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**Determinants of Agritourism Operators' Participation in Clustering: A  
study of the Appalachian**

Oluwatoyin Adebisi\*  
*West Virginia University, Department of Human and Community Development*

Dee Singh-Knights (advisor)  
*West Virginia University*

Micheal Dougherty (co-advisor)  
*West Virginia University*

Jinyang Deng  
*West Virginia University*

Micheal Strager  
*West Virginia University*

\*corresponding author, oadebisi@mix.wvu.edu

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## Abstract

Cooperation within and between similar and complementary businesses brings about healthy growth. Regional economic boom and future sustainability have been a concern to the operators of Agritourism worldwide. This is likely to induce the decision to participate in clustering and this underpins why clustering in agritourism is being promoted and utilized as a mechanism for advancing the growth of the sector and development of rural economies. In the Appalachia region where agritourism has been growing, there is paucity of empirical information about the determinants of clustering of agritourism enterprises. To bridge this gap, from the perspectives of agritourism operators, we explored the determinants of the decision to participate in agritourism clustering. Using a multistage sampling procedure, about 192 agrotourism operators was surveyed in the Appalachian region, of which only 145 responses met our inclusion criteria for analysis. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to get agritourism development factors. Descriptive statistics, logit regression model, and multiple linear regression were used to identify the relationships among human capital, operational, financial, farm characteristics, operation season, and operating revenue.

Logistic regression model results revealed that operators who engage in on-farm direct sales, entertainment, and make high average sales were more likely to engage in agritourism clustering. The linear regression model further showed that that motivation to diversify into Agritourism, acres devoted to Agritourism, money spent by visitors. Most levels of education were the significant factors influencing the revenue of agritourism operators agrotourism operators with higher financial risks, whose operations were in Virginia and Kentucky. Also, higher levels of education were less likely to participate in agritourism clustering.

The results can be draw upon by policymakers and extension educators on the need to create awareness on adopting clustering as a viable strategy for fostering agritourism development in the region. Also, there is need for interventions and promotional activities aimed at encouraging participation in agritourism mostly in Virginia and Kentucky.

*Keywords:* rural tourism; Agritourism; cluster; agritourism operators.