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**"Rural Images, Tourism and Sustainability:
Perceptions of Rural Accommodation Operators and their Visitors in Waterloo-
Wellington Region, Ontario"**

by

Kelley Anne McClinchey

Honours Bachelor of Science (Geography), Lakehead University, 1997

THESIS

Submitted to the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

Master of Environmental Studies in Geography

Wilfrid Laurier University

1999

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate rural images and perceptions of rural accommodation operators and their visitors, and to explore the contribution of tourism to sustainability in the Waterloo-Wellington region. The objectives were; to investigate and compare images, as perceived by rural hosts and visitors, and as projected through accommodation brochures; to compare perceived and projected images with ideal rural images; and to explore the role of rural tourism in sustaining rural cultures and contributing to sustainable rural development. Images and perceptions of rural accommodation operators were obtained via personal interviews and visitors' perceptions were gathered through the use of guest questionnaires. A content analysis of accommodation brochures provided the basis for the projected image. Results indicated that hosts' images were similar to visitors' images in most aspects but also differed significantly in others. Visitors tended to have an idealized rural image. Hosts' perceptions also indicated that rural tourism contributes to the cultural and economic sustainability of the Waterloo-Wellington region. The findings of the present study raised important implications for further rural tourism planning and promotion in the context of sustainable rural development, as well as addressed the need for future research on rural images, tourism and sustainability.

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CHAPTER ONE

Rural Images, Tourism, and Sustainability

1.1 Introduction

For centuries in Europe, especially in Britain, as urban areas expanded on farming landscapes and wilderness, people have had a special attachment for rural areas. Post-industrialization further developed these perceptions, as people began rejecting urban areas because of their growing distain for congested, polluted, and industry-based cities. The rural idyll, pastoral myth, and rurality are concepts which were used to describe such ideal visions of a peaceful, quiet, simple and wholesome lifestyle, which has strong attachments to agriculture, nature and community (Valentine 1997, Cloke and Milbourne 1992, Short 1991). In more recent decades, similar perceptions and idealizations of rural areas were transferred across the Atlantic to North America, especially with threats of urbanization on valuable farmlands, and political and social restructuring of rural communities (Newby 1986, Marsden, Lowe, and Whitmore 1990). The North American countryside ideal encompassed a sentiment or mystique for rural areas and their ambiance, wholesomeness, small-town life, images of the pioneer, and historical nature (Willits, Bealer, and Timbers 1990, Park and Coppack 1994, Bunce 1994). Even though popular images of rural areas are apparent in North America, less academic attention was paid to North American, and especially

Canadian, rural images.

The affection for the countryside has resulted in an increase of individuals visiting, and even moving, to rural areas in order to capture a sense of the rural experience. Especially in North American cities, sprawling residential neighbourhoods on the outskirts of urban centres are being developed to give sub-urbanites a taste of country living. Even small rural villages are developing residential neighbourhoods similar to those found in urban centres but boasting "country living in a friendly rural community" (Appendix A, Toronto Star, November 28, 1998). For those who wish to get away temporarily from the rush of everyday life to a place where the atmosphere is relaxing, peaceful, and quiet, the people are friendly and welcoming, and the agricultural landscape is plentiful and beautiful, there are opportunities waiting which have been, and will be, developed to satisfy them.

Rural tourism began haphazardly as a result of people becoming interested in visiting rural areas because of their idealized perceptions or feelings of nostalgia for rural life (Vogeler 1977, Kieselbach and Long 1990, Weaver and Fennell 1997). Tourism, in general, refers to "the temporary stays of people travelling primarily for leisure or recreational purposes" (Pearce 1989:1). More specifically, rural tourism, in this case, refers to tourism in areas where the primary industry is agriculture and consists of small-scale accommodations, and attractions which centre on agricultural, rural, or country themes (Warnick and Klar 1991, Evans and Ilbery 1989). For instance, rural tourism activities could be farm, rural, or horseback riding tours, agricultural festivals, or farmers' markets, which explains why rural tourism is sometimes referred to as farm tourism or agri-tourism (Davies and Gilbert 1992, Oppermann 1996). Accommodations in rural areas as in the form of bed

and breakfasts, country inns, or farm holidays, with guest ranches being more common in the North American west (Oppermann 1996, Vogeler 1977). Although rural tourism originated from people's desire for a rural experience, rural communities quickly learned of the economic benefits of encouraging visitors to their area. This was particularly attractive for agricultural communities which were experiencing economic declines, and for farmers who needed extra income.

Rural tourism was recognized only in recent years as a separate form of tourism, thus the research was limited and has consisted primarily of profiles of accommodations and economic benefits (Luloff et al 1994, Fleischer and Pizam 1997, Dernoï 1983, Oppermann 1995, Shaw and Williams 1994). Although there were a few studies on rural tourism in the United States, and still fewer in Canada (Weaver and Fennell 1997, Vogeler 1977, Luloff et al 1994), rural tourism in continental Europe and Britain was acknowledged more frequently. But regardless of location, rural tourism was viewed as a means of diversifying rural economies (Fleischer and Pizam 1997, Oppermann 1995). Rural tourism also has the potential to benefit rural areas environmentally and culturally, even though these considerations have not been acknowledged as often as economic benefits. Because of its initial small-scale developments and emphasis on natural and cultural resources, rural tourism was sometimes viewed as a form of ecotourism (Fennell and Weaver 1997, Morrison et al 1996). Rural tourism can also improve the role of women in rural society, preserve local traditions, and provide rural families with the opportunity of meeting new people, exchanging ideas and values, and learning about other places (Oppermann 1996, Dernoï 1991).

Recognizing the benefits of bringing visitors to rural areas, entrepreneurs have commercialized many facets of rural life and landscapes which they feel are most attractive for visitors and which are most successful at motivating them to stay. Many of these aspects are similar to the ideal rural images discussed earlier such as the "'green' and wholesome image of farm life" (Kieselbach and Long 1990) or images of wide open spaces and unique traditional cultures which have strong attachments for the land and community. But rural areas, in their efforts to gain economically, may take advantage of what they perceive are visitors' images of an ideal rural place and produce a tourism product which most fits with an ideal, rather than marketing real rural places and cultural identities. In North America, rural communities have commodified rural traditions, landscapes and cultures in order to provide people with "country" things to do and consume (Bunce 1994, Park and Coppack 1994). Moreover, increased visitor numbers and the introduction of non-local investors/developers may raise concerns about the environmental and social implications of tourism for rural areas. Thus, like other forms of tourism which are not properly planned, managed, and promoted, rural tourism may become harmful for rural areas instead of beneficial. The result may be a destruction of what initially attracted visitors, and a loss of a sense of community, tradition and identity among local residents; in other words, the rural idyll (Mitchell 1998). It is for these reasons that a sustainable approach to rural tourism is especially important (Lane 1994).

Sustainability issues were raised in rural tourism research with regard to economic benefits and rural diversification (Fennell and Weaver 1997, Fleischer and Pizam 1997, Gannon 1994). Rural tourism was also associated with ecologically sustainable tourism or

ecotourism (Bryan 1991, Morrison et al 1996). However, even though Crouch (1994) raised important issues with regard to rural cultures and sustainable tourism, there has been less emphasis on the importance of sustaining rural cultural heritage and rural lifestyles. Culture has been defined as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor 1970:10). Rural cultures are thought of as unique among themselves (Old Order Mennonite versus Anglo-American farming cultures) as well as unique from urban cultures. Rural culture consists of rural beliefs and values, heritage, and customs, such as those associated with cultural celebrations and harvest.

It seems surprising that rural cultural heritage, traditions, friendly communities and agricultural landscapes, which play a significant role in attracting visitors, have not been acknowledged as frequently in the research. Moreover, there are implications for how these aspects are viewed by visitors, as well as residents, since the way in which rural areas are projected may be compromised by popular styles of tourism presentation and promotion (Crouch 1994). Operators in rural areas may be too keen on commodifying agricultural traditions for tourism since the realities of modern agriculture are not pictured in most people's ideal rural images (Hjalager 1996).

Sustainable tourism principles have recognized the importance of involving the community in tourism planning decision making, understanding hosts and visitors needs and desires, and appropriate tourism promotion and marketing (Eber 1992, Gannon 1994, Crouch 1994, Gilbert 1993, Pigram 1990). However, these issues are newly explored, or yet to be explored, in rural tourism. Questions continue to be raised pertaining to the values and

perceptions of hosts and visitors, appropriate promotion of rural tourism, maintaining rural heritage and culture, and sustaining rural economies and environments (Oppermann 1996, 1995, Crouch 1994, Gannon 1994). Even though images of rural areas have been mentioned in association with rural tourism and sustainability, they have not been examined in any detail. Rural images and tourism were only recently explored as part of the growing interest in destination image research (e.g. Chen and Kerstetter 1999; Selby and Morgan 1996, Echtner and Ritchie 1991). More importantly, tourism should be viewed in the context of sustainable rural development, since sustaining rural economies, environments, and cultures cannot be appropriately discussed without regard for other industries such as agriculture.

The issues addressed are important for all agricultural regions with valuable resources but they are particularly significant for regions which have very unique rural cultures and heritage such as the Mennonite areas in Waterloo County, Ontario. The Old Order Mennonites of Waterloo County, the unique heritage of Wellington County, and the attractive agricultural and natural landscapes, have facilitated the development of a lucrative rural tourism product in the Waterloo-Wellington region. Even though development has stayed clear of marketing the Mennonite culture for fear of negatively impacting the quiet, self-sufficient community, concerns are apparent with regard to the commercialization and promotion of rural life and communities for tourism. In addition, there have been concerns about the sustainability of agriculture in the region and urban encroachment on valuable agricultural land. Although rural tourism continues to be a positive factor in the region, important questions need to be addressed with regard to tourism promotion, the image of the area, perceptions and views of visitors and hosts, and rural sustainability.

1.2 Purpose, Objectives, and Outline

The purpose of this study is to investigate rural images and perceptions of rural accommodation operators and their visitors, and to explore the contribution of tourism to sustainable rural development in the Waterloo-Wellington region. The objectives of the study are as follows; 1) to investigate and compare the images of rural areas, as perceived by rural accommodation operators and visitors, and as projected through accommodation brochures, 2) to compare perceived and projected images with ideal rural images (i.e. the rural idyll, pastoral myth, countryside ideal), and 3) to explore the role of rural tourism in sustaining rural cultures and contributing to sustainable rural development.

The beginning of the report introduced the issues relevant to the study, and chapter two will expand on them in a discussion of the context for the research. Important areas of research are images and tourism, rural images, rural tourism, and sustainable development and tourism. The third chapter addresses the research methodology with descriptions and justification of the study area, research design and construction of the interview questions and visitor survey. The next three chapters are analysis and discussion chapters covering the three main sections of this study which coincide with the objectives of the study. The fourth chapter describes the characteristics of rural accommodations and visitors in the study area, the fifth chapter addresses the rural images of hosts and visitors and the image as projected by accommodation brochures, which are then compared with the ideal rural images, and the sixth chapter explains rural operators' perceptions of rural tourism and the connections to sustainable rural development in the region. Finally, chapter seven combines the ideas and issues raised in the three discussions and develops conclusions. Limitations of the research

design and study are acknowledged as well as recommendations for further research and for future rural tourism planning, promotion and development within the Waterloo-Wellington region.

CHAPTER TWO

Images, Tourism, and Sustainable Rural Development

Chapter one introduced the topic of interest and the purpose, objectives, and questions addressed in the study. The context of the study will be discussed in Chapter two and will consist of three major areas of research which are relevant to the present study. The first major theme focuses on image research in tourism and studies on rural images, the second research theme relates to rural tourism. The third area of research examines sustainable rural development and tourism research. The fourth section of the chapter will discuss these three areas with regard to Ontario. A final discussion will describe the development of a conceptual framework which will connect the three major research themes and provide a basis for the present research.

2.1 Images

2.1.1 Images and Tourism

Consumer marketing researchers have long recognised the importance of studying people's *images* or perceptions of a product for product promotion. Tourism marketers quickly learned that ideas raised in consumer marketing research could be applied to the promotion of destinations. Tourism researchers expanded the definition of image to include the perceptions or impressions a person has of a place. However, many researchers debated

about whether image was best defined by the perceptions of individual attributes or by the total impression of the destination (Dichter 1985, Crompton 1979, Phelps 1986, Gartner 1989). Based on a conceptual framework for tourism image studies, Selby and Morgan (1996) came up with a comprehensive definition of destination image. Image is defined as the perceptions of individual attributes of a destination and the holistic impression made by a destination (Selby and Morgan 1996).

Although it is important to understand the concept of an image in relation to tourism, it is also important to recognize that there are different types of images which are formulated based on people's level of exposure to and experience with a destination. For example, Gunn (1997) described seven phases of the travel experience with reference to image formation: 1) Accumulation of mental images about vacation experiences; 2) Modification of those images by further information; 3) Decision to take a vacation trip; 4) Travel to the destination; 5) Participation at the destination; 6) Return home; 7) Modification of images based on the vacation experience. Images reflect people's perceptions of a place, landscape, or environment whether or not they have visited that destination. Perceived images also exist which are based on people's *real* experiences with a destination.

Organic images are perceived images of a destination derived from non-tourist or non-commercial sources such as general media (news reports, magazines, books, movies) and the opinions of family/friends (Gunn 1997, Echtner and Ritchie 1991). Commercial sources of information such as travel brochures, guidebooks, and travel agents may alter the organic image, and this modified perceived image is referred to as an *induced* image (Gunn 1997, Echtner and Ritchie 1991). On the other hand, Selby and Morgan (1996) suggested

that the *projected* image is the image derived from tourist sources, advertisements, and guidebooks, and the organic image is the image produced from popular culture, media, literature, and education. Selby and Morgan (1996) also stated that the *naive* image consists of organic and projected images, whereas the *re-evaluated* image is derived from perceptions gained by visiting the destination itself, and hence are perceived images based on vacation experiences.

Images which are based on people's expectations of a perfect mythical place or "utopia" are referred to as *ideal* images. For instance, Mayo (1973) concluded that an ideal destination would have a comfortable climate, consisting of a great deal of scenery and lacking congestion. Similarly, Ross (1993) differentiated between ideal and "actual" images based on certain favourable attributes such as climate, congestion, scenery, and the friendliness of residents, but the study lacked a clear definition of ideal image. Different types of images are defined and summarized in Table 2.1.

Tourism image researchers have chosen to focus on certain types of images more than others. For instance, image studies have focussed more on designative images or cognitive images rather than evaluative or affective images (Walmsley and Young 1998, Baloglu and Brinberg 1997). Designative images are associated with the perceptual or cognitive processing of environmental information which is concerned with more tangible physical components of place perception such as attribute measurement (Walmsley and Young 1998). Affective images deal with feelings rather than beliefs to evaluate places (Baloglu and Brinberg 1997). Some researchers have neglected to state which types of images they are analysing. For example, perceived images were analysed by Goodrich (1977), Crompton

(1979), and Reilly (1990) but it was not stated whether or not these images were based on previous travel experiences to the particular destinations studied. On the other hand, Gartner (1989) measured induced images, Ross (1993) studied ideal images and "actual" images, and Phelps (1986) assessed secondary images which were defined as primary images altered by real experiences.

Table 2.1: Types of Images Described in Tourist Image Literature

| Image Type | Description by Authors |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Organic Image | - perceived images of a destination derived from non-tourist sources (general media, books, movies, news reports) (Gunn 1997, Echtner and Ritchie 1991, Selby and Morgan 1996) |
| Induced Image | - perceived images derived from commercial sources such as travel brochures, guidebooks, travel agents (Gunn 1997, Echtner and Ritchie 1991) |
| Projected Image | - images derived from tourist sources, brochures, advertisements and guidebooks (Selby and Morgan 1996) |
| Naive Image | - consists of organic and induced images (Selby and Morgan 1996) |
| Re-evaluated Image | - derived from perceptions after visiting the destination itself (Selby and Morgan 1996) |
| Ideal Image | - perceptions of a perfect mythical place or utopia, not a clear definition given in the literature, although certain characteristics such as climate, scenery, friendly atmosphere and lack of congestion were considered ideal image attributes (Mayo 1973, Ross 1993) |

Perceived images are commonly studied in the research, yet it is not always clear whether these images are based on organic or induced sources of information or are re-evaluated based on real experiences. Moreover, ideal images are not commonly studied in the research and distinctions between tourism images and the reality of the destination, are not frequently discussed. However, the work by Phelps (1986) is one study which examined

the differences between image and reality with regard to first-time and return visitors and the promotional images of Menorca. These are issues which should be recognized more since the larger the difference between image and reality, the more likely the tourist will be dissatisfied (Mathieson and Wall 1982).

It is important to distinguish between types of images since people's level of exposure to and experience with a destination are critical in determining their overall perception of a place. Potential visitors who perceive an extremely positive induced image of a destination may be disappointed with their real tourism experience, especially if it was not close to what they expected. In addition, place perception is a highly personalised reaction and it is difficult to make satisfactory generalizations (Phelps 1986). Therefore, some researchers have focused on measuring destination images of particular groups in specific contexts. For instance, Goodrich (1977) analysed the images of nine tourist attracting regions as perceived by international travellers, Ross (1993) measured images of back-packer visitors to New Zealand, Reilly (1990) analysed skiers' images of a Montana ski area, and Phelps (1986) examined the images of first and second time travellers to Menorca. On the other hand, some researchers have focussed on the image of a destination as perceived by a random sample from a general population (Gartner 1989, Reilly 1990) and others have chosen samples of university students for survey convenience (Crompton 1979, Baloglu and Brinberg 1997) and as a separate potential travel market (Chen and Kerstetter 1999).

It is evident that by focussing on the images of particular groups of people, researchers may gain a greater understanding of the variables which affect destination image.

For example, images vary with visitors' distance from the destination and with visitors' level of exposure (Crompton 1979). Similarly, Selby and Morgan (1996) argued that the richest data are uncovered by studies which include both the perceptions of actual and potential visitors (people who have not visited the destination). In addition, Phelps (1986) mentioned that, "real" experiences of visitors and residents can be different which, in turn, affects their images.

The destination which visitors are "allowed" to experience, or the destination which is promoted through tourism sources, is often substantially different from the place which residents' experience. Examining residents' perceived images will allow the image to be understood based on real experiences and not outside influences. This may give researchers a truer picture of a place based more on reality rather than a promoted product. However, residents may have biased opinions of where they live and may give descriptions of their home which make it seem more attractive than it actually is. In contrast, visitors have real tourism experiences of a destination but their re-evaluated images are influenced by how they originally perceived the destination through organic and induced sources:

"Viewing the world from the vantage point of the actor, or at least calling [into] account the perceptions individuals hold of their physical and socio-cultural environments, can provide insights into the personal reasons or underlying motivations which influence human action" (Willits, Bealer, and Timbers 1990: 559)

Thus, by exploring both residents' and visitors' images of a destination, one can gain a greater understanding of how a place is promoted and whether this image differs from the one perceived by people who live there. Tourism image research has yet to explore and compare visitors' and residents' images.

Destination image studies have recognized the importance of focussing on different types of images and on the images of different groups of people. Image studies have also resulted in several useful findings. For instance, the stronger and more positive an image, the more likely people will visit or return to a destination (Goodrich 1977) and images of a destination are a mixture of both positive and negative perceptions (Chen and Kerstetter 1999). Hunt (1975) found that respondents who resided farther from the region did not differentiate areas within the region as well as those respondents from closer markets. Similarly, Crompton (1979) concluded that the overall image of Mexico became more positive as distance from the country increased. Ross (1993) found that ideal images involved positive ratings of the friendliness of local residents, high quality tourist information, and suitable accommodation. "Actual" images involved ratings of the physical environment, friendly local residents, and the destination's authenticity (Ross 1993).

Many tourism image researchers arrived at their findings using analytical methodologies and theories adopted from consumer marketing literature. These studies are based on the notion that destinations can be positioned for tourism marketing whereby the attributes of a destination are matched to the needs of one or more market segments through a promotional campaign (Reilly 1990). Attribute statements are incorporated into semantic differential or likert scales which are a form of structured methodology. Respondents' level of agreement with these statements determines the destination's image. For example, Hunt (1975) , Crompton (1979) and Chen and Kerstetter (1999), measured destination images using structured attribute statements. Another common structured methodology used in tourism image research is multidimensional scaling (Goodrich 1977, Gartner 1989, Baloglu

and Brinberg 1997). It is a technique which positions attributes on a plane based on the closeness of similar attributes and the distance among dissimilar attributes, and the analyst determines which dimensions will separate various destinations being measured. Multidimensional scaling enables researchers to group similar destinations for tourism marketing and promote these destinations based on an image that specific market segments will find most attractive. Structured methodologies are easy to code, administer, and allow for sophisticated statistical techniques (Echtner and Ritchie 1991). However, images can be measured using unstructured methodologies which enable respondents to freely describe their impressions of a product. A few studies which analysed tourist brochures used content analyses of brochure descriptions or the frequency of certain pictures in order to determine a projected tourist image (Dilley 1984, Buck 1977). Selby and Morgan (1996) stated that the analysis of place image need not employ sophisticated statistical techniques. Unfortunately, tourism researchers have relied heavily on structured methodologies which has limited their ability to capture more holistic and unique components of a destination (Echtner and Ritchie 1991). Reilly (1990) argued that free elicitation of descriptive adjectives can serve a similar function with advantages in ease of data collection and straightforward analysis. On the other hand, Selby and Morgan mentioned that the richest and most useful data for place marketing and image studies are produced by a combination of structured and unstructured techniques. However, few destination image studies have attempted to do this.

Destination image studies are well-referenced with literature from tourism and consumer marketing research. They use sophisticated techniques to measure and understand destination images, and repeatedly mention the importance of understanding images for

marketing purposes. But much of the place marketing literature has followed a tradition which commodifies place as a product and which fails to critically evaluate the implications of selling places on the people who reside in those places (Hall 1997). Destinations are places with landscapes, identities, economies and cultures which interact spatially and create unique areas that people want to visit. However, there tends to be more discussion on specific qualities, attributes, or impressions of destinations which result in projecting the most appropriate images for increasing visitor numbers and demand. Thus, destination and tourism image research tends to lack the full geographical context of people, places, and landscapes.

A more recent addition to tourism research which is grounded in geography, as well as other social sciences such as anthropology, is the study of landscapes and tourism. Although descriptive rather than analytical, such studies have a deeper association with human and cultural geography. The ideas raised in research on landscapes and tourism are similar to those in destination image literature. For instance, landscapes are described as being perceived differently by visitors and locals based on differences in their backgrounds and interests (Wall 1998). Landscapes of tourism are said to be contrived and idealized, and differ from the formation of the destination by local people (Ringer 1998). Oakes (1993) stated that tourism is based on the production, re-production, and re-enforcement of images. In other words, place images are formulated from organic and induced sources, people's perceptions of those sources, and people's perceptions based on tourism experiences (re-evaluated images). In addition, Ringer (1998:7-8) stated that:

"...as part of our lived realities, tourism is essentially about the creation and reconstruction

of geographic landscapes as distinctive tourist destinations through manipulations of history and culture. A transformation of mythology into place, its meaning shaped by multiple contexts of production and consumption..."

Geographers and tourism scholars must become sensitive to the multiple realities of social groups residing in diverse places and who experience, interpret and articulate the values and meanings of their destination in a variety of ways (Ringer 1998, Hughes 1998). Thus, tourism image research would benefit from a stronger association with geography and other related disciplines, to gain a deeper understanding of the interconnections between people, places, and perceptions. Moreover, promoting an ideal or preferred destination image solely for the purposes of tourism marketing may have implications that have yet to be fully realised.

2.1.2 Rural Images

Tourism image research has usually focused on the images of destinations which are politically bounded, such as countries and states. However, Gupta and Ferguson (1992) stated that images need not be national in scale and one example of this are the images long associated with rural regions and the countryside. Although international students' images of rural Pennsylvania were explored with regard to rural tourism and destination image research (Chen and Kerstetter 1999), there has been no association among the ideal rural images described in the contexts of rural sociology and rural geography with tourism.

The study of rural images evolved through images portrayed in art, British literature, and rural sociology, of a lifestyle, landscape and community uniquely separate from the urban. The concept of rural has been studied for centuries based on people's idealised

perceptions of relatively natural, yet primarily agricultural, areas. Nostalgia for a vanishing rural past characterized writings about English countryside for several centuries (Williams 1973). Short (1991:31) wrote that "for the past four hundred years the idealized countryside has been contrasted with the rise of the city and the power of the market." But rural images have been studied more commonly within the last 30 years, a result of the restructuring of rural political and social relations (Newby 1986, Marsden, Lowe, and Whitmore 1990). As well, people began rejecting urban areas because of their disgust with congested, polluted, industry-based cities. They found comfort in perceiving rural areas as ideal places, and actual experiences of rural life, such as economic hardships or medical and educational difficulties, were put aside (Hummon 1980).

Country life has been distinguished from city life on two principal accounts. First, it was felt that there is a stronger sense of community in the country and, second, that country life is closer to nature than city life (Bell 1992, Cloke and Milbourne 1992). People living in the country were said to have unity with the land and with each other, a special identity associated with rural life. Images of rural in Britain centred on villages and landscapes of a "mythically timeless and natural England" but Cloke and Milbourne (1992:361) stated that "such a concept is slippery as an eel." To further complicate the issue, there are several phrases used in the literature that refer to rural images such as pastoral myth, agrarian myth, countryside ideal, sense of place in the countryside, rurality, and rural idyll (Short 1991, Valentine 1997, Halfacree 1995, Bunce 1994). However, these concepts encompass similar descriptions of what is a commonly perceived, yet ideal, image of the rural (Table 2.2). For instance, rural refers to people, places, lifestyles, artifacts, values, and

social relationships (Willits, Bealer, and Timbers 1990). The most powerful imagining of the rural is as a peaceful, tranquil, close-knit community (Valentine 1997). This is a common romantic vision described in rural studies based on a nostalgia for a past way of life which is imagined as being purer, simpler and closer to nature, where people have recognized a place and an authentic role, and which offers a sense of belonging and escape from the city (Valentine 1997, Bell 1992, Short 1991).

Terms such as rural idyll, rurality, and countryside ideal are used more commonly in reference to the British national obsession with the countryside as an aesthetic and social ideal. But much of these cultural beliefs have also been transferred across the Atlantic, hence there are important links between English and North American attitudes (Bunce 1994).

Table 2.2: Rural Images Described in the Literature

| Literature Source | Phrase and Words used to Describe Rural Images |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Valentine 1997 | Rural Idyll: peaceful, tranquil, close-knit community, nostalgia for past way of life, sense of belonging, escape from city, safe place to bring up children |
| Cloke and Milbourne 1992 | Rural Idyll: happy, healthy, problem free images, close social community, contiguous natural environment, retreat from modernity, nostalgic return to rural roots, rustic simplicity |
| Short 1991 | Pastoral Myth: agricultural life which is more wholesome, more spiritual, more natural, fresh air, moral purity, good life of country, nostalgic past, simpler |
| Bell 1992 | Gemeinschaftlich themes: quietness, slower pace, smallness of scale, knowing everyone, helping others, traditions, good for children, escape, peaceful |
| Park and Coppack 1994 | Rural Sentiment: rural ambiance, wholesomeness, peace and quiet, historical nature, quaintness |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Willits, Bealer, and Timbers 1990 | Rurality/Gemeinschaft images: romantic, nostalgic view of life, close-knit community, wholesome, safe, family farms, close to nature, open country; American rural mystique: small town life, farming, wilderness |
| Bunce 1994 | Countryside Ideal: closer to nature, simplicity of lifestyle, nostalgia, community, escape from city, aesthetic amenity; North American images of pioneer, family farm, bygone lifestyles |

Rural myths of life and landscape may have originated from a British context but have developed in other nations as well. "In most countries the countryside has become the embodiment of the nation, idealised as the ideal middle landscape between the rough wilderness of nature and the smooth artificiality of the town, a combination of nature and culture which best represents the nation-state" (Short 1991:35). For instance, Willits, Bealer and Timbers (1990) described the American rural myth as encompassing small- town life, farming, and wilderness concepts. Similarly, Hummon (1980) discussed popular images of the American small town and suggested that urban Americans who idealise the town do so as an expression of their frustrations with modern urban life. The American rural myth is consistent with notions of rural idyll and countryside ideal. It is a romantic, nostalgic view of life in the country and for an imagined and unchanged landscape of the past. In addition, the North American rural myth, commonly referred to as "rural sentiment" (Willits, Bealer, and Timbers 1990), has also been influenced by images of the pioneer, family farm, and productive agrarian economy (Bunce 1994). However, there tends to be more academic attention paid to American rural images as opposed to Canadian. Thus, the Canadian countryside ideal or rural idyll appears to be poorly developed (Bunce 1994).

Research on rural images in North America is more of a geographical study than a sociological or historical study which was the common context of rural image studies in Britain. The notions of rural in North America were not developed over centuries. Instead, they have recently become important since encroaching urban centres threaten valuable farmlands, and social and political restructuring affects many rural communities. For example, Cragg (1982) described her family farm in Huron County, Ontario, as a "family geography" and planning efforts stressed the importance of retaining the rural flavour as it increasingly becomes a playground for southern Ontario urban residents. Cragg explained her attachment to rural Ontario as giving her a sense of place and belonging. But Jackson (1977) also explained how:

"The more the city expands and absorbs us, the firmer the belief in a rural paradise becomes. Our ties with the countryside no further than twenty miles from our door grow fewer; even the annual return to the family farm, a tradition still alive a generation ago, has now all but vanished. Without personal involvement we are in the dark as to what is happening on the farm—any farm. And the result is a popular image of rural America which bears a decreasing resemblance to reality" (Jackson 1977).

Studying rural images is important for geographical research on landscapes as well as for providing a greater understanding of the role images play in sustaining what is unique about rural places. There needs to be a greater association among the concepts in the literature, on people's images and the effects these may have on rural places. It is vital that researchers understand what people associate with the countryside so that the interest in it can be explained. Not only is there a need to better understand rural images in Canada but it is vital that one can explain why people associate certain feelings and perceptions with rural landscapes and rural life. This is because such knowledge can help interpret the actions

of people toward rural people and places (Willits, Bealer, and Timbers 1990), especially with regard to tourism. Rural images are a cultural construct and a social ideal and they emerge from a mix of ideology and values, myth and stereotype, image and perception, as well as lived experience (Bunce 1994). Moreover, "the affection for the countryside may reflect fundamental human values and psychological needs which can be traced to a basic human desire for harmony with land and nature, for a sense of community and place and for simplicity of lifestyle" (Bunce 1994:2).

The study of rural images is dependent on the emotional attachments, experiences, and knowledge of the residents and visitors of rural places. Images may be perceived differently by rural residents, who have developed a strong attachment and identity for rural life and landscape, and by visitors, who have a strong affection for what they perceive is rural based on their tourist experiences. Park and Coppack (1994) examined the theory behind people's motivations for visiting rural areas. For instance, people visit rural areas to experience particular scenic, psychological and commercial attributes which contribute to the desired outcome of rural sentiment.

The desire to escape the city and experience the nostalgic, simple, wholesome, rural lifestyle and scenic cultural landscape, is what attracts people to rural areas. It seems reasonable that the same imagining of rural areas could be used to attract shoppers, day-trippers, and vacationers to enhance the local economies of rural communities (Willits, Bealer, and Timbers 1990). Rural tourism is increasingly becoming a hungry industry feeding off people's appetites for a taste of the rural. For example, rural areas in Europe have been taken for granted as part of the 'product' (Middleton 1982). In North America,

the experience of bygone rural days in restored pioneer villages, quaint small-town main streets and country antique and craft stores seems to have become a particularly popular diversion for those seeking suitable 'country' things to do and consume (Bunce 1994).

Bunce (1994:134) continued by stating:

"The commodity which seems to be most sought after is 'country atmosphere', and villages and small towns in most of the metropolitan hinterlands of Canada and the USA have been quick to re-create this atmosphere in their enthusiasm to capitalize on its commercial potential. A good example of this is the Amish region around Lancaster in southern Pennsylvania where a whole economy has been converted to the peddling of rural nostalgia."

Similarly, scenery and landscape have been commodified, marketed, and sold in the form of rustic ambiance and "...the iconization of rural culture and values is exploited for contemporary consumption" (Park and Coppack 1994: 163).

There is the potential for the tourism industry to take advantage of visitors' rural images and produce a rural tourism product which most fits with their ideal instead of marketing real rural places and cultural identities. Consequently, commodification of the rural landscape as a result of tourism may destroy the rural idyll, which constitutes rural areas as culturally unique places to visit (Mitchell 1998). Therefore, tourism geographers need to recognize that rural tourism products are also places with distinctive cultures, communities and environments. Studying images of rural residents and visitors can provide a better understanding of the value and meaning of rural places and encourage appropriate tourism development in these areas. Tourism image research has only recently recognized the importance of studying rural images even though the affection and attraction for rural places is well documented. Moreover, rural image studies in geography and sociology are quite descriptive, thus there is a lack of research on the measurement and comparisons of

people's perceptions of rural places.

2.2 Rural Tourism

Visitors' affection for the countryside, or motivations to visit rural areas based on feelings of nostalgia for rural life, were mentioned in rural tourism studies (Vogeler 1977, Kieselbach and Long 1990, Weaver and Fennell 1997). Chen and Kerstetter (1999) explored international students' destination images of rural Pennsylvania by developing image dimensions of attribute statements through factor analysis. It was found that international students seemed to have a common image of a relaxing atmosphere, fresh air, lack of crime, quiet, and friendly people, which may fit the stereotype that is often portrayed through the media and tourism promotion agencies (Chen and Kerstetter 1999). However, there is a lack of research on people's perceptions of rural landscapes and rural lifestyles, and ideal rural images such as the rural idyll and countryside ideal have yet to be associated with rural tourism research. Rural tourism, as a separate study, is a relatively recent addition to tourism research. It is somewhat of an ambiguous concept and the absence of a widely-accepted concrete definition has contributed to the lack of studies on rural tourism. Sometimes rural tourism is equated with farm tourism which can include farm-based accommodations such as bed and breakfasts or country inns, and farm-based recreation such as museums, horse-back riding tours, or agricultural festivals (Oppermann 1996, Davies and Gilbert 1992, Evans and Ilbery 1989). Other authors have included nature-based tourism in the definition of rural tourism, such as wilderness tourism in national parks and outdoor recreation (Owens 1984), whereas others have included cottaging, second homes or holiday homes (Ireland 1987). Lane (1994:10) suggested that in order to define rural tourism, one needed to begin by

understanding rurality since "in almost every case rurality is the central and unique selling point in the rural tourism package." Thus, for the purpose of this review, rural tourism will incorporate tourism which occurs in non-urban areas where the primary human economic activity is agriculture. Therefore travel in non-agrarian areas will be excluded (Dernoi 1991).

Rural tourism research has focused primarily on profiles of business operations and investigations of the economic benefits of rural tourism for agricultural areas. This has been in an effort to assess rural tourism "products", such as accommodations and recreational activities, to gain a greater understanding of the existing and potential rural tourism industry. For instance, Luloff et al. (1994) assessed rural tourism efforts in 50 states of the United States and revealed that 30 of them had tourism programs specifically targeted for rural areas. Accommodations in rural areas are commonly in the form of bed and breakfasts, country inns, farm vacations, or guest houses and a number of studies have profiled these accommodation types. Fletcher and Johnson (1991) described frequencies and spatial patterns of bed and breakfast locations in Ontario in order to understand their impact and importance to the Ontario tourist scene. In the United States, bed and breakfast characteristics such as location, rate structure, business patterns, and number of rooms were analysed in order to provide information for tourism planners and prospective operators (Emerick and Emerick 1994, Warnick and Klar 1991). Although the majority of bed and breakfast operations are rural, these studies did not focus on rural tourism or rural accommodations in particular. Thus, rural images were not explored even though "bed and breakfasts seem to fit the character of the communities in which they are located; they comprise a 'home-grown' industry which contributes to the sense of community, history,

preservation of old-world and traditional values..." (Warnick and Klar 1991:24).

The majority of rural tourism studies which profiled rural accommodations examined the benefits of rural tourism for rural areas and operators rather than exploring rural images. For instance, economic benefits of rural tourism are well documented in the literature (Fleischer and Pizam 1997, Oppermann 1995, Fennell and Weaver 1997, Deroi 1983, Shaw, Williams, and Blackwell 1994). Farm-based accommodations are viewed as one way of boosting family incomes and, without disrupting the primary (farming) activity, help the rural community survive (Evans and Ilbery 1989, Gill 1991). Similarly, Deroi (1983) listed European rural tourism statistics and described several benefits of rural tourism for the farmer. Although Deroi discussed benefits for the community, such as enhancing the value of local resources and upholding a home-grown identity and culture, there was no mention of why maintaining such cultural resources was important. On the other hand, Frater (1983) suggested that a component of the farm tourism image for visitors is the beliefs, feelings and assumptions held about farm holidays. It is assumed that one of the main attractions is the potential involvement in farm life and the countryside, which fits well with the rural images discussed earlier.

Other rural tourism studies which investigated rural accommodations mentioned cultural and environmental benefits as well as economic. Some researchers have suggested that rural tourism can be a form of ecotourism by helping to preserve natural resources, by contributing to farmers' incomes and relieving the pressure for intensive agricultural production (Bryan 1991, Fennell and Weaver 1997). Deroi (1991) mentioned that by operating rural accommodations, women can contribute to the family income. As well,

farmers' wives are usually more involved in catering to visitors (Neate 1987). Rural tourism can also help preserve local traditions, and provide farmers and their families with the opportunity of meeting people, exchanging ideas and values, and learning about other places (Oppermann 1996, Dernoï 1991). Oppermann (1995) commented on the importance of understanding both hosts' and guests' perspectives since differences in expectations and values can lead to serious conflicts and planning and management mistakes. These concerns could be extended to the importance of understanding visitors' and hosts' perceived rural images and whether they differ from an ideal image. Even though Oppermann (1995) found 'natural landscape' to be the highest ranked travel motive, there was no exploration into the rural images of hosts and guests or what aspects of the landscape were most important for both groups.

Images of rural life and landscape were mentioned in some of the literature on rural tourism, but only briefly, and in reference to people's motivation for visiting rural areas (Fennell and Weaver 1997) or in formulating a destination image (Chen and Kerstetter 1999). For instance, Shaw and Williams (1994:237) discussed how farm tourism commercialises existing resources such as "the 'green' and wholesome image of farm life" to attract visitors. In addition, Kieselbach and Long (1990), writing about the American west, stated that the word "rural" conjures up images of wide-open spaces and a culture richly embedded with the pioneering spirit. People are, increasingly, seeking experiences only found in the American countryside (Kieselbach and Long 1990). Similarly, Vogeler (1977) explored ranch vacations in the United States and found that a satisfying rural vacation is not defined by participation in specific activities, but rather by a holistic

encounter with the lifestyles of rural Americans. Furthermore, vacation farms and ecotourism potential were examined in Saskatchewan and it was suggested that the specific interest in rural tourism derives from the desire to experience the rural milieu and nostalgia associated with a working farm enterprise (Fennell and Weaver 1997). Visitor motivations described by these authors are similar to the popular rural images of rural idyll, rural sentiment, and countryside ideal, yet these images have not been explored in studies on rural tourism. Moreover, there is the need for more regional studies on rural accommodations and the perceptions and interactions of hosts and guests (Vogeler 1977, Oppermann 1996, Warnick and Klar 1991). Chen and Kerstetter (1999) also recommended that rural areas be more precisely defined in future studies if the results are to be used more effectively by decision makers.

Visitors' perceived images are important to understand since they are related to their motivations for visiting rural areas. Although visitors' rural perceptions need to be acknowledged, it is important to ensure that real rural places rather than ideal rural products are being promoted. McDonald (1987:121) described an image of Brittany and how it has been formulated and promoted to fit this ideal:

Brittany, in spite of all its self-proclaimed modernity and progress, is often required, in tourist literature, to be a world of unspoilt charm and traditionality—and this is evidently what it is for the many contented tourists who now come into the inland areas of the peninsula every year. Busy, high-tech, capitalist farming might controvert the required reality; however, it tends not to exist for these tourists except perhaps as some kind of sad and imposed necessity, extraneous to the 'real' Brittany that is expected and will be found...An image of Brittany has been created that appeals to the modern, urban tourist in search of all that urbanity, modernity and progress are not."

Thus, by studying residents' as well as visitors' images, tourism researchers can develop

successful marketing programs which will also be considerate of rural people's needs and maintain real characteristics of rural places. For example, Huang and Stewart (1996) suggested that rural tourism development encourages conformity to an ideal rural town image, but one that can be acceptable to new and old residents and still attract visitors. Furthermore, residents' and visitors' images will differ because their real experiences with the destination are different. Understanding rural images is important so that rural areas remain attractive for people to visit but, more importantly, be places where residents' needs for agriculture, economy, identity and community are maintained.

2.3 Sustainable Rural Development and Tourism

Studying rural images can provide a better understanding of people's perceptions of rural places. This can also ensure rural places are appropriately promoted which will benefit the rural tourism industry. However, rural tourism, like other forms of tourism, if not properly managed, can drastically modify rural places by affecting the economy, society and environment. This is especially true if rural areas try to commercialize aspects of rural life and landscape in order to sell an ideal image which they think will match people's perceptions and encourage visitation. Thus, it is important to recognize how tourism affects rural areas in order to ensure that it will positively contribute, for the long-term, to rural economies, communities and environments. Understanding tourism's contribution to sustainable rural development is one way of accomplishing this. However, the concept of sustainable development needs to be clarified first.

Sustainable development is development which occurs at such a scale and intensity that it does not alter the human and physical environment and exists to such a degree that it

remains viable over future generations. The concept was proposed in *Our Common Future* (WCED 1987) and its definition and implementation has been debated within the fields of environmental resource management, ecology, planning and geography. Although the report on sustainable development included important considerations with regard to industry (agriculture, forestry, mining, hydrology) environment and economy, there was no reference made to tourism (Butler 1991). This seemed surprising since tourism is dependent on the viability of human (unique cultural places) and physical (natural environment) resources. Nevertheless, recent trends in tourism research have focused on alternative forms of tourism which are supposedly more environmentally and culturally friendly such as ecotourism, "green" tourism, rural tourism, soft tourism and adventure tourism. However, it is debatable whether these are, in fact, sustainable.

Since sectors often compete for resource use, the sustainability of tourism should not be discussed without recognizing that other industries may depend on resources which are deemed valuable for tourism. It was argued in the research on sustainable tourism that the predominant paradigm on sustainable tourism is too "tourism-centric" and encourages inappropriate consideration of the scope and geographical scale of tourism's resource base (Hunter 1995). Wall (1993) acknowledged that tensions can emerge between sustainable tourism and sustainable development because the former can be viewed primarily as a drive to maintain and enhance tourism-related activity. Thus, tourism in the context of sustainable development should be:

"developed and maintained in an area in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period and does not degrade or alter the environment (human and physical) in which it exists to such a degree that it prohibits the successful development and

well-being of other activities and processes" (Butler 1993: 29)

Principles of sustainable tourism were designed to be similar to those of sustainable development with a focus on sustaining resources for tourism (Eber 1992). Many studies on sustainable tourism have discussed development strategies and policy considerations. For example, it was recommended that sustainable tourism development strategies focus on preserving and protecting quality environmental and cultural resources, maintaining the values, character and traditions of local communities, and marketing and promoting tourism responsibly (Eber 1992, Pigram 1990, May 1991). However, the majority of studies were concerned primarily with tourism development which would not harm the ecosystem or environment (Pigram 1990, May 1991, Butler 1991). There are fewer studies which concentrated on developing strategies which sustain tourism without negatively affecting local cultures. A study by Hughes (1995) is one example which concentrated on sustainable tourism strategies which treated tourists as people and destinations as communities.

Rural areas, in particular, consist of unique cultures and communities which are, quite often, promoted through images which will most attract visitors. However, if not properly planned and managed, rural tourism may drastically alter the economy, environment or cultures of rural places. For instance, parts of the physical environment may be at risk from tourism because they are fragile and may be threatened by visitor numbers. Rural economies and communities may be threatened by large-scale tourism businesses seeking short-term gains, and cultural heritage may be at risk from outsiders and powerful outside cultures (Lane 1994). Moreover, traditional rural landscapes and unique cultures may be lost in the process

of producing an idealised rural image more "suitable" for consumption by visitors. It is for these reasons that a sustainable approach to rural tourism would seem especially important (Lane 1994).

A sustainable approach to rural tourism was acknowledged by a number of researchers primarily concerned with sustaining rural economies and environments rather than sustaining rural cultures or landscapes. For example, studies mentioned earlier in this review which described economic benefits of rural tourism, also suggested that tourism helps diversify, and therefore sustain, rural economies (Fennell and Weaver 1997, Fleischer and Pizam 1997). Similarly, Gannon (1994) examined how, with regard to tourism, community resources can be mobilised to help rural communities make the transition from agrarian to diversified and sustainable economies. Rural tourism can also contribute to sustaining the environment as well by encouraging "greener" tourism management practices such as targeting for specific markets and assessing the motivations of large-scale tourism developers (Bramwell 1990). As well, Morrison et al. (1996) suggested that there is the need to examine in greater depth the proposition that specialist accommodations (such as bed and breakfasts) are more compatible with the principles of ecologically sustainable tourism than traditional forms of accommodation. However, Morrison et al. did not mention that, in addition to sustaining the environment, specialist accommodations could sustain traditional rural cultures, landscapes, and lifestyles of rural places because they may supplement existing lifestyles, thus contributing to their viability.

Although the principles of sustainable tourism were applied to studies on rural tourism, there was little discussion of the compatibility of sustaining tourism with other

important industries in rural areas such as agriculture. Agriculture is often the primary industry in rural areas and sustainable agriculture has been a concern for many decades. Canada, in particular, has witnessed a deterioration of soil resources, significant losses in its farmland base, and a growing dependence on high energy technology (Dyer 1982). The discussion on sustainable agriculture deals with interests of society, rural people and places as well as environmental concerns (Wimberley 1993). Important principles of sustainable agriculture are maintaining environmental quality, providing adequate social and economic rewards and a sufficient and accessible food supply (Brklacich, Bryant, and Smit 1991). In Ontario, the social ambiance of agriculture is still the family farm but with declining farmland area and the enlargement of farm size, this tradition is changing (Walker 1995). The concerns for sustainable agriculture are similar to those for tourism. Therefore, sustaining rural tourism cannot appropriately be discussed without regard for the sustainability of other industries which may compete for resources and also affect the economy, environment and culture of rural places.

Examining rural tourism in the context of sustainable rural development is a holistic approach to understanding how tourism should contribute to rural areas. Integrating tourism with rural development is not a new concept in the literature (Chow 1980), but the association of tourism with sustainable rural development is more recent. For instance, Gilbert (1993) stated that one way to approach the achievement of sustainability in a rural area is to ensure different local industries involved in tourism, agriculture, and forestry combine to formulate single strategies. Gilbert explored sustainable issues of appropriate tourism development such as sensible business planning, protection of the environment,

community-led programs, and community involvement. There is a growing concern for community-based planning initiatives in rural tourism development which allow "rural" to have place-specific meaning (Bowler 1995). In other words, rural areas are being perceived and acknowledged as unique places which may attract visitors and benefit residents. Bowler explained that there is a distinction between this concept of *rural* as an intellectual, academic construct and *rural* as a popular, societal construct (i.e. like the values associated with rural idyll, countryside ideal, and rural sentiment) (Bowler 1995):

"Arguably, the latter cannot be abstracted away from the former when it has significance for human behaviour. Examples of behaviour influenced by the societal construct of *rural* include residential mobility, farm tourism, environmental conservation, landscape ethics, identification with community, and political actions including development policies" (Bowler 1995:11).

With regard to tourism and sustainable rural development, Hjalager (1996) discussed the challenges of commodifying agricultural traditions for tourism, since the realities of modern agriculture (the main concern for farmers) are not pictured in most people's ideal images of rural landscapes and life. Similarly, Gannon (1994) discussed rural tourism as a factor in economic development and suggested that rural places be careful to maintain traditional rural experiences in the development of rural tourism products. Gannon explained seven issues he deemed important in the development of rural tourism projects including the economic, social, and environmental benefits and costs of tourism.

It is apparent that traditional rural landscapes and cultures, and the way in which they are perceived by visitors, are important factors for rural tourism development. However, it is also critical to understand residents' perceptions of rural areas and rural tourism to ensure that tourism is not negatively affecting rural people and places. A study by Crouch (1994)

discussed notions of home, escape and identity in conjunction with rural cultures and sustainable tourism in Ireland. Images of rural landscapes and Ireland's heritage are said to be pivotal to the promotion of Ireland as a tourism destination. It was suggested that the heritage picture which is presented to the visitor may be quite different to that experienced daily by those who live in the countryside. Thus, the way in which Ireland is projected may be compromised by the popular styles of tourism presentation and promotion (Crouch 1994). Rural tourism policy in Ireland is often concerned with quick returns on investment in terms of cashflow and jobs created. But deeper questions about tourism promotion and the development of images deserve to be raised especially with regard to sustaining tourism in the context of sustainable rural development.

2.4 Rural Images, Tourism and Sustainability in Ontario

The study of rural images and rural tourism is more apparent in Britain and Europe than in North America, and Canada in particular. A few rural tourism studies have been undertaken in a Canadian context (Fennell and Weaver 1997, Weaver and Fennell 1997, Deroi 1991) as well as with respect to sustainable rural development research (Bowler 1995). However, Bunce (1994), used primarily British and European references because there is a lack of literature on rural images in Canada. The lack of research in these areas may be due to Canada's geographical size and variability among and within provinces and a lack of understanding as to the importance and meaning of rural to Canadians. Moreover, it has only been in recent years that rural places in Canada have taken advantage of people's affection for the countryside and developed rural tourism. This has primarily been in response to the need for diversifying declining rural economies in order to sustain farming

ways of life. Some rural communities in Ontario have commercialized distinctive rural traditions and cultures which have resulted in the development of heritage shopping villages. For example, Mitchell (1998) discussed entrepreneurialism, commodification and creative destruction with regard to rural heritage shopping villages and used St. Jacobs as an example. However, it was concluded that if development and promotion are left uncontrolled, then the inevitable result will be the partial (or in some cases the total) destruction of the image upon which the initial development was based.

In contrast, sustainable agriculture has been an important issue in southern Ontario since intensive forms of agricultural production have proved harmful to the environment. Similarly, encroaching urban development on prime agricultural land has stimulated the concern for sustainable rural development. However, the concern for sustaining rural areas in southern Ontario is largely with regard to agriculture, environment and economy, and less with tourism, landscapes, and culture. Unfortunately, most of the research if it has been done, is in the form of "grey" literature, studies which are often difficult to uncover because they are published in conjunction with government ministries and private industries. For example, a study by Reid et al (1993) was prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation which focussed on the integration of tourism, culture and recreation in rural Ontario. Several useful conclusions were made. For instance, there is a large and growing market for rural tourism in Ontario and there is the opportunity of it contributing to social, economic and environmental sustainability. As well, rural tourism can be compatible with existing rural life and there is tremendous potential for cultural and natural heritage to act as organizing themes for tourism in rural areas. However, in order to

understand the long-term contribution and potential of rural tourism for rural communities in Ontario there needs to be a greater understanding of how people perceive rural areas, how they are promoted through tourism, the rural tourism experiences offered, and the role of rural tourism in sustaining what constitutes a rural tourism attraction; the lives of rural people and landscapes of rural places.

2.5 Discussion and Development of a Conceptual Framework

Tourism image research was discussed in the beginning of the chapter in order to provide a background of image studies in tourism research and to define different types of images. Destination image studies were found to have a tourism marketing focus and most studies measured people's destination images using statistical techniques for the purposes of improved destination marketing. It was discovered that tourism image research would benefit from a stronger association with geography especially considering that tourism is dependent on people, places, heritage and landscapes, not just viable product images. Recent literature on landscapes and tourism have raised similar ideas concerning place images. These studies have a deeper association with geography than tourism image studies but are more descriptive rather than analytical. Studies on rural images, based in rural sociology, also tended to be descriptive. Ideal rural images originated from fears of urbanization and from people's growing dissatisfaction with polluted and congested urban areas. Popular notions of rural were explained in reference to people's nostalgia for a past way of life and for areas which are closer to nature, simple, peaceful, quiet, wholesome and an escape from the urban. Rural tourism developed as a result of rural areas commercializing on people's affection for the countryside. Most rural tourism studies consisted of research on profiles

of operations and the benefits of rural tourism for rural areas. However, rural tourism studies lacked discussion on rural images even though it was clear that researchers associated visitors' attraction for rural areas with the wholesome image of community, heritage, and nature, nostalgia for a past way of life, or an escape from the city. Rural tourism in the context of sustainable development was also discussed to provide a basis for ensuring that rural tourism, in conjunction with other sectors, contributes to the long-term economic, cultural and environmental sustainability of rural areas.

There were three main themes addressed in this chapter in order to develop the context for the present study; rural images, rural tourism, and sustainable development. To summarize the research context, Figure 2.1 shows the connections among the themes and provides insights into the development of a research framework for which the present study and future studies on rural images, tourism, and sustainability may be based. Rural images comprise the first section of the diagram. Rural images originate from people's perceptions and/or experiences and different groups of people may have different images. There are also popular ideal rural images described in rural sociology literature which were referred to as the rural idyll, pastoral myth, countryside ideal or rural sentiment.

The rural tourism section consists of several types of tourist experiences and/or resources, such as rural accommodations, agricultural/cultural festivals, rural tours, and craft shops and markets. The perceptions of these tourism experiences by different groups of people, and their interactions with each other, such as rural hosts, visitors, residents or community leaders, are also an important part of rural tourism. The third section of the diagram refers to sustainable rural development which is development that maintains the

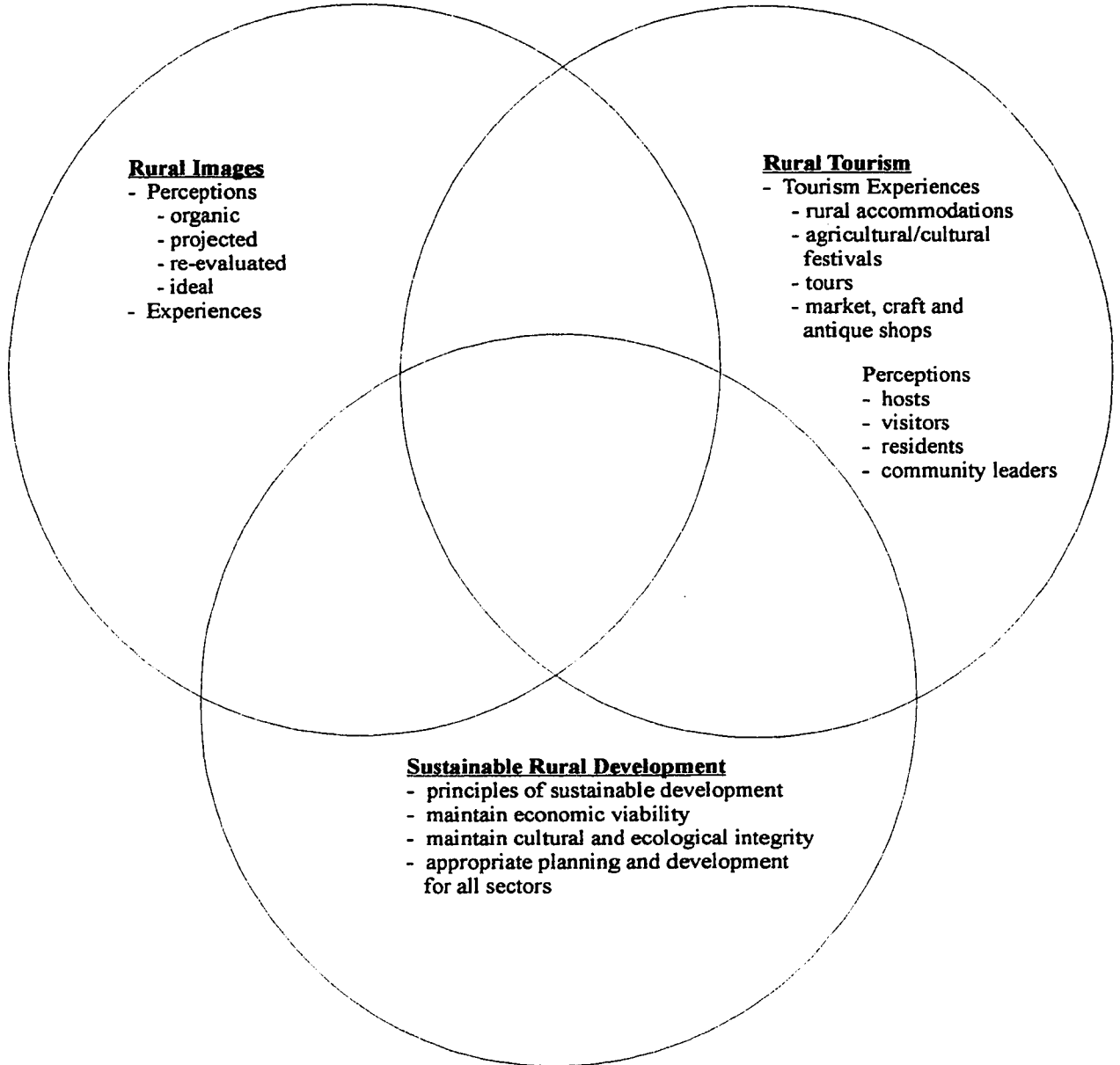


Figure 2.1: Diagram Showing the Associations Between Images, Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development

economic, cultural and environmental resources of rural areas for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. There are several principles of sustainable development which refer to appropriate development of resources in all sectors, promoting education and awareness, reducing consumption and waste, involving communities in planning and appropriate marketing and promotion (see Eber 1992, Butler 1991). The three sections which connect the three themes provide the basis for research on rural images, tourism, and sustainable rural development.

The three sections which connect the themes may vary with regard to the issues being examined. For example, for the present study, the area which connects images and tourism can be comprised of the perceptions and experiences of rural operators and their visitors (Figure 2.2). Rural images of rural operators are based on organic images and real experiences. Images of visitors are comprised of organic images as well as projected images and tourism experiences, which are based on the commercialization of rural images and experiences.

The area which connects rural tourism and sustainable rural development, focuses on maintaining quality cultural and agricultural resources and landscapes for present and future tourism development while sustaining the viability of other sectors, the economy and communities. The association between images and sustainability is to ensure that acceptable rural images, such as qualities described by the rural idyll, are maintained by protecting agricultural areas from harmful urban and industrial developments, strengthening identity within rural communities, and sustaining distinctive rural cultural heritage.

The central region which combines all three themes is comprised of maintaining the

rural idyll. This is achieved by sustaining quality cultural tourism resources, communities and heritage, as well as by ensuring that tourism is properly planned, managed (in order to offer quality tourism experiences which fit with the true character of the region) and promoted. Through the findings of the study it is proposed that the framework may be applied to other areas of research within the themes of rural images, tourism and sustainability. Section 7.3 will show how the framework can be applied to future research in rural tourism and geography.

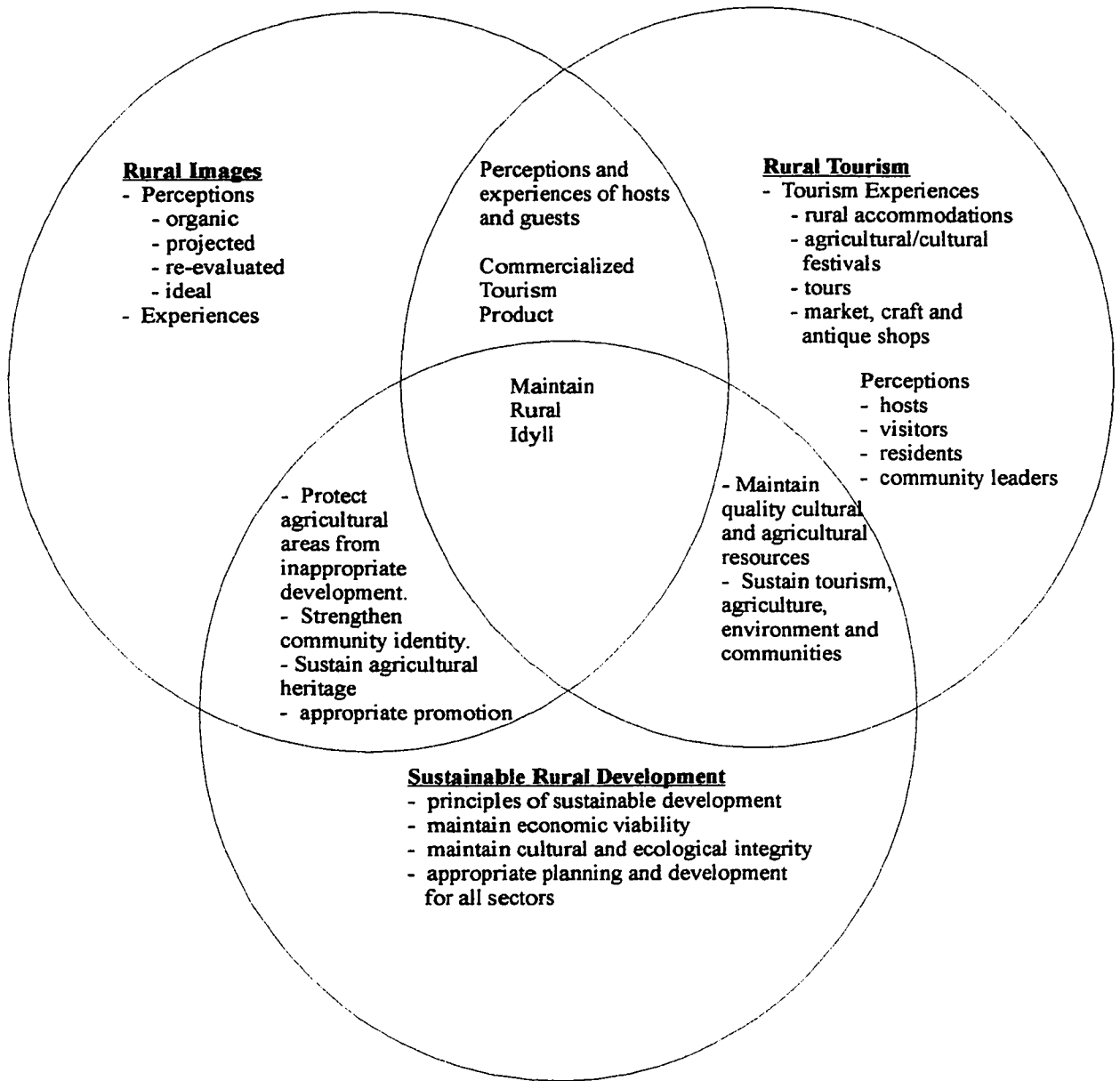


Figure 2.2: Conceptual framework for Rural Images, Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methods

Chapter three will describe and justify the methods used for the collection and analysis of data for the study. To compare hosts' and guests' perceived rural images, rural operator personal interviews were completed and visitor questionnaires were distributed and collected. Projected images of rural accommodations were examined by a content analysis of secondary sources (brochures). Rural operator interviews examined rural images of hosts and their perceptions of visitors and rural tourism within the study area. In addition, a visitor questionnaire was distributed which provided information on perceived rural images of visitors and perceptions of their rural tourism experiences. The information gained through host interviews and visitor surveys provided an understanding of rural images of hosts and guests, and of the role of rural tourism in sustaining rural cultures and contributing to sustainable rural development. The first section of chapter three will discuss the selection, description, and justification of the study area, the second section will outline the research design, the third section will describe the development of the rural operator interview questions, and the fourth section will explain the creation of the visitor survey.

3.1 Selection, Description and Justification of the Study Area

There were several reasons for selecting the Waterloo-Wellington region for this

study. Its distinctive rural cultural heritage and attractive natural and agricultural landscapes have generated a lucrative rural tourism sector for developers and entrepreneurs in the region. The region is central to many large urban centres which provide an extensive potential market for those wishing to visit the country. There are also issues in the region with respect to rural sustainability. For instance, intensive agricultural practices have caused soil degradation and water pollution, and fears of urbanization on valuable farmland and declining rural economies, have raised concerns about sustainable rural development in the region. Yet there has been little exploration into the effects of rural tourism promotion and development in the region. Therefore, it is logical to examine rural tourism more closely and to investigate its contribution to sustaining this unique rural region. The following sections describe in more detail the study area with regard to rural tourism and sustainable rural development.

3.1.1 The Waterloo-Wellington Area

The Waterloo-Wellington area is comprised of two counties, Waterloo and Wellington, which are located in the central portion of southwestern Ontario (Figure 3.1). The area is within close proximity to all major centres in southern Ontario. It is approximately 100 km west of Toronto and 100 km east of London. The United States border at Niagara Falls, through Hamilton, is approximately 120 km southeast and the United States border at Windsor-Detroit is approximately 350 km southwest.

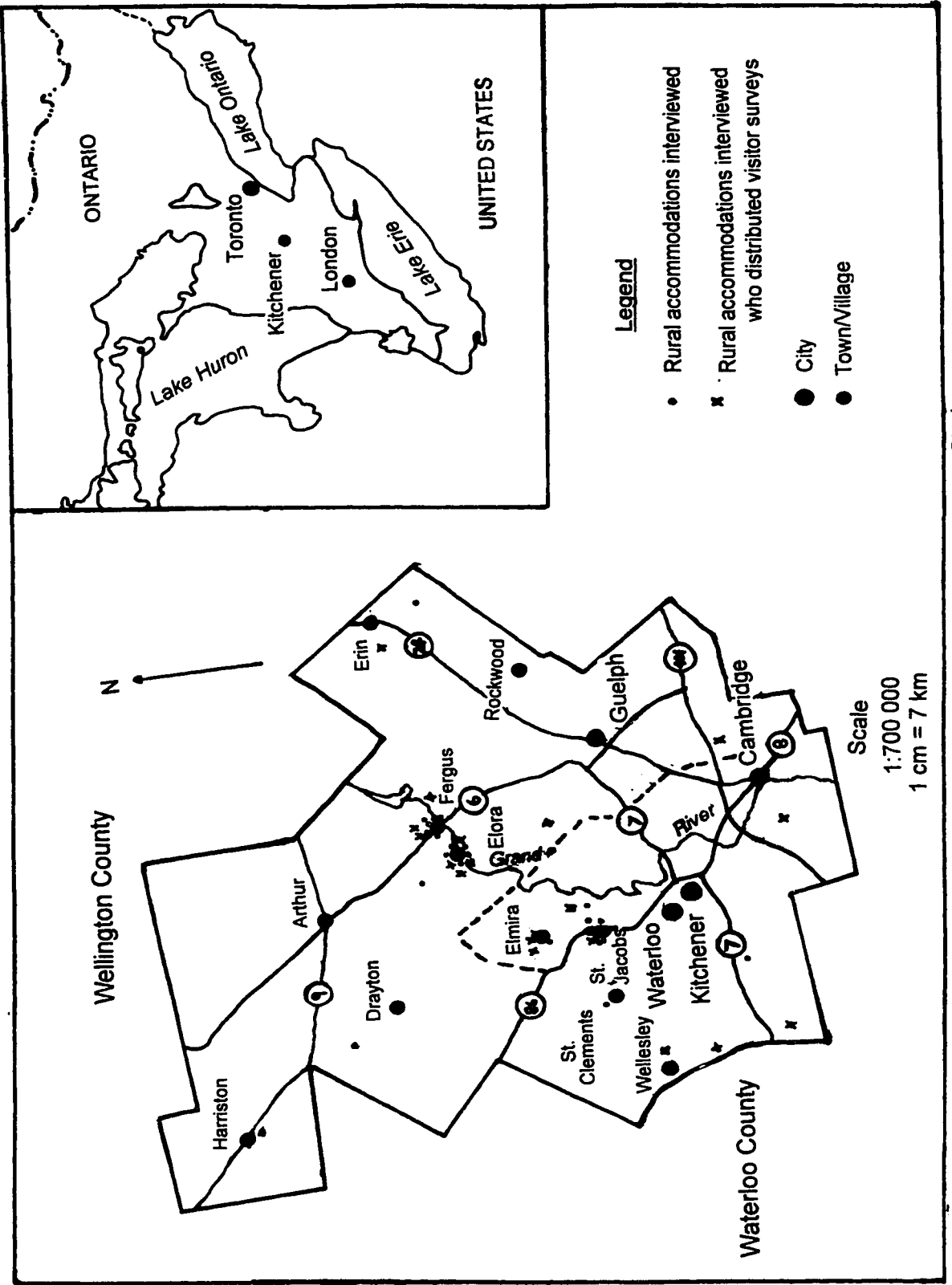


Figure 3.1: Rural Accommodations in the Waterloo-Wellington Region Included in the Study

Wellington County is the larger of the two and is situated north of Waterloo County. Guelph, consisting of a population of approximately 80 000, is the only large urban centre located in the southern portion of the county. The remainder of the county consists of a few towns such as Fergus and Drayton, and a number of smaller towns Elora, Arthur, Mount Forest, and Harriston. Towns and villages, which are primarily agriculturally-based service centres for the surrounding farms, are divided by expanses of prime agricultural land. A moderate climate and fertile soil make this region well-suited for agriculture. The main agricultural crops in the area are corn, soybeans, wheat, and hay. Beef, pig, and mixed farming also contribute to the area's agricultural success. There are sections of rolling hills, esker, moraine, or drumlin formations left behind from the retreat of the last glaciers, and expanses of woodlots, which create scenic agricultural landscapes. The main geomorphological formation is a river gorge formed over thousands of years by river water cutting through a limestone-based river bank. The Grand River and Elora Gorge run through the village of Elora.

Wellington County also has a rich settlement history which is celebrated in agricultural fairs, cultural festivals, heritage attractions and buildings located in many of the villages' down-towns. The town of Fergus is rich in Scottish heritage and has celebrated this with an annual Highland Games and Scottish Festival. Buildings and homes in the down-town are constructed of limestone which has, historically, been a characteristic building material of this region. The village of Elora has similar buildings in its down-town as well, namely the Elora Mill. The Elora Mill is a limestone-constructed flour mill situated on the Grand River north of the Elora Gorge. It is no longer a mill but has been renovated into a

country inn, still bearing the name of its special heritage, "The Elora Mill." Other rural villages in Wellington County have strong British or European settlement histories and are, historically, deeply tied to agriculture such as Erin, Alma, Arthur, and Harriston. More recent migrations from Waterloo County have contributed to an influx of the Mennonite culture as far north as Drayton and Mount Forest (Mage 1989). The Mennonites have migrated north into Wellington County to take advantage of the prime agricultural land and to escape the rapid urbanisation of their farmland which has been taking place in the Waterloo area.

Waterloo County is smaller than Wellington County but has three main urban centres located in close proximity to each other ("the tri-cities"). Kitchener, with a population of approximately 180 000, has a strong Bavarian and German heritage and celebrates this with an annual Oktoberfest. Waterloo, which is located to the north of Kitchener, has a population of 90 000, and Cambridge, to the south of Kitchener, has a population of approximately 105 000. The remaining county consists of small agriculturally-based service centres of approximately 1000 people, such as Elmira, Wellesley, St. Clements and Heidelberg. Waterloo County is also rich in agricultural resources and the main crops are corn, soybeans, wheat, and hay. Mixed, beef and pig farming are common as well as dairy farming to the west of Kitchener-Waterloo. Waterloo County contains rolling hills much like Wellington County and well-kept fields, wood-lots, and century farmhouses contribute to the scenic agricultural landscape.

Waterloo County boasts a rich and unique rural settlement history. As war broke out in the United States in the 18th century, Pennsylvania Swiss and Dutch Mennonites were

exempted from military service (Elmira Maple Syrup Festival Guide 1999). After the American Revolution, some migrated to Ontario. They were in search of prime agricultural land and an environment similar to the one which they were leaving behind. Mennonites settled together in the region north of Waterloo. Their smaller and well-kept fields, large farmhouses, and immaculate properties are still characteristic of the rural landscape today. Although there are many "orders" of Mennonites who farm this area, the Old Order Mennonites are the most intriguing. They wear traditional plain dresses or trousers and black coats, boots, and hats. Old Order Mennonites travel by horse and buggy and abide by many strict religious and ethnic traditions. Many of the rural villages in this part of Waterloo County have a substantial Mennonite cultural heritage. Mennonite farmers have been selling produce, furniture, and handiwork to village people and have been providing other services in places such as Millbank, Heidelberg, St. Clements, Wallenstein, Elmira, and St. Jacobs, and especially the Waterloo-St. Jacobs Farmer's Markets and the Kitchener Farmer's Market. Mennonite farmers have contributed to making Waterloo County famous for quilts, maple syrup, furniture, summer sausage, and high quality agricultural produce.

Although the Mennonite culture is perhaps the most distinctive, it makes up only a fraction of the rural population in Waterloo County. The region is rich in European and British heritage as well, and large churches in many small villages and hamlets exemplify this influence (St. Agatha, Baden).

3.1.2 Rural Tourism in the Waterloo-Wellington Area

The rural cultural heritage and picturesque agricultural landscape of the Waterloo-Wellington area have been attracting visitors for decades. An Ontario tourism development

study in 1977, stated that a combination of small-town atmosphere, rural landscape, and ethnic flavour in this area would be expected to continue to appeal to major markets (Ministry of Industry and Tourism 1977). It was proposed that total theme development to integrate components such as ethnic religion (Pennsylvania-Dutch Mennonite, Amish, and German), historical (agriculture and agricultural communities), and present day agricultural, would be beneficial for future tourism development in this region (Ministry of Industry and Tourism 1977).

In the Waterloo County area, the Mennonites were the main attraction. Originally, people were curious about the Mennonites and began coming to this region in hopes of catching a glimpse of this strange and quiet culture, wanting to take pictures or to get closer looks at their farms and way of life. Unfortunately, many Mennonites began feeling invaded especially around the St. Jacobs area. As a result, a new-order Mennonite formed a business corporation which directed visitors to the down-town of St. Jacobs and provided attractions and shops within the village which would discourage visitors from disrupting the Mennonites on their farms. Formerly an agricultural service town, St. Jacobs was transformed into a tourist destination which offered small-town atmosphere, country craft shops, Mennonite and local heritage information, countryside tours, and local Mennonite and German cuisine and baking. Development was also directed to the St. Jacobs Farmer's Market area which has expanded to include an outlet mall. The St. Jacobs area attracts over a million visitors a year (Powell 1989 cited in Mitchell 1998) and issues have been raised pertaining to the negative effects of tourism on local residents and the Mennonite culture. Mennonites are rarely seen within the village of St. Jacobs today.

Although the Mennonite culture and St. Jacobs are promoted as this area's primary rural attraction, other rural villages have their own unique rural tourism resources. West Montrose is home to the only remaining covered bridge in Ontario. Elmira, a town north of St. Jacobs, began developing tourism much like St. Jacobs but it has still remained an agricultural service community where local Mennonites and farmers do their shopping, thus it boasts true small town ambiance. Many smaller villages such as Heidelberg, Conestogo, New Hamburg, Millbank, and St. Agatha are home to small-scale restaurants which serve the best of local Waterloo County cuisine. These villages are also home to quality bakeries and cheese dairies. Other rural villages celebrate agricultural harvest with such festivals as the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival and the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival.

Rural tourism in Wellington County was also influenced in part by the Mennonite settlement to the south. Mennonite farms are also situated along country roads and highways in the southern areas of Wellington County near Elora and Fergus. But the natural and cultural heritage unique to the Elora region has stimulated visitors in its own right. The Wellington County Museum is a beautiful historic building located between Elora and Fergus and provides a history of the Wellington region. The Elora Gorge and the quaint historic nature of the village, with its stone buildings and homes, have attracted visitors for decades. Fergus, only 2 km north, has an attractive and historic townscape and the town is proud of its Scottish heritage and Fergus Market. Drayton, northwest of Elora, is home to the successful Drayton Festival Theatre. The remaining areas of Wellington County are largely agricultural, and even though rural tourism has not developed in these regions as predominantly as it has near Elora and Fergus, they boast beautiful rural landscapes and

quiet, peaceful countryside.

There are many attractions, festivals, shops, and restaurants which give visitors plenty to see and do in the Waterloo-Wellington region. There is quite a lot of effort given to promoting the region surrounding St. Jacobs, Elmira and Elora as "Mennonite Country" or "St. Jacobs Country" yet many of the small villages also promote their country hospitality, rural heritage, small town ambiance and quaint atmosphere, feeding an image which they perceive attracts visitors. Many people do come to this region for a relaxing day in the country, to get away from the city, or to spend a short vacation in the midst of a beautiful and scenic area. In order to encourage visitors to stay in the area longer and to provide a much needed service in the rural sections of Waterloo-Wellington, local residents and farmers began opening their homes for guest accommodation. A few of the larger village inns have been providing accommodation for visitors to these rural areas for many years, but smaller country and village bed and breakfasts are recent phenomena. People wanting to spend time in the country are given the opportunity to stay longer. Tourists can visit attractions, festivals, shop, eat in local restaurants, take walks and enjoy the rural landscape and then come home to a comfortable bed, fulfilling breakfast, and the opportunity of meeting a friendly rural host. Thus, rural tourism in the Waterloo-Wellington area has become a lucrative industry. However, issues of encroaching urban development on prime agricultural land, unplanned tourism development, and increased visitor numbers, have raised concerns about the loss of small town ambiance, quality of life for residents, and the associated rural image of the area. Moreover, questions have been raised concerning the long-term benefits of tourism for rural communities.

3.1.3 Sustainable Rural Development

The Waterloo-Wellington region attracts visitors because of its distinctive rural cultural heritage and attractive agricultural and natural landscapes. The close proximity of urban markets enables rural tourism to be a profitable venture for entrepreneurs and local developers. However, tourism developments in the region, around St. Jacobs and Elora more specifically, have changed over the years (Mitchell 1998). Early commodification of rural landscapes and heritage was in the form of local small-scale investments which sold traditional products such as Mennonite cuisine, baked goods, furniture and ornamental iron work (Mitchell 1998). As investors saw the economic potential for commercializing the unique rural characteristics which initially attracted visitors, tourism development became increasingly commodified and less-associated with local heritage, artisans and handiwork. For example, in St. Jacobs, there was the construction of a retail centre which sold non-characteristic local merchandise, the development of an outlet mall which contained 30 different businesses offering a range of products, and an increase in the number of quaint country craft stores (Mitchell 1998). In Fergus, for example, the traditional location of the Fergus Highland Games and Scottish Festival was near the shore of the Grand River. In order to accommodate more people and vendors, the site as been moved to a baseball field/park.

Mitchell (1998) stated that while investment levels have generated significant financial benefits for those involved in the creation of this commodified landscape, such investments have also led to a partial destruction of the rural idyll. Therefore, there is the

need for appropriate rural tourism planning in the region especially for the areas which are already highly promoted for rural tourism. Rural tourism developers should not compromise community identity or the protection of unique rural traditions, cultures, landscapes and heritage for economic gains.

Other developments also threaten rural areas of Waterloo-Wellington. Sub-urban areas of Kitchener, Waterloo and Guelph are expanding on prime agricultural land. As cities in Waterloo-Wellington expand, concerns have been raised with regard to water supply, waste management and other municipal services. Issues have been raised especially with regard to water supply since it originates from the Grand River and water resources get low in the summer and fall months.

The loss of prime agricultural land is also a major concern. Not only does this affect food supply, but puts pressures on farmers to adopt more intensive forms of agricultural production. Loss of agricultural land may also affect the region's rural image since attractive agricultural landscapes and well-kept farms are a symbol of the area's agricultural heritage. Moreover, expanding urban centres and large-scale developments becoming more common on the edges of urban centres in the region (e.g. box stores such as Walmart), threaten the lifestyles of Mennonite families. Their response may be to emigrate, which would be a loss of a significant portion of Waterloo-Wellington's rural heritage.

Sustainability issues in the region were primarily in response to agriculture, environment and economy. For example, intensive agricultural production has resulted in soil degradation, and agricultural run-off which has polluted water ways with pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers and silt deposits. As well, concerns have been raised with regard to the

economic viability of agriculture in the region.

Considering the distinctive rural cultural heritage and beautiful agricultural and natural landscapes of the Waterloo-Wellington region, sustaining rural cultural resources should be of the utmost importance as well. This is especially true since current development and potential development for rural tourism in the Waterloo-Wellington region is based on the commercialization of the images and experiences associated with traditional agricultural communities and rural heritage. Therefore, it is important to examine rural tourism development and promotion in the region in more detail and investigate its contribution to sustainable rural development.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Interview Procedure

A list of rural accommodations within the Waterloo-Wellington area was formulated using several sources of information. A list of farm vacations and country bed and breakfasts located in Waterloo and Wellington Counties was taken from the 1998 Ontario Farm and Country Accommodations Guide. Several rural accommodation brochures were also picked up from the Elmira Chamber of Commerce, and lists and advertisements for bed and breakfasts, country inns, and farm vacations were found in community information brochures from Fergus and New Hamburg. This accumulated a list of 76 rural accommodations within the Waterloo-Wellington area.

Since there was a small number of rural accommodations in the study area, it was decided that generating a random sample would reduce the number further and would not provide an accurate representation of the rural accommodation population. Therefore, all

76 accommodations were included in the interview procedure. Rural operators were contacted by a mailed letter which explained the purpose of the study and requested their participation in a personal interview which would take place at their accommodation. The letter explained that the interview would consist of questions about their rural accommodation experiences and would be approximately 30 minutes in length (appendix B). It was explained in the letter that rural operators would then be called at a later date (approximately one to two weeks after they received the letter) to set up an interview time if they were interested in participating in the study. Through the calling procedure, it was found that some of the rural accommodations on the list were ineligible to be used in the study. For example, places which were named "inns" were actually restaurants and not accommodations. Others on the list had ceased operating, their numbers were no longer in service, or were mistakenly included on the list but were actually located outside of the study area boundary. Therefore, the number of accommodations was reduced to 71.

In order to ensure a good response rate of the visitor survey which involved operator cooperation, it was necessary to contact rural operators during July and August, the busiest tourist months. In addition, time and financial constraints of the researcher demanded that data be collected in an efficient and concise manner. Although contacting rural operators during this time was justified, it proved to be very challenging. This was because rural accommodation operators are extremely busy, not only with their tourism operations but with other careers, such as farming. Therefore, a call-back system was used to provide an accurate way of measuring the interview response rate. If rural operators could not be reached and booked for an interview on the first attempt, a "five call" call-back system was

used. Five calls would be made to operators in an attempt to book them for an interview. If there was an answering machine, no more than two messages would be left, and three more attempts to reach them would be made at various times on different days. The message left on operators' answering machines introduced the researcher and reminded operators of the purpose of the study and the request for an interview. The message also requested operators to return the researcher's call and express their desire to volunteer or not, or the researcher would try to call back at another time. In spite of this call-back procedure, many hosts were still unreachable (22 of the 71 operators), yet very few rural operators who were contacted declined participating in the interview (9 of the 71 operators). Operators' reasons for declining to participate were that they were simply not interested, that they were too busy, or that they felt they could not contribute much to the study because they were new in the business. This interview procedure resulted in the completion of 40 interviews out of 71 rural operators, a response rate of 56.3%. This is comparable to other rural tourism studies which distributed a questionnaire such as Fennell and Weaver's (1997) 52.6%, Vogeler's (1977) 32%, and Oppermann's (1995) 67.6%, which was obtained through extensive interviews during fieldwork from 1991 to 1993. The standard error of proportion for the present study was calculated on the assumption that a 50% response could be expected. The standard error of the proportion for rural operators is $\pm 5.2\%$. Therefore, the number of hosts completing the interviews is deemed appropriate.

3.2.2 Visitor Survey Distribution

Visitor questionnaires were distributed, at the completion of the interview, to 20 of the 40 rural operators interviewed. This was a partially selected sample based on a number

of criteria. For instance, the visitor survey was not completed until approximately five interviews had already taken place and this was to test the questions on hosts before the final copy of the survey was produced. As well, the sample of rural operators chosen to distribute surveys was based on information about their accommodation gathered during the interviews such as the number of rooms, the previous year's visitor numbers, and the number of visitors expected in the present year. Accommodations were not selected for survey distribution if they had two rooms or less, or were not expected to receive many visitors. However, 3 accommodations with two rooms or less were included in the sample in order to represent smaller accommodations. Similarly, other information collected during the interview, such as the level of interest in their accommodation business and interest in the study, was also used to select operators for survey distribution. For instance, operators were not asked for further participation in the study if they seemed disinterested or bored in the interview. As well, rural accommodations were selected to ensure that the sample was evenly distributed within the study area (Figure 3.1). The final selection criterion was whether rural operators agreed to distribute surveys to their guests. Only 3 of the 23 rural operators who were asked if they would participate in the visitor survey declined.

The visitor survey was designed to be completed in approximately 10 to 15 minutes which would encourage visitor participation in the questionnaire. A cover letter on university paper was attached to each survey (appendix C). It introduced the researcher, the purpose of the study, and reasons the information gained through the survey would provide rural operators with valuable knowledge on visitors' experiences, needs, and desires so that a high rate of visitor satisfaction would be maintained. The letter also suggested visitors

complete the questionnaire and leave it with their host. Based on the number of rooms and the previous year's visitor numbers, the 20 rural operators were given a number of surveys to distribute to their guests. For example, an accommodation with only three rooms and a count of 50 to 150 guests/ year received 5 or 10 surveys to distribute. In contrast, a village inn with 9 rooms and a guest total of more than 3000/ year was given 40 surveys. These distribution techniques are similar to those used by Oppermann (1995). Among all 20 rural accommodations, 280 questionnaires were distributed. Rural operators were asked to distribute questionnaires to their guests and return the completed forms in a stamped envelope supplied by the researcher by the date on the envelope. Because of research time constraints, the time allowed for the collection of visitor surveys was approximately two months. Rural operators were not reminded through a mailed postcard or a phone call to distribute surveys or to return completed copies. Financial and time constraints were factors in this decision. However, 106 completed surveys out of 280 were returned which is a response rate of 37.9%. This is comparable to Oppermann's (1995) visitor questionnaire response rate of 25% and Vogeler's (1977) visitor questionnaire response rate of 40%. The standard error of the proportion for visitors in the present study was calculated assuming a 50% response. Since the standard error of proportion was $\pm 4.8\%$ then the sample is deemed appropriate.

It is evident that accommodations with a greater number of rooms and visitor stays may contribute more surveys to the study, even though there were fewer larger accommodation units in the area.. This is especially true for village inns which are as much as 3 times larger than the majority of smaller bed and breakfast establishments. Moreover,

the central location of larger inns within the villages, as compared to country bed and breakfasts being dispersed along country highways, also contributed to a greater number of visitors and, thus, completed visitor surveys. Through questionnaire design it was possible to determine which establishments visitors were from and it was evident that the majority came from village inns. However, visitors' socio-demographic and travel characteristics, motivations for visiting rural areas, activity preferences, and rural images can still be accurately examined and evaluated according to the objectives and questions of the study.

3.3 Development of Rural Operator Interview Questions

Personal interviews have the ability to give researchers more flexibility than structured surveys by enabling them to use a wide range of questions. Possible question types to be used in personal interviews can be multiple choice, closed questions such as likert or semantic differential scale questions, and open-ended questions enabling the respondent to give descriptive, open answers. In addition, personal interviews allow the researcher to gain in-depth knowledge about certain issues that would not otherwise be captured by a questionnaire. Although a valuable method of data collection, personal interviews can be a difficult and time-consuming technique, especially for larger samples.

Personal interviews have not been the preferred method of data collection for rural tourism researchers. However, Oppermann (1995) performed detailed host interviews over a three-year period. In contrast, studies have explored accommodation characteristics by performing an inventory analysis of what is offered by accommodations (Reid et al 1993, Fletcher and Johnson 1991) or through the distribution of a questionnaire (Vogeler 1977, Weaver and Fennell 1997, Fleischer and Pizam 1997). However, it would seem beneficial

to obtain detailed information while developing a connection between the interviewer and the operator since rural accommodations tend to be few in number, small, and privately-owned.

Personal interview questions in this study were designed to collect data on accommodation characteristics, rural operators' knowledge of their visitors, operators' perceived rural images, and their feelings toward rural tourism (appendix D). Interview questions were designed to encourage short answers and be straightforward so that the personal interview would encourage operator response.

The first section of interview questions asked operators about their accommodation such as what type of rural accommodation it was and whether it was situated in the country or a village. For instance, the types of accommodations listed were country and village bed and breakfasts, farm vacations, and inns. Village bed and breakfasts were defined as differing from country B&B's in that they were located within the main parts of the villages. On the other hand, village inns have more rooms and tend to offer more amenities. Emerick and Emerick (1994) found that the majority of inns had 5 to 9 rooms whereas B&B's had 1 to 3 rooms. Farm vacations differed from B&B's in that they have farm-related activities available for guests. Other questions related to information on seasonality, number of rooms, how much was charged per night, characteristics and motivations of the primary operator, and number of years the accommodation had been in business. The questions asked with regard to accommodation characteristics are comparable to those that were asked in previous rural accommodation studies (Weaver and Fennell 1997, Oppermann 1995, 1996, Emerick and Emerick 1994, Warnick and Klar 1991) (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Information Sources for Interview and Survey Questions

| Relevant Source/Ques. Type | Accomm. Characteristic | open questions asking for descriptors | Rural image attribute statements | Motivations of Visitors | Rural tourism resources |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Weaver and Fennell (1997) | X | | | | |
| Oppermann (1995) | X | | | X | X |
| Emerick and Emerick (1994) | X | | | | |
| Warnick and Klar (1991) | X | | | | |
| Reilly (1990) | | X | | | |
| Student Trip Assignment | | | X | | |
| Brochure Analysis | | | X | | |
| Bell (1992) | | | X | | |
| Valentine (1997) | | | X | | |
| Fennell and Weaver(1997) | | | X | | |
| Willits, Bealer and Timbers (1990) | | | X | | |
| Vogeler(1977) | | | | X | |
| Bonifield, Jeng, and Fesenmaier (1996) | | | | X | |
| Ulrich, Dimberg, and Driver (1989) | | | | X | |
| Short (1992) | | | X | | |

Rural images of rural operators comprised the next section of interview questions. This was to provide the information necessary to compare operators' rural images with visitors' perceived rural images and with the ideal images of rural in the literature. The research methods used by tourism image researchers are usually structured survey questions consisting of pre-constructed attributes on a 5- or 7-point semantic differential or likert scale (Echtner and Ritchie 1991). However, Reilly (1990) suggested that free elicitation of descriptive adjectives can serve a similar function with greater ease of data collection, straightforward analysis, and permit the specification of inter-segment differences. This technique also allows unique characteristics of the destination to surface through visitors' own descriptions rather than through a rated scale of attributes provided by the researcher. Therefore, a series of open-ended questions asked operators what words most described the rural landscape in their area, and what aspects of the rural landscape and rural life they liked and disliked most.

On the other hand, structured questions can be analysed using sophisticated statistical techniques, and are also easy to administer, simple to code, and force the respondent to rate the product on more general, common traits (Echtner and Ritchie 1991). Thus, a series of attribute statements on rural landscapes and quality of life were included in a later section of the interview (question 38). The rating scale was a 5-point likert scale based on the level of agreement with each statement.

In previous tourism image studies attributes were developed by using opinions of tourism experts, researcher's judgement, general reading or visual material and brochures, and literature reviews (Crompton 1979, Gartner 1989). In this research, several techniques

were used to generate the attribute statements on rural landscapes and life for this question. For instance, an undergraduate tourism geography field trip assignment through Waterloo County's Mennonite country, contributed to the generation of descriptors. As part of their assignment, undergraduate university students were asked to describe the rural landscape they experienced (Table 3.2). Through content analysis of 40 assignments, the words most commonly used to describe the rural landscape were beautiful, peaceful, open, green fields and simple. The attribute statements were also generated through a content analysis of the rural accommodation brochures (Table 3.3).

Table 3.2: Rural Image Descriptors from Mennonite/Rural Field Trip Assignment

- Rural area, beautiful, fewer people
- simplicity, well-kept, fields of green
- simplistic lifestyle
- desirable, simplistic, country image
- picturesque, fields of crops, relaxed, comfortable, barns, livestock
- scenic countryside
- beautiful, authentic, natural environment
- open, peaceful, escape, green
- similar to other rural landscapes
- picturesque, beautiful
- therapeutic, relaxing, temporary escape
- barren, beautiful, peaceful
- refreshing, peaceful, beauty
- attractive
- peaceful
- natural beauty
- quiet, peaceful
- animals, vegetation
- regular farmland
- open spaces, relaxing change
- sparseness
- beautiful, peaceful
- open space, farms
- "gave me a sense of home"
- traditional farmhouses, open landscapes, typical rural setting

A frequency count (in brackets) of the above descriptors resulted in the following list which were words used most often:

- beautiful, beauty (7)
- peaceful (6)
- open (5)
- traditional/regular farms, farmhouses, farmland (8)
- green fields (4)
- simple, simplicity (3)

Table 3.3: Rural Image Descriptors from Rural Accommodation Brochures

- quiet, relaxation
- quiet country lanes
- warm hospitality
- relax, learn about rural living
- taste of farm life
- conservation areas, Belwood Lake, Elora Gorge
- relax, birdwatch
- warm welcome
- privacy
- picturesque countryside
- walk, ski, hike
- Elora Gorge, hiking, walking, canoeing
- antique furnished home
- antiques, nature trails
- homey atmosphere
- Victorian, century home
- rural southern Ontario hospitality
- walking, shopping, antiques, cultural heritage attractions
- beautiful country setting
- hiking, skiing, exploring, shopping, peaceful, relaxing, country hospitality
- nostalgic scenery, country lifestyle

A frequency count (in brackets) of the above list resulted in the following descriptors being used most often:

- relaxation (4)
- friendly/country hospitality (3)
- outdoor activities-walking, hiking, nature trails (7)
- beautiful scenery/setting (2)
- country lifestyle/setting (learn about or experience) (7)
- antiques/century home (4)
- shopping (2)
- cultural heritage attractions (1)

The most common descriptions were relaxation, country/friendly hospitality, walking/hiking/nature trails, nostalgic/beautiful scenery, country lifestyle, learn. In addition, a review of rural landscape image literature and a few rural tourism studies, which asked visitors why they were attracted to rural accommodations, contributed to the development of the statements (Bell 1992, Short 1991, Valentine 1997, Fennell and Weaver 1997). Common descriptive phrases were rural nostalgia, simplistic living, family farms, desirable way of life, close-knit community, sense of belonging, and escape from the city. The wording of the statements in the interview question were similar to those used in Willits, Bealer, and Timbers' (1990) study on popular images of rurality in Pennsylvania. However, measurements of rural images are lacking in rural studies as well as in rural tourism research. Combining unstructured and structured methods to assess rural images will provide a balanced way of measuring images by using a variety of question types (Selby and Morgan 1996).

The next set of interview questions were developed to measure rural operators' knowledge of their visitors' travel characteristics such as activity preferences and motivations for visiting the area. These questions were open-ended questions. However, later in the interview a structured question (question 39) was developed which asked rural operators to rank what they felt most motivated visitors to stay at rural accommodations in the area. The purpose of asking this question was so that a comparison could be made between the responses of rural operators and their visitors. The motivation criteria were generated from previous rural tourism studies (Oppermann 1995, Vogeler 1977) which listed visitor travel motives such as peace and quiet, new experience, experience ranch/farm life,

host/guest interaction, inexpensive vacation, and nature/environment. In addition, visitor motivations such as the natural environment, visit with family and friends, relaxing environment and an active vacation, were generated from tourist motivation research (Bonifield, Jeng, and Fesenmaier 1996, Ulrich, Dimberg, and Driver 1989). Ranking a pre-determined set of motivations seems to be the most common format for assessing visitor motivations (Oppermann 1995, Bonifield, Jeng, and Fesenmaier 1996).

The final section of the rural operator interview questions pertained to rural operators' perceptions of rural tourism within their region. The purpose of this section was to determine economic, environmental, or cultural benefits of rural tourism as perceived by rural accommodation operators. Moreover, these questions were designed to help in understanding the role of rural tourism in sustaining rural cultures and contributing to sustainable rural development. Interview questions addressed operators' benefits from rural tourism, the economic, environmental, and cultural benefits of rural tourism for the area, and the potential for future rural tourism development. Another structured question asked operators to rate on a 5-point likert scale how important they felt certain resources were for rural tourism. The purpose of this was to determine which resources are valuable for management and sustainability purposes and to make comparisons with previous research (Oppermann 1995).

3.4 Secondary Sources of Information

A content analysis of secondary sources, such as rural accommodation brochures, pamphlets, and advertisements, contributed to the examination of projected rural images of rural accommodations. This analysis was different from the frequency count of descriptors

which was used to formulate rural image statements. The analysis was based on word descriptions used in the brochures and advertisements. There were 34 out of 40 accommodations which had an advertisement or brochure which was used in this analysis.

3.5 Visitor Survey Design

A visitor survey was designed to gather information on visitors' socio-demographics, travel characteristics, travel motivations, and perceived images. In order to promote visitor response, the survey was designed to be concise and easy to complete (appendix E). The survey consisted of structured questions. However, one open-ended question asked visitors to describe the rural landscape and another one asked visitors to include any additional comments. Several questions were identical or similar to those in the rural operator interview (questions 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 21). Comparing visitors' motivations, activity preferences, and travel characteristics with similar questions asked in the rural operator interview was designed to reveal hosts' knowledge of their visitors (Oppermann 1995, Vogeler 1977). Questions pertaining to visitors' rural images were identical to questions in the operator interview, both open-ended and structured. Frater (1983) suggested that the future of farm tourism is dependent on an understanding of market demand and consumer preferences. Thus, information on visitors' socio-demographics will assist in determining the types of visitors who enjoy rural vacations.

3.6 Summary

Projected rural images of rural accommodations were collected through an analysis of accommodation brochures. Rural images and perceptions of rural accommodation operators and their guests were investigated by interviewing rural hosts and by distributing

questionnaires to their guests. Several types of images, such as projected images, induced images, and re-evaluated images, were outlined in chapter two and also discussed in this chapter in association with research methods. Since images will be further discussed in the results and analysis chapters, a diagram was produced which provides clarification of the connections among hosts and guests, images and research methods (Figure 3.2). For instance, hosts' perceptions and images were collected by way of the rural operator interview. Hosts' rural images and perceptions are influenced by real experiences and organic images. Accommodation brochures, which were analysed by a content analysis of word descriptors, contribute to a projected image of rural areas which is influenced by hosts' perceptions. On the other hand, visitors' re-evaluated images and perceptions, which were measured using the visitor survey, are influenced by organic images, induced images and tourist experiences. The perceived images of hosts and visitors and the projected image were compared with the ideal rural images described in the rural sociology literature. Data collected on accommodation and visitor characteristics, rural images and hosts' perceptions of rural tourism, will be described and discussed in the following three chapters.

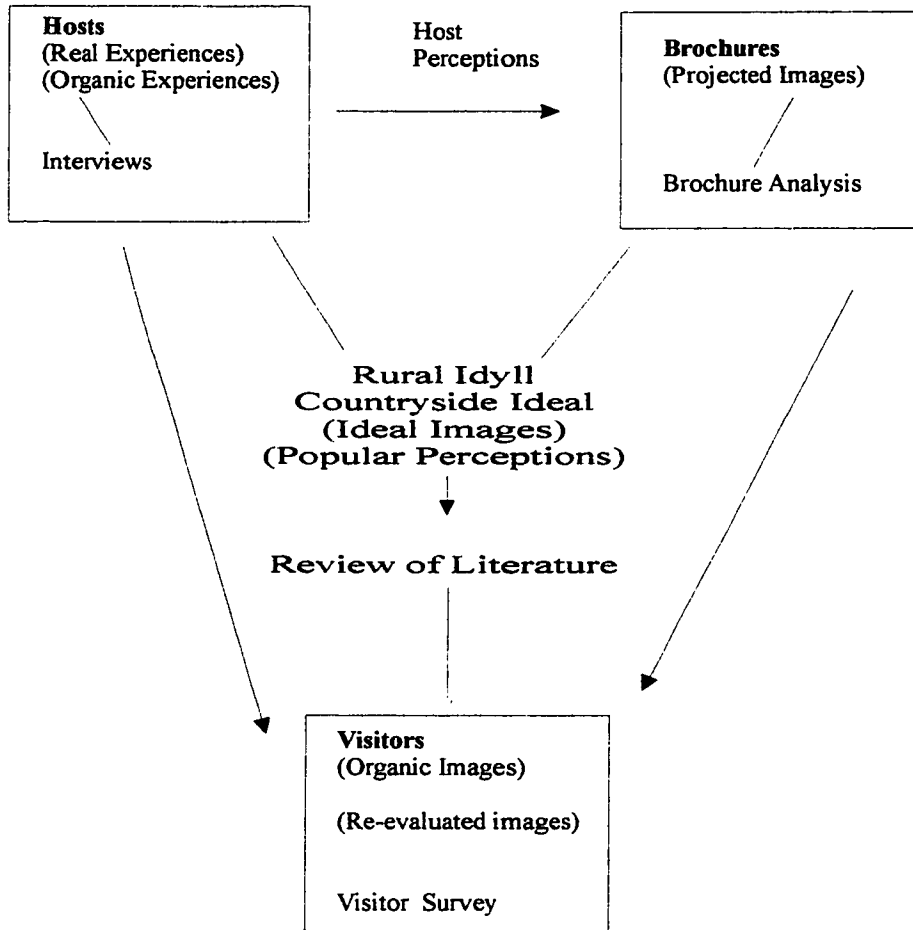


Figure 3.2: Relationships Among Hosts, Visitors and Rural Images

CHAPTER FOUR

Rural Accommodations and their Visitors in the Waterloo-Wellington Region

Chapter four will describe rural accommodation characteristics in order to provide an overview of the existing accommodation sector in the Waterloo-Wellington region. Visitor characteristics will be discussed in order to explore particular segments who prefer rural vacations. Furthermore, rural operators' perceptions will be compared with visitors' perceptions with regard to visitors' travel characteristics, activity preferences, sources of cultural heritage information, and motivations in order to gain an understanding of hosts' knowledge of their guests. These sections will be followed by a discussion of the results and comparisons with findings from previous research.

4.1 Rural Accommodation Characteristics

Hosts' perceptions of their rural accommodation characteristics were obtained as part of the rural operator interview. The types of accommodations studied were farm vacations, bed and breakfasts, and inns. Differences between the accommodations were outlined in the research methodology. The first question asked operators whether they perceived their accommodation to be a country bed and breakfast, village bed and breakfast, farm vacation, or village inn. Village bed and breakfasts differ from country bed and breakfasts (B&B's) in that they are located within the main parts of the villages. On the other hand, village inns

have more rooms and tend to offer more amenities. Farm vacations differ from bed and breakfasts in that they have farm-related activities available for guests. The majority of rural operators' interviewed perceived their accommodation to be a country bed and breakfast (60%) (Table 4.1). They are located in the country or on the outskirts of rural villages. Village bed and breakfasts comprised 22.5% of the accommodations studied and village inns were 12.5%. Only 5% of the accommodations studied were perceived as farm vacation properties.

Most of the rural accommodations in the study were open all year round (82.5%). Those that were seasonal were stated as being open from approximately April to December (17.5%). On the other hand, the majority of rural operators mentioned that their accommodation was a part-time business (65%) rather than full-time (35%). Many operators who chose full-time meant that they spend a lot of time with their accommodation business especially during the busy tourist season. As well, if operators were retired and their accommodation business was now what they did to earn an income, they often thought of it as a full-time business.

The majority of rural accommodations were operated by the male and female of the household (55%). However, many females operated rural accommodations by themselves (37.5%) which contrasts greatly with males (2.5%). Two of the village inns were not privately owned but instead were operated by corporations (5%). Even though the majority of rural accommodations is operated jointly between males and females, the one who mainly deals with guests is usually female (57.5%). This is followed by the role being shared by both males and females (30%) and by males alone (7.5%). Thus, rural accommodations

seem to be a business largely operated and run by women.

Many rural operators have been providing rural accommodation for only a few years. For instance, 80% of operators have been in business for 10 years or less and only 5% have been operating their accommodation for more than 15 years. This is somewhat comparable to the number of years hosts have been living in the study area. Half of the hosts have been living in the Waterloo-Wellington area for 10 years or less whereas the other 50% have lived in the area ranging from 11 to 50 or more years.

The number of rooms typical of rural accommodations in the area is dependent on the type of accommodation (Table 4.2). For example, smaller country or village B&B's range from 1 to 3 rooms whereas larger B&B's range from 5 to 8 rooms. Village inns were recorded as having 8 to 12 rooms. Similarly, the price per night for rural accommodations is also dependent on the accommodation type (Table 4.3). For a single occupancy, prices range from \$35-60 and for a double occupancy prices range from \$45-170. The price depends on what amenities are offered at each accommodation. For example, less expensive accommodations may offer a shared bath, continental breakfast, or smaller rooms or beds. More expensive accommodations may offer a private bath, full 5-course breakfasts, honeymoon suites, or private cottages.

Table 4.1: Rural Accommodation Characteristics

* n = 40

| Characteristic | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Accommodation Type: farm vacation | 2 | 5 |
| country bed and breakfast | 24 | 60 |
| village bed and breakfast | 9 | 22.5 |
| village inn | 5 | 12.5 |
| Seasonality: yes | 7 | 17.5 |
| no | 33 | 82.5 |
| Full or part-time business: full-time | 14 | 3565 |
| part-time | 26 | |
| Gender of Primary Host: male | 1 | 2.5 |
| female | 15 | 37.5 |
| both | 22 | 55 |
| corporate | 2 | 5 |
| Gender of Host who mainly deals with guests: male | 3 | 7.5 |
| female | 23 | 57.5 |
| both | 12 | 30 |
| corporate | 2 | 5 |
| Number of years in operation: 0 to 5 | 19 | 47.5 |
| 6 to 10 | 13 | 32.5 |
| 11 to 15 | 6 | 15 |
| 16 to 20 | 1 | 2.5 |
| 21 or more | 1 | 2.5 |
| Number of years host been a resident: 0 to 10 | 20 | 50 |
| 11 to 20 | 8 | 20 |
| 21 to 30 | 5 | 12.5 |
| 31 to 40 | 4 | 10 |
| 41 or more | 3 | 7.5 |

Table 4.2: Number of Rooms in Accommodations

| Type of Accommodation | Range of Rooms |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| smaller country or village B&B's | 1-3 rooms |
| larger country or village B&B's | 4-7 rooms |
| village inns | 8-12 rooms |

Table 4.3: Amount Charged per Night

| Room Type | Range of Prices |
|------------------|-----------------|
| single occupancy | \$35-60 |
| double occupancy | \$45-170 |

Rural operators gave several reasons for why they started their accommodation business but many stated that their main motivation was because they liked to meet people (30%) (Table 4.4). Only 22.5% seemed concerned about income and 15% of hosts said they wanted to keep their house filled since their children had left home. On the other hand, 10% of rural operators wanted to preserve the heritage of their home so they started the business to help offset the expenses of keeping a larger, older home. Other motivations mentioned were to take on a retirement project (10%), to experience something new (7.5%), to work at home/in the home (7.5%), or that they liked the B&B concept from their own travels (7.5%).

In a separate question, hosts were asked whether their motivations had changed since they began their business. The majority of operators said their motivations have not changed over the years (75%). However, operators who originally started their business for economic reasons, said they now enjoy having guests and meeting new people. Other changes experienced were not being as eager for business as in the beginning and using the business

to raise money for volunteer projects.

Table 4.4: Rural Operator Motivations for Starting Accommodation Business
 *total percent greater than 100 because respondents gave multiple responses

| Motivation Described by Host | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| meet people/like people | 12 | 30% |
| provide income | 9 | 22.5 |
| fill empty house | 6 | 15 |
| provide accommodation | 5 | 12.5 |
| preserve heritage of home | 4 | 10 |
| take on retirement project | 4 | 10 |
| experience something new | 3 | 7.5 |
| work at home/in the home | 3 | 7.5 |
| liked B&B concept | 3 | 7.5 |

4.2 Visitors' Characteristics

The visitor questionnaire collected information on visitors' socio-demographic and travel characteristics in order to gain a better understanding of the type of people who prefer rural vacations. Visitors who responded to the questionnaire were primarily female (62.5%) but it should be noted that visitors were mostly couples (71%) rather than families (13%), single guests (10%), or business people (13%) (Table 4.5).

Rural accommodations attract older travelers since almost 30% of the respondents were 50 to 59 years old. Similarly, other main age groups of visitors were 40 to 49 years (21.8%) or 30 to 39 years (17.8%). The majority of visitors were working (77%). Rural vacations were also enjoyed by visitors with varying incomes. For instance, almost a third of visitors had household incomes of more than \$100 000 (29.2%) whereas 22.2% of visitors had incomes between \$20 000 and \$39 000. As well, nineteen percent of visitors had family incomes between \$40 000 and \$59 000 or between \$60 000 and \$79 000.

The majority of guests who visited rural accommodations in the study area were from southern Ontario (58.4%). However, 16.8% were from countries overseas, such as England, Germany, The Netherlands, or Belgium. This was greater than those visitors who were from other parts of Ontario (3%), other provinces (6.9%), or the United States (10.9%). Thus, rural vacations in the study area are popular for travelers from southern Ontario and for those from Europe traveling in the region.

Although the visitor survey was distributed among all the accommodation types, the majority of responses came from guests who stayed at village inns (55.9%)(Table 4.6). The remaining responses came from country B&B's (32.4%) and village B&B's (11.8%) but zero were from farm vacations. Since there were only two farm vacations recorded in the study, results will not include information from this type of accommodation. It seems that the study area is lacking in this form of rural accommodation. Most visitors stayed for only 1 to 2 nights (91.3%) and the majority were first time visitors (61%) rather than repeat visitors (39%). Although 61% of guests were first-time visitors, 99% of guests stated that they would return to the area and recommend the vacation to friends or relatives. However, it should be noted that these results may be biased since rural operators may have selected and sent only those surveys with positive results to be part of the study.

This may have also been the case for the results of this question, although it is possible that these findings represent an overall sample of rural vacation visitors. Guests selected several criteria which made their stays enjoyable (Table 4.7). Clean, comfortable accommodations were stated by 85.8% of visitors to have made their stay enjoyable as well as friendly hospitality (80.2%). A quiet, relaxing atmosphere (78.3%) and good meals

(72.6%) were also regarded as important. The rural landscape was seen as contributing to an enjoyable stay (50%), more so than nearby rural tourist attractions (41.5%).

Table 4.5: Visitors' Socio-demographic Characteristics

*different numbers of missing cases for each variable

| Characteristic | Frequency* | Percent |
|----------------------------------|------------|---------|
| Gender of Visitors | | |
| male | 38 | 37.5% |
| female | 63 | 62.4 |
| Age of Visitors | | |
| under 19 | 1 | 1 |
| 20 to 29 | 14 | 13.9 |
| 30 to 39 | 18 | 17.8 |
| 40 to 49 | 22 | 21.8 |
| 50 to 59 | 30 | 29.7 |
| 60 or more | 16 | 15.8 |
| Are Visitors Retired? | | |
| yes | 22 | 22.7 |
| no | 75 | 77.3 |
| Visitors' Level of Income | | |
| less than 20 000 | 1 | 1.4 |
| 20 000 to 39 000 | 16 | 22.2 |
| 40 000 to 59 000 | 14 | 19.4 |
| 60 000 to 79 000 | 14 | 19.4 |
| 80 000 to 99 000 | 6 | 8.3 |
| more than 100 000 | 21 | 29.2 |
| Visitors' Place of Origin | | |
| Waterloo-Wellington | 4 | 4 |
| southern Ontario | 59 | 58.4 |
| northern Ontario | 3 | 3 |
| another province | 7 | 6.9 |
| United States | 11 | 10.9 |
| other | 17 | 16.8 |

Table 4.6: Visitors' Rural Trip Characteristics

*different numbers of missing cases for each variable

| Characteristic | Frequency* | Percent |
|------------------------------------------------|------------|---------|
| Accommodation Stayed | | |
| farm vacation | 0 | 0 |
| country B&B | 33 | 32.3 |
| village B&B | 12 | 11.8 |
| village inn | 57 | 55.9 |
| Type of Visit | | |
| single guest | 10 | 10 |
| couple | 71 | 71 |
| family | 13 | 13 |
| business | 6 | 6 |
| Length of Visitors' Stay | | |
| 1 to 2 nights | 94 | 91.3 |
| 3 to 4 nights | 5 | 4.9 |
| 5 to 6 nights | 2 | 1.9 |
| more than 6 nights | 2 | 1.9 |
| Repeat Visitors | | |
| yes | 39 | 39 |
| no | 61 | 61 |
| Would Visitors Return? | | |
| yes | 104 | 99 |
| no | 1 | 1 |
| Would Visitors Recommend this vacation? | | |
| yes | 104 | 99 |
| no | 1 | 1 |

Table 4.7: Criteria Which Made Visitors' Stay Enjoyable

*respondents were asked to select all that apply

| Criteria | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| friendly hospitality | 85 | 80.2 |
| clean, comfortable rural accommodations | 91 | 85.5 |
| good meals | 77 | 72.6 |
| quiet relaxing atmosphere | 83 | 78.3 |
| rural landscape | 53 | 50 |
| nearby rural attractions | 44 | 41.5 |
| other | 7 | 6.6 |

4.3 Hosts' Knowledge of their Visitors

Hosts were asked several questions pertaining to their knowledge of their guests' travel behaviours. This information was gathered to provide a greater understanding of the interactions between rural operators and their visitors.

Hosts were asked several questions in the interview pertaining to their perceptions of guests' travel characteristics such as length of stay, type of visit, activity preferences, and motivations. Hosts were also asked to comment on the effectiveness of certain sources of cultural heritage information for visitors. Visitors were asked similar questions in the visitor survey as well as other questions which indicated their degree of desire to return to the area.

Hosts perceived visitors to stay most often as a couple (87.5%) rather than as a family, or single guest (Table 4.8). The visitor survey indicated that 71% of visitors stayed as a couple (see Table 4.7). Similarly, hosts perceived guests to stay approximately 1 to 2 nights (90%) and 91.3% of guests who responded to the visitor survey stayed 1 to 2 nights. Some hosts were correct in perceiving that the majority of their guests are first time visitors (50%) since 61% of guests in the survey had not previously visited the area. Other hosts felt that the majority of their guests were repeat visitors (20%) or at least divided equally between repeat visitors and first time visitors (15%).

Table 4.8: Hosts' Perceptions of Visitors' Travel Characteristics

| Characteristic | Frequency (n=40) | Percent |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------|
| Type of Stay | | |
| single guest | 2 | 5 |
| couple | 35 | 87.5 |
| family | 3 | 7.5 |
| Number of Nights | | |
| 1 to 2 | 36 | 90 |
| 3 to 4 | 3 | 7.5 |
| 5 to 6 | 0 | 0 |
| more than 6 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Type of Visitor | | |
| first time | 20 | 50 |
| repeat | 8 | 20 |
| half first time/half repeat | 6 | 15 |
| only operating a couple of years, thus first time | 6 | 15 |

Hosts were also asked to list some activities, in an open-ended question, which they perceived guests to participate in while staying in the area (Table 4.9). Hosts gave several suggestions for what visitors do, but outdoor activities such as walking, biking, hiking, golf, swimming, or fishing topped the list (52.5%). Shopping and visiting villages were also popular activities. For instance, St. Jacobs (42.5%) and the Waterloo-St. Jacobs Farmer's Market, (32.5%) were listed by hosts more often than shopping in general (20%), or shopping in Elora (15%), Stratford (15%), Fergus (5%), or Elmira (5%). Theatre (32.5%), visiting local attractions and tourist sites (30%), and eating in local restaurants (27.5%) were suggested by hosts as common activities preferred by guests. However, other attractions were listed separately such as antique browsing (15%), visiting museums (15%), cultural heritage festivals (10%), or music festivals (7.5%). Some hosts listed visitors as being here

for business reasons (12.5%), attending weddings (17.5%), or visiting friends and relatives (10%), whereas others stated that guests simply enjoy the countryside/rural landscape (20%) and the rest and relaxation (17.5%)

Table 4.9: Hosts' Perceptions of Visitors' Activity Preferences

*total frequency is greater than 40 because hosts gave several responses

**hosts said "local attractions" but did not mention specific ones

| Hosts' Descriptions of What Guests Do | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| outdoor activities: walk, hike, bike, golf, swim, fish | 21 | 52.5% |
| St. Jacobs | 17 | 42.5 |
| theatre | 13 | 32.5 |
| market | 13 | 32.5 |
| visit local attractions and tourist sites | 12 | 30 |
| restaurants | 12 | 27.5 |
| shopping | 8 | 20 |
| enjoy countryside/landscape | 8 | 20 |
| rest and relaxation | 8 | 17.5 |
| weddings | 7 | 17.5 |
| Elora | 7 | 15 |
| Stratford | 6 | 15 |
| antiques | 6 | 15 |
| museums | 6 | 15 |
| business | 5 | 12.5 |
| festivals: maple syrup, Highland Games | 4 | 10 |
| visit friends and relatives | 4 | 10 |
| music festival | 3 | 7.5 |
| Fergus | 2 | 5 |
| Elmira | 2 | 5 |
| universities | 2 | 5 |

As part of the visitor questionnaire, visitors were asked to select, in a closed question, all the activities in which they participated while on their rural vacation (Table 4.10). It should be noted that open-ended responses by hosts are being compared with closed question

responses from visitors. This is being done only to explore hosts' knowledge of visitors' characteristics and is not meant to provide statistically significant results or concrete conclusions. Most visitors said they made purchases or browsed at local shops and markets (81.1%) which is comparable to hosts perceiving shopping at the market and in the rural villages to be an activity frequently participated in by guests. Most visitors ate in local restaurants (81.1%), and it is interesting that only some hosts recognized this as an activity. On the other hand, only a few hosts perceived guests to enjoy the rural landscape and relax, yet 51.9% of guests selected this. Only 25.5% of guests went for nature walks or hikes.

It seems that visitors participated in outdoor activities less than hosts perceived. A few visitors attended local cultural heritage attractions (28.3%) which is similar to what hosts perceived, yet community theatre was only selected by 13.2% of guests. Fourteen percent selected other activities and some of them were visiting friends, attending a wedding, went kayaking, and went on the tourist train. Zero visitors responding to the questionnaire participated in farm chores. This is to be expected since none of the visitor surveys completed were from farm vacations. It seems that there is a lack of hands-on rural tourism experiences available for visitors in the area. However, in a separate question which asked visitors if they had learned more about rural culture while visiting the area, 47.1% said yes (Table 4.11).

Hosts have a good idea about their guests' travel characteristics but are not quite as perceptive as to what guests prefer to do while vacationing. Hosts acknowledged guests preferences for shopping in rural villages and markets and visiting local cultural attractions but depicted outdoor activities and community theatre to be enjoyed more often than it was

by this group of visitors. Visitors also enjoyed the rural landscape and relaxing.

Table 4.10: Visitors' Activity Preferences

*respondents were asked to select all that apply

| Activity | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| made purchases/browsed local shops/markets | 86 | 81.1 |
| visited local cultural heritage attractions | 30 | 28.3 |
| ate/drank local restaurants | 86 | 81.1 |
| went for nature walks | 27 | 25.5 |
| relaxed/enjoyed rural landscape | 55 | 51.9 |
| participated in farm chores | 0 | 0 |
| learned about rural life | 11 | 10.4 |
| community theatre | 14 | 13.2 |
| other | 15 | 14.2 |

Table 4.11: Did Visitors Learn More About Rural Culture While on Vacation?

*missing cases

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|----------|-----------|---------|
| yes | 49 | 47.1% |
| no | 37 | 35.6 |
| not sure | 18 | 17.3 |

Hosts and guests were also asked for their perceptions on the effectiveness of cultural heritage attractions in providing rural cultural heritage information for guests (4.12). Respondents were asked to rate, on a scale from very effective to, not very effective, their perceptions of cultural heritage sources of information. The scale was re-coded for the purposes of analysis as 1 for very effective through 4 for not very effective. The sources of

information are listed from most effective to least effective based on the percent values and the position of the mean.

Hosts perceived experiencing rural life hands-on to be the most effective method of providing information for guests about rural cultural heritage (the very effective category (65%) and effective category (20%) combined is 85%. They are combined for the remainder of the percent values described in this section). It was shown in a previous question that the opportunity of participating in farm-related chores for guests is lacking. A number of hosts have suggested that this is because of the high insurance costs associated with risks of disease for livestock or risks of injury to visitors. However, many hosts added that staying in rural accommodations can also enable guests to learn about rural cultural heritage. For example, during home-cooked breakfasts or moments enjoying the countryside, many hosts talk with guests about the area and answer many of their questions.

Several hosts also felt that cultural festivals (72.5%) such as the Fergus Scottish Festival enable visitors to learn about cultural heritage, which was mentioned more frequently than for heritage buildings and museums (70%). Many hosts added that these sources are only effective if visitors attend them. Hosts believed that to be the case for agricultural fairs and festivals as well (55%), which were perceived as not attended much by visitors. Rural operators gave several interesting comments on the effectiveness of agricultural fairs for educational purposes. For instance, an operator for 11 years stated,

"Agricultural fairs are definitely lacking in that department [learning about rural cultural and heritage]. There is much needed appropriate planning to include more of that, rather than being carnival-like".

Another rural operator mentioned that people come from the cities to get closer to their "rural

roots" or "closer to their food". But,

"Agricultural fairs are not really agricultural [but are] more of a midway. Part of the rural community itself is that showing of vegetables and garden stuff at fairs, without it, people are that much further from the earth and their source of food."

One host suggested that agricultural fairs could include more educational and hands on material, especially since farmers choose not to operate farm vacations.

Educational brochures (57.5%) were perceived as effective if visitors take the time to read them. Even though hosts perceived farm and rural tours to be effective (60%) rather than ineffective, many hosts felt that they would be more effective if there were more of them. Since there are very few rural/farm tours available in the area, many hosts selected the "don't know" category because hosts were unfamiliar with how effective they would be in providing rural cultural information for visitors. Even in some of the rural villages which attract a large number of tourists, there are no organized rural or farm tours running through the area. One host suggested that more rural tours which visited real farms would encourage people's awareness of agriculture and rural life.

Table 4.12: Hosts' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Sources of Cultural Heritage Information

*percent value in table, some missing cases

*scale from 1 (very effective) to 4 (not very effective)

| Information Source | very effective | effective | some effective | not very effective | don't know | mean |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|--------------------|------------|-------|
| experiencing rural life hands on | 65% | 20% | 10% | 0% | 5% | 1.6 |
| cultural festivals | 42.5 | 30 | 17.5 | 5 | 5 | 2 |
| heritage buildings, museums | 50 | 20 | 15 | 10 | 5 | 2 |
| educational brochures | 40 | 17.5 | 17.5 | 17.5 | 7.5 | 2.35 |
| farm or rural tours | 37.5 | 22.5 | 15 | 5 | 20 | 2.475 |
| agricultural fairs and festivals | 32.5 | 22.5 | 15 | 17.5 | 40 | 2.55 |

Similarly, visitors felt that experiencing rural life hands-on is the most effective method of learning about rural cultural heritage (combined total of very effective and effective categories = 82.5%) (Table 4.13). In contrast, visitors perceived heritage buildings and museums (80.6%) to be more effective than cultural festivals (81.5%), but perceived agricultural festivals (79%) or rural tours (75.3%) to be more effective than brochures (76.3%). Visitors were less sure about the effectiveness of rural tours in providing rural cultural heritage information, but this may be due to the lack of opportunities available to experience this activity. Thus, visitors' perceptions of the effectiveness of cultural heritage attractions in providing information are somewhat similar to hosts' perceptions. However, hosts are more skeptical of their effectiveness especially if visitors choose to participate in

other activities like shopping and eating in restaurants rather than attend cultural attractions.

Significant differences between rural operators' and visitors' perceptions of the effectiveness of rural cultural heritage information were found using an Independent Samples Means t-Test (Table 4.14). The Levene's Test for equality of variances was significant at the 0.01 level for all sources of cultural heritage information, indicating significant differences in the variances of the two groups. Statistically significant differences existed at the 0.01 level for agricultural fairs whereas significant differences existed at the 0.05 level for rural tours and educational brochures.

Table 4.13: Rank of Visitors' Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Sources of Rural Cultural Heritage Information

*percent values in table, some missing cases

*scale from 1 (very effective) to 4 (not very effective)

| Source of Information | very effective | effective | some effective | not very effective | don't know | mean |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|--------------------|------------|-------|
| rural life hands on | 41.7% | 40.6% | 6.3% | 0% | 11.5% | 1.6 |
| heritage buildings. museums | 24.5 | 56.1 | 9.2 | 0 | 10.2 | 1.84 |
| cultural festivals | 18.6 | 62.9 | 7.2 | 0 | 11.3 | 1.87 |
| farm or rural tours | 19.6 | 55.7 | 9.3 | 0 | 15.5 | 1.88 |
| agricultural fairs | 18.4 | 61.2 | 8.2 | 0 | 12.2 | 1.883 |
| educational brochures | 14.4 | 61.9 | 15.5 | 0 | 8.2 | 2.01 |

Table 4.14: Independent Sample Means t-Test for Hosts' and Visitors' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Rural Cultural Heritage Information

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

| Source of Information | t-value | df | sign. (2-tail) |
|----------------------------------|---------|-----|----------------|
| Heritage buildings, museums | -.768 | 126 | .446 |
| cultural festivals | -.681 | 123 | .499 |
| agricultural fairs | -2.85 | 124 | .007** |
| farm or rural tours | -2.38 | 120 | .022* |
| educational brochures | -2.45 | 122 | .031* |
| experiencing rural life hands-on | .000 | 123 | 1.00 |

Rural operators were asked to describe their guests' primary motivation for visiting the area. This information was sought to gain a greater understanding of the knowledge hosts have of their guests. Hosts gave several descriptions of motivations which they perceived to be important and similar descriptions were grouped together to obtain a frequency count (Table 4.15). Hosts' perceptions of guests' primary motivation for visiting the area were to get away or escape into the country (30%). A couple of hosts expanded on this in the section for additional comments. One host, who has been operating for nine years but has been a resident for 47 years, stated, "There seems to be a need to escape large city life". Another long-term resident host wrote,

"The sheer number of visitors to our area is a strong statement of how people enjoy their escape from their busy lives in the city as well as finding a unique community to spend a little of their vacation time..."

This was followed by several different descriptions of visiting villages and shopping in St. Jacobs (17.5%), at the market (15%), Elora (15%), and Fergus (10%). Coming to the area to see the Mennonites was also perceived as a motivation (12.5%) as well as theatre (10%). Other motivations listed were rest and relaxation (10%) and special cultural events in the

area (10%). The rural landscape or countryside was perceived as a visitor motivation by 7.5% of hosts. These results are similar to hosts' rankings of visitor motivations but different from guests' ranking.

Table 4.15: Hosts' Perceptions of Guests' Primary Motivations for Visiting the Area
 *total frequency greater than 40 because hosts gave several responses

| Hosts' Description of Guests' Motivations | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| getaway/escape | 12 | 30% |
| The Village of St. Jacobs | 7 | 17.5 |
| The Farmer's Market | 6 | 15 |
| Elora | 6 | 15 |
| Mennonites | 5 | 12.5 |
| theatre | 4 | 10 |
| Fergus | 4 | 10 |
| rest and relaxation | 4 | 10 |
| special events e.g. Highland Games | 4 | 10 |
| rural landscape/countryside | 3 | 7.5 |
| Stratford | 2 | 5 |
| Elmira | 2 | 5 |

To further investigate hosts' knowledge of their guests travel characteristics, hosts were asked to rank a pre-selected list of visitor motivations on the basis of which ones they felt most motivated guests to stay at rural accommodations in the area (Table 4.16). Hosts' rankings were compared with guests' rankings of the same question on the visitor survey.

For the most part, hosts have a good idea of what motivates visitors to stay at accommodations in the area, however, some differences existed. For instance, rural operators ranked escape into the country as guests' primary motivation followed by relaxing environment and tourist attractions. However, visitors ranked relaxing environment as their

primary motivation followed by the rural landscape and then escape into the country. In contrast, hosts ranked rural landscape somewhere in the middle and have thus underestimated the importance of the rural landscape in motivating visitors to stay in the area. This was seen in other results discussed earlier which showed that visitors enjoy the rural landscape as part of their vacation experience more than hosts perceived. The rural landscape was ranked by visitors far higher than the natural environment which is different from what hosts perceived.

The rest of the visitor motivations are ranked quite similarly between hosts and guests, maybe differing by only one or two spots. For instance, hosts perceived guests to want to learn about rural lifestyles more than they did, yet guests were more motivated by the cost of the vacation. Hosts perceived guests to be least motivated by an active vacation which was shown to be correct in visitors' rankings as well.

Mann Whitney U test was used to test for statistically significant differences between rural operators' rankings of visitors' motivations. Significant differences existed between the groups at the 0.05 level only for inexpensive vacation (Mann-Whitney $U = 680.5$, $p = .022$). Thus, hosts had a good idea of what motivates visitors to travel to this rural region.

Table 5.15: Hosts' and Visitors' Rank of Visitors' Motivations for Staying in Rural Accommodations

| Motivation | Hosts' Rank | Motivation | Visitors' Rank |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| escape into country | 1 | relaxing environment | 1 |
| relaxing environment | 2 | rural landscape | 2 |
| tourist attractions | 3 | escape into country | 3 |
| natural environment | 4 | tourist attractions | 4 |
| friendly hospitality | 5 | friendly hospitality | 5 |
| rural landscape | 6 | natural environment | 6 |
| host/guest interaction | 7 | host/guest interaction | 7 |
| new experience | 8 | new experience | 8 |
| learn about rural lifestyles | 9 | inexpensive vacation | 9 |
| inexpensive vacation | 10 | visit with family and friends | 10 |
| active vacation | 11 | learn about rural lifestyles | 11 |
| visit with friends and family | 12 | active vacation | 12 |

4.4 Rural Accommodations and Visitor Characteristics

4.4.1 Rural Accommodations and their Hosts

Information was collected on rural accommodations in order to gain a greater understanding of existing and potential rural accommodation resources and characteristics within the study region. Findings were similar to previous studies on rural tourism but differed in some aspects. The majority of rural accommodations in the study area were country bed and breakfasts and village bed and breakfasts. There were fewer village inns which are larger establishments and provide more amenities. There were also fewer farm vacation properties which tend to be more difficult to operate because of time demands and insurance concerns. Most of the accommodations were located within or near the villages of St. Jacobs, Elora, Fergus and Elmira. There were fewer country bed and breakfasts as the distance from these villages increased, especially in Wellington County. There also seemed to be more country accommodations in the northern parts of Waterloo County near these villages, with a few in Wellesley Township to the west. Throughout the Waterloo-Wellington area, there are beautiful farms and attractive natural and agricultural landscapes, thus there is great potential for rural accommodation businesses within the region. Reid et al. (1993) stated that the rural accommodation sector remains small and represents an under-developed resource in rural Ontario.

Warnick and Klar (1991) also found bed and breakfasts to be the most common establishment. Although Warnick and Klar's study did not focus on rural accommodations, it was stated that bed and breakfasts appear to thrive in rural areas and seem to fit the character of many communities in which they are located. On the other hand, Oppermann

(1995) found that private apartments rather than traditional bed and breakfast accommodations were the trend in southern Germany. Farmers in this area found they could still offer accommodation and gain economic benefits without spending as much time entertaining guests.

Most rural accommodations in the Waterloo-Wellington area were part-time businesses and operated all year long, but the few who stated they were seasonal were open from April to December to cover the busier tourist season. Rural accommodations in other studies were also found to have busier seasons during summer and fall even though they were open all year (Warnick and Klar 1991, Oppermann 1996, Weaver and Fennell 1997). Rural accommodations were operated by private households, which was similar to other studies (Warnick and Klar 1991, Oppermann 1995). These characteristics have implications for the economic contribution of rural accommodations which will be discussed in later section.

Female accommodation operators were more likely than males to deal closely with visitors. It has been mentioned in previous research that women operating rural accommodations, especially on farms, can contribute to the household income and gain social recognition and self assurance. However, gender issues with regard to rural tourism and rural development within developed countries deserve to be explored in further detail in order to gain a greater understanding of the changing role of women in modern rural society and their contribution to sustaining rural areas.

Most rural hosts in the study region have been operating accommodations for less than 10 years and very few operators have been in business for more than 15 years. Perhaps

there is a high turn over of rural accommodation operators. If so, then the reasons for this should be further examined. On the other hand, rural operators may have moved to the country in order to enjoy a rural lifestyle and have realised the potential for bed and breakfast accommodations, or have fulfilled the desire of starting an accommodation business. In contrast, rural operators in southern Germany were found to have been in business from 10 to 15 years (Oppermann 1996). However, rural tourism has been common in Europe for many years but has been a more recent phenomenon in Canada.

As mentioned earlier in the study, the number of rooms is related to on the type of accommodations; for instance, bed and breakfasts have fewer rooms than country inns (Emerick and Emerick 1994). Smaller bed and breakfasts in this study had 1-3 rooms, whereas village inns had 8-12 rooms. The average number of rooms was approximately 3.5 which is probably comparable to Oppermann (1995) who found the average number of *bed spaces* to be 6.7 and Weaver and Fennell (1997) who found the average to be 6.2, since many of the rooms contained double beds or two twin beds. Similarly, the amount charged per night by rural operators was related to the type of accommodation and the amenities offered. The prices are comparable to the average room rate of \$40-60 (Warnick and Klar (1991) and \$59-88 (Emerick and Emerick 1994), but more than rates found in Oppermann (1995) (US \$12) and Fleischer and Pizam (1997) (US \$22).

Although it was mentioned in many rural tourism studies that rural accommodations provide supplementary income to rural and farm residents, rural operators' reasons for starting their business were not covered in much detail in previous studies. It seems that studies have assumed that the major reason for operating a bed and breakfast, farm vacation,

or village inn is for the income benefits. However, even though generating income was important for operators in this study, it was secondary for many hosts. The majority of rural operators were motivated mainly by their desire to meet people. Farmers and rural residents may realise that small-scale rural accommodations provide only a fraction of the household income needed to offset farm and rural living expenses. Oppermann (1996) stated that many farmers run their tourism business more for the social contacts it provides rather than for the money they could possibly earn from it. However, it has been mentioned that more financially stable farmers rather than farmers in debt are more likely to operate rural accommodations (Hjalagar 1996). But generating a secondary income through operating rural accommodations has enabled rural residents in this study to preserve larger, century homes, to earn money while in retirement, and to work at home, things which they may not have otherwise been able to do. Preserving larger, century rural homes can contribute to sustaining rural cultural heritage by preserving the built heritage of the region and the cultural heritage of the families who have lived there.

4.4.2 Visitors' Characteristics

Data was collected on visitors to gain a better understanding of the type of people who prefer rural vacations. Very little research has been done on the characteristics of farm tourism visitors (Oppermann 1995, 1996). This information can assist in the development of appropriate promotion and marketing of rural tourism which can be directed at people who prefer rural vacations and for those segments which may have shown the most demand. Visitors in the study were mostly couples and tended to be older travellers between 40 and 59 years. In previous rural tourism studies mentioned in Oppermann (1996), the majority

of visitors were between 30 and 49 years. However, Oppermann's results indicated that middle-aged adults with children under 20 were a common occurrence. The majority of visitors in this study were working and it was apparent that rural accommodations attract visitors from several of the income categories. On the other hand, Vogeler (1977) found farm and ranch vacationers to have larger than average incomes. Most visitors in the present study were from southern Ontario yet there were more travellers from Europe than from other provinces or the United States. This was confirmed in an earlier government study by Reid et al (1993), which looked at rural tourism and recreation development in rural Ontario. Thus, the rural Waterloo-Wellington area is a popular destination for European travellers. This is most likely because of the well-known heritage of the area, predominantly Mennonite, Scottish, and German.

Most visitors stayed for only 1 to 2 nights and since most visitors were from southern Ontario, the emphasis was on short vacations where couples could spend time together away from home. Short vacations were also the emphasis in Fleischer and Pizam's (1997) study of rural tourism in Israel. Oppermann (1996) found couples to be an important market segment in southern Germany as well. Reid et al. (1993) commented that bed and breakfasts tend to appeal to adults on vacation and business travellers seeking the comforts of home, yet they stated that there had been no known studies on rural tourism demand in Ontario. The results of this study showed that although there were families, single guests, they were not as common as visitors travelling as couples.

The majority of visitors were first-time visitors which differed from Oppermann (1996) who found the majority to be repeat visitors. However, Oppermann's study was

undertaken over a three-year period. Guests were also satisfied with their vacation experience. Visitors stated they would return to the area and recommend the vacation to friends or relatives. In addition, visitors selected a number of criteria which made their stays enjoyable, such as clean, comfortable accommodations, friendly hospitality, good meals, a quiet relaxing atmosphere and the rural landscape. But this conclusion must be assessed carefully since visitors who had positive experiences may have been more inclined to respond to the visitor survey, particularly since the survey was administered through the host.

4.4.3 Hosts' Knowledge of their Visitors

The results of this study have shown that rural operators have a high degree of familiarity with their guests and that this may be a result of the close host-guest interactions characteristic of these accommodation types. Although some interesting differences existed, hosts' perspectives were similar to visitors' perspectives. Rural operators' perceptions of visitors' travel characteristics such as type of stay, length of stay, and whether the guest was a repeat or first time visitor, were very close to the actual results obtained through the visitor questionnaire.

Rural operators' perceptions of visitors' activity preferences were also similar to the activities which guests selected. For example, hosts were correct in perceiving shopping in rural villages and at local farmers' markets, eating in restaurants, and visiting local cultural heritage attractions to be popular activities for visitors. On the other hand, hosts' perceived guests would participate in outdoor activities or attend the theatre more than it seemed guests actually did. Similarly, Fennell and Weaver (1997) found that farm vacation operators rated wildlife viewing, hunting, photography, and hiking as important activities

for visitors. It is clear that hosts understand guests visit local shops and markets and eat in local restaurants quite often. However, cultural heritage attractions and natural attractions such as trails and parks are important resources as well and deserve to be recognized. Moreover, more attention should be paid to the less tangible resources such as the rural landscape and relaxing environment since visitors perceive them as contributing to the enjoyment of their stay and as an important activity.

Rural operators also had similar perceptions as guests with regard to sources of rural cultural heritage information although statistically significant differences existed for agricultural fairs, rural tours and educational brochures. Visitors perceived sources of information to be more effective than hosts. Therefore, hosts were more critical of the rural cultural heritage that is available for visitors. Both groups perceived that experiencing rural life hands-on would be the most effective way of learning about rural cultures and heritage. But there is a lack of farm vacations in this region which offer activities on farms and, as a result, no visitors who completed the survey participated in farm chores while on vacation. However, rural operators felt that visitors can learn about rural cultural heritage by staying at bed and breakfasts and with rural hosts. This seemed to have been the case since almost half of the visitors responding to the survey stated they had learned more about rural culture while on vacation. Hosts often talk with visitors during breakfast or answer guests' questions about the history of the area or about unique cultures such as the Mennonites. Rural hosts can also offer visitors the personal interaction with a rural family.

Rural operators felt that other sources of information such as cultural festivals, heritage buildings and museums, and agricultural festivals were most effective if visitors

chose to attend them, and that brochures were effective if visitors read them. Since visitors felt educational brochures were not that effective, they may not be reading the appropriate material or choose to learn about rural cultural heritage through other sources. On the other hand, agricultural festivals and fairs have changed over the years and tend to promote their midway rides and money-making ventures rather than agricultural interests or educational potential. Agricultural fairs and festivals have the potential to teach visitors and children about agriculture and the rural heritage of the region. This should still be an important focus and would benefit the rural tourism industry. In addition, rural tours were seen as not very effective but the main reason for this was because of the lack of rural tours in many areas of the region. There is the potential to set up rural or farm tours in the areas around Fergus, Elora, and other nearby rural communities, and in the areas west of Kitchener-Waterloo and west of Cambridge.

Hosts' perceptions of visitors' motivations were compared with guests. Although differences existed in the rankings of visitors' motivations by the two groups, the only motivation which was statistically significant was inexpensive vacation. Hosts perceived visitors to be motivated by their desire to escape into the country, by the relaxing environment, and by local tourist attractions. However, visitors were motivated most by the relaxing environment, the rural landscape, and thirdly tourist attractions. Similar to the issues addressed above, the rural landscape seems to be an important aspect of visitors' rural vacations. Guests viewed the rural landscape as contributing to their activity preferences, their enjoyment of their vacation, and as a primary motivation in visiting rural areas. Previous rural tourism research found visitors to be motivated by the peace and quiet,

friendly reception, experience for children, relaxing environment, and the natural environment (Frater 1983, Oppermann 1995, Vogeler 1977, Fleischer and Pizam 1997). Results in this study showed that the natural environment was not considered a primary motivation by visitors even though hosts perceived it would. Perhaps, hosts and guests have different interpretations of the meaning of "natural" environment. However, hosts and guests were similar in their perceptions with regard to other less highly-ranked motivations such as friendly atmosphere, new experience and active vacation. Oppermann also compared the motivations of hosts and guests and found significant differences to exist in the two motivations of time at leisure and calm/relaxing environment.

Therefore, rural operators have a good knowledge of their guests travel characteristics. The close host-guest interaction of bed and breakfasts, inns, and farm vacations, give hosts the opportunity to learn about visitors' socio-demographic and travel characteristics as well as other information visitors wish to share. This can help hosts understand visitors' needs and wants and enable them to market rural tourism accordingly. For example, differences between hosts and guests perceptions of the effectiveness of cultural heritage information, gives insights into how certain rural tourism resources can be improved. The close host-guest interaction also enables visitors to learn more about their hosts and to gain knowledge about rural life and the area. which has implications for sustainability and will be discussed in more detail in chapter six.

CHAPTER FIVE

Rural Images in the Waterloo-Wellington Region

Rural accommodation characteristics and visitors' socio-demographic and travel characteristics were discussed in the previous chapter with regard to previous research findings. Chapter four also examined hosts' knowledge of guests travel characteristics, activity preferences and travel motivations. Chapter five will examine the rural images of rural operators and visitors as well as rural images projected through accommodation brochures in order to gain an understanding of how the region is perceived by hosts and visitors and whether these perceptions differ. The first section describes the images portrayed through accommodation brochures. The second section examines hosts' images of the rural landscape and rural life. The third section discusses visitors' rural images. The fourth section compares rural operators' and visitors' images and the projected image and discusses them with regard to the ideal images and real rural experiences.

5.1 The Projected Rural Image from Rural Accommodation Brochures

Thirty-four of the 40 accommodations had their own brochure, or a paragraph about their accommodation advertised in a separate publication such as the Farm and Country Accommodation guide. A content analysis of these descriptions was performed by recording words or phrases which described the accommodation or the rural landscape surrounding the

accommodation. Similar words or phrases were grouped and a frequency count was taken to determine how common certain descriptions were among rural accommodations. The purpose of this was to provide a better understanding of the images projected by rural accommodations through advertising. Only a content analysis of words and descriptions was performed and not an analysis of pictures so that the projected image can be compared to the words and phrases commonly used to describe ideal rural images.

The most common aspect of the accommodation described in the brochures was the history of the home or farm (50%) (Table 5.1). Other aspects of the home which were promoted were country hospitality (26%) and relaxing atmosphere (35%). Words or phrases used to describe the rural landscape surrounding the accommodations were unique farming area/country/fields (32%), Mennonite country (29%), quiet (21%), peaceful (6%), and tranquil (6%). Many accommodations also promoted the proximity of their accommodation to several tourist activities namely theatre (29%), antique shopping (24%), and cultural heritage attractions such as the Fergus Highland Games or the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival (32%). However, the most common activities described and used in the projected image of accommodations were shopping in the rural villages of St. Jacobs, Elora, Fergus, and Elmira (65%), and outdoor activities such as biking, hiking, skiing, and birdwatching (59%).

Therefore, the projected image, in words, of rural accommodations included important aspects of the accommodation itself such as its heritage, country hospitality and relaxing atmosphere, as well as aspects of the surrounding area thought of as attractive such as the farming country, the Mennonites, peace and quiet. The projected image also included descriptions of nearby tourist attractions. The most common ones promoted were shopping,

outdoor activities, and cultural heritage attractions.

Table 5.1: Rural Descriptions from Content Analysis of Accommodation Brochures

* 34 of 40 accommodations had descriptions from brochures or booklets that were used in the analysis. Thus, frequency is out of 34.

* total percent is greater than 100 because respondents had multiple responses

| Phrase and Description Used | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| century home, old home, or century farm | 17 | 50 |
| relaxation - described as part of a phrase such as "relax by the fireplace", "on the porch" | 12 | 35 |
| farming area, country, fields | 11 | 32 |
| country hospitality - described as "warm welcome", "friendly" | 9 | 26 |
| quiet - used in descriptions of area surrounding accommodation (i.e. "quiet countryside") | 7 | 21 |
| Activities described nearby: | | |
| - attractions (theatre, Stratford, Drayton) | 10 | 29 |
| - shopping - in St. Jacobs, Elora, Elmira, Fergus, Farmer's Market | 22 | 65 |
| - antiques | 8 | 24 |
| - cultural heritage attractions - Fergus Highland Games, Elmira Maple Syrup Festival, Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese, museums | 11 | 32 |
| - outdoor activities - biking, hiking, skiing, birdwatching | 20 | 59 |
| Mennonite Country | 10 | 29 |
| peaceful | 2 | 6 |
| tranquillity | 2 | 6 |

5.2 Hosts' Perceived Rural Images

Rural operator interview questions asked hosts' their perceptions of the rural landscape and rural life surrounding their accommodations. This information was used to examine hosts' perceived rural images. Hosts were asked to use words which best described the rural landscape surrounding their accommodation. Several words and phrases were offered by hosts and those with similar meanings were grouped into categories. The most

common descriptions about the rural landscape referred to aspects of the natural environment or nature such as flowers, woodlands, the green of the land (summer), or the colours of the trees (fall) (85%) (Table 5.2). The neat farms or well-kept farmland, fields and cultivated crops were also frequently mentioned by hosts (42.5%). Words such as peaceful (30%) or beautiful (22.5%) were used to describe the area surrounding the accommodations. Animals and wildlife were also mentioned (22.5%), although not as frequently as other aspects of nature such as the trees, colours, or forests. Some hosts felt the rural landscape to be quiet (17.5%) or serene (17.5%) while some noticed the Mennonites and their horses and buggies (12.5%) or the neighbours and communities (12.5%). Other descriptions used by a few hosts were picturesque or scenic (12.5%), open or spacious (7.5%), the history of the area (7.5%), tranquil (7.5%), or quaint (5%).

Table 5.2: Hosts' Perceptions of the Rural Landscape

*frequency greater than 40 because hosts gave several descriptions

**similarities in hosts' descriptions were grouped into the following categories

| Hosts' Descriptions** | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Nature/flowers/woodlands/green /colours | 34 | 85 |
| farmland/fields/cultivated/well-kept/crops/farms | 17 | 42.5 |
| peaceful | 12 | 30 |
| beautiful/nice/pretty | 9 | 22.5 |
| wildlife/animals | 9 | 22.5 |
| quiet | 7 | 17.5 |
| serene | 7 | 17.5 |
| Mennonites/horse and buggies | 5 | 12.5 |
| neighbours/community | 5 | 12.5 |
| picturesque/scenic | 5 | 12.5 |
| open/spacious | 3 | 7.5 |
| history/heritage | 3 | 7.5 |
| tranquil | 3 | 7.5 |
| quaint | 2 | 5 |

Hosts were also asked to describe which aspects of the rural landscape they liked best (Table 5.3). Many of the descriptions were similar to the previous question's responses. Hosts listed several aspects of the rural landscape which they liked best. However, the majority mentioned nature, environment, trees, the changing seasons, the river, or the rolling hills (62.5%). Many also stated that they liked the well-kept farms, fields, or cultivated crops (27.5%) whereas some enjoyed the sense of community in rural areas (15%) or the fact that the area is open and uncluttered (15%). Similar to the previous question, hosts' mentioned

that they liked the quiet (12.5%), peacefulness (12.5%), and privacy (7.5%) of rural areas. Other descriptions given were the stone homes or history of the area (7.5%), the proximity to city centres (5%), or the availability of outdoor activities (5%).

Therefore, hosts described the rural landscape similarly to the aspects of the rural landscape which they like best. Hosts appreciated the naturalness of their rural area such as the trees, colours, and flowers, yet they also acknowledged the cultivated fields, well-kept farmlands and fields. Hosts described the rural area as beautiful, peaceful, quiet, and serene, but they also liked the sense of community/neighbours and open spaces as well as the peace and quiet.

Table 5.3: Aspects of the Rural Landscape Hosts Like Best

*total frequency greater than 40 because hosts gave several answers

*similar descriptions were grouped into the following categories

| Hosts' Descriptions | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| nature/environment/trees/ seasons/river/hills | 25 | 62.5 |
| fields/farmland/cultivated crops/well-kept land | 11 | 27.5 |
| sense of community/neighbours/ towns/home | 6 | 15 |
| open spaces/uncluttered | 6 | 15 |
| quiet | 5 | 12.5 |
| peaceful | 5 | 12.5 |
| isolated/privacy | 3 | 7.5 |
| stone homes/history/heritage | 3 | 7.5 |
| proximity to city centres | 2 | 5 |
| outdoor activities | 2 | 5 |

On the other hand, a separate question asked hosts whether they felt any changes could be made to the rural landscape in the area. Many hosts felt that no changes needed to be made to the rural landscape (42.5%); however, a few suggestions were given. Similar suggestions were grouped together for easier discussion. The percent value refers to the number of hosts who had similar comments. For instance, 15% of hosts felt that the area needed transportation improvements such as paved roads, bigger shoulders for cyclists, better lights for safety at night, or more public transportation. Other suggestions given were improved planning of shops and businesses in some of the down-towns, particularly St. Jacobs, since hosts stated they did not want to see any more craft or novelty shops (10%). Some hosts stated they did not want to see the development of big box stores which might distract visitors from the surrounding unique rural landscape (7.5%). Others wanted to see better riverside development in Fergus like walkways and parks (7.5%) and the preservation of farmland from industrial, residential or urban development (7.5%). Hosts were aware of developments that would benefit their community such as improvements to transportation and conserving natural areas. However, they also want to control or improve developments that might affect the rural character of the region such as the monotony of similar craft stores and the uncharacteristic "ruralness" of big box stores.

Hosts were also asked whether there were any aspects of the rural landscape which they disliked. The majority of hosts interviewed said "no" (65%). Hosts who said "yes" stated they disliked the commercialism of rural areas and of the Mennonites (7.5%), urban development on farmland (7.5%), and sometimes the smell of manure (7.5%). One host seemed displeased with the advertising for St. Jacobs (which sends visitors to experience

"Mennonite Country") saying that St. Jacobs may be "killing the golden goose." Visitors may come to the village expecting to see Mennonites when what they are really getting is a commercialized version of a village rich in rural and Mennonite heritage.

Rural images include images of rural life as well as aspects of the rural landscape. Thus, hosts were asked to describe their perceptions of rural life (Table 5.4). Hosts described several aspects of rural life which they like such as its closeness to nature, the outdoors, or wildlife (25%), and the neighbours and friendly communities (25%). Hosts also enjoy the quiet (22.5%), privacy (22.5%), and peacefulness (7.5%) of rural life as well as the more relaxed, slower pace (17.5%) or the open spaces (17.5%). Some hosts described certain activities associated with rural life which they like such as gardening (7.5%) or producing their own food without chemical pesticides or herbicides (7.5%). On the other hand, a few others stated that they enjoy the rural setting or farm life (5%), the proximity to larger urban centres (5%), or raising a family in the country (5%). In a separate question, rural operators were asked if there was anything they disliked about rural life. Many hosts said "no" (45%). But some hosts said they dislike driving in the winter (7.5%), having to drive everywhere for things (10%), the lack of services such as garbage collection, fire or police protection (7.5%), or the hard work (because they are getting older) (5%).

Therefore, the aspects of rural life hosts like best were similar to the aspects which they described and liked about the rural landscape. Hosts acknowledged the fact that rural life is close to nature, their neighbours/community, the quiet, slower pace, and peacefulness of rural life as well as the privacy and open spaces. Other things mentioned which were being able to produce food without chemicals and raising a family in the country.

Table 5.4: Aspects of Rural Life Hosts' Like Best

*total frequency is greater than 40 since hosts gave several responses

| Hosts' Description | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| closer to nature/outdoors wildlife | 10 | 25 |
| neighbours/friendly/ community | 10 | 25 |
| quiet | 9 | 22.5 |
| privacy | 9 | 22.5 |
| slower pace/relaxed | 7 | 17.5 |
| open space | 7 | 17.5 |
| peaceful | 3 | 7.5 |
| gardening | 3 | 7.5 |
| producing own food without chemicals | 3 | 7.5 |
| farm life/rural setting | 2 | 5 |
| proximity to communities | 2 | 5 |
| raising a family | 2 | 5 |

Hosts were also asked to rate their level of agreement with several statements about the rural landscape and rural life in general. The results of these statements will be discussed in a later section which compares images of hosts and guests.

5.3 Visitors' Perceived Rural Images

Since the visitor questionnaire was designed to be concise and easy to complete, it did not include as many open-ended questions dealing with rural images as did the rural operator interview. However, visitors were asked to use words or phrases which they felt best described the rural landscape surrounding the accommodation in which they stayed (Table 5.5). Guests gave several descriptions for the rural landscape and those that were

similar in meaning were grouped into categories. The most common words used were beautiful, pretty, or nice (32.1%). Visitors also mentioned aspects of the natural environment such as trees, hills, woods, gardens, or colours (19%) as well as the well-kept farms, fields, or crops (19%). Guests also liked to describe the rural landscape as peaceful (17.9%), relaxing or restful (15.5%), quaint/charming (14.3%), scenic/picturesque (14.3%), or quiet (10.7%). Other less common descriptions were pleasant, serene, Mennonites, clean, and tranquil.

Table 5.5: Visitors' Perceptions of the Rural Landscape

* total percent greater than 100 since visitors gave several responses

* n = 84, missing cases

| Description | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| beautiful/pretty/nice | 27 | 32.1 |
| natural/hills/trees/woods/ colours/gardens | 16 | 19 |
| farmland/well-kept fields/ crops/agriculture | 16 | 19 |
| peaceful | 15 | 17.9 |
| relaxing/slower pace/restful | 13 | 15.5 |
| quaint/charming | 12 | 14.3 |
| scenic/picturesque | 12 | 14.3 |
| quiet | 9 | 10.7 |
| pleasant | 5 | 6 |
| serene | 4 | 5 |
| Mennonites | 4 | 5 |
| clean | 4 | 5 |
| tranquil | 3 | 3.6 |

Another question which provided information on guests rural images was a series of statements about the rural landscape and rural life in general. Visitors were required to record their level of agreement with the statements and the results were used in a comparison with hosts' responses to the same statements. Hosts' and visitors' responses to the statements will be included in the next section which compares hosts' and guests' perceived rural images.

5.4 A Comparison of Hosts' and Guests' Images

Hosts and guests were asked to describe the rural landscape in an open-ended question and both groups came up with similar descriptions. Both hosts and guests described the rural landscape most frequently by referring to nature, hills, trees, colours, and flowers, as well as to cultivated crops, well-kept fields and farmland. Peaceful, quiet, slower pace, serene and picturesque were also common descriptions used by both hosts and visitors.

Hosts' and guests' level of agreement with statements about rural life and landscape in general were also used to compare hosts' and visitors' rural images. The 16 statements were ranked from highest level of agreement to the lowest as well as according to the value of the mean. Hosts agreed most strongly with the statement that rural life is closer to nature than other lifestyles (a combined total of strongly agree and agree of 92.5%) (Table 5.6). The percent values mentioned in this section are a combined total of "the strongly agree" and "agree" categories or "strongly disagree" or "disagree". Hosts also agreed most strongly with the statement that the rural landscape consists of beautiful scenery (97.5%), there are large open spaces in the rural landscape (97.5%), rural areas are peaceful (92.5%), and that family farms are large part of the rural landscape (87.5%). Hosts disagreed with the

statements the rural landscape looks the same everywhere (95%), rural living means living without the better things of modern society (92.5%), rural communities provide few new experiences (77.5%), and rural life is simple (65%).

Visitors agreed most strongly with the statement concerning beautiful scenery (95%) and were more likely to agree with the statement that rural areas are more peaceful than other areas (92.8%). Visitors also agreed with the statements there are large open spaces in the rural landscape (92.1%) and family farms are a large part of the rural landscape (89.1%). Visitors also disagreed most strongly with the statements the rural landscape looks the same everywhere (91.9%), rural areas provide few new experiences (77.6%), and rural living means living without the better things of modern society (81.8%).

In order to determine if there were statistically significant differences between hosts and visitors level of agreement with the rural image statements, an Independent Samples Means t -Test was performed to test if significant differences existed between the means of the two groups for each of the statements. Only those statements which showed significant differences are included in the table (Table 5.8). The Levene's Test for equality of variances were not significant at the 0.05 level, indicating no significant differences in the variances of the two groups. Statistically significant differences existed at the 0.01 level for only three of the 16 statements; rural life is closer to nature, rural life is simple, and rural areas are smelly because of farm animals. Statistically significant differences existed between the groups at the 0.05 level for the statements; the rural landscape tends to look the same everywhere, and rural living means living without the better things of modern society. Thus, hosts and visitors have similar perceptions with regard to most of the rural image statements.

Table 5.6: Rank of Hosts' Level of Agreement with Rural Image Statements

*percent value is in table, some missing cases, scale 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree)

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither A/D | Dis-agree | Strongly Disagr. | don't know | mean |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|-------------|-----------|------------------|------------|-------|
| rural life is closer to nature than other lifestyles | 57.5 | 35 | 7.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.425 |
| rural landscape consists of beautiful scenery | 60 | 37.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.5 | 1.5 |
| there are large open spaces in the rural landscape | 52.5 | 45 | 2.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.5 |
| rural areas are more peaceful than other areas | 55 | 37.5 | 5 | 2.5 | 0 | 0 | 1.55 |
| family farms are a large part of the rural landscape | 37.5 | 50 | 7.5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1.8 |
| the rural landscape attracts people to visit rural areas | 32.5 | 62.5 | 2.5 | 0 | 0 | 2.5 | 1.8 |
| visitors enjoy nature in rural areas | 20 | 72.5 | 5 | 0 | 2.5 | 0 | 1.925 |
| friendliness is more characteristic of rural communities | 32.5 | 35 | 25 | 5 | 0 | 2.5 | 2.125 |
| rural areas are smelly because of farm animals | 2.5 | 65 | 20 | 5 | 2.5 | 5 | 2.55 |
| life in rural areas is less stressful than elsewhere | 22.5 | 25 | 25 | 10 | 17.5 | 0 | 2.75 |
| people visit rural areas to learn about rural life | 5 | 27.5 | 30 | 35 | 0 | 2.5 | 3.05 |
| social services are not provided for as effectively in rural areas | 10 | 25 | 5 | 30 | 20 | 10 | 3.55 |
| rural life is simple | 5 | 15 | 22 | 35 | 20 | 2.5 | 3.575 |
| rural communities provide few new experiences | 0 | 10 | 10 | 42.5 | 35 | 2.5 | 4.1 |
| rural living means living without better things of modern society | 0 | 2.5 | 5 | 42.5 | 50 | 0 | 4.4 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|------|------|---|-------|
| rural landscape tends to look the same everywhere | 0 | 5 | 0 | 32.5 | 62.5 | 0 | 4.525 |
|---------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|------|------|---|-------|

Table 5.7: Rank of Visitors' Level of Agreement with Rural Images Statements

*percent is in brackets, missing cases, scale 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree)

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither A/D | Dis-agree | Strong Disagr. | DKnw | mean |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|-------------|-----------|----------------|------|-------|
| rural landscape consists of beautiful scenery | 53 | 42 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1.59 |
| rural areas are more peaceful than other areas | 37.1 | 55.7 | 5.2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1.742 |
| there are large open spaces in the rural landscape | 41.6 | 49.5 | 6.9 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1.713 |
| family farms are a large part of the rural landscape | 46.5 | 42.6 | 7.9 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1.713 |
| rural life is closer to nature | 34.7 | 52.5 | 11.9 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1.792 |
| rural landscape attracts people to visit rural areas | 26.5 | 62.2 | 7.1 | 3.1 | 0 | 1 | 1.908 |
| visitors enjoy nature in rural areas | 19.6 | 66 | 9.3 | 0 | 0 | 5.2 | 2.103 |
| friendliness is more characteristic of rural areas... | 28.3 | 43.4 | 17.2 | 9.1 | 0 | 2 | 2.152 |
| life in rural areas is less stressful than other areas | 22.2 | 31.3 | 25.3 | 17.2 | 2 | 2 | 2.515 |
| rural life is simple | 15.2 | 25.3 | 25.3 | 28.3 | 5.1 | 1 | 2.859 |
| people visit rural areas to learn about rural life | 6.1 | 23.2 | 43.4 | 20.2 | 3 | 4 | 3.03 |
| rural areas are smelly because of farm animals | 2 | 25 | 30 | 31 | 10 | 2 | 3.28 |
| social services are not provided for as effectively... | 3 | 24.2 | 23.2 | 21.2 | 5.1 | 23.2 | 3.707 |
| rural living means living without the better things... | 2 | 7.1 | 8.1 | 51.5 | 30.3 | 1 | 4.04 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------|---|-----|------|------|------|-----|-------|
| rural areas provide few new experiences | 0 | 6.1 | 13.3 | 50 | 27.6 | 3.1 | 4.082 |
| rural landscape looks the same everywhere | 1 | 5.1 | 1 | 58.2 | 33.7 | 1 | 4.214 |

Table 5.8: Independent Samples Means t-Test for Rural Image Statements

***only those statements which were significant at the 0.05 level are included**

| Rural Image Statement | t-value | df | sign. (2-tailed) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----|------------------|
| Rural life is closer to nature than other lifestyles | 3.084 | 139 | 0.002 |
| Rural life is simple | -3.199 | 137 | 0.002 |
| Rural areas are smelly because of farm animals | 3.623 | 138 | 0 |
| The rural landscape tends to look the same everywhere | -2.101 | 136 | 0.037 |
| Rural living means living without the better things of modern society | -2.167 | 137 | 0.032 |

5.5 Discussion of Rural Images and Tourism in Waterloo-Wellington

This study focused on rural images as projected through accommodation brochures and as perceived by hosts and their guests. The purpose was to gain a greater understanding of how rural Waterloo-Wellington is promoted for tourism and whether this image differs from the images perceived by the people who visit and by the people who live there. Perceived rural images of visitors in this study were re-evaluated images because they were based on tourism experiences of the destination (Selby and Morgan 1996). However, the destination which is promoted through tourism sources or popular media may be different from the place which residents' experience.

The projected rural image, in words, included important aspects of the accommodations themselves such as their heritage, country hospitality, and relaxing

atmosphere as well as aspects of the surrounding area thought of as attractive such as the farming country, the Mennonites, peace, and quiet. Descriptions of farm life, crops, animals and the rural landscape were also found in an analysis of tourist brochures from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania (Buck 1977). The projected image also included descriptions of local tourist attractions. The most common one promoted was shopping in nearby rural villages. Natural attractions like the Elora Gorge and trails, and cultural heritage attractions such as museums, the Fergus Highland Games, and the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival were mentioned less often. The projected image seemed to encompass three main areas to promote rural vacations in the region, namely the unique farming area, the friendly hospitality of heritage-rich accommodations and activities such as shopping and attractions.

Hosts' perceptions of the rural landscape and rural life were similar to some of the descriptions of the projected rural image which is logical considering many rural operators design their own brochures. Hosts described the rural landscape as being full of nature, trees, colours, and flowers and consisting of cultivated fields and well-kept farms. Hosts used words such as peaceful, beautiful, sense of community/neighbours, quiet, open spaces, and serene. Hosts described rural life as being close to nature, having good neighbours, community, being quiet, peaceful, and having a slower pace and open spaces.

Hosts felt strongly about the images of being closer to nature, well-kept farms and fields, community and neighbours, peaceful, quiet, and open spaces. Although hosts described the rural landscape and rural life in the Waterloo-Wellington region in their own words, they are remarkably similar to the descriptions of the ideal rural images in the literature. For instance, the rural idyll has been described as peaceful, tranquil, close-knit

community, contiguous natural environment, and rustic simplicity (Valentine 1997, Cloke and Milbourne 1992). Rurality and Gemeinschaft images have been described as quietness, slower pace, close to nature, open country, small town life and farming (Bell 1992, Willits, Bealer, and Timbers 1990). These ideal rural images have more commonly been associated with the British countryside but are also applied to North America. Rural sentiment which has been described as rural ambiance, wholesomeness, peace and quiet, and historical nature was used to describe a more North American ideal (Park and Coppack 1990) as was the countryside ideal which was described as closer to nature, simplicity of lifestyle, nostalgia, community, family farm, and bygone lifestyles (Bunce 1994).

It was hypothesized that visitors' perceptions of rural areas would vary from hosts' images. However, visitors used similar words to describe the rural landscape, such as beautiful, pretty, natural, trees, colours, gardens, farmland, crops, well-kept fields, peaceful and quiet. In contrast, visitors used other descriptions more often than hosts such as relaxing/slower pace, quaint/charming and scenic/picturesque. This is probably due to the fact that rural tourism experiences are considerably more relaxing and taken at a slower pace than hosts' daily rural experiences. These descriptions are similar to the projected rural image which indicates that it may have influenced visitors' organic images and helped form a re-evaluated image. On the other hand, visitors' images were also similar to the ideal images which indicates that their perceptions may be a result of popular notions of rural portrayed in books, media, and other non-tourism sources. For instance, "while each individual can have a somewhat unique mental picture of a destination, there also exists a publicly held common mental picture of that destination, or stereotype" (Echtner and Ritchie

1991: 6).

In addition to comparing hosts' and guests' descriptions of the rural landscape, hosts' and guests' images were further compared by examining their level of agreement with statements about rural life and landscape in general. Significant differences existed between the groups for the statements rural life is closer to nature, rural life is simplistic, rural areas are smelly because of farm animals, the rural landscape looks the same everywhere, and rural living means living without the better things of modern society. The results of the differences between the groups for these statements are similar to the word descriptors used by each of the groups. For instance, hosts felt rural areas to be closer to nature than visitors perceived, yet visitors were more likely than hosts to perceive rural life as simple. Hosts were more likely than guests to perceive rural areas as smelly because of farm animals. This is probably because hosts have more opportunities to experience this real aspect of rural life. Furthermore, visitors may be more likely to idealise the country and not admit that they would visit a location which smelled. Similarly, visitors are more likely to perceive the rural landscape as looking the same everywhere or rural living as living without the better things of modern society. The image of rural life lacking modern conveniences fits with the ideal rural image of a pioneering way of life or nostalgia for a past way of life.

Thus, it is evident that visitors are more likely to hold an idealised image of rural as more relaxing and quaint, simple, looking similar everywhere, and as living without the better things of modern society. These images are similar to the images and differences found by sub-urban and urban groups in Willits, Bealer, and Timbers (1990). Chen and Kerstetter (1999) found international students to have had similar images with regard to the

Atmosphere dimension which comprised images such as relaxing atmosphere, fresh air, quiet and friendly people. Chen and Kerstetter stated that these images fit the stereotype that is often portrayed through media and tourism promotion agencies and they question whether this is unique to rural areas in Pennsylvania or whether it cuts across all rural areas.. The results of the present study also showed that visitors tend to hold rural images of the region which were similar to the ideal image descriptions.

5.5.1 Ideal Images Versus Real Experiences

Rural operators' real rural experiences contributed to their perceptions of the rural landscape and rural life in positive ways quite similar to the ideal rural images. However, hosts did not use images such as simple, nostalgic, or quaint. Thus, it is apparent that rural operators' experiences do not share these aspects of the ideal rural image. The most important images were associated with nature, agriculture, community, peace, quiet and open spaces. It is evident that as residents of the area, hosts may have personal biases towards their rural area and describe its most ideal aspects. However, rural operators seemed genuinely proud of the unique and beautiful characteristics of their farms and communities and were protective of any changes. Thus, certain qualities which have been described by the rural idyll, pastoral myth, rural sentiment, and countryside ideal seem to be real characteristics which residents of rural areas experience.

Hosts mentioned a few negative images which they perceived to be harmful for their rural area. Hosts disliked commercialism of the Mennonites and "rural" themes, and urban development on agricultural land. The notions of rural in North America have recently become important because encroaching urban centres threaten valuable farmlands, and social

and political restructuring affects many rural communities. It is perceived that people come to rural areas to escape the frustrations of urban life, to experience the nostalgia for a past way of life, and to be re-connected with their rural roots (Willits, Bealer and Timbers 1990, Bunce 1994). Visitors' motivations in this study showed that people were attracted to rural areas for similar reasons; a relaxing environment, the rural landscape, tourist attractions, and to escape into the country. The projected image seemed to exemplify those aspects and attract people based on hosts' perceptions of visitors' motivations. However, it was apparent that visitors were motivated strongly by the rural landscape. Thus, care must be taken to ensure that rural tourism marketing does not simply give tourists what it is perceived that they want, since the customers' perceptions of place, its facilities and its culture, are shaped in part by promotion (Crouch 1994).

To a certain degree, it is acceptable if visitors are attracted to rural areas because of some ideal images. After all, there were some images which were perceived by hosts (and perhaps based more on real experiences) to be similar to the rural idyll. However, some rural areas commercialize these popular notions of rural. The experience of restored pioneer villages, quaint, small-town main streets, and country antique stores have become popular for those seeking "country" things to do and consume (Bunce 1994). Similarly, scenery and landscape have been commodified, marketed, and sold so others can consume rural cultures, values, and "rustic ambiance" (Park and Coppack 1994). Hughes (1998) discussed a "hyper-reality" situation where the complexities of social life are eventually replaced with promotional gestures that fuse with the expectations of the visitor, in other words, a different reality.

In the Waterloo-Wellington region these concerns are already evident. For instance, some rural villages, namely St. Jacobs and Elora, consist of many quaint, country craft and novelty shops, an image that has been commercialised in the region for a number of years as Heritage Shopping Villages (Mitchell 1993, 1998). Although visitors perceive the area to be quaint and charming, some rural operators fear that there are too many similar shops and there is too much emphasis on this quaint country image. They fear this because they have had some visitors express this when they have returned from shopping in the villages. Similarly, the projected image and hosts' perceptions have indicated that more emphasis is placed on promoting shopping in rural villages than on enjoying the rural landscape, and on cultural and natural attractions. Consequently, inappropriate tourism planning and development designed to capture a certain attractive image may result, in the long run, in an image that neither residents nor visitors will find ideal (Ross 1991).

Attracting visitors to rural areas based on ideal aspects, which are truly felt by residents as unique characteristics of their cultures and community, is understandable. But if tourist experiences are continually designed to market an ideal rural product, then visitors' experiences may become further and further from reality. In addition, it has been suggested that "the larger the difference between image and reality, that is between expectation and experience, the more likely is the tourist to be dissatisfied" (Mathieson and Wall 1982:31). Moreover, Jackson (1977) stated that as urban centres expand and absorb us, personal involvement on farms and in rural areas becomes even more important. Without personal involvement and more genuine rural experiences, the result is a popular image of rural America which bears decreasing resemblance to reality (Jackson 1977). Since results

discussed in another section showed that both hosts and guests consider experiencing rural life hands-on to be the most effective source of rural cultural heritage information, the region would benefit from increasing visitors' opportunities for these experiences through farm vacations, rural tours, and improved information available at agricultural festivals.

The results of this portion of the study also showed that there are some significant and important differences between hosts' and guests' images. Even though few problems have been encountered in the region so far, it is important to recognise issues and prevent problems concerning rural images and the satisfaction of guests and residents. Concerns addressed at the present time can improve future rural tourism planning and image promotion in the Waterloo-Wellington region for the long term. For instance, rural accommodation operators and other important figures in tourism planning have a responsibility to ensure that the rural images portrayed through brochures and tourism experiences are a representation of characteristics which residents themselves perceive as ideal and attractive. Effective tourism planning and promotion should ensure that commodification of ideal images and marketing of rural tourism products does not inevitably destroy the rural idyll (countryside ideal, pastoral myth, rural sentiment etc.), agricultural landscapes, unique cultures, and rural areas as special places to live and visit.

CHAPTER SIX

Rural Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development in the Waterloo-Wellington Region

The previous chapter described and compared the projected rural image and the images perceived by rural accommodation operators and their visitors. Hosts' rural images were similar to the projected image as well as to the ideal image descriptions in the literature. The images of hosts and visitors were similar in many aspects although some statistically significant differences existed. Visitors' rural images tended to be more similar to the ideal rural images described in the literature and there were important implications addressed with regard to ideal images and real experiences. Chapter six will examine hosts' perceptions of rural tourism benefits and importance of tourism resources. Rural tourism's contribution to sustainable rural development will also be explored. The findings will be discussed with regard to research on rural tourism and sustainable development.

6.1 Hosts' Perceptions of Rural Tourism

In order to gain a greater understanding of the role of rural tourism in contributing to sustainable rural development, hosts were asked for their perceptions of the benefits of rural tourism, the importance of rural tourism resources, and the economic and cultural contribution of rural tourism to the study area.

Hosts were asked to describe personal benefits they have received from operating a rural accommodation business. Similar responses or descriptions were grouped and included under one category so that frequencies could be calculated. Respondents listed several benefits, but 80% said that the greatest benefit they received is from meeting a variety of different people (Table 6.1). Many hosts said they enjoy meeting new people and learning new things from their guests. Some have stated that meeting many different people is like "traveling without traveling". Hosts get to "travel" by meeting guests from different places. Hosts also stated income to be a personal benefit (42.5%). However, they mentioned other personal benefits such as learning about others/exchanging ideas (22.5%), gaining the satisfaction of making other people happy (10%), or even making lasting friendships with guests who return (10%). Others simply enjoy the diversity in life provided by operating an inn or bed and breakfast. Therefore, rural operators seem to put social or cultural benefits such as meeting new people ahead of economic benefits. Other cultural benefits such as exchanging ideas were common as well.

Table 6.1: Hosts' Personal Benefits From Operating a Rural Accommodation
 * total frequency is greater than 40 because hosts gave several responses

| Hosts' Descriptions of Personal Benefits | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| meet people | 32 | 80% |
| personal income | 17 | 42.5 |
| learn about others/exchange ideas | 9 | 22.5 |
| satisfaction of making people happy | 4 | 10 |
| make friendships | 4 | 10 |
| provide diversity in life | 2 | 5 |

Hosts' perceptions of the benefits of rural tourism for the study area were acknowledged in a separate open-ended question. Hosts gave several ways in which they felt tourism benefits the area and similar descriptions were grouped into categories (Table 6.2). Many hosts felt that tourism benefits the area economically (75%); however, a number of respondents suggested other worthwhile cultural or environmental benefits. For instance, rural tourism enables guests to learn about the area and its rural cultural heritage (15%). It may also allow guests to become more aware of agriculture, farming, and country living (15%). One host mentioned that staying in rural accommodations "gives people an appreciation for the country." An operator for one year, but a resident for 33 years, stated that guests learn "to appreciate agriculture more; they see where their food comes from and gain a greater respect for the rural area." Although rural operators acknowledged the economic benefits of rural tourism for the area, they also recognized the cultural benefits of rural tourism such as teaching visitors about the region's heritage, rural life, and agriculture.

Rural tourism can also encourage the development of parks and trails which can preserve the environment and benefit local residents as well as visitors (5%). One operator of a village inn mentioned that having guests stay in the area enables them to experience qualities of rural life and the country. He stated that "there is something worth preserving here, something worth keeping."

Table 6.2: Hosts' Perceptions of the Benefits of Rural Tourism for the Area
***total frequency is greater than 40 because hosts gave several responses**

| Hosts' Description of Benefits | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| economic | 30 | 75 |
| guests learn about area/heritage/culture | 6 | 15 |
| guests become more aware of agriculture/farming/country living | 6 | 15 |
| encourages development that benefits locals i.e. trails and parks | 2 | 5 |

In a similar question, hosts were asked whether they felt rural accommodations were important for rural areas. All rural operators interviewed except one said they felt rural accommodations were important for rural areas (Table 6.3). They listed several ways in which they felt rural accommodations are important. For instance, 47.5% of operators said that bed and breakfasts and inns provide accommodation in areas where large-sized hotels or even motels could not survive. One host commented that rural accommodations are a more appropriate form of accommodation for rural areas because they are small-scale and fit in better with the surrounding rural landscape. Other operators stated that accommodations supply the demand for those who wish to vacation in the country. Hosts feel rural accommodations benefit the local economy by encouraging visitors to stay in the area longer and therefore spend money in local shops and restaurants (22.5%). One operator, who manages a village inn, stated that it was more likely that their larger-sized inn contributed more to the economy of the village rather than to preserving the culture of the

area. The operator continued by stating that smaller bed and breakfasts probably contribute more to preserving the local culture of the area and the rural way of life.

Similarly, some hosts are aware that rural accommodations have a role in educating and teaching visitors about rural and farm life (20%) which may provide visitors with a greater appreciation for where their food comes from. Other important aspects mentioned were; personal income (17.5%), increasing the awareness of the area which encourages other people to visit or to purchase local products (15%), and the fact that rural accommodations provide a more sociable, friendlier form of accommodation (12.5%). Thus, rural accommodations are perceived by hosts as important for economic as well as cultural and environmental reasons.

Table 6.3: Hosts' Perceptions on the Importance of Rural Tourism

*total frequency greater than 40 because hosts gave several responses

| Hosts' descriptions of Importance | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| provide alternative accommodation | 19 | 47.5 |
| benefits local economy | 9 | 22.5 |
| educational, learn about rural life/farm | 8 | 20 |
| personal income | 7 | 17.5 |
| increase the awareness of the area | 6 | 15 |
| interaction with guests/more sociable, friendlier accommodation | 5 | 12.5 |

There are a variety of rural tourism resources available in the study area and hosts were asked for their perceptions regarding the importance of some of these resources (Table 6.4). Hosts were required to rate, on a scale from very important to not-at-all important, how they perceived each tourism resource. For the purposes of analysis, the scale was re-coded as 1 for very important through 5 for not-at-all important. The resources were ranked from most important to least important according to percent values and the mean. By far, the tourism resources perceived to be the most important were clean, comfortable rural accommodations (82.5% very important +12.5% important = 95.5%). Hosts also felt that the natural environment was more important (combined percent of very important and important of 90%) than the agricultural landscape (77.5%). Other important rural tourism resources perceived by hosts were local shops and markets (85%) and friendly rural people and their way of life (82.5%). Tourism resources such as walking and hiking trails, agricultural fairs and festivals, community theatre and cultural heritage festivals were perceived as important but not as important as the others previously mentioned.

Table 6.4: Hosts' Perceptions on the Importance of Rural Tourism Resources

*percent values in table, some missing cases, scale 1 (very important) to 5 (not at all important)

| Resource | very important | important | undecide | some important | not at all important | mean |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|----------|----------------|----------------------|-------|
| clean, comfortable rural accommodations | 82.5% | 12.5% | 0% | 2.5% | 0% | 1.4 |
| natural environment | 52.5 | 37.5 | 0 | 7.5 | 0 | 1.8 |
| local shops and markets | 50 | 35 | 7.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 1.875 |
| friendly rural people and their way of life | 35 | 47.5 | 2.5 | 10 | 2.5 | 2.125 |
| walking/hiking trails | 35 | 37.5 | 7.5 | 17.5 | 0 | 2.25 |
| agricultural landscape | 30 | 47.5 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 2.275 |
| community theatre | 27.5 | 45 | 12.5 | 10 | 12.5 | 2.3 |
| cultural heritage festivals | 27.5 | 40 | 7.5 | 22.5 | 0 | 2.425 |
| agricultural fairs/festivals | 25 | 40 | 10 | 20 | 2.5 | 2.5 |

In order to investigate the role of rural tourism in contributing to sustainable rural development, the economic contribution of rural accommodations to the area was explored (Table 6.5). Annual gross sales were estimated for each accommodation by multiplying the room price by the number of stays. The calculation was based on the lowest double occupancy price and the number of *stays* not the total number of visitors and does not include extra meals or services. Only 32 of the 40 accommodations gave the information necessary to estimate sales. Gross sales were calculated for each accommodation and then grouped

according to accommodation type. Country bed and breakfasts (B&B's) contributed on average \$6895, village B&B's contributed on average approximately \$10580, and village inns contributed \$224344. The combined overall total gross sales of rural accommodations in the study was \$1 119 906. The gross sales calculated from the country and village bed and breakfasts and village inns in the study, were used to estimate the gross room sales for all 71 rural accommodations in the region. The results indicated that the total gross room sales for accommodations in the region was approximately 1.6 million dollars. Even though rural accommodations bring money into the region, it is evident that, in most cases, the economic contribution of rural accommodations is to supplement rural operators' incomes.

Table 6.5: Estimate of Economic Contribution of Rural Accommodation Gross Sales

*n=32

| Accommodation Type | Range | Total (for n=32) | Average | Estimated total for all 71 operators in region |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------------------------------------|
| Country B&B | \$900-\$22 250 | \$137 890 | \$6 895 | \$260 000 |
| Village B&B | \$2 250-\$26 250 | \$84 641 | \$10 580 | \$300 000 |
| Village Inn | \$51 500-\$354 000 | \$897 375 | \$224 344 | \$1 000 000 |
| Combined Total | | \$ 1 119 906 | | \$1 560 000 |

In order to further investigate the role of rural tourism in sustaining the local agricultural industry and thus contributing to the local economy, hosts' were asked their perceptions of the origin of the food supplies for their accommodations (Table 6.6). Other information, such as the linkages between tourism and agriculture, can also be obtained from the results of this question. Hosts were asked to estimate where or how they received the majority of their food supplies for their business. It seemed that many hosts purchase their

food supplies locally and many directly from the farmer. For instance, fruits and vegetables seem to be purchased most often from the local farmer's market or a local farmer's produce stand (37.5%), although many other hosts purchased their produce from the local grocery store (35%). A number of hosts grow their own produce for use in their accommodation business (22.5%). Since none of the rural operators were dairy farmers, they could not produce their own milk or cheeses. Moreover, strict government regulations on the production and sale of milk products mean that grocery stores are often the only available supply in an area. However, some hosts purchased cheeses from the farmer's market or a local dairy such as Oak Grove Cheese in New Hamburg (12.5%). On the other hand, most hosts make their own baked goods such as bread, muffins, or pastries (72.5%). The majority of meats were purchased from the market or a local butcher (40%) whereas 32.5% of hosts used meat products purchased from the local grocery store. Those hosts who raised their own meat preferred to use it for their accommodation business (10%) whereas 12.5% of hosts do not use any meat in the meals they prepare for guests. In each category, only the larger village inn establishments obtain their food from wholesale suppliers. Therefore, it appears that rural accommodations contribute to the local agricultural industry and to sustaining the local economy by using local food supplies for their operations.

Table 6.6: Estimate of Where Hosts' Purchase Food Supplies For Business

*percent refers to number of hosts which selected that particular supplier

*12.5% of operators do not use meat

| Supplies/ supplied from | Produced on own property (percent) | purchased from market/local farmer | purchased from local grocery store | supplied by local whole- saler | non-local whole- saler | Total % |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| fruits and vegetables | 22.5% | 37.5% | 35% | 2.5% | 2.5% | 100 |
| dairy | 0 | 12.5 | 80 | 5 | 2.5 | 100 |
| baked goods | 72.5 | 17.5 | 5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 100 |
| meats | 10 | 40 | 32.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 87.5* |

It is also apparent that rural tourism contributes to the local economy in many other ways (Table 6.7). For instance, the majority of hosts perceived that guests would always browse or make purchases at local shops and markets when visiting the area (65%). Hosts also perceived that most visitors would eat in local restaurants (90%) especially since most rural accommodations only provide breakfast. These activities, which provide the area with economic benefits were perceived by hosts to be participated in more frequently by guests than nature-based (always=20%, sometimes=60%) or cultural activities (always=17.5%, sometimes=67.5%).

Table 6.7: Hosts' Perceptions of Guests' Participation in Certain Activities

*percent value in table, some missing cases

| Activity | always | some-times | rarely | never | don't know | mean |
|----------------------------|--------|------------|--------|-------|------------|-------|
| eat local restaurants | 90 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 2.5 | 1.35 |
| purchases at local shops | 65 | 32.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.525 |
| take nature walks or hikes | 20 | 60 | 17.5 | 0 | 0 | 2.15 |
| visit cultural attractions | 17.5 | 67.5 | 10 | 0 | 2.5 | 2.175 |

In a separate question, hosts were asked if they had noticed any changes that rural tourism has brought to their area. Since a number of hosts did not have any comments, the frequency does not add to 40. Therefore, the percent values are only given to provide an idea as to the number of hosts who gave similar comments (Table 6.8). Many hosts said they have not noticed any changes in the area as a result of rural tourism (40%), and a few hosts said this is because they have not lived in the area long enough to have seen changes over time. Some hosts have noticed more people coming to the area (25%) or more residents start up bed and breakfasts (5%). Others felt that rural tourism has enhanced the area as a place to live by developing more festivals and events that can also be enjoyed by rural residents (12.5%).

Table 6.8: Changes Brought to Area By Rural Tourism

* total frequency may not add to 40

| Changes | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| not noticed any changes | 16 | 40% |
| noticed more people | 10 | 25 |
| enhance area as a place to live | 4 | 12.5 |
| noticed more bed and breakfasts | 2 | 5 |

In order to determine the future of rural tourism in the study area, it was asked whether hosts felt tourism development should increase or stay the same. The majority of guests felt tourism development could increase but they gave a number of suggestions for how it should be developed, marketed, or promoted. Percentages do not necessarily equal 100 because some hosts did not give comments, thus numbers are used only to give an idea of how many hosts made similar comments. Some hosts felt that rural tourism in the area could be advertised better through more educational material in the way of brochures, more media attention on local travel shows, better distribution of information to tourists, and an increased emphasis on advertising resources for cultural rather than economic reasons (15%). One host who has been providing accommodation for three years suggested that advertising and other promotional sources could be better organized among accommodations, attractions and local restaurants since all are directed at a similar market: "...we are all holding hands but we don't know we're holding hands." Similarly, another host who has been in the business for five years stated, " [there is] need for better coordination between all resources associated with rural tourism—for benefit of all within the Waterloo-Wellington region."

Other hosts preferred that rural people, the Mennonites, and rural areas not be

commercialized (15%). For instance, one host, who has been providing accommodation for six years, mentioned that "increasing tourism development is good to a point but we may also lose the actual beauty and reason why people come." Some hosts also felt that there could be more educational and cultural resources such as rural tours, historical/cultural tours, more hands on experiences, and more shops with authentic local crafts and handiwork (12.5%). A rural operator for seven years but living in the area for 18 years suggested "on-going rural tours for certain days---more public awareness for the area and to give people the chance to see real farms and not just buggy rides in the countryside." Other ideas were to have more attractions such as theatre, more nature trails and the tourist train to continue to Elmira (7.5%).

Rural operators see room for rural tourism to grow; however, it is clear they want to ensure, through proper planning, management, and promotion, that it does not negatively affect their rural lifestyle, the rural cultures in the area, or the unique qualities of this agriculturally-rich region. Hosts predict appropriate advertising and more rural cultural tourism resources to be beneficial for the future of rural tourism and for the future of their rural way of life. One rural operator, who has been providing accommodation for 9 years, stated:

"Farming alone is no longer a sustainable way of life for many farm families. High costs and a low value placed on most farm products necessitates off farm employment for most farm families. Rural tourism is one option where farm families can stay on the farm and have additional income. Hopefully, a balance is achieved where rural families can still keep their sense of community, heritage and traditional family values."

Similar ideas were perceived by rural operators who preferred to see rural tourism development stay the same. For instance, hosts suggested that rural people's lives not be

disrupted. A rural operator and resident for 10 years does "...not want tourism to take away what is rural." Another host who has been living in the area for 37 years mentioned that it is "very important that people's way of life not be disturbed too much." Some hosts would like to see agricultural areas protected from encroaching development (12.5%). Others feel there are too many of the same types of craft shops. A few country bed and breakfast and farm vacation operators stated they would like better insurance available for farm holidays. Expensive insurance policies for having holidays on the farm prevent farmers from offering that type of accommodation. However, one host who preferred to see tourism development stay the same, suggested that winters definitely have potential for development but that the area needs a person to organize tourism full-time.

Hosts were asked whether there were any barriers to them as rural operators in their efforts to run their business successfully. The majority of hosts said "no" (60%) although some said that distance from village centres and attractions tends to be a barrier (10%). For example, hosts said that some visitors feel certain accommodations are too far in the country and are worried about getting lost down dark country roads. A couple of other hosts stated that some of the larger, more elaborate bed and breakfasts which offer more comforts and luxury, are causing competition for smaller establishments (5%). On the other hand, 5% of other hosts stated that by-laws limiting the location of signs have caused difficulties in their efforts to advertise their business.

6.2 Discussion of Rural Tourism in the Waterloo-Wellington Region

Rural hosts' perceived many benefits from operating a rural accommodation business. Although previous research seemed to emphasize the economic benefits of rural

tourism for hosts (Fleischer and Pizam 1997, Oppermann 1995, Deroi 1983), the findings of this study indicated that meeting people was more rewarding. Findings also indicated that the business enabled hosts to learn about others or exchange ideas, gain personal satisfaction from making people comfortable and happy, make lasting friendships, and provide diversity in life. Similarly, Deroi (1991) and Oppermann (1996) mentioned cultural benefits of rural tourism such as meeting people, exchanging ideas between hosts and guests, and learning about other places.

Although most rural operators did not emphasize personal economic benefits from their rural accommodation businesses, most perceived the primary benefit of rural tourism for the region to be economic. However, a number of hosts listed other cultural and environmental benefits. For instance, it was felt that rural tourism encourages the development of trails and parks which can benefit locals as well as visitors and helps preserve natural resources (Fennell and Weaver 1997). Rural tourism enables guests to learn about the area and its cultural heritage and also enables them to become more aware of agriculture, farming, and country living. Visitors staying in rural accommodations can learn about rural cultural heritage and agricultural practices by being in close contact with rural hosts. This in turn benefits the region for it enhances the value of local cultures, traditions, landscapes and the importance of our agricultural industry (Deroi 1983, 1991). Moreover, Frater (1983) suggested that an aim of the farm tourism operator should be to improve the perception and knowledge of the countryside and of particular agricultural activities. The results of this study show that some rural hosts understand that rural tourism plays a role in teaching visitors and increasing their awareness.

Rural accommodations were perceived by rural operators to be very important. Bed and breakfasts, inns, and farm vacations provide an alternative form of small-scale accommodation where large-scale motels and hotels would not survive. Similarly, rural accommodations fulfill the demand for people who want to stay in the country, especially during special events such as the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival and Fergus Highland Games. Hosts perceived rural accommodations to be important because they contribute to the local economy by providing spin-off benefits for local restaurants, shops, and attractions. But almost equally they were perceived as educational and enable guests to learn about rural life and farming. It was also perceived that rural accommodations are important because they contribute to personal incomes and this in turn helps the communities survive (Evans and Ilbery 1989, Gill 1991). However, increasing the awareness of the area and interacting closely with guests were reasons perceived as important as well. Although rural operators clearly see the economic benefits and importance of rural accommodations for the area, they understand that these businesses provide a worthy service which can educate visitors about special agricultural landscapes and unique rural cultures.

The quality of rural accommodations was perceived by hosts as the most important rural tourism resource. The natural environment was considered a very important rural tourism resource as well as tourist shops and markets, more so than the agricultural landscape. However, previous results showed that visitors considered the rural landscape to be an important motivation for travelling to the region, and for making their stays enjoyable. Thus, the agricultural lands and the unique rural cultural heritage which contribute to the rural landscape of this region should be considered important resources for rural tourism.

In contrast, Oppermann (1995) found both hosts and guests to perceive the natural environment and outdoor activities to be more important than shopping opportunities. This area in southern Germany is mountainous with numerous lakes and swamps, an environment which offers a variety of outdoor pursuits. However, Waterloo-Wellington area is primarily rolling agricultural fields and forests with unique rural heritage, but shops and antique stores in rural villages have been promoted and marketed as one of the region's main rural attractions (Mitchell 1998). This contributes to their perception as important tourism resources. On the other hand, cultural and agricultural festivals were perceived as less important even though they have the potential to offer valuable information to guests about the unique qualities of this agricultural region. Therefore, the way in which tourism resources are perceived seems to depend, in part, on the economic contribution of those resources and on the aspects which have been marketed as part of the rural tourism product. However, rural operators and tourism planners should ensure that the resources they perceive as most important do in fact coincide with a quality and unique rural tourism product. This may mean that the "product" is promoted based on many less tangible resources than shops and markets, such as experiencing the wonders of nature, nostalgia, friendship, relaxation, adventure, fresh air, and space (Gannon 1994).

6.3 Rural Tourism and its Contribution to Sustainable Rural Development

It has been shown that rural accommodations in this study provide several benefits for rural operators and the community, and are an important component of successful rural tourism in the Waterloo-Wellington region. Since bed and breakfasts, inns, and farm vacations offer many economic, cultural, and environmental benefits for rural areas, it can

be proposed that they contribute to the sustainability of rural areas. But this must be examined in conjunction with other important industries such as agriculture in order to determine tourism's contribution to sustainable rural development. Since economic benefits have been a main focus of previous research on rural tourism, this study has emphasized the economic benefits of rural tourism for the Waterloo-Wellington region. However, this study went further to examine cultural benefits of rural tourism and the potential for further development, since it is the unique people and places of rural areas, not just the economy, which need to be maintained.

The economic benefits of rural tourism have been the most recognized in previous research, with cultural and environmental benefits not often explored. The reason for this is partly because economic impacts from tourism are more easily measured whereas cultural benefits require an analysis of perceptions and behaviours, which tend to be more difficult to interpret. Rural accommodations provide supplementary income for rural residents who would not otherwise be able to afford to live or work in rural areas. This is especially true for rural residents who need extra income to offset the costs of living in larger, older homes. Thus, rural tourism has been viewed as a way of diversifying rural economies (Fennell and Weaver 1997, Fleischer and Pizam 1997, Gannon 1994). Rural diversification contributes to the sustainability of rural areas since it encourages the development of more than one source of income.

The economic contribution of rural accommodations to the Waterloo-Wellington area has been examined in order to investigate their role in sustaining the rural economy. While it is likely that smaller bed and breakfast operations provide additional income for

rural residents, village inns contribute more directly to the local economy. Village inns also have other amenities such as restaurants which can add significantly to annual gross sales. The annual sales for country bed and breakfasts were similar to the maximum gross incomes for bed and breakfasts in southern Germany (Oppermann 1995).

Even though rural accommodations bring money into the region, it is evident that the economic contribution is to supplement rural operators' incomes. This is because rural accommodations are small-scale operations and are very dependent on a seasonal visitor market (Dernoi 1983, Oppermann 1995). But it is important to note that most rural accommodations were operated by women even if they were jointly owned. This gives women in rural areas the opportunity to contribute directly to the household income (Reid et al. 1993). Having people stay in the area, not only contributes to residents' incomes and maintains their lifestyles, but enables visitors to spend money at restaurants and local shops and markets. Hosts' perceptions of visitors' participation in certain activities justifies this notion. For instance, it was felt that guests always shopped or browsed in local shops and markets and ate in local restaurants. This was examined in detail by Fleischer and Pizam (1997) who found bed and breakfasts in Israel to have generated 75% more total revenue through the multiplier effect (from restaurants, food bought in stores, souvenirs, entertainment etc.). Moreover, tourism diversifies the economic base of a region which is more likely to maintain economies, communities, and the environment, especially in rural areas which usually depend on one main industry (Eber 1992).

Another method was used in this study to estimate the role of rural accommodations in contributing to sustaining the rural economy. The origin of hosts' food supplies for their

accommodation can be used to examine whether rural operators purchase local goods as opposed to goods produced outside of the region. Rural operators contribute to the local agricultural industry and to sustaining the local economy by using local food supplies for their accommodations. Therefore, rural tourism contributes to the sustainability of agriculture in the region by providing a greater market and demand for locally grown and raised agricultural products.

It is evident that rural tourism in the form of accommodations in the Waterloo-Wellington area, contributes to the economic sustainability of the rural area. But there are cultural and environmental resources, also important components of the sustainable rural development equation, which need to be maintained. For instance, it has been suggested that rural tourism can contribute to sustaining the natural environment by encouraging "greener" forms of tourism such as ecotourism (Fennell and Weaver 1997, Oppermann 1995). This is because rural tourism targets specific markets and is initially based on small-scale local tourism development (Bramwell 1990, Morrison et al. 1996). Tourism can also contribute to sustaining the environment by diversifying the economy and taking the pressure off farmers to depend on intensive agricultural production. The results of this study indicated that the natural environment is an important aspect of both hosts' and guests' rural images. It was also perceived by hosts to be an important motivation for guests and outdoor activities were promoted strongly in the projected image. Visitors participated in outdoor activities, but not as much as hosts perceived and were not motivated as strongly by the natural environment as they were by the rural landscape. However, the potential for rural tourism to contribute to environmental sustainability deserves further exploration, especially

considering the emphasis on environment in the sustainability research.

A sustainable approach to tourism in general, and rural tourism more recently, has primarily been concerned with sustaining rural economies and environments. There has been less emphasis on sustaining rural cultures and unique rural landscapes associated with rural people and their heritage. This seems surprising since it has been found, especially in developing countries, that when cultures are sustained (i.e. encourage rather than dismiss local people's knowledge and lifestyles), then valuable habitat is maintained and the environment is sustained. Thus, this study examined the cultural benefits of rural accommodations and tourism's potential to contribute to sustainable rural development.

Rural operators' personal benefits from operating their accommodation business indicated many social/cultural benefits of rural tourism. Educating others and increasing awareness is one of the principles of sustainable development and sustainable tourism (Butler 1991, Eber 1992, May 1991). Meeting people, learning from others and exchanging ideas benefit rural residents by providing greater diversity in their lifestyles. Exchanging ideas also creates an information pathway through which rural hosts have the opportunity to teach visitors about their unique rural lifestyles and cultures, and visitors are able to provide knowledge about outside cultures and urban life. Providing information about the region's agricultural heritage, present agricultural industry and rural cultures, will let visitors understand that rural areas consist of special communities with valuable resources. Moreover, it will increase rural residents' sense of community and identity which will contribute to their understanding of the importance of preserving cultural resources in their communities.

Involving local communities in the tourism sector benefits the environment and improves the quality of the tourism experience (Eber 1992). Butler (1991) explained that educating all concerned parties--local residents, government, and tourists--about valuable resources and the implications of unplanned tourism development, is likely to be very successful for promoting sustainability. Since the majority of rural hosts did not mention cultural benefits of rural tourism, it is believed that rural operators, as a whole, are unaware of just how great their potential is to influence visitors' perceptions and images of the region and thus contribute to maintaining cultural heritage resources and landscapes.

It is also apparent that the cultural benefits of rural tourism and its contribution to sustaining rural cultural and agricultural heritage are under-estimated with regard to other components of rural tourism. For instance, rural operators perceived cultural and agricultural festivals to be the least important of tourism resources. Perhaps this is because they perceived that festivals were not attended frequently by visitors. This seemed to be the case since only one third of the visitors in the survey visited cultural heritage attractions while on vacation. Hence, more attention needs to be given to the promotion of cultural festivals and attractions. Moreover, the projected image portrayed through accommodation brochures indicated that cultural attractions were not mentioned as frequently as shopping and outdoor activities.

On the other hand, there seems to be a lack in the quantity and quality of rural cultural attractions which may have contributed to their lack of acknowledgment by hosts and visitors. Cultural festivals, and agricultural fairs in particular, were perceived as not offering the quality of rural cultural heritage and agricultural information as perhaps they

could. For example, it was felt by hosts that agricultural festivals have moved away from promoting the traditional celebrations and shows of produce, local crafts and livestock, to marketing carnival-like fairs which have non-local artisans. Agricultural fairs and festivals could contribute to sustaining the rural flavour and agricultural tradition of the area by educating visitors and offering more hands-on material, especially since farmers choose not to operate farm vacations. This linkage between tourism and agriculture is an important one since some argue that the crisis in North American agriculture stems from an erosion of traditional culture in rural areas (Smit and Brklacich 1989, Berry 1984 cited in Smit and Brklacich 1989). Increasing visitors' awareness of agriculture brings people closer to the source of their food and may motivate them to ask ethical questions about the environmental impacts of food production practices.

In addition, there is the potential to increase the number of rural/farm tours in the region. Hosts and visitors perceived them to be less effective than other sources of cultural heritage information but this was mainly because of a lack of organised tours offered. Rural/farm tours, which are available in Elmira and St. Jacobs, give visitors the opportunity to see the surrounding rural landscape and learn about local cultures and farming practices. Thus, an increase in the number of rural tours, perhaps operated seasonally, would encourage people's awareness of agriculture and rural life.

Enhancement of awareness and education are important processes for sustaining rural cultures, traditions and communities. The most effective method for achieving those goals is by ensuring there are appropriate resources which offer the necessary information for visitors. Improving the quality of cultural and agricultural festivals and providing more

organized rural tours are ways to increase the effectiveness of these resources. Pigram (1990) gave several elements of strategy for sustainable tourism which included the preservation and enhancement of the quality of resources which are the basis of tourism, fostering the development of attractions with roots in their own locale, and the development of visitor services which enhance local heritage and environment. However, these elements should be included as a basis for the sustainability of tourism in conjunction with other important industries in rural areas.

Quality tourism resources based on local cultures, traditions and heritage, can ensure that there are plenty of rural tourism experiences which are more "real" rather than commercialized or based on an ideal tourism experience. The most effective way of achieving this is by enabling visitors to experience rural life hands-on. Wimberley (1993) mentioned studies which showed that those people who have been personally associated with farming are most favourable towards agriculture. This can be in the forms discussed already or by offering farm vacations. However, this study showed that there is a lack of farm vacations in the region and many rural operators who are farmers perceived their accommodations to be bed and breakfasts rather than farm holidays. Farm vacations which tend to be more labour intensive and require high insurance coverage may not be a feasible option for many farmers. The question also remains whether visitors want to face the realities of modern agricultural production (Hjalager 1996). This may be why visitors are attracted to the Waterloo-Wellington region in particular, because the Mennonites represent a culture which still uses traditional farming methods. Visitors may be attracted by their nostalgia for this past way of life. But visitors' rural accommodation experiences at bed and

breakfasts and their associated rural tourism experiences, can also enable guests to learn about rural cultural heritage. For example, almost one half of visitors in this study claimed they had learned more about rural culture while on vacation.

It is evident that rural tourism contributes to the sustainability of rural cultures and rural landscapes which are symbolic of the cultural and agricultural heritage of the area. This helps ensure that aspects of the rural region such as traditions, cultures and landscapes, which are most attractive and unique, are maintained. Frater (1983) stated that rural operators have a good product and should be encouraged and helped in every way possible to sell it. But attention should be paid to how the region is promoted since it has an affect on how the area is perceived by outsiders. Care should be taken that unique qualities are not commercialized in order to produce a rural tourism product which is designed to be consumed by visitors and which is far-removed from the reality which hosts experience or wish visitors would understand about rural areas. Instead, it should be realized that visitors are motivated strongly by the rural landscape and that they seek rural areas for their naturalness, farmland, beauty, peace, quiet, slower pace, charm, and open spaces. Perhaps instead of escape from home it is an escape for home (Crouch 1994), and that people's affection for the countryside may reflect deeper human values which may be based on ideals, but those which have not been commodified for the purposes of profit alone.

Rural tourism will contribute to sustainable rural development only if present rural tourism, and future development interests, remain positive forces within the Waterloo-Wellington region. The majority of rural operators felt rural tourism development could increase, but they gave several suggestions for how they perceived it should be further

developed so that it continues to impact their area positively. Rural hosts suggested improved advertising with more educational brochures about the area and an increased emphasis on advertising for cultural rather than economic reasons. Improved networking and advertising between accommodations, attractions and local restaurants, was suggested in order to provide updated and efficient rural tourism information for visitors. It was perceived that more educational and cultural resources, such as rural tours, historical/cultural tours, more hands-on experiences, and more shops with authentic local crafts and handiwork, would increase visitors awareness of the unique rural flavour of the region. On the other hand, hosts were concerned about future tourism development commercializing rural people, the Mennonites, or the rural area. They do not want tourism to negatively affect their rural lifestyle, the rural cultures of the area, or the unique qualities of this agriculturally-rich region.

Similar ideas were perceived by rural operators who preferred to see the level of rural tourism development stay the same. However, they were also concerned about urban encroachment on valuable farmland or too many of the same type of craft shops. Even though rural tourism development is viewed positively by rural operators in this study, they raise important questions about how the area is promoted (its projected image), which resources are marketed, the quality of tourism resources, and the urbanization of agricultural land. These concerns need to be recognized so that tourism continues to be a positive force in the region, contributing to the sustainability of rural cultures, communities and landscapes and working symbiotically with other industries such as agriculture.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

The final chapter of this study combined important issues raised in each of the three discussion chapters, in order to provide insights into the interconnections among rural image formation, tourism, and sustainable rural development. The first section summarized the important issues raised in each of the chapters and related them to the context of the study. Based on these concerns, the second section provided a list of recommendations for future rural tourism planning, promotion and development for the Waterloo-Wellington region and ideas for other regions as well. The final section mentioned the limitations of the present study, and provided suggestions for further research within the region and within the fields of rural tourism and geography based on the conceptual framework outlined in chapter 2.

7.1 Rural Accommodations and their Association with Rural Images and Sustainability

Rural accommodations are an important component of rural tourism. Useful information was gained through the present study with regard to rural accommodation and operators' characteristics and visitors' socio-demographic and travel characteristics. This provided an understanding of the current industry and future potential of the industry in order to ensure appropriate and efficient planning, development and promotion.

Appropriate tourism promotion and image formation are key principles in ensuring that tourism contributes to the sustainability of a region (Eber 1992). Attracting visitors to

rural areas based on ideal aspects, which are truly felt by residents as unique characteristics of their cultures and community, will ensure that rural tourism experiences are based more closely on real rural experiences. But tourist experiences which are continually designed to market an ideal rural product may become further from reality and the result may be a loss of local rural traditions, cultural heritage and local community identity. Concerns addressed at the present time can improve future rural tourism planning and image promotion for rural areas, particularly those with very distinctive rural cultural heritage, such as the Waterloo-Wellington region. Future investment must therefore keep the landscape intact, foster a healthy social structure of the local communities, promote optimal quality of life for residents, relaxation for visitors, and increase the potential for added value to the tourism industry (Gannon 1994). As Gannon (1994:60) concluded, "rural tourism can no longer afford a second-class image." Thus, effective tourism planning and promotion should ensure that commodification of ideal images and marketing of rural tourism products does not inevitably destroy the rural idyll.

Bed and breakfasts, inns, and farm vacations offer many economic and cultural benefits for rural operators and rural areas, which contributes to rural sustainability. Rural accommodations provide supplementary income for rural residents and thus diversify the economy. Rural accommodations also contribute to sustaining the local agricultural economy by supporting local farmers and food suppliers. Furthermore, rural accommodations provide spin-off economic benefits by enabling visitors to stay in the area and spend money in local restaurants, shops and visit cultural attractions. However, there is great potential for rural accommodations and rural tourism to contribute to sustaining local

rural cultures and heritage as well. For instance, meeting people, learning from others, and exchanging ideas benefits rural residents by providing greater diversity in their lifestyles. As well, providing information about the region's agricultural heritage, present agricultural industry, and rural cultures, will enable visitors to understand the region consists of special rural communities with valuable resources. Moreover, it will increase rural residents' sense of community and identity which will contribute to their understanding of the importance of preserving cultural heritage resources in their communities.

Maintaining rural character and tradition is a means of helping to ensure that rural tourism will contribute to the sustainability of unique rural cultures, heritage and landscapes. The central task of developing sustainable and community tourism is that of constructing cultural identities which are often different from those sought by a mainstream commercial approach (Crouch 1994). These identities may not be based on a financial/economic relationship. But there is no reason why they should not be financially successful even if they may involve different kinds of presentation, activities, practices, and forms of engagement that are often unashamedly social and cultural (Crouch 1994).

Awareness and education are important criteria for sustaining cultural resources (Pigram 1990, Butler 1991, Conaway 1993). However, many rural operators, and other important figures associated with rural tourism, may be unaware of the potential education and awareness has for contributing to sustaining rural cultures, traditions and agricultural landscapes. Rural operators themselves have a significant role in influencing visitors behaviours, perceptions and images of the region because of the close interaction they have with their guests. The most effective method for achieving awareness and education of

unique rural characteristics is by ensuring there are appropriate resources which offer the necessary information for visitors and by creating and promoting an appropriate rural image of the region. Quality tourism resources based on local cultures, traditions and heritage, can ensure that there are plenty of rural tourism experiences which are more "real" rather than commercialized or based solely on ideals. Attention should also be paid to how the region is promoted since it has an effect on how the area is perceived by outsiders. Care should be taken to ensure that unique qualities are not commercialized in order to produce a rural tourism product or image which is designed to be consumed by visitors and which is far removed from reality.

Even though rural tourism is perceived positively by rural operators in the present study, they raised important questions about how the area is promoted, which resources are marketed, the quality of tourism resources, and the urbanization of agricultural land. These issues run deep and are a constant threat to rural communities. For example, an article clearly directed at Toronto urban dwellers who might be considering a move to the country, addressed convenient country living in Alma (north of Elora), a "quiet, rural, family-oriented community" (Toronto Star, November 1998, Appendix A). These concerns need to be recognized so that tourism continues to be a positive force in the region, contributing to the sustainability of rural cultures, communities, and landscapes while working symbiotically with other sectors such as agriculture. Issues addressed with regard to sustainable agriculture and sustainable rural systems, justify the importance of acknowledging tourism in the context of sustainable rural development. For instance, the loss of traditional family-operated farms, the enlargement of farms, and urban encroachment on valuable farmland in the southern

Ontario area, raises significant concerns for agricultural and rural tourism industries (Walker 1995).

It has already been mentioned that community involvement and principles of sustainable rural development in tourism planning, development and promotion can ensure that rural tourism remains positive for local residents. By becoming involved, rural residents can offer their ideas and perceptions on tourism and other development initiatives in order to ensure that their quality of life is maintained as well as the unique rural cultural heritage and agricultural landscapes of their communities. Conaway (1993) mentioned how educating community leaders and involving local citizens brings attention to the elements which make an area unique such as the combination of architecture, landscapes and history. Appropriate rural tourism development which follows notions of sustainable rural development must ensure it benefits communities economically, culturally, and environmentally and be compatible with other industries. There are several practical steps outlined by Crouch (1994) which could be taken to ensure rural tourism is planned and developed in such a manner. For example, environmental and heritage policies which are geared to living heritage and not simply the past, an appreciation of the multiplier effects of local tourism, giving prominence to local cultural expertise, experience and ideas, once released from generations of negative imagery, and providing initiatives at all levels and in many forms. Similarly, efforts could be made to educate and persuade tourists and local businesses to modify their behaviour, improving the product through adaptation and change, and adopting policies and plans which are driven by environmental and cultural principles of protection. Gilbert (1994) suggested sensible business planning which assesses the

carrying capacity of the region, zoning to protect valuable lands, community-led programmes and community involvement. Gannon (1994) also explained seven issues which were deemed important in the appropriate development of rural tourism projects; economic ambition, authenticity, benefits and costs of tourism, tourism as part of a strategic development plan, developing and delivering quality products, training, and future trends.

Community participation, broad involvement of all sectors and local government commitment, are aspects of a planning and development initiative in Woolwich Township, Waterloo County. The Woolwich Healthy Communities organization which is part of the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition seeks to improve the social, environmental and economic health and well-being of individuals, communities and governments. Their primary concerns are for clean water ways, well water quality, trail promotion and sustaining communities. With regard to tourism in particular, the township completed two tourism studies which examined residents' and retailers' perceptions of tourism development around the St. Jacobs area (Mitchell 1998). However, there is the potential for more community involvement and similar community initiatives in other areas of the region.

7.2 Future Rural Tourism Development in the Waterloo-Wellington Region

The Waterloo-Wellington region is an area rich in rural cultural heritage and attractive agricultural and natural landscapes. In order to ensure rural tourism continues to benefit the region and contribute to economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability, a few recommendations have been suggested which encompass future planning, development, and marketing initiatives. These recommendations are suited for the Waterloo-Wellington region and may be applicable to other rural tourism regions which contain unique rural

cultural heritage and are within close proximity to an urban market. Rural regions which are further from urban centres and which do not have a wide range of rural cultural heritage attractions may be more inclined to adopt other development initiatives such as focusing on longer farm holidays with many activities available on the site. Thus, the recommendations for the Waterloo-Wellington region are;

1) Rural Tourism Planning and Sustainable Rural Development Strategy

A strategy for rural tourism planning and development could be initiated which would provide a basis for future developments in conjunction with sustainable rural development. Township, municipal, and regional governments, local residents, and rural tourism operators could meet and discuss important issues with regard to tourism which would have implications for the economic, environmental, and cultural sustainability of rural communities. A rural tourism development committee consisting of stakeholder members could meet and discuss issues such as the location and impact of current and future developments, appropriate rural image promotion for the region, and urbanization on agricultural landscapes. A mission statement or vision could be developed which would incorporate all interests including local residents, rural tourism businesses, and accommodation operators. Combining the interests of all concerned parties ensures that ideas and perceptions are exchanged and each group is educated on the needs and desires of other stakeholders (Mitchell 1997). For example, educating community leaders in Carroll County, Maryland encouraged an appreciation and understanding of the elements which made the area unique (Conaway 1993). Similarly, a group of concerned citizens began meeting to discuss the implications of sub-division sprawl on the rural character of their

communities (Conaway 1993).

A rural tourism planning and development strategy which follows a sustainable approach would require the organization of issues which would be deemed important for maintaining the unique cultural and agricultural resources of rural Waterloo-Wellington. For example, Crawford (1993) explained how potential for further rural tourism development in Langley, British Columbia, including the promotion of heritage resources, farm experiences, and scenic roads and landscapes, caused rapid growth and pressures on the agricultural community. As a result, the township undertook the Langley Tomorrow Program to understand residents' attitudes and values with regard to the rural nature and heritage of Langley. The goals of the plan were to enhance agricultural viability and to retain the countryside character by maintaining the economy, lifestyles, landscapes and environmental features associated with rural Langley.

Rural communities in the Waterloo-Wellington region would have to monitor economic contributions of rural tourism and its spin-off effects and promote economic diversification, since a sustainable economic agricultural society should be considered important. As well, the development of quality rural tourism resources should be based on the unique rural cultures, agricultural heritage, traditions, and landscapes of the region which would contribute to sustaining rural cultural heritage. Furthermore, the planning and development of rural tourism should coincide with agricultural sustainability. Other important issues which would have to be addressed are the monitoring of economic, cultural, and environmental benefits and costs of rural tourism, the training of rural tourism entrepreneurs in order to ensure quality in management, delivery, and promotion of rural

tourism, and future trends in rural tourism markets (Gannon 1994). A rural tourism development strategy which combines the interests of all concerned groups should promote and develop rural tourism in such a way that it remains economically viable yet contributes to the cultural and environmental integrity of the region. Phillips (1990:12) stated that, "a good local development program recognizes the character of the community."

Under the guidelines of a rural tourism planning and sustainable rural development strategy there are several recommendations for future development which have been recognized throughout the course of this study. They are suggested to encourage and improve the economic and cultural sustainability of rural Waterloo-Wellington. They have been organized into three main components; rural accommodations, advertising and promotion, and rural tourism resources.

2) Rural Accommodation Development

Rural accommodations in the region cluster mainly around the three main rural villages in the region, St. Jacobs, Elora, and Fergus. There are a number of country and village bed and breakfasts as well as one or two village inns in these communities. The entire Waterloo-Wellington region is comprised of beautiful farms, unique rural communities, and attractive agricultural and natural landscapes. Thus, there is the potential for the development of rural accommodations in other areas of the two counties particularly north and east of Fergus, west and south of Kitchener, and west of Cambridge. Although these locations are not as close to the more promoted rural tourism villages, they would offer visitors a unique rural experience in true rural character and tradition of the region.

Through the present study, it was found that farm vacations or rural accommodations

which offer hands-on farm experiences are lacking. This was attributed to the higher insurance costs of operating farm holidays and the increased time and costs which may be incurred by offering such accommodations. Since experiencing rural life hands-on is one of the best ways of learning about rural cultural heritage and agriculture, there is the potential for the development of farm vacations in the region. It was found that even accommodations which belonged to the Ontario Farm and Country Accommodations Association and were located on farms, were perceived as country bed and breakfasts rather than farm vacations by their hosts. Therefore, the farm vacation sector is an aspect which needs increased attention. A rural tourism development strategy consisting of concerned groups could assess the benefits and costs of farm holidays and the insurance costs associated with these accommodations.

3) Marketing and Promotion

Several recommendations are suggested which relate to advertising and promotion of rural tourism within the Waterloo-Wellington region. According to the results of the present study, visitors were mainly older adults who were first-time visitors and who stayed 1-2 nights. Marketing and promotion efforts could be directed at older adults who prefer shorter vacations. Further marketing studies could also be performed by a rural tourism development committee which would assess why younger adults do not prefer rural vacations as often as older adults, or why visitors only choose to stay 1-2 nights in the region. Rural tourism marketing in the region, such as rural accommodation brochures, could emphasize the number and variety of activities and attractions in the region to encourage visitors to stay longer. In addition, efforts could be made in the form of package

deals for accommodations and attractions, such as theatre packages, local cuisine or special events packages, which may encourage visitors to return at another time.

The projected image in accommodation brochures indicated that cultural attractions were not mentioned as frequently as shopping in local craft and antique shops and outdoor activities. While advertising for shopping contributes to sustaining the rural economy, an increase in marketing and promotion of cultural and agricultural attractions could increase visitors' awareness of the unique qualities of the area and contribute to sustaining rural cultural heritage. In addition, marketing could be improved by focusing more on intangible resources which are deemed important motivations for visitors such as the rural landscape which is influenced by rural cultural heritage and agricultural resources. Moreover, rural accommodation and tourism operators, concerned government parties, and local residents should work together to formulate a rural image which they feel should promote the unique qualities of their communities and ensure the sustainability of these characteristics.

Rural accommodations, shops and attractions, and local restaurants cater to a similar market, those who wish to spend time in the country. Thus, more networking could take place between these sectors for advertising and promotion. For example, rural accommodations would benefit from having up-dated information about local restaurants' menus and prices so that they can accurately send their guests to an appropriate location for dinner. Similarly, local shops, museums, restaurants or cultural events would benefit from having rural accommodations carry advertisements about their businesses. An annual or bi-annual Waterloo-Wellington rural tourism booklet containing descriptions of businesses such as hours of operation, prices, or other related information might be an efficient method for

sharing information between accommodations, attractions, and restaurants. In the age of computers, a Waterloo-Wellington rural tourism web-site containing similar information updated annually may also be an option. A tour guidebook titled *A Day in the Country* offers rural tourism information for parts of rural Waterloo-Wellington (Carpenter 1997). Although the guide offers plenty of information on regional rural cuisine and shopping, most of it is focused on the commercialized area surrounding St. Jacobs, Elmira, Elora and Fergus and does not contain much in the way of rural accommodations.

On the other hand, members of a rural tourism planning and sustainable development strategy, can discuss recent changes in any of the businesses and relay them to visitors should they inquire. Rural accommodation operators, in particular, have an important role in influencing visitors perceptions and images of the rural area and offering them information about specific attractions in the region.

4) Rural Tourism Development

There is the potential for future rural tourism development which concentrates on improving opportunities for visitors to learn about the unique rural cultural heritage of the region as well as participating in more hands-on experiences. Cultural festivals and agricultural fairs could provide more educational and hands-on materials. This would contribute to sustaining the rural flavour of the area. Rural and farm tours which give visitors the opportunity to see the surrounding rural landscape are available in Elmira and St. Jacobs yet there is the potential to increase the number of tours even if they operate seasonally or during special events. An increase in the number of rural/farm tours would also encourage people's awareness of agriculture and rural life in the region. Concerns have

been raised with regard to the number of similar quaint novelty and craft shops located in the rural villages. Shops which offered more authentic local crafts, handiwork, and art would contribute to sustaining local cultures and traditions. Future rural tourism developments which contribute to the sustainability of the region and do not commercialize on the Mennonite culture or rural lifestyles of residents can be planned and implemented with the aid of a rural tourism planning and sustainable development strategy. Concerned groups can meet and discuss the implications of proposed developments and determine which would be most effective in ensuring the sustainability of the economies, cultures and environments of their communities.

7.3 Research Limitations and Further Research in Rural Tourism and Geography

This study investigated rural images of rural accommodation operators and their guests and explored the role of rural tourism in contributing to sustainable rural development in the Waterloo-Wellington region. Financial and time constraints of the study limited the size of the study area and thus the number of rural accommodations and visitors included in the study. Results may have varied if a larger study area, such as all of southern Ontario, and a larger visitor sample was chosen. However, explorations into the connections among rural accommodation operations and their visitors, rural image promotion, and sustainability have offered insights into areas of further study in the region and rural tourism in general.

Studies on the interactions between hosts and guests should be on-going so that the rural accommodation experience continues to be positive and original. It is also important to understand visitors' socio-demographic and travel characteristics so that marketing is directed at appropriate market segments. Furthermore, Butler (1993) stated that tourist

markets evolve over time and are attracted to different images of a destination. Thus, the rural images of hosts and guests should be continually monitored to make sure that hosts have a positive and special sense of their communities and that visitors' images are not based too strongly on an unrealistic ideal. Rural images in the area should also be studied in order to determine if differences exist among visitors' socio-demographic characteristics. But most importantly, the contribution of rural tourism to sustainable rural development in the region should be a continuous process of economic, cultural, and environmental impact studies, as well as rural tourism planning strategies which incorporate community involvement and acceptance.

Further research is needed in the fields of rural tourism and geography in order to broaden the understanding of rural image promotion and tourism's contribution to sustaining rural areas. More studies are needed on host-guest interactions of rural accommodations in a variety of regions so that comprehensive conclusions can be drawn with regard to these types of tourist/host experiences. It is also pertinent to understand the values rural hosts, rural residents, and visitors have of rural areas. For example, are there fundamental values or needs for why people visit the country or desire country experiences? There is the need for more research on the importance of rural images to rural tourism and how rural images are perceived by in other rural tourism regions. For example, the perceptions and experiences of certain groups could be acknowledged so that their rural images can be thoroughly understood (Figure 7.2). As well, rural tourism research could include impact studies to ensure that the environment and communities are not negatively affected. Positive rural images could be maintained by ensuring appropriate planning and developments and

community involvement. These connections can contribute to maintaining rural economies and environments as well as the rural idyll. Moreover, the effects of image promotion and tourism experiences on the economic, environmental, and cultural sustainability of rural areas should be further examined. And finally, there is potential to broaden rural tourism research within the contexts of rural geography and sustainable development. For example, rural tourism development could be discussed in connection with social, political and economic restructuring of rural areas, the environmental degradation of intensive agricultural productions, or the effects of urbanization on valuable rural lands.

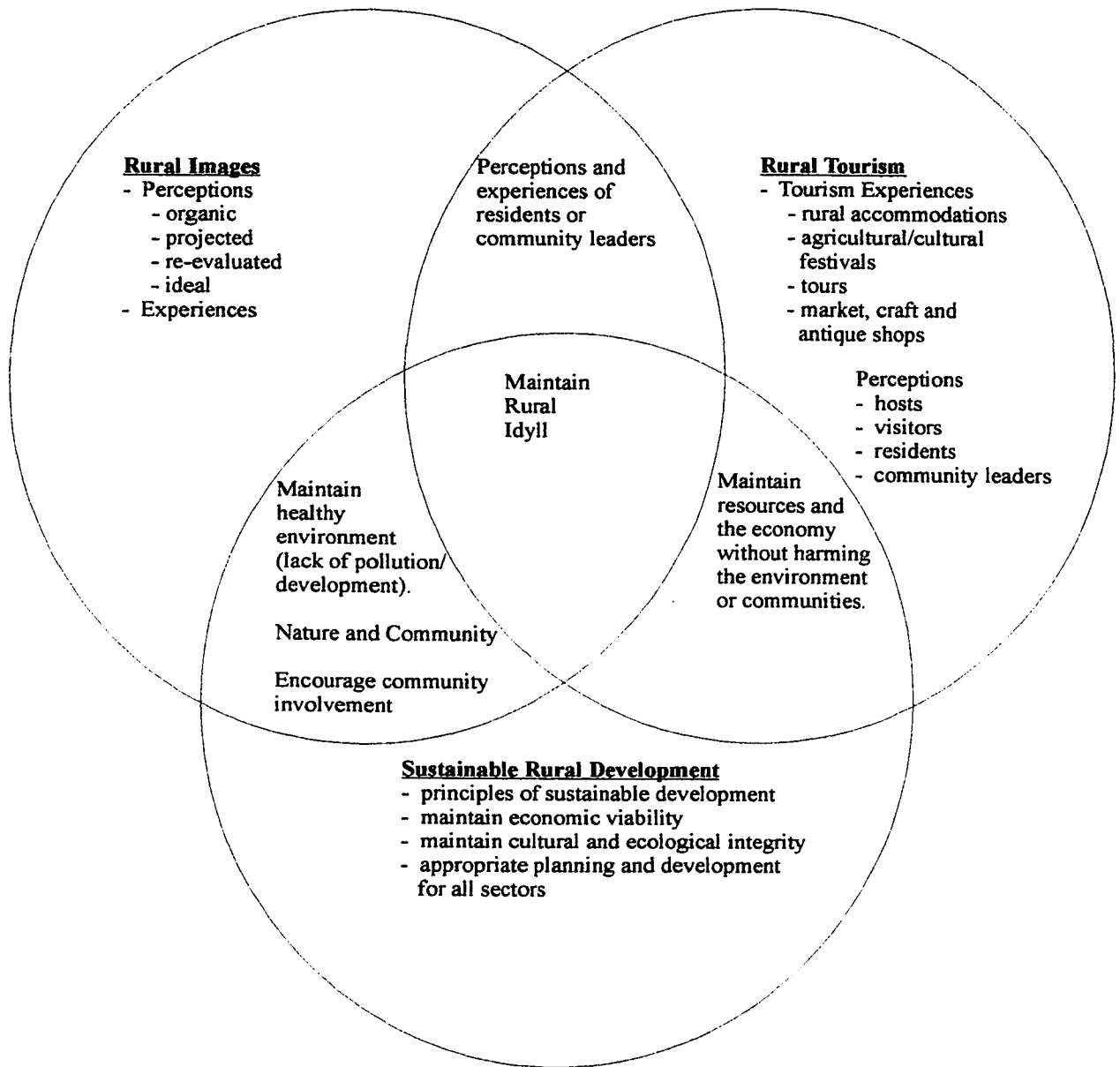


Figure 7.1: Examples of future research in Rural Images, tourism and Sustainable Rural Development

7.4 Concluding Comment

Like many rural areas, the Waterloo-Wellington region holds a treasured past comprised of a distinctive rural cultural and agricultural heritage. Rural communities in the region capture traditional rural characteristics in the peace and quiet of open spaces, and in their historic farms and towns, friendly atmospheres, close-knit communities, well-kept farms and rolling agricultural and natural landscapes. For those who live there it may be an ideal place, but a real place, and an identity referred to as home. For those who visit, it is a product of image, presentation, promotion, and a rural tourism experience, all of which may be too easily driven by a consumed and commercialized ideal. However, conscientious planning and cooperation among local interests would ensure that valuable cultural and environmental qualities are maintained. Unfortunately, there are still many issues which threaten the lifestyles and landscapes of rural regions, such as the industrialization and urbanization of prime agricultural land, the aging populations of rural communities, and the variable and unpredictable agricultural economy. Therefore, it is imperative that a sustainable approach to rural tourism, in conjunction with other rural development, be implemented in order to maintain precious rural places, whose value to us seems yet to be realized.

Quiet village offers country comfort

Toronto Star Saturday Nov. 20, 1998

BY CYNDY NAYLOR
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Not everyone can tell you how to get to the small town of Alma, but more than a few can tell you how to get to Marg's Kitchen. The steady flow of patrons that flock to taste the renowned home-style cooking at this Mennonite restaurant are about the only real traffic this rural town of 200 gets.

"This is one village that will remain a village. It has been 10 years since any new homes have gone up in Alma. There are no places to build here," says Dave Hunter Jr., president of Newland Holdings Inc.

The company is building homes on large lots in this quiet community north of Elora on the edge of Mennonite country.

The original farmhouse on the site and the surrounding mature trees are to be maintained as part of the site, called Alma Crossings, says Hunter.

The 1,250 to 2,700-sq.-ft., three-bedroom traditional country-styled homes enjoy tranquil views of the surrounding countryside. But the setting isn't the



CYN DY NAYLOR PHOTO

ALMA CROSSINGS: Dave Hunter Jr. in front of one of the homes north of Elora on the edge of Mennonite country.

only thing attracting buyers. The lots are huge — 250 to 300 feet deep with a frontage of 120 feet, says Hunter.

Convenience is another attraction. The site is close to larger centres that provide all the necessary amenities. Alma is 20 min-

utes from Guelph and Kitchener and 45 minutes from Hamilton and Burlington. The farmer's market, dining, and the boutique and antique shops of St. Jacobs, Elmira, and Elora are moments away. New shopping facilities and high schools are five min-

utes away in the town of Fergus. The site is just over an hour from Pearson International Airport.

"Alma is a quiet, rural, family-oriented community," Hunter adds. There's a newly built elementary school complete with up-to-date computer labs, as well as a variety of local sports teams, he says.

Hunter is a small time, hands-on builder who says he'll offer buyers a high level of customer service. There are no salespeople to go through and Hunter is personally involved at all stages from hammering nails to driving the bulldozer!

Occupancies for these customized, bungalow, 1½- and 2-storey modular homes begin in April. Prices range from \$163,900 to \$258,000.

Sales office hours are Wednesday to Friday 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends.

To get to the site from Toronto take the 401 west to Hwy. 6, north through Guelph. Take Wellington County Rd. 7 north through Elora into Alma. The site is on your right.

APPENDIX B

Kelley A. McClinchey
260 Laurentian Drive
Kitchener, Ontario
N2E 2B6, (519) 741-5217
mccl3170@mach1.wlu.ca

Name
Address
Of Rural Accommodation

Thursday, July 30, 1998

Dear Sir/Madam:

Hello! My name is Kelley McClinchey and I am a Master's student in geography at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo. My area of interest is tourism and its effects on rural areas. Since I have lived in Waterloo region my whole life and have a love for the agricultural landscape, I have decided to complete my Master's thesis on rural tourism in Waterloo-Wellington Counties. More specifically, I wish to investigate rural landscape images portrayed through the rural accommodation experience, and to explore the role of rural tourism in sustaining rural culture and contributing to sustainable rural development.

To complete my study, I request the participation of some important individuals within the rural tourism industry, in order to obtain the most accurate and useful information. I have chosen to contact rural accommodation operators within the Waterloo-Wellington area which is why I am writing you. I am asking if you would please participate in a short personal interview (30 minutes) consisting of short-answer questions about your accommodation, your visitors, and the rural landscape. I realise that this is your busiest season. However, I feel that the information I can gain from you at this time, and in person, would be extremely beneficial, not only for my study, but for the rural tourism industry as a whole. Of course, your participation in this study is voluntary and you should feel free to withdraw from the interview at any time. A summary of my completed study will be available to you. It will benefit you as well by providing you with a comprehensive examination of the rural accommodation sector in your area, how it is viewed by visitors, and suggestions for further planning, promotion, and marketing.

I will be contacting you by phone within the next 2 weeks to discuss your willingness to participate in this research. Any information collected through this study is well-appreciated and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Yours truly,

Kelley A. McClinchey

APPENDIX C

September 1998

Dear Guest(s),

Hello! I hope that you are enjoying your stay at this rural accommodation. My name is Kelley McClinchey and I am a student at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo. I am completing my Master's thesis project on rural landscape images portrayed through rural accommodation experiences, and on the contribution of rural tourism in sustaining rural areas.

I have contacted important individuals within the rural tourism industry, such as your host, in order to obtain the most accurate and useful information for my study. With your host's agreement and assistance, I am able to distribute a visitor questionnaire. If you choose to participate in completing the questionnaire, you will be providing me and your host with valuable information on your experiences at this accommodation. The information received by you, through this study, will benefit rural accommodation operators by providing them with a comprehensive look at the needs and desires of people who visit rural areas. Your perceptions and feelings towards your rural vacation experience is important to understand so that a high rate of visitor satisfaction is maintained.

The questionnaire is one page, both front and back, and is designed to take approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Please feel free to complete the survey and leave it with your host. Any information given is well-appreciated and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Yours truly,

Kelley A. McClinchey

APPENDIX D

Accommodation # _____

Interview Questions for Rural Operators

First I would like to ask some questions about your accommodation:

1. What is your type of accommodation?

- farm vacation
- country bed and breakfast
- village bed and breakfast
- village inn

2. Is your accommodation seasonal?

If yes, when is it open (month-month) _____

- yes
- no

2b) How much do you charge per night? _____

3. Is the primary operator male female joint operation

4. Is the operator who mainly deals with the guests throughout their stay male female both

5. Is your accommodation a full-time or part-time business? full-time part-time

6. How long have you been providing commercial accommodation?

7. How long have you been a resident here?

8. What were your primary motivations for starting the business?

Have they changed? _____

9. Approximately how many visitors did you have last year? _____

10. What do you feel most attracts guests to your accommodation?

11. How many rooms do you have? _____

Next, I am interested in your feelings about the rural landscape:

12. What are some words which you can think of that best describe the rural landscape surrounding your accommodation?

13. What aspects of the rural landscape do you like best?

14. What aspects of the rural landscape do you feel are most attractive to visitors who stay at your accommodation?

15. Are there any changes or improvements you feel could be made to the rural landscape in your area?

16. Is there any aspect of the rural landscape which you dislike, if so, what?

Now, about rural living:

17. What aspects of rural life do you like best?

18. Is there any aspect of rural life which you dislike, and if so, what?

This next section, I am interested in finding out some basic information about your visitors' experience while staying at your rural accommodation:

19. Do the majority of your guests stay as

- a single guest
- a couple
- a family visit

20. Approximately how long do guests stay?

- 1 to 2 nights
- 3 to 4 nights
- 5 to 6 nights
- more than 6 nights

21. Are they mostly repeat or first-time visitors? _____

22. Could you make a list of some of the things you think guests do when staying here? _____

23. What do you feel guests' primary motivation is for visiting the area? _____

Now I would like to discuss your feelings toward rural tourism within the region:

24. Do you think rural tourism, in the way of rural accommodations such as yours, important for rural areas? If yes, how is it important? _____

25. What kinds of benefits do you personally get from your accommodation business?

26. Generally, the majority of your produce for your accommodation is
- a) produced/grown on your own property
 - b) purchased from a local stand, farmer's market
 - c) purchased at a local commercial grocery store
 - d) local wholesaler (within county)
 - e) non-local (outside of county)

27. The majority of your dairy is
- a) produced/grown on your own property
 - b) purchased from a local stand, farmer's market, or supplier
 - c) purchased at a local commercial grocery store
 - d) local wholesaler (within county)
 - e) non-local (outside of county)

28. The majority of your baked goods are
- a) produced/grown on your own property
 - b) purchased from a local stand, farmer's market, or supplier
 - c) purchased at a local commercial grocery store
 - d) local wholesaler (within county)
 - e) non-local (outside of county)

29. The majority of your meats are
- a) produced/grown on your own property
 - b) purchased from a local stand, farmer's market, or supplier
 - c) purchased at a local commercial grocery store
 - d) local wholesaler (within county)
 - e) non-local (outside of county)

30. Describe how you think having guests stay at your accommodation may benefit your rural area?

31. How likely are your guests to participate in the following activities while staying at your accommodation?

| | always | sometimes | rarely | never | don't know |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) make purchases at local shops and markets | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b) visit local cultural heritage attractions | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c) eat/drink at local food and beverage establishments | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d) take nature walks or hikes | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| 32. How effective are the following in allowing guests to learn about rural culture and heritage | very effective | effective | somewhat effective | not very effective | don't know |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) heritage buildings, museums, meeting places | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b) cultural festivals | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c) agricultural fairs and festivals | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d) farm or rural tours | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e) educational brochures and pamphlets | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| f) staying in rural areas and experiencing rural life hands on | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

33. What kind of changes has rural tourism brought to your area, in the past? _____

 and more recently? _____

34. Do you feel rural tourism in your area should
 decrease
 stay the same
 increase

35. If you would like to see rural tourism grow, how would you like to see it continue to be
 a) developed _____

 b) promoted _____

 c) marketed _____

36. If you would like to see it decrease or stay the same, do you have any suggestions for how these changes could be planned for in the future? _____

37. Are there any barriers to you as a rural operator in your efforts to successfully run your rural accommodation business? _____

38. Now, I'm interested in your level of agreement with the following statements about the rural landscape and rural life in general. Please just state whether you SA, A, NA/D, D, SD, DK.

| | strongly agree | agree | neither agree nor disagree | disagree | strongly disagree | don't know |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) The rural landscape consists of beautiful scenery | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b) There are large open spaces in the rural landscape | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c) Family farms are a large part of the rural landscape | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d) Rural life is closer to nature than other lifestyles | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e) Rural life is simplistic | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| f) Friendliness and neighbourliness are more characteristic of rural communities than urban communities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| g) Life in rural areas is less stressful than life elsewhere | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| h) Rural areas are more peaceful than other areas | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| i) The rural landscape attracts people to visit rural areas | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| j) People visit rural areas to learn about rural life | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| k) Rural areas can be smelly because of farm animals | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| l) The rural landscape tends to look the same everywhere | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| m) Rural communities provide few opportunities for new experiences | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| n) Rural living means living without the better things of modern society | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| o) visitors enjoy nature in rural areas | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| p) social services (eg. ambulance) are not provided for as effectively in rural areas as in urban areas | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Separate Sheet: Complete Separately

39. Which of the following do you feel most motivates guests to stay at rural accommodations such as yours, in your area (Rank each of the following from 1 to 12, 1 being chosen as the one which would most motivate visitors)

- the rural landscape
- the natural environment
- escape into the country
- inexpensive vacation
- personal host-guest interaction
- friendly hospitality
- visit with family or friends
- learn about rural lifestyles and culture
- relaxing environment
- a new experience
- an active vacation
- nearby tourist attractions or shops

40. Rate how important you feel the following are as resources for tourism in your area:

| | very important | important | undecided | somewhat important | not at all |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| important | | | | | |
| 1) agricultural landscape | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2) natural environment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3) walking and hiking trails | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4) agricultural fairs and festivals | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5) cultural heritage festivals | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6 local shops and markets | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7) community theatre | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8) friendly rural people and their rural way of life | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9) clean, comfortable rural accommodations | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Any other additional comments:

Appendix E Rural Vacation Visitor Survey

Please indicate your answer choice by completely filling in the correct circle with a pen or a pencil for all responses except question #1. (All responses are confidential and will be used only for the stated purposes of this study.)

eg. Do you like ice cream? Yes No office use only:
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Please Start Here

⇒

1. What motivated you to stay at this rural accommodation? (Please rank each of the following from 1 to 12, 1 being chosen as the one which most motivated you.)

- ___ the rural landscape
- ___ the natural environment
- ___ escape into the country
- ___ inexpensive vacation
- ___ personal host-guest interaction
- ___ friendly hospitality
- ___ visit with family or friends
- ___ learn about rural lifestyles and culture
- ___ relaxing environment
- ___ a new experience
- ___ an active vacation
- ___ nearby tourist attractions or shops

2. What did you do while staying here? (Please select all that apply.)

- made purchases or browsed at local shops and markets
- visited local cultural heritage attractions
- eat/drank at local food/beverage establishments
- went for nature walks or hikes
- relaxed and enjoyed the rural landscape
- participated in farm chores
- learned about rural life
- community theatre
- other _____

3. What made your stay an enjoyable experience? (Please select all that apply.)

- friendly hospitality
- clean, comfortable accommodations
- good meals
- quiet, relaxing atmosphere
- rural landscape
- nearby rural attractions
- other _____

4. Would you return to this area?

- Yes
- No

5. Would you recommend this vacation to a friend or relative?

- Yes
- No

6. How did you find out about this rural accommodation?

- from a magazine
- from a pamphlet
- from a newspaper
- from television or radio
- from an acquaintance
- other _____

7. Did you learn more about rural life and cultures by staying at this accommodation?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

8. How would you best describe the guest accommodation where you were staying?

- farm vacation
- country Bed and Breakfast
- village Bed and Breakfast
- village Inn

9. What was the length of your stay?

- 1 to 2 nights
- 3 to 4 nights
- 5 to 6 nights
- more than 6 nights

10. Have you previously visited this establishment?

- Yes
- No

11. Where do you live?

12. What words can you think of that best describe the rural landscape around the accommodation you visited?

13. Please include any additional comments or suggestions that you might have about your rural vacation experience.

Please Continue Here



14. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree Nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't Know |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) The rural landscape consists of beautiful scenery. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b) There are large open spaces in the rural landscape. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c) Family farms are a large part of the rural landscape. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d) Rural life is closer to nature than other lifestyles. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e) Rural life is simplistic. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| f) Friendliness and neighbourliness are more characteristic of rural communities than urban communities. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| g) Life in rural areas is less stressful than life elsewhere. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| h) Rural areas are more peaceful than other areas. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| i) The rural landscape attracts people to visit rural areas. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| j) People visit rural areas to learn about rural life. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| k) Rural areas are smelly because of farm animals. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| l) The rural landscape tends to look the same everywhere. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| m) Rural communities provide few opportunities for new experiences. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| n) Rural living means living without the better things of modern society. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| o) Rural life is characterized by hard farm-related labour. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| p) Visitors enjoy nature in rural areas. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| q) Social services are not provided for as effectively in rural areas as in urban areas. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

15. Please rate the effectiveness of the following in enabling you to learn about rural culture and heritage.

| | Very Effective | Effective | Neither Effective Nor Ineffective | Ineffective | Very Ineffective | Don't Know |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) heritage buildings, museums, meeting places | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b) cultural festivals | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c) agricultural fairs and festivals | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d) farm or rural tours | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e) educational brochures and pamphlets | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| f) staying in rural areas and experiencing rural life hands on | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

16. Please indicate your gender.

- Male
- Female

17. Please indicate your age category.

- under 19 years
- 20 to 29 years
- 30 to 39 years
- 40 to 49 years
- 50 to 59 years
- 60 to 69 years
- over 70 years

18. Are you retired?

- Yes
- No

19. Please indicate the category that best describes your family income. (Optional)

- less than \$20,000 per year
- \$20,000 to \$39,000 per year
- \$40,000 to \$59,000 per year
- \$60,000 to \$79,000 per year
- \$80,000 to \$99,000 per year
- \$90,000 to \$109,000 per year
- more than \$110 000 per year

20. Which best describes where you are from?

- Waterloo-Wellington area
- southern Ontario
- northern Ontario
- another province or territory
- the United States
- other _____

21. Was your visit as

- a single guest
- a couple
- a family visit
- a business trip?

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire!

You may leave the completed form in your room when you leave or you may mail it to:

Kelley McClinchey
C/O Department of Geography
Wilfrid Laurier University
University Avenue
Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 3C5
mcc3170@mach1.wlu.ca

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