents-in-law still involved and/or living on the farm.

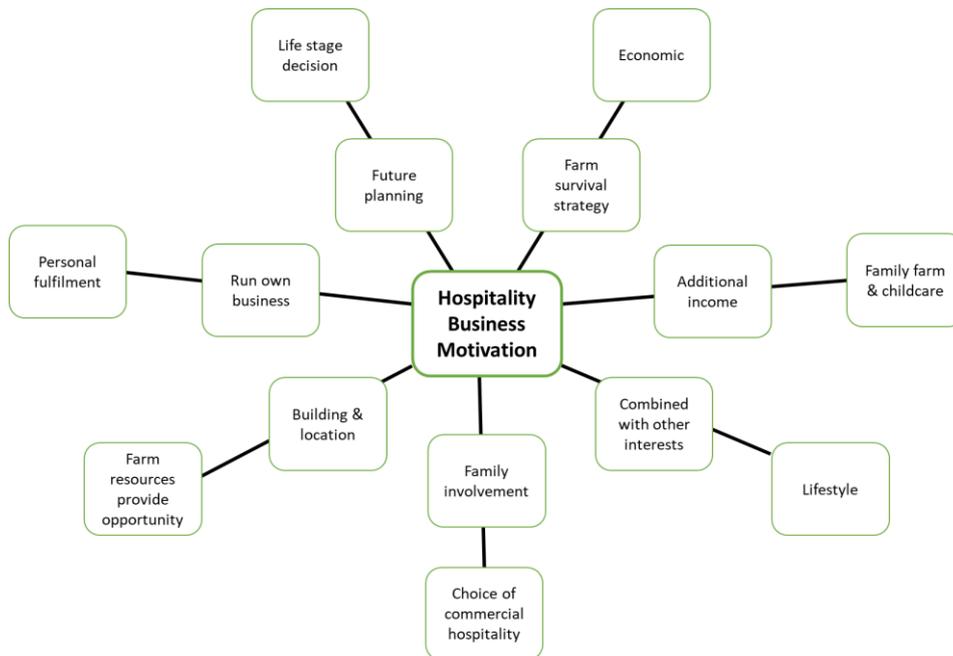
#### **5.0 Findings: Entrepreneurial Orientation of Farm Women in Agri-tourism**

Initial analysis of the interviews identified seven themes of motivations, presented in Figure 1 (Wilson-Youlden, 2014). The first radial of boxes illustrates the main motivations explained by the women participants and the outer box provides the contextual rationales. These themes are further analysed against the five dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation set out in Table 1. In the remainder of this section.

Table 2: *Description of Participants*

<b>Name and Age</b>	
Jill (50s)	340 acre 3 <sup>rd</sup> generation farm, providing B&B for 35 years, expanding to holiday cottages, adult children with son working on the farm
Sue (50s)	14-acre smallholding, providing B&B, also works as bookkeeper and supports adult daughter's horse business
Mary (50s)	3rd generation farm but land now rented out, provided B&B for 3 years, adult children
Sarah (40s)	366-acre tenancy farm, farmer's daughter but brothers inherited family farm, provided B&B for 5 years
Margaret (60s)	smallholding managed independently for 30 years, offers B&B, self-catering, camping and adult children
Lucy (40s)	300-acre 3rd generation farm providing B&B and self-catering for 10 years and adult son works on the farm and provides support for son's additional off farm business
Carol (50s)	1,200-acre 3rd generation farm, provided B&B for 21 years, manages farm accounts, partner in farm, adult children & grandparent responsibilities
Maureen (60s)	720-acre 3rd generation farm, provide B&B for 21 years, farm also support adult daughter's business
Anne (50s)	350-acre 2nd generation farm, now provides only self-catering after 24 years of B&B, self-catering cottages managed by Anne's adult daughter, farm also support pheasant shooting business
Barbara (50s)	2nd generation dairy farm, provided B&B for 20 years, adult children and son working on the farm
Ellen (50s)	3rd generation farm, providing B&B and self-catering for 24 years, adult daughter works both on the farm and supports the hospitality business
Alison (50s)	smallholding with 11 years providing self-catering accommodation in disused farm buildings, adult children
Karen (40s)	380-acre livestock farm, provided B&B on current farm for 12 years and on previous farm property for 8 years
Jennifer (60s)	4th generation livestock farm, providing B&B for 35 plus years, expanded to include self-catering and bunkhouse, farm now managed by adult son
Louise (40s)	3rd generation 113 acre farm, managed self-catering cottages for 10 years, with school age children
Deborah (40s)	smallholding, providing B&B for 11 years, accommodation business now ran as joint business with husband

Figure 1. Framework Illustrating Motivations for Hospitality Business Start-ups Among Farm Women in North East England.



Source: Wilson Youlden (2014).

It is quite difficult to separate the business start-up motivation for the women from those of the farm business and the farm family due to the interrelated and pivotal role that the women play both within the family and the farm. When asked how they came to be running their farm accommodation business, interviewees again cited a range of often overlapping influences including financial need, childcare and family commitments, a desire to “do something different” and opportunities relating to the redevelopment of buildings. It should also be noted that a number of the participants were partners in the farm and actively engaged in the day to day management of the farm itself alongside their ownership and management of the commercial hospitality business.

### 5.1 Motivations – Combining Personal and Family Autonomy

A desire for autonomy is a major driver of entrepreneurship but here the farm women were often balancing personal autonomy with family commitments and aspirations. For Lucy and Ellen, a personal desire to be self-employed was clearly stated as the main motivation but this was inseparable from the family context in Sarah’s response:

Well I’d always had a hankering to be self-employed...you have to want to be self-employed because it is completely different to being employed...(Lucy).

I needed to do the business...it was nice to do something different and just meet people (Ellen).

Well...even as a child...I wanted to do bed and breakfast... it just fits in well with the family and farm because if I’m not here Martin can let people in and my children can take a booking (Sarah).

For Jennifer, the motivation combined both social and economic necessities as the B&B offered the personal benefit of meeting new people and bringing people onto a large remote farm as well as additional income to support her son's inheritance of the farm:

My husband died in 1994 and my son was very young...just 18...so he had to take over and so I started doing B&B, we had the cottages but I started doing the B&B cause it was just me and him in this biggish house and it's grown from then... and I enjoy it you meet some very nice people.

For Anne, autonomy extended to the financial independence that came with income from the hospitality business. Although somewhat dismissive of the economic value, Anne recognised that an independent income from her husband and the farm was important and allowed spending money on clothing items for herself that were perceived as personal 'expenditure' or 'treats':

I started in the stables which sleeps 6 in 1989 with self-catering...and we started with bed and breakfast here in the farmhouse and we let 2 rooms and enjoyed the B&B and it worked quite well with a young family...that's when we all made some money and on farms to actually have money to be able to spend on other things... I can remember going out and buying a new jumper each year because I suddenly felt I had my own income which is silly (Anne).

A number of the participants commented that this extra income paid for holidays, clothes, and extra 'treats' particularly for the children, as the following quotes illustrate:

It was pocket money for me... but saying that we wouldn't have had such a nice house or such a nice lifestyle if we hadn't done the B&B in the beginning (Jill).

Why? To pay school fees...and I could still work at home (Maureen).

The children were three and five and then they got to school and we just needed all the different bits and pieces and instead of taking away from the farm and having to have extra housekeeping, it just paid for whatever they needed really (Barbara).

Although many hospitality businesses started to provide symbolic or windfall contributions, or to cover specific costs such as children's education, the importance of the financial contribution of several of these businesses grew over time. This suggests that had these relatively low-key ventures not been established when they were, the farm businesses may have subsequently found themselves in considerably more perilous situations. Therefore, the long-term value of proactive opportunity-led entrepreneurship, whether for financial, lifestyle, or other reasons, should not be underestimated, especially in peripheral rural economies. The growing economic contribution of these hospitality businesses are mentioned by Deborah, for whom the money was originally "incidental", and by Jennifer for whom it began as "a bit of extra income" but now "to be honest it is very important". Ellen also noted the growing importance on the additional income stream:

Well since the children were all born I just stayed at home and worked at home and then there was our family and my husband's parents were farming so it was just to make some extra money...it was additional money – it's not now but it was then (Ellen).

At the most extreme case, Louise has seen the financial success of her tourism enterprise, offering a potential exit strategy from a second-generation tenanted farm that is still under the majority shareholding of ageing parents. As Louise explained, “to start with it was to support the farm but I think as years have gone on and now we've just opened up our third [self-catering property] it's a way to get out [of farming].” The farm used to be mixed, with arable, sheep and dairy but the completion of their first self-catering property enabled them to get rid of the dairy cows. Louise described how the ‘totally horrendous hours a day’ combined with the low supermarket price for milk was instrumental in encouraging them to diversify.

Within the family farm sector, succession forms part of the family's goal for continuing ‘autonomy’ into future generations.

Agri-tourism development is often viewed as a mechanism to keep the farm in the family (McGehee & Kim, 2004; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007) by strengthening the farm business (Tew & Barbieri, 2012) and enabling the wider family to sustain their lives as farmers in the rural environment (Ilbery, Bowler, Clark, Crockett, & Shaw, 1998; Fleischer & Tchetchik, 2005; Sharpley & Vass, 2006). This is illustrated by Lucy, who prior to establishing the hospitality business, had been actively involved with the farm, but the tourism business allowed her son to take on greater involvement in the family farm. She added:

It's a 300 acre farm, it's not big enough for two families to make a living so the only way Thomas [son] could come back was if we started another business within the farm. So Thomas and David started a construction business from here...and I did the accounts for that and the farm (Lucy).

Farming is still perceived as a male occupation (Beach, 2013) and participants Jill, Lucy, Maureen, Barbara and Jennifer all had sons working on the farm planning to take on the business, although there was less certainty in terms of the continuation of the hospitality business. For Ellen, her daughter was already actively engaged in both the farm and the hospitality business, but for other participants, both sons and daughters were established at university and followed alternative career paths to farming. The women were concerned about the very low income from farming and the uncertain nature of the industry and thought the management of the hospitality business was ensuring that there was a family farm to pass onto their sons.

The key finding here was that in a region with many marginally viable farms and an emerging threat over the future of agricultural support policies, these enterprises build a safety net to strengthen family-farm resilience. Importantly for these cases, the safety net is created before the farm hits a crisis point, at which point it would be much more challenging to launch into a new customer-facing enterprise surrounded by financial uncertainty and limited budgets. Although the financial contributions are often small, the increased options for business growth or strategic change, the upskilling of those running the new venture and the scope for sustaining local employment for family members are all highly significant. Recognising the value of these additional contributions of women's entry into farm hospitality is important both in the household and at a wider rural policy scale.

## **5.2 Innovative Use of Existing Skills and Resources**

These enterprises draw on a range of different resources, including physical resources, human capital, social and community resources, and ‘immaterial’ (cultural and symbolic) resources (Müller & Korsgaard, 2018). For example, in terms of their human capital, many of the women had experience working off-farm with pre-child careers in teaching, nursing, and bookkeeping, but chose to remain at home with young children for personal and financial reasons, including childcare costs, as illustrated here:

I’d had my second child and I had a really good job but I couldn’t get childcare and the home lends itself because it has two sets of stairs and one set goes up to two rooms only... I could stay at home and look after the children and have some form of income (Barbara).

I started doing bed and breakfast in 1986 with a child just over a year old and a bump...to go back to work the cost of a child-minder was going to take up all my wage, it would cost very little to decorate two spare bedrooms (Karen).

For others, the recognition that outdated farm buildings could be turned into a new income stream was a stimulus for new venture creation:

It worked quite well with a young family...and I did quite a lot on the farm so it wasn’t feasible for me to work away and my qualifications were dated...so we then decided to convert the buildings (Anne).

We moved down here 15 years ago and the buildings were falling apart down the side of the road as you approach the house, it was an absolute eyesore and we couldn’t afford to just repair it and not utilise it. So we thought it would make three cracking bedrooms (Lucy).

I was left with four small children... we’d moved up here in 1980...and within four years my ex had departed so I was left with an uncertain income... and we had all these barns that needed something doing to them, so we gradually moved into them all the way around...we were strapped for cash and we were very fortunate in getting a grant in 1988 (Margaret).

Mary’s story is perhaps the best example of the complex interplay of personal circumstances, disused farm buildings, and a need for income motivating the initiation of the hospitality business.

My husband has worked away from home for a long time, we let out the farm on a farm tenancy agreement about 10 years ago now actually he was very ill and had a major operation... and then realised you know that there was another life out there and he didn’t need to work himself into the ground...at that stage our daughters were both at school...so one of us had to be here for lifts more than anything...now they are both at university and John was still away, and I said I’m not going to stay here in the middle of nowhere on my own for nothing...we’ll maybe have to move or do something different so I’ve got more opportunities as well. One possibility was to make the farm buildings self-catering houses but the buildings are very near us...so we got around to thinking perhaps bed and breakfast accommodation instead and it’s got quite a big turnover...so we decided that we would do that (Mary).

The quotations above each identify some degree of opportunity-based entrepreneurship but also a significant necessity dimension to the women's decisions. The challenging factors of childcare, remote locations, ill health, family separation, and dated qualifications combine with the opportunities to exploit under-utilised skills and property assets in bringing about the new ventures.

### ***5.3 Risk-taking, Pro-activeness and Competitive Aggression***

Rather than examples of risk-taking, a number of these ventures could be seen as risk mitigation. Spreading the sources of income with a new hospitality business can provide a financial 'safety net' for the unpredictability of farming income and ease the reliance on bank overdrafts.

It was because I had that feeling that I needed to work, I wanted to contribute to the income... farming was ticking over; we always farmed on such a massive overdraft, I have always been frightened of that overdraft... we started having the odd holiday when we did begin the cottages... because it was money coming in from an outside source it wasn't dependent on the farm and...I mean...it fitted in quite well (Anne).

What drives me? Money! Because on a farm you just never know how much money you're going to make, I mean they're at the mart today and if the bottom fell out of the market you either bring your stock back and you've got to feed it, and then haul it back again and it's all cost... because the farm works on an overdraft, we basically live off the B&B (Sarah).

I've always thought really you know most households need two incomes and its very few people where the man is now the provider and why should farms be any different... I like to say I had a good job that would have been the second income (Barbara).

In line with Bosworth and Farrell's (2011) earlier study, there are examples of farm accommodation being viewed as an easy option. Some mentioned that their mothers had provided B&B, making it a natural business to establish. Ellen also said, "I'm a people person...and I knew I could cook, I could do a proper breakfast." Others went a step further and integrated wider cookery skills and put their own identity on the business confirming the view that farm accommodation is a very personal enterprise and thus one that can easily be undervalued. Perhaps these lifestyle entrepreneurs are less risk-taking, but this does not mean that they are not striving for quality and success and making a significant contribution to their rural economies:

I wanted to make sure we were top end...I didn't want to just run a B&B...I wanted it all to be as good as possible and my original grading was 4 stars...I make all my own jams, marmalades, they have freshly baked bread everyday...special dishes for vegetarians...and I source sausages and bacon from different butchers... (Deborah).

At the same time as starting up the B&B I had started selling free-range eggs, I started marketing and going around persuading shops to buy... (Karen).

For some, running a B&B was also seen as an opportunity to incorporate wider interests and create a unique offering to guests:

I love art and antique furniture and it really has been a passion since I was young...but you can't do that on a farm...so I've decorated the B&B with as much as possible...we have had a number of artists visit too (Maureen).

These women are also enterprising in seeking out funding opportunities to improve their businesses, but the quotation from Sarah highlights another limiting factor for small rural tourism enterprises – the need to master so many skills oneself:

I got a development grant...that allowed me to get my laptop, a new website, a little digital camera to take pictures to put on it...but you've got to be able to do computing, banking, online booking and I'm not very good at everything...I could market myself better I just don't really know how (Sarah).

While business owners demonstrate competitive and enterprising behaviours, there are no clear patterns to this activity – and arguably the personal touch and diversity of offerings is an essential ingredient of the rural tourism offer. The unpredictability of start-up moments is highlighted in a quotation from Jill, who runs one of the longest established hospitality businesses offering both B&B and self-catering accommodation for 35 years:

We were married about six months and we went down to Devon for a holiday and Paul being a farmer wanted a farm Bed and Breakfast... we were shown up into the attic room and she had the most fantastic cobwebs and you could write your name in the dust, and the wallpaper was falling off the next morning in the dining room... We wrote in their visitors' book, 'we will tell our friends' but we didn't tell her what we'd tell our friends! I've been telling the story for 35 years but all the way home [my husband] kept saying if you can't do better than that it's a bad job...so we literally came home and started just with a bedroom in the farmhouse (Jill).

For many participants, there was often an overlap of different motivations for starting and developing their farm-hospitality business. For example, the quotation above indicates that their own lifestyle preferences for staying on a farm and their own values, influenced by their friendship circles, all played a part in the decision-making process. Elsewhere, economic motivations were stronger, but these too crossed over with desires to sustain the family or the farm or to pay for childcare or school fees. The complex range of family or lifestyle factors can undermine the credibility of a business which might be viewed as being less ambitious, pursuing lower growth and making a lesser contribution to the local economy. Equally significant, when the business operators themselves do not identify as business people, and even less “entrepreneurs” (Jill, Sue, Mary, Anne, Barbara, Ellen, Karen, Jennifer, Louise), this reinforces the erroneous view that their enterprises are less important and outside of the mainstream economy.

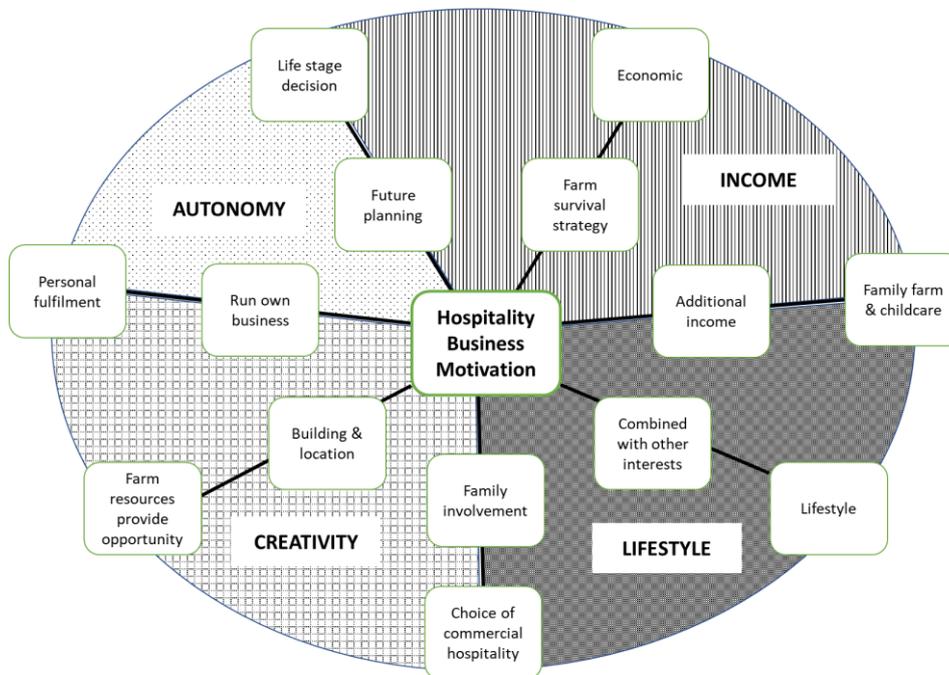
While ‘lifestyle preferences’ play a major role, this should not be conflated with an expressed choice for an ‘easy life’ as some might assume. Instead, lifestyle entrepreneurs in agri-tourism are capable of creating business models that are strengthened by their entwinement with the family lifestyle, capitalising on local opportunities, and adding robustness to the farm business. Furthermore, astute farm accommodation providers draw on other elements of their lifestyles to

enhance the tourism offer, whether providing more local foods, authentic farm-based experiences or personal interactions that make the farm lifestyle an integral part of the tourism offer, not simply a business motivation for the business owner. This supports the findings of Brandano et al. (2018) whose Italian study observed that the enthusiasm of tourism providers who seek to communicate with tourists and showcase local culture enhanced the authenticity of their offer in ways that matched the prevailing demand in the rural sector.

## 6.0 Discussion

Within this study, the women participants described their motivation for starting their hospitality business, with personal and family circumstances often combined with an economic motivation, both for them and for the next generation. This, in turn, is frequently linked with insecurity in the farming environment as much as with any opportunity-driven factors associated with the rural tourism sector. The combination of participants' motives for starting their hospitality business is set out in Figure 2, categorising the initial findings in line with our subsequent qualitative analysis.

Figure 2. Categorising Farm Hospitality Motivations.



Source: Authors.

The findings confirm the complex connections between motivations, so the intention is not to place an individual on the wheel, but perhaps use it as a template for a spider diagram to assess the relative importance of different elements. The four shaded sections do not map directly on to the entrepreneurial orientation framework as our findings revealed that competitive aggression and risk-taking were less important among our sample. However, the personal desires for autonomy and creative expression alongside the needs for additional income or strengthening the sustainability of the farm emerge as the over-riding themes. The framework could also be divided between necessity influences and opportunity influences (Acs, 2006), but it was evident that opportunity and necessity influences often combined around the different drivers identified in Figure 2.

For three of the women participants, starting their hospitality business was part of a farm family survival strategy, coinciding with a desire to be self-employed. Choices reflected the needs of the family, the farm and the availability of suitable resources in terms of the farmhouse or outbuildings. While three participants cited economic motives as the primary drivers of their businesses, for many of the participants, the financial returns appeared more incidental—perks to fund holidays and other treats initially—and were referred to as ‘pocket money’ or ‘pin money’ by some. However, as the financial income from the hospitality enterprise grew, so had the priority placed on the hospitality enterprise, particularly in relation to time allocation for many of the women. Although some attention within the literature has focused on the non-economic personal, family and social benefits (Sharples & Vass, 2006; Nickerson et al., 2001), there remains “a lack of research on the role of agri-tourism in providing non-economic benefits to the farm household” (Tew & Barbieri, 2012, p. 217). Benefits to the farm household will evolve over time (economic and social) and may be dependent upon specific family and economic circumstances within the rural economy.

## **7.0 Conclusion and Policy Implications**

The research findings extend the current literature examining the motives for farm tourism diversification from the perspective of the women involved in family farming. These women’s journeys and the balancing of family and business responsibilities reveal multiple and complex social, economic, and personal-fulfilment motives. The challenge to understand their economic significance is made more difficult by the fact that many of the women interviewed did not perceive themselves as ‘businesswomen’ and even less so as ‘entrepreneurs.’ Beyond the economic contribution to the sustainability of the farm, these hospitality businesses conferred greater recognition upon women’s roles as small business owners. From a personal perspective, the movement into agri-tourism, also provided an opportunity for women to move ‘front of house,’ creating a path for “empowerment within the context of the family farm” (Wright & Annes, 2014, p. 494).

The study has two immediate policy implications building from the entrepreneurial orientation framework and web of entrepreneurial motivations presented in this paper. Many women start hospitality businesses for mainly for non-economic reasons, but as the business develops the economic implications frequently become realised and significant in relation to the sustainability of the farm itself. From a policy perspective, this suggests that pre-start policy intervention should relate to personal motivations and identify the intangible, non-economic benefits that can ensue. As businesses emerge, this can extend into support for informal networks and activities to facilitate the sharing of good practice among operators of these types of businesses which are often fairly remote from larger networks and mainstream tourism organisations. To improve the long-term sustainability of small scale rural commercial accommodation, policy approaches that engage with new and aspiring hospitality providers can provide a platform for network-building, additional training and support for the development of business confidence, skills and local cooperation.

This research has also shown that policymakers need to focus on the next generation of rural hospitality provision; including the aspirations of younger members of farm households and the potential for these businesses to grow into meaningful career options and not just viewed as a side-activities or ‘hobbies.’ While farm-based hospitality businesses may be small scale, they contribute to both the financial and personal quality of life among farm families and are important for the future sustainability of both farming and rural tourism activity,

and, by implication, the sustainability of rural landscapes as well. However, the success of these enterprises depends on both the internal family farm environment and the external rural tourism environment. To an extent, and in line with the theory of lifestyle entrepreneurship, they can be more resilient as the profitability targets are less exacting and effective lifestyle entrepreneurs are able to navigate pathways through peaks and troughs by balancing life and work priorities around busier and quieter periods.

While these flexible approaches fit a very traditional model of a rural entrepreneur, they fit more awkwardly into mainstream activities. For policy actions to reach these businesses, policymakers must recognise that these are meaningful businesses meriting attention and business owners themselves must recognise that they are included in rural business policy. Policymakers must also recognise that farm hospitality operators are unlikely to be able to commit to travelling, in many cases quite long distances, to networking or training events when their business commitments can vary at very short notice, so any activities need to be developed in partnership with local businesses to ensure sufficient reach.

In summary, the research highlights that women establishing farm hospitality enterprises do have an entrepreneurial orientation, but the mainstream categories proposed by Lumpkin and Dess (1995) and others are obscured by a complex array of personal, family, and cultural factors. This makes it harder for women in these circumstances to recognise the value of their own competences with respect to entrepreneurship, as propounded by Phelan and Sharpley (2012). Therefore, in line with Methorst et al. (2017), policy must recognise the socio-material context within which family farms operate and support is needed to help farm-based entrepreneurs (and latent entrepreneurs) to recognise both the value of their personal competences and the (potential) value of other resources under their control and accessible through their networks. These resources can include under-used farm buildings, recreational opportunities, aesthetic and natural capital, or local food and drink, all of which have been used by women in this study, but there was no business model that told them how to make the most of these resources.

In summary, facing economic and climatic uncertainties, a multifunctional business base can provide tourism, food production, energy production. New forms of rural enterprise could safeguard the economic role of farmers within a modern rural economy. Although only small steps, the development of farm hospitality and recognition of women's business skills move family farms away from dependence on production prices towards more market-oriented approaches to creating value from their abundant resources.

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