

## Introduction:

- The rural lifestyle creates opportunities for land owners to generate income beyond farming.
- Agritourism refers to the combination of agriculture and tourism to connect farms with communities through recreational-style activities.
- Research suggests that agritourism provides a way for farms to stay competitive through diversification of activities and employment (Matthews, 2012; Mitchell, 2010; Van Sandt & Thilmany, 2018).
- Agritourism is growing nationally, but little research exists that is specific to Montana, where the two main industries are agriculture and tourism.

## Methods:

- Purpose: To examine Montana agritourism stakeholders' perceptions of industry characteristics, challenges, and opportunities.
- Objectives:
  1. Identify challenges faced by agritourism operators.
  2. Identify common questions of operators.
  3. Describe characteristics of a successful agritourism operation.
- Seven interviews were conducted with four operators and three stakeholders in active counties.
- Interviews were transcribed and content analysis was performed. Emergent codes were then organized into themes during researcher analysis sessions.

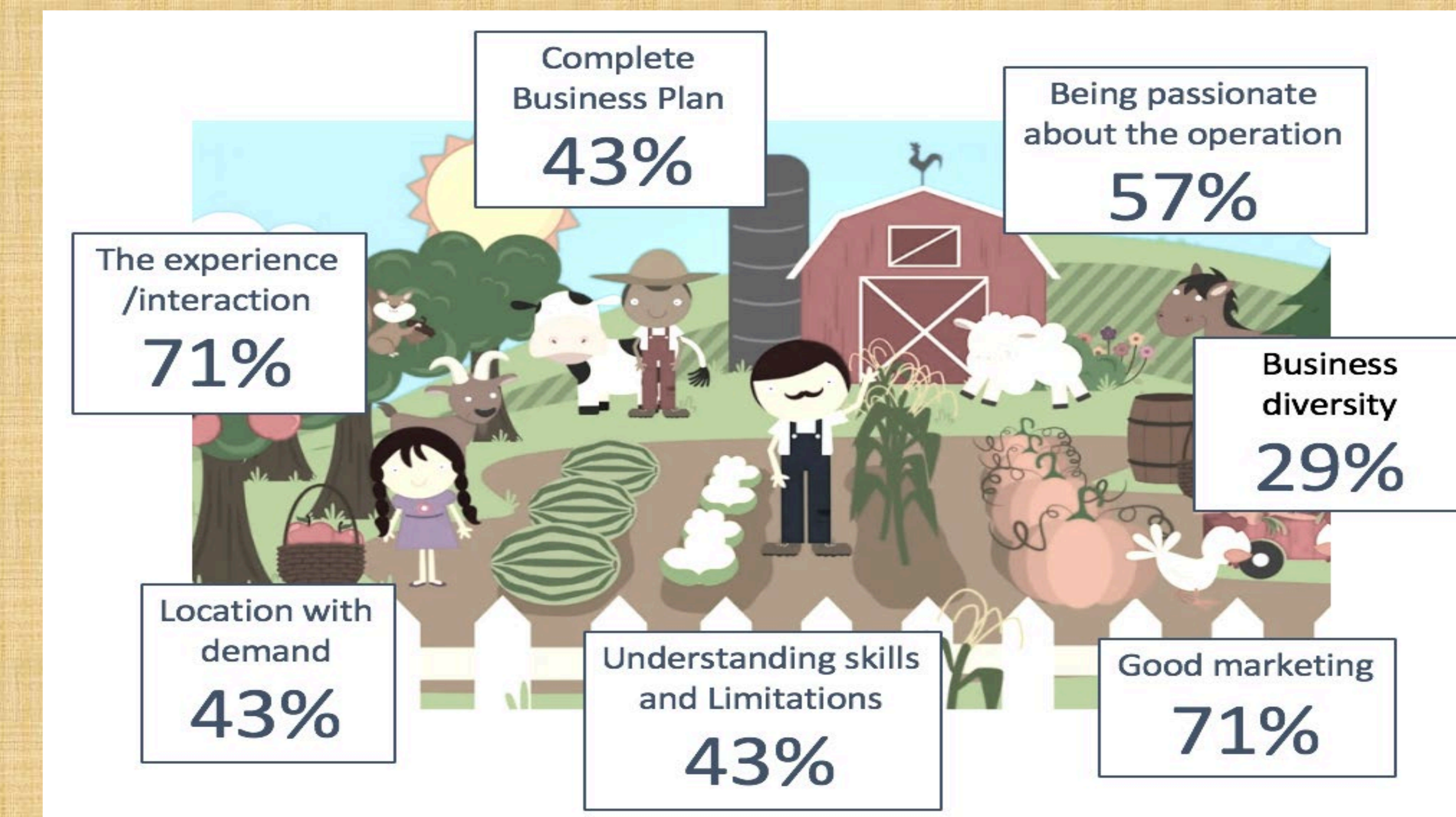
## Challenges Faced by Operators:

Monetary Investment  
Lack of Labor  
Lack of Business Savvy  
**Liability**  
Public Interaction  
Lack of Time  
Regulations/Legislation

## Common Questions of Operators:

**Liability**  
Facing legislative obstacles  
**General advice**  
Effective marketing  
Unexpected joys

## Characteristics of Successful Agritourism Operation



## Conclusions and Recommendations:

- The most common themes related to the need for accessible liability information, public interaction regulations, and assistance with business management.
- The top rated characteristics of an effective operation were creating a unique experience for visitors and having an effective marketing plan.
- Mentoring and networking programs should be developed to connect agritourism businesses with economic development organizations, extension education, and agricultural and tourism associations, as well as a designated Montana coordinator.
- Post-secondary agricultural education should consider adding courses and majors in agritourism to meet demand.