SURVEY OF THE CONSUMER ATTITUDE OF TOURISTS VISITING SOUTH TRANSDANUBIA, HUNGARY

Bence ZÁVODI*
University of Pécs, Faculty of Sciences, Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, Department of Tourism, Pécs, Hungary, e-mail: bence.zavodi@gmail.com

Géza SZABÓ
University of Pécs, Faculty of Sciences, Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, Department of Tourism, Pécs, Hungary, e-mail: fg4t@gamma.ttk.pte.hu

Levente B. ALPEK
University of Pécs, Faculty of Sciences, Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, Department of Human Geography and Urban Studies, Pécs, Hungary, e-mail: alpeklevente@gamma.ttk.pte.hu


Abstract: The primary goal of the survey conducted was to work out adequate methods for the exploration of the consumer attitudes of tourists visiting South Transdanubia (Hungary) and to typify these attitudes, especially to analyse tourists’ behaviour concerning local products. The source of the primary findings of the paper is a guest questionnaire survey conducted in 2018. These data were analysed – relying on professional literature – by cluster analysis and factor analysis. During the research comprehensive information was gained about the typical consumer habits of tourists arriving at South Transdanubia, which habits show several similarities and matches to consumer trends revealed by the literature research. Getting to know these consumer attitudes allowed the authors to create consumer types with the help of which the structure and size of the potential consumer base can be known.

Key words: rural tourism, consumer attitude, consumer type, local product, South Transdanubia, Hungary

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION

Tourism in Hungary is diverse, with several tourism products in the supply that attract both domestic and international guests. As regards the – regional distribution of the – number of guest nights spent in commercial accommodations in Hungary, two junctions are visible, Budapest and the Balaton region (19%) by the figures of 2019 databases of guest numbers. On the other hand, the region in the focus of the paper has significantly lower indices, based on the guest nights spent in commercial accommodations it is only 4% of the volume of tourism in Hungary (1.261 million guest nights) that was realised in South Transdanubia (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2019). These statistical indices reflect the distribution of tourists before the pandemic. In the recent years, tourism in the region has gone through considerable changes, making researches on the tourism development of South Transdanubia important, also, the willingness to utilise these research findings in practice may be high. Rural areas as complex regions have gone through a fundamental transition in the last decades. As a result of this transition, they are not only spaces of agriculture but also areas of recreation and entertainment, and in some cases, we can even talk about geographical space of tourism (Lane and Kastenholz, 2015). For tourists participating in rural tourism, it is the quality of recreation, the opportunity to get away from the everyday stress of urban life that matters, as does the chance to get to know traditional lifestyles, authenticity, personal guest-host relationships and the proximity of nature (Frochot, 2005; Lane, 2009; Sidali et al., 2018; Sims, 2009). Approaching the issue from the demand side, a visible trend is the growing demand of urban dwellers to visit and get to know rural spaces (Bel et al., 2015; Molera and Albaladejo, 2007; Park et al., 2012; Pesonen, 2015; Sidali and Schulz, 2010). Rural areas thus have several advantages, as areas abundant in natural and cultural values and resources, offering a huge diversity of experiences where tourists can find the services that best match their needs (Campón-Cerro et al., 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Results of empirical researches show that tourists visiting rural destinations do not only have different motivations but also different profiles, their behaviour and consumption habits are diverse and different (Eusébio et al., 2017; Fernández-Hernández et al., 2016; Molera and Albaladejo, 2007; Park et al., 2012; Pesonen, 2015). Knowing these attitudes may help manage the demand for destinations and the selection of the ideal segments (Kastenholz, 2004). Besides, effective marketing activity, which can be implemented in several ways, plays an important role. It can be product-centred (Frochot, 2005), can be based on activities pursued during travels (Eusébio et al., 2017; Pesonen, 2015), or connected to factors related to sustainability (Kastenholz et al., 2018). Tourism may play an important role in the sustainable development of rural areas especially in well organised and managed rural areas and regions where tourism appears as a part of the development strategy (Çakır et al., 2018; Clarke, 2005; Kastenholz, 2004; Kastenholz et al., 2012; Saxena et al., 2007).

The relationship between gastronomy and tourism has been appreciated over recent years (Cohen and Avieli, 2004; Long, 2004; Torres, 2002). The food offered to tourists may have a dominant impact on the economy, culture and environmental sustainability of the touristic destinations. Experts emphasise that locally produced goods have advantages both for the local inhabitants and the tourists (Boniface and Ioannides, 2017; Ilbery et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2009; Woodland and Acott, 2007). Local food products and the industries built on them (foods and beverages alike) are suitable for the improvement of sustainability both on the side of tourism and local community by the propaganda of sustainable farming solutions, the support of local businesses and creating a brand for the destination which is suitable for the attraction of even more tourists and investments. These advantages can also be seen concerning locals and tourists (Clark and Chabrel, 2007; Ilbery et al., 2003). Another achievement of initiatives based on local products can be linking visitors to local products and their producers. Telling the “story” of the food may satisfy tourists’ need for authenticity, which may lead to the stabilisation of the market of these products (Sims, 2009). Tourists often search for the experience of authenticity and the typical and iconic products of the respective areas, in which local products may play an important role (Sims, 2009). Advantages attributed to “local” products – for example, better environment,
healthier foods, greater social justice – can often be contradictory. The primary reason for this is the alternative meanings of “local” as a concept (Maye et al., 2007). When purchasing local products, it must be mentioned that tourists can experience a sort of moral satisfaction, as they choose a more ethical form of eating. The personal experience of eating and shopping can strengthen tourists’ attachment to the destination (Soper, 2007). Several studies have already proved that customers are willing to pay more for premium quality goods produced locally (Balogh et al., 2016; Carpio and Ise, 2008; Darby et al., 2006). According to Sims (2010), several consumers have been alienated from today’s modern food industry. Their needs for natural and healthy foods may be prime motivating factors by which tourists can be attracted to rural areas. Tourists are also consumers in the destination who partly bring their consumption habits with them and partly show an interest in the local specialties that are novel for them, which means that local food products can appear as attractions to them. A visible trend has unfurled in food consumption since the traditional community attitude of the 1960s through the individualist, “calculating” attitude of the 1980s and the followers of the trend of “uniqueness”, modernity and hedonism in the 1990s to the “responsible” consumer attitude, representing ethics and fairness and respecting the community again, after the turn of the millennium (Dagevos and Gaasbeek, 2001; Lehotai, 2004). By the early 21st century, new concepts and values are strongly attached to the consumption of foods like experience, already well-known in tourism, and lifestyle determining one’s self-expression (Töröcsik, 2014). Besides this, the issues of environment and responsibility are becoming more and more important in influencing consumption attitude. The growth of the membership of the LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability) group, i.e., health- and environment-minded consumers indicates the growing role of responsibility taken for the narrower and broader environment (Wenzel et al., 2007). Consumption of foods produced in the direct vicinity of the place of residence, i.e., local food trend seems to be evaluated (Töröcsik, 2011). Consumption of authentic products in the region and also their producers, marking a return to the seasonal trend of food consumptions based on traditions (Smith and Mackinnon, 2008).

The primary objective of the examinations made was the elaboration of adequate methods for the exploration of the consumption attitude of tourists visiting South Transdanubia and the typing of the characteristics of these attitudes, to allow the analysis of their behaviour concerning local products.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main source for the research findings of this paper is a questionnaire guest survey conducted in 2018. Sampling lasted from early summer in 2018 (May–June) right to the beginning of autumn (September–October), matching the seasonality of the region, i.e., sampling was done in pre-main- and after-season as well. Areas concerned by the questionnaire survey are within the territory of the touristic region of South Transdanubia. The selection of the settlements involved in the survey was done by a tourism index defined by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, the number of guest nights spent in commercial accommodations. Results of the questionnaire survey were recorded in a database with the assistance of the Microsoft Excel software. Of the total sample (n=430), only a certain proportion (n=166) could be included in further examinations, the main reason for which is the lack of data at certain variables.

This database was the foundation of the statistical methods applied in the subsequent phases of the research. The statistical methods were applied with the assistance of the software IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0. During the research, a total of 41 variables along 5 relevant dimensions were included in the factor analysis, as a result of which the total of the sample could be characterised with the use of 13 factors. Before the factor analysis, it was checked whether the variables chosen were suitable for further analyses. Table 1 shows the values achieved by the preliminary examinations proving the applicability of factor analysis, in the case of Bartlett-test, and also for the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin indices. These tests proved that the sample is suitable for further analyses in terms of every dimension.

Following this, tourists included in the factor analysis were surveyed with cluster analysis, distinguishing the different types using the Ward process and the application of the squared Euclidian distance. Each variable was measured along a metric scale, no outstanding individual values were found, and no significant correlations among the factors were detected, either. When defining and checking the number of clusters, the examination of the adequate number of elements of coefficients and types was done.

The description of the clusters and the examination of the correlations among the background variables (comparison of cluster centroids and averages) were done by variance analysis. During the survey of consumer types and local products, respondents could define on a scale from 1 to 5 to what extent they preferred local products. Aggregations were made for easier comprehensibility and easier analysability. Preference levels 1 and 2 were aggregated and given the specification typical not preferred. Preference level 3 was considered as neutral, while preference levels 4 and 5 were taken as category typically preferred. The main demographic features of tourists involved in the survey (Table 2) are a good indication of the fact that they made a heterogeneous sample. The main characteristics of the sample are male (61%), age between 18-25 (30%), single (39%), secondary degree, income between HUF 100,000-250,000 (48%).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Consumer attitude in the tourism of South Transdanubia

Exploration of consumer attitudes was done along five dimensions (Figure 1). At the decision on the use of each dimension, it was an important principle of selection that they should be relevant in tourism research and match the research objective defined earlier. Based on the nature of the respective dimensions, the variables were chosen from among the questions of the questionnaire, the main aspect in their selection was the connection between the – contents of the – dimension and the variable. The questions selected, i.e., the variables describing the different characteristic features of consumer behaviour have high touristic relevance, also supported by the literature. The result of the factor analysis aiming at the filtering of the variables is shown in Figure 1, demonstrating that it is 13 factors that describe the consumer preferences connected to the realised demand. For the sake of easier interpretation, we have highlighted the factor weights in the tables summarizing the relationship between the variables and dimensions (Table 3, 4, 5, 6, 7), so that the characteristic of the variable of each consumer attitude is outlined. Dimension 1 (Table 3) is the frequency of the use of traditional sources of information, in connection with which a total of nine variables were included for three consumer attitudes. The first attitude (expert information) is typical mainly of those tourists who prefer information mediated by the tourism trade. The information acquisition habits of tourists showing the signs of the
second attitude (simplified information) reveal a preference for simple solutions primarily. A different attitude is shown by those tourists who prefer first-hand information; this factor contains variables representing the highest level of trust.

Dimension II (Table 4) shows the frequency of the use of online sources of information, based on which three consumer attitudes were specified. The first attitude (websites) is true of those tourists who prefer websites from among all online sources of information. Attitude relying on applications primarily means reliance on opportunities offered by smartphones and different phone applications. Variables in the third attitude are typical of those tourists who rely on a specific segment of modern solutions, shared contents. Dimension III (Table 5) means the importance of the infrastructure elements of the destination.

Two consumer attitudes were here defined, both with 3 variables. The first attitude (security) is typical of those tourists mainly who pay great attention to factors listed among the security factors of a destination. Accessibility is considered as important by those tourists for whom access to the destination and movements within it are of utmost significance. Dimension IV (Table 6) is the importance of the elements related to the touristic services of the destination; three consumer attitudes (with the assistance of nine variables) were defined here. Shopping and related supply available in the destination is featured in the attitude called product supply. The second attitude (folkloristic values) is typical, in the first place, of tourists open to folk values, for whom the use of environment-friendly solutions is a decisive factor. The attitude of experience focus is characteristic for those tourists who attribute special importance to experiences coming from the services used.

Dimension V (Table 7) is general consumer preferences, along which two consumer attitudes, with 4 variables each, assist the interpretation of the sample. Rationalist attitude is typical of those tourists in the first place who make their decisions by rational consumer preferences primarily. The elitist factor characterizes those tourists whose decisions are influenced by special aspects.

Consumer types in the tourism of South Transdanubia

Using the consumer attitudes defined, respondents involved in the survey were classified into five types by cluster analysis (Table 8). For the easier analysis of the table, we highlighted the consumer attitudes in terms of every consumer type in each dimension. The earlier presentation of consumer attitudes allows that variables have also become definable for each consumer type.
The first type, making the largest part of the sample, is goal-oriented tourists, with 34% of tourists surveyed falling into this category. Of all 13 consumer attitudes, 7 are typical of them. During their travels they pay special attention to accessibility and product supply, also, they typically show rationalist consumer preferences in the first place.

The second type shows almost all consumer attitudes, 12 out of the 13, which gave them the label of meticulous tourists. They make 20% of the total of the sample. Their information acquisition typically takes place by the application of websites, mobile phone apps and simplified information. Also, the pattern of their consumption habits is significantly influenced by experience-focus and the product supply. Tourists in the third category were defined as classical tourists, characterised by 6 consumer attitudes of the 13 defined. Members of this type make 20% of the sample. As regards the consumer attitudes most typical of them, these tourists make their travel and consumption decisions based on websites, applications and expert information.

The fourth category of the sample, by the consumer attitudes typifying them, can be called exclusive tourists. They make 14% of the sample. Of the 13 consumer attitudes defined, 8 are typical of them. The sources of their information are usually shared contents and expert information; also, they typically have an elitist consumer attitude.

The fifth type in the sample is a specific type, of the members of this type, called the hedonists, only 2 consumer attitudes of the 13 are typical. Travel-related information is obtained in this group from first-hand sources. It must be emphasised that experience-focus is of special importance for them when it comes to touristic services available in a destination.

The positioning of the consumer types detected in the classifications in the literature

The typifying of the consumers that we gained by our survey can be compared to further classifications in the professional literature. When analysing consumer trends, Lehota (2004) defined six consumer attitudes. The result of the cluster analysis done by Malota et al. (2018) also yielded six consumer types, in our terminology: consumer segments. The respective types, based on their characteristic features, can be connected in different ways to the consumer attitudes that our research detected. These connections of different quality are demonstrated in Table 9. The table shows whether there is a correlation between our consumer types and the consumer types defined in the literature, which were classified into four categories: correlation by their characteristic features, indirect correlation by their characteristic features, opposite types and no correlation. As regards the consumer types identified by this survey, it is the types “meticulous” and “goal-oriented” that can be best matched to the types demonstrated in the professional literature. The group of the “exclusive” is quite similar to those of the “unique” by Lehota (2004) and the “active perfectionists” and those “seeking local specialities” identified by Malota et al. (2018). Analogies to “hedonists” can be found in Lehota (2004) “individualists” and “unique”. The characteristic features of “classical tourists” are the least similar to the types in the other two classification systems; in fact, the type “responsible” by Lehota (2004) even shows opposite features.

Table 9. Relationship dimensions among the consumer types (Source: Lehota, 2004; Malota et al., 2018; own research)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individualist</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalist</td>
<td>Calculating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique</td>
<td>Responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active perfectionists</td>
<td>Seeking value for money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking local specialities</td>
<td>Everyday active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price sensitive</td>
<td>Casual perfectionists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal-oriented</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meticulos</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonist</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Distribution of the preference for local products among the consumer types (Data source: own research)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Prefers local products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typically not preferred</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typically preferred</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal-oriented</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meticulos</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonist</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Distribution of the preference for local products among the consumer types (Data source: own research)

CONCLUSION

In our research, we gained a lot of diverse information about the consumption habits typical of tourists visiting South Transdanubia, which can be correlated and matched in several aspects to the consumer trends identified in the professional literature. Getting to know these consumer attitudes allowed us to create consumer types by which the structure and size of the potential consumer base can be learnt.

As regards the preference level of the respective consumer types for local product, the proportions within the types and the formerly identified consumer attitudes, the following statements can be made. Those types that were typified by more than one attitude concerning the

The positioning of the consumer types detected in the classifications in the literature

The typifying of the consumers that we gained by our survey can be compared to further classifications in the professional literature. When analysing consumer trends, Lehota (2004) defined six consumer attitudes. The result of the cluster analysis done by Malota et al. (2018) also yielded six consumer types, in our terminology: consumer segments. The respective types, based on their characteristic features, can be connected in different ways to the consumer attitudes that our research detected. These connections of different quality are demonstrated in Table 9. The table shows whether there is a correlation between our consumer types and the consumer types defined in the literature, which were classified into four categories: correlation by their characteristic features, indirect correlation by their characteristic features, opposite types and no correlation. As regards the consumer types identified by this survey, it is the types “meticulous” and “goal-oriented” that can be best matched to the types demonstrated in the professional literature. The group of the “exclusive” is quite similar to those of the “unique” by Lehota (2004) and the “active perfectionists” and those “seeking local specialities” identified by Malota et al. (2018). Analogies to “hedonists” can be found in Lehota (2004) “individualists” and “unique”. The characteristic features of “classical tourists” are the least similar to the types in the other two classification systems; in fact, the type “responsible” by Lehota (2004) even shows opposite features.

Table 8. Consumer types defined by the cluster analysis (Data source: own research)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Consumer attitude</th>
<th>Typical</th>
<th>Atypical</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Exclusive</th>
<th>Hedonist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional sources of information</td>
<td>Expert information</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simplified information</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First-hand information</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online sources of information</td>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applications</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared contents</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure elements</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touristic services</td>
<td>Product supply</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Folk values</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience focus</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General consumer preferences</td>
<td>Rationalist</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elitist</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
<td>Atypical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Relationship dimensions among the consumer types (Source: Lehota, 2004; Malota et al., 2018; own research)

Legend: Direct correlation by their characteristic features: +; Indirect correlation by their characteristic features: =; Opposite types: x; No correlation: 0

It can be said about all consumer types identified in our research (Table 10) that the overwhelming majority of tourists fall into the category typically preferred when it comes to local products. It is seen that most tourists had average or above-average preference levels. One of the reasons for this may be the fact that the trends identified in the introductory part of the paper are also true for tourists travelling to South Transdanubia, their openness to and interest in local products is traceable also during their travels.

Table 10. Distribution of the preference for local products among the consumer types (Data source: own research)
sources of information had a neutral preference level in a smaller proportion. The types relying on expert information or websites or applications showed a smaller proportion of neutral preference level. As a summary, it can be stated that the regular use of different sources of information promotes the birth of preference for local products in both a positive and negative way.

Despite the lack of preference for folkloristic values, 73% of hedonist tourists are in the category of “typically preferred”. The categories of which a hedonist attitude is less typical showed this low preference level in higher proportion. The categories characterised by the elitist attitude showed a neutral attitude in a lower proportion than other categories did. The categories not characterised by attitudes related to online sources of information showed a significantly higher level of neutral preference.

High level of preference is most characteristic for the meticulous type, a reason for which may be the fact that 12 out of the 13 attitudes are typical of them, i.e. their decisions made about local products is based on the consideration of several aspects. A high level of preference is most typical for the goal-oriented type, a reason for which may be the reliance of the members of this category on sources of information, only. A neutral preference level is most typical of the exclusive type, which may be explained by the fact that this is the only category that relies on shared contents as a source of information.

A low preference level is most typical of the classical type; a reason for this may be the fact that hedonist attitude is not typical of them. A low preference level is least typical of the hedonist type, a reason for which might be the fact that only two attitudes are typical of them.

The future way of this research could be the search for the relationships between the touristic demand and the consumer types determined by our survey concerning the local products of the Southern Transdanubia. These results would be beneficial for the region itself and based on them tourism professionals would be able to create development strategies based on the current behaviour of the tourists.

Acknowledgement

This publication/research has been supported by the European Union and Hungary and co-financed by the European Social Fund through the project EFOP-3.6.2-16-2017-00017, titled “Sustainable, intelligent and inclusive regional and city models”.

REFERENCES

Ilbery, B., Kneafsey, M., Bowler, I., & Clark, G. (2003). Quality products and services in the lagging rural regions of the European Union: a producer perspective. In K. Beesley, H. Millward, B. Ilbery, & L. Harrington (Eds.), The new countryside: geographic perspectives on rural change,126-142, Brandon University (Rural Development Institute), and Saint Mary’s University.