

MOTIVATIONS FOR VISITING FARMS AND PRIVATE FORESTS IN MISSOURI

Sandra Sotomayor, MS¹
Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism
University of Missouri
ses8w8@mail.missouri.edu

Carla Barbieri, PhD
Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism
University of Missouri

Francisco X. Aguilar, PhD
Department of Forestry
University of Missouri

Sonja Wilhelm Stanis, PhD
Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism
University of Missouri

Abstract

A 2010 survey examined preferences and behaviors of current and potential agritourists and explored 15 motivations for visiting two agritourism settings (farms and private forests). Responses from 969 Missouri households showed that doing something with family, viewing the scenic beauty, and enjoying the smells and sounds of nature were the most important motivations for visiting both settings. Paired *t*-tests showed that there were significant differences in seven motivations for visiting a farm versus a private forest.

1.0 Introduction

Agritourism is defined as recreation-related services and/or activities incorporated into a working farm or other agricultural setting (Barbieri et al. 2008, Che et al. 2005). Agritourism includes visiting both farms and private forests and encompasses a wide variety of activities. The most prevalent agritourism activities in Missouri are tours, recreational self-harvest (e.g., pick-your-own vegetables and mushroom gathering), and observation/participation in agricultural processes (Tew & Barbieri 2011).

Agritourism opportunities are increasing in the U.S. as more landowners develop these activities to compensate for decreased agricultural incomes (Che et al. 2005). The demand for agritourism increased two-fold between 2000 and 2007 (Cordell 2008). In light of this increased popularity, research is needed concerning motivations for visiting different agritourism settings. Information is also needed to evaluate whether visitors' preferences and motivations differ between farm and private forest agritourism settings. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine (a) preferences and behaviors of current and potential agritourists, and (b) the various motivations for visiting farms and private forests that offer recreational activities. Such information will provide valuable insights and marketing implications for agritourism providers across different settings.

2.0 Literature Review

Motivations arouse and direct human behaviors (Iso-Ahola 1999). Visitor motivations have been examined as determinants of the decision making process for visiting recreational settings (Graefe et al. 2000, Jackson 2005, Kyle et al. 2006). Most of this research stems from Driver's (1983) conceptual and empirical work on Recreation Experience Preference (REP) scales. REP is composed of 44 items organized in 21 domains designed to capture the psychological, social, and perceived physiological outcomes and desired goals for engaging in recreation (Manfredo et al. 1996). Researchers typically employ REP scales in smaller versions by selecting specific items or domains pertinent to their research focus (Graefe et al. 2000, Thapa et al. 2004).

Understanding the motivations associated with participation in agritourism can guide planning and management tasks such as measuring recreation supply and demand, developing management objectives, and minimizing user conflicts (Graefe et al. 2000, Thapa et al. 2004). Delivering services based on visitors' needs can provide better recreational experiences (Beh & Bruyere 2007) and optimize visitor satisfaction (Graefe et al. 2000). Despite the importance of motivations for managing, planning, and marketing outdoor recreation opportunities, little information is available regarding motivations for visiting agritourism settings. Jolly and Reynolds's (2005) research on consumer values and habits regarding food and the agricultural system in California is an exception. That study, however, used an open-ended format rather than the REP scale to examine motivations. Purchasing fresh/homemade products directly from farmers, experiencing nature, and relaxation were the strongest motivations for engaging in agritourism and nature tourism (Jolly & Reynolds 2005). Although this study provides potential insights for farm settings, to our knowledge, there is no study contrasting motivations for visiting different agritourism settings.

¹ Our gratitude to Dr. Samantha Rozier Rich, North Carolina State University, for her valuable comments and suggestions.

3.0 Methods

A self-administered mail survey of 5,000 Missouri households was conducted in 2010. A random sample of Missouri households was purchased from a marketing agency; the sample was stratified to mimic Missouri's metropolitan (70%) and non-metropolitan (30%) county distribution (USDA: ERS 2004). Survey procedures followed a modified Tailored Design Method (Dillman 2000). The survey produced 969 completed questionnaires (19.6% adjusted response rate). Excluding those who did not indicate their residence ($n = 233$), 68% of respondents lived in metropolitan counties and 32% in non-metropolitan counties, holding the 70/30 (metropolitan/non-metropolitan) state distribution.

Visit motivations were examined for 15 motivational items from the REP scale (Driver 1983) using 5-point scales anchored in "Very Unimportant" (1) and "Very Important" (5). The items reflected a diversity of experiences that visitors might have when visiting natural settings. Statistical analysis included descriptive analysis and a series of two-way paired t -tests. To reduce family-wise error due to multiple comparisons, a more conservative $p < .003$ (0.05/15) was used.

4.0 Results

The gender distribution among respondents was nearly even with a slight majority of males (51.6%). On average, respondents were 54 years old. About half (48.7%) had at least a two-year college degree and 41% reported at least \$50,000 in annual household income. About half of respondents (49.3%) were full-time employees and 30% were retired. A quarter (27.2%) had some sort of relationship with farms or forests – either living on, owning, or leasing a farm or forested land.

4.1 Preferences and Behavior for Visiting Natural Settings

Nearly one-half of respondents had visited an agritourism farm (48.1%) or a private forest (51.2%) for recreation purposes in the past (Table 1). A large proportion went for the first time at least 10 years ago (44.4% farm; 50.1% forest) and used to visit these natural settings at least occasionally when they were 16 years or younger (45.2% farm; 62.3% forest). A relatively large proportion of respondents thought that it was either likely or very likely that they would visit an agritourism farm (43.1%) or a private forest (44.8%) in the next 12 months. The most frequent activities when visiting an agritourism farm were pick-your-own fruit/vegetable (75.9%), attend a festival or event (70.3%), and wildlife observation (38.5%). The most popular activities when visiting a private forest were hiking, biking or cross-country (all one category; 58.1%), wildlife observation (55.9%) and fishing (51.2%).

<Insert Table 1 about here>

4.2 Motivations for Visiting Farms and Private Forests

Results showed a diversity of motivations for visiting both agritourism settings. With slight differences in the rankings for farms and private forests, the most important motivations were: viewing scenic beauty, doing something with family, and enjoying the smells and sounds of nature (Table 2). The least important motivation for visiting both types of agritourism settings was to share their agricultural/outdoor skills with others.

<Insert Table 2 about here>

Paired t -tests showed that two motivational items were perceived as significantly more important for visiting farms as compared to private forests: do something with family ($M_{farm} = 4.28$; $M_{forest} = 4.12$; $t = 7.418(898)$; $d = .181$; $p < .001$); and experience new and different things ($M_{farm} = 3.98$; $M_{forest} = 3.88$; $t = 3.786(912)$; $d = .108$; $p < .001$). Conversely, five motivations were perceived as significantly more important for visiting private forests than farms: use their equipment ($M_{forest} = 3.81$; $M_{farm} = 3.65$; $t = -5.925(897)$; $d = -.0157$; $p < .001$); give their mind a rest ($M_{forest} = 3.79$; $M_{farm} = 3.70$; $t = -3.464(917)$; $d = -.093$; $p = .001$); share their agritourism/outdoor skills ($M_{forest} = 3.33$; $M_{farm} = 3.07$; $t = -9.174(910)$; $d = -.254$; $p < .001$); have a change from their daily routine ($M_{forest} = 3.98$; $M_{farm} = 3.90$; $t = -3.609(914)$; $d = -.099$; $p < .001$); and experience solitude ($M_{forest} = 3.73$; $M_{farm} = 3.57$; $t = -5.925(910)$; $d = -.161$; $p < .001$).

No significant differences were found in the perceived importance of eight motivational items (get exercise; enjoy the smells and sounds of nature; experience excitement; learn more about nature; be with people having similar values; think about their personal values; recall good time from the past; view the scenic beauty) for visiting farms or private forests for recreational purposes.

5.0 Discussion

Results showed that a relatively large proportion of respondents were likely or very likely to visit a farm (43.1%) or a private forest (44.8%) for recreation in the next 12 months. These results suggest a large interest in agritourism among Missouri residents as has been reported using national data (Cordell 2008). As expected, the most popular activities when visiting natural settings were strongly linked to that setting's specific offerings, especially concerning farms. These results suggest that managers of farms and private forests should capitalize on their unique resources in programming and advertisement efforts as competitive advantages to capture visitors seeking a unique outdoor recreation experience. For example, farmers engaged in agritourism should consider offering "pick-your-own fruit/vegetable" opportunities and program special events (e.g., harvest festivals). Forest managers should consider opening portions of their lands for hiking, biking or cross-country activities and for wildlife

observation. Programming activities based on agritourists' interests can enhance visitor experience and satisfaction levels (Beh & Bruyere 2007, Graefe et al. 2000).

Results related to motivations for recreational visits to farms and private forests are important and should be incorporated when implementing motivation-based marketing strategies at the firm (i.e., farm/forest) and regional levels. At the firm level, agritourism providers' advertising efforts should focus on the suitability of both settings for family-friendly activities and interaction with nature since "view the scenic beauty," "do something with their family," and "enjoy the smells and sounds of nature" were reported as the most prevalent motivations. This is especially important since these motivations have also been identified as especially important in nature-based recreation/tourism studies (Beh & Bruyere 2007, Graefe et al. 2000, Kyle et al. 2006). Agencies promoting agritourism development at a local or regional level (e.g., Missouri Department of Agriculture) can also highlight the value of agritourism for educational purposes, especially since learning more about nature was perceived as a very important motivation for visiting both farms and private forests.

Differences in the importance of motivations for visiting farms versus private forests also provide valuable information for agritourism providers when both types of settings are competing in the same locality. For example, owners/managers of private forests offering or willing to offer recreational services may highlight the suitability of their lands for the use of certain equipment and gear or for relaxation purposes as those motivations were perceived as more important for visiting forests than for visiting farms. Conversely, farmers offering or willing to offer agritourism can promote their land as a place to experience new and different things and to do something with family, thus attracting visitors seeking to satisfy that set of needs.

6.0 Conclusions

The findings of this study provide information regarding motivations for visiting agritourism settings for recreation, including similarities as well as differences between motivations for visiting farms and private forests. These results have important management and planning implications, especially for agritourism businesses since little information is available about this form of recreation. Similar visit motivations for the two settings can help landowners who are offering or willing to offer recreational services craft or re-direct collaborative marketing strategies. For example, such strategies could focus on the enjoyment of scenic beauty and learning opportunities about nature, as these motivations were highly important for visitors to both settings. Agencies and offices promoting agritourism development at the local, regional, or state level can also use the results on motivations to design itineraries for both types of settings. Several differences in motivations for visiting farms versus private forests also emerged and could be used by agritourism providers. For example, agritourism farms can focus on family-oriented activities while forests can focus on the opportunity to experience solitude.

6.0 References

- Barbieri, C., Mahoney, E., & Butler, L. (2008). Understanding the nature and extent of farm and ranch diversification in North America. *Rural Sociology*, 73(2): 205–229.
- Beh, A., & Bruyere, B. (2007). Segmentation by Visitor Motivation in Three Kenyan National Reserves. *Tourism Management*, 28(6): 1464–1471.
- Che, D., Veeck, A., & Veeck, G. (2005). Sustaining production and strengthening the agritourism product: Linkages among Michigan agritourism destinations. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 22(2): 225–234.
- Cordell, K. (2008). The latest on trends in nature-based outdoor recreation and. *Forest History Today*, Spring: 4-10.
- Dillman, D.A. (2000). *Mail and internet surveys: The Total Design Method*. New York: John Wiley and Sons. 480p.
- Driver, B. (1983). *Master list of items for Recreation Experience Preference scales and domains*. Unpublished document. USDA Forest Service, Fort Collins, CO: Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station.
- Graefe, A., Thapa, B., Confer J., & Absher, J. (2000). Relationships between trip motivations and selected variables among Allegheny National Forest visitors. *USDA Forest Service Proceedings RMRS-P-15-VOL-4*.
- Iso-Ahola, S. E. (1999). Motivational foundations of leisure. In E. L. Jackson & T. L. Burton (Eds.), *Leisure studies: Prospects for the twenty-first century* (pp. 35-51). State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc. 559 pp.
- Jackson, E. (2005). Leisure constraints research: Overview of a developing theme in leisure studies in E. Jackson, editor. *Constraints to Leisure* (pp. 3-19). State College, PA: Venture.
- Jolly, D., & Reynolds, K. (2005). Consumer demand for agricultural and on-farm nature tourism. UC Small Farm Center Research Brief 2005–01. Retrieved June 10, 2010, from <http://www.agri-toursolutions.com/pdf/agtourbrief013006.pdf>
- Kyle, G., Absher, J., Hammitt, W., & Cavin, J. (2006). An examination of the motivation-involvement relationship. *Leisure Sciences*, 28(5): 467–485.

Manfredo, M.J., Driver, B.L., & Tarrant, M.A. (1996). Measuring leisure motivation: A meta-analysis of the Recreation Experience Preference scales. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 28(3):188-213.

Tew, C., & Barbieri, C. (2011). The perceived benefits of agritourism: The provider's perspective. *Tourism Management*, DOI: 10.1016/j.tourman.2011.02.005.

Thapa, B., Confer, J., & Mendelsohn, J. (2004). Trip Motivations among water-based recreationists. *Paper presentation at the 2nd International Conference on Monitoring and Management of Visitor Flows in Recreational and Protected Areas*. Rovaniemi, Finland. 208-212.

USDA: ERS (2004). Measuring Rurality: Rural-Urban Continuum Codes. Retrieved September 9, 2010, from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/rurality/ruralurbcon/>

Table 1. Past visitation, willingness to visit, and types of activities while visiting an agritourism farm or private forest

	Farm		Private Forest	
	N	%	n	%
Past Visitation for Recreation Purposes				
Did visit	433	48.1%	464	51.2%
Did not visit	467	51.9%	443	48.8%
First Visit for Recreation Purposes^a				
Last year	29	6.8%	45	9.8%
2-4 years ago	69	16.1%	41	8.9%
5-9 years ago	74	17.3%	48	10.4%
At least 10 years ago	190	44.4%	231	50.1%
Do not recall	66	15.4%	96	20.8%
Frequency of Visit during Childhood^{a b}				
Never	115	26.7%	55	11.9%
Rarely	85	19.7%	76	16.4%
Occasionally	132	30.6%	130	27.9%
Often	49	11.4%	123	26.5%
Always	14	3.2%	36	7.8%
Do not recall	36	8.4%	44	9.5%
Likelihood to Visit in the Next 12 Months				
Very unlikely	116	12.3%	111	11.8%
Unlikely	152	16.1%	178	18.7%
Undecided	269	28.5%	235	24.7%
Likely	294	31.1%	289	30.4%
Very likely	113	12.0%	137	14.4%
Engagement in Recreation/leisure Activities^{a c}				
Attend a festival or event	303	70.3%	134	28.9%
Attend a private party	90	20.9%	111	24.0%
Boating, canoeing or sailing	111	25.8%	173	37.4%
Drive motorized RVs	39	9.0%	109	23.5%
Fishing	145	33.6%	237	51.2%
Hiking, biking or cross-country	146	33.9%	269	58.1%
Horseback riding	59	13.7%	79	17.1%
Hunting	56	13.0%	150	32.4%
Other recreational activity	133	30.9%	134	28.9%
Pick-your-own fruit or vegetable	327	75.9%	115	24.8%
Swimming	85	19.7%	112	24.2%
Wildlife observation	166	38.5%	259	55.9%

^a This only includes those who have visited farms ($n = 433$; 48.1%) and private forests ($n = 464$; 51.2%) in the past.

^b Childhood was defined as 16 years old or younger.

^c Percentages sum to more than 100%, as respondents were able to select multiple categories.

Table 2. Importance of motivations for visiting a farm and a private forest for recreation

Motivations	Importance (<i>M</i>) ^a		Paired <i>t</i> -test
	Farm	Forest	
View the scenic beauty	4.25	4.28	-1.210
Do something with their family	4.28	4.12	7.418 *
Enjoy the smells and sounds of nature	4.06	4.13	-2.795
Learn more about nature	3.98	3.98	0.405
Have a change from their daily routine	3.90	3.98	-3.609 *
Experience new and different things	3.98	3.88	3.786 *
Get exercise	3.84	3.90	-2.676
Give their mind a rest	3.70	3.79	-3.464 *
Use their equipment	3.65	3.81	-5.454 *
Experience excitement	3.69	3.63	2.256
Experience solitude	3.57	3.73	-5.925 *
Recall good times from the past	3.59	3.60	-0.503
Be with people having similar values	3.49	3.46	1.037
Think about their personal values	3.43	3.47	-1.718
Share their agritourism/outdoor skills	3.07	3.33	-9.174 *

^a Measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (=Very Unimportant) to 5 (=Very Important).

* Statistically significant ($p < 0.003$)