

Public Abstract

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Title:VISIT MOTIVATIONS AND PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF FARMS, PRIVATE FORESTS AND STATE/NATIONAL PARKS IN MISSOURI

Although agritourism is an activity that in the last 10 years has gained popularity throughout the US, research is still limited. Most existing studies are focused on the supply side (i.e., landowner). This study explored the variability in visit motivations and perceived benefits of Missouri households from three natural settings: (1) Farms; (2) Private Forests; and (3) State/National Parks. Specific goals of this study were: (1) To describe outdoor recreation preferences and behavior; (2) to contrast motivations for visiting these three natural settings; and (3) to compare the perceived benefits among these three settings. Data were collected in 2010 using a mailed questionnaire from a random sample of 5,000 Missouri households. The survey produced 969 responses (19.6% response rate). Results show that "Do something with their family", "Visit scenic beauty", and "Enjoy the smells and sounds of nature" were the three most important motivations for visiting all three natural settings. Repeated Measures ANOVA showed that the 15 motivation items were perceived to be significantly more important to visit a state/national park as compared to a farm or a private forest. Post-hoc paired t-tests showed that only seven motivational items (i.e., "Use their equipment", "Get their mind a rest", "Experience new and different things", "Enjoy the smells and sounds of nature", "agritourism/outdoor skills", "Have a change from their daily routing; and "Experience solitude") were significantly different across the three settings. Overall, respondents also considered significantly more important state/national parks for providing environmental, socio-cultural, and economic benefits to society as compared to farms and private forests. Results provide important management, planning and marketing implications. Overall landowners interested in agritourism should provide a variety of attractions for all family members. Also, farmers willing to develop agritourism with little investments should consider providing recreational self-harvest activities.