

S. Król

Czestochowa University of Technology , ul. Dabrowskiego 69,
42-201 Czestochowa, Poland
e-mail: deszczowa123@interia.pl

STRATEGIES AND BARRIERS HOLDING AGROTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN POLAND

Summary: The ideology of agritourism appeared several dozen years ago. It spread in all European countries, especially in countries characterized by traditional agriculture. In Poland, the beginnings of rural tourism date back to the 19th century.

Key words: agritourism, rural tourism, agritourism strategy, barriers to agritourism development

Introduction

Both in practice and in theory, the term agritourism is often misused and is called any type of tourism activity that is carried out in rural areas, but it does not coincide with a farm or agriculture. Therefore, there is a difference between the two concepts.

1. The concept of agritourist

Agritourism is a form of recreation in rural areas with an agricultural character, while rural tourism is a form of recreation that takes place in real villages and includes various types of recreational activities related to walking, nature, sightseeing, health, ethnic and cultural tourism, with direct use of with the advantages and potential of the village. Rural tourism is distinguished by space, closeness to nature, active recreation, personal contact with the inhabitants of the countryside, as well as staying in areas that are sparsely populated.

Both agritourism and rural tourism have become a renowned form of spending free time, which is quite dynamically developing all over the world. On the one hand, the increase in interest in rural tourism resulted from the need for rural residents to search for auxiliary sources of income, and on the other hand, due to the growing demand of urban residents for the described form of rest.

Agritourists appreciate recreation in the countryside, among others, because of contact with animals, fresh air, peace, quiet, the noise of trees, singing birds, the possibility of being in the bosom of nature, tasting regional cuisine, fresh dairy products or healthy cuisine..

2. Strategy for the development of agritourism

The proper policy of local authorities plays an important role in the development of agritourism. Local government may influence the development of tourist services in a given commune. In the case of most development strategies in municipalities, it is tourism that is taken into account both in visions and strategic missions. The strategy for the development of tourism, including agritourism, is not only a long-term but also a future action plan.

In the effective management of agritourism at the local level, a special role is played by local government authorities in the commune, which may be the entity regulating the development of agritourism economy thanks to various types of local management instruments. This facilitates the implementation of infrastructural investments, the preparation and implementation of long-term programs related to the development of tourism, supporting courses in the field of recreation and tourism, improvement of consultancy, preparation of directions and rules for the tourism development of the commune, as well as improvement of tourist promotion and information system.

The benefits of implementing a tourism strategy in a commune include the expansion of the tourist information system, economic intensification of the commune, promotion of the commune by stimulating tourism, development of trade, increasing the production of products for vacationers, development of local rituals and traditions as an element of the tourist offer.

There are 4 models of agritourism strategies. The first is an extended strategy that looks for new markets for the old product range; apart from the possibility of using our accommodation and meals on the farm. This strategy also involves advertising, among others, in tourist offices. The second strategy is a product development strategy that allows you to minimize risk with a high potential of chances. The innovation diversification strategy assumes that new products are to help open up pioneering markets. This strategy is one of the most risky strategies. However, it should not be forgotten that innovation is necessary in tourism. The last of the described strategies is market penetration, in which the recognition of the market is possible thanks to the products that already exist on it. This strategy is not risky, because it does not consist in

creating a new, more attractive agritourism product that might not be found by the consumer. It is important that the agritourism development strategy takes into account not only expansion, but also increasing the quality of services provided. One should also bear in mind the process of market segmentation.

The agritourism development strategy should be based on a scrupulous assessment of the tourist base and the market. However, the development of such a document requires expert forecasts as to the possibilities of development of the tourism industry and thorough knowledge of the current recreational and tourist resources. It is also important to be able to recognize the possible outlet and the tourist segment. This undertaking is not easy, because it requires reliable knowledge of specialists who have knowledge of both agritourism and tourism.

3. Barriers inhibiting the development of agritourism in Poland

As a result of the socio-economic changes taking place in rural areas in Poland, many unfavorable changes can be noticed, such as a decrease in the profitability of agricultural production or an increase in unemployment. For this reason, in order to counteract these changes, rural society much more often uses innovative forms of rational management of resources already present on the farm.

Such a form is definitely agritourism related to offering accommodation and leisure services within the reach of an agricultural farm. An important role in agritourism is played by the natural surroundings of a given farm, which for agritourists is a place for recreation and rest.

The development of agritourism in Poland is influenced by the seasonality of providing services, the role of insufficiently urbanized areas in the development of rural tourism, state policy at every level of government: local, regional and central, which is or should be the result of the implemented strategy, the importance of surface tourism regions, competition existing on the market relating not only to offering agritourism services, but also to agricultural production, as well as the profitability and effectiveness of agricultural production and non-economic reasons for managing agritourism activities, including satisfaction with the joy of an agritourist or the perspective of spending time with people who live in larger cities.

The development of tourism in wooded and rural areas requires special care for investments in infrastructure related to the state of the natural environment, and thus its protection.

Both in practice and in the literature on the subject, agritourism has several semantic ranges. The most famous are economic activities (business that involves receiving guests in a farmer's household, as well as providing profit and guaranteeing jobs not only for the hosts but also for the entire sphere of production and services in the countryside), the form of rural development planning and the agreed way of traveling and spending free time (the aim is to guarantee an interesting way of spending free time, learning about the culture of the region, working, living in the countryside, improving health, making new friends).

The following barriers appear in the development of agritourism in Poland: the credit barrier, the civilization barrier, the labor force barrier, the quantitative development barrier, the seasonality barrier, the infrastructural barrier and the current structure of the demand for agritourism services. As a barrier to seasonality, extending the season

carries additional costs, which are mainly related to interior heating and the provision of additional services aimed at making customers' stay at a given farm more pleasant.

The civilization barrier should be understood as the general level of education and keeping up with the development of civilization, as well as the level of interpreting this development, which results from the conditions of staying so far. The level of education has a powerful influence on the ability to use foreign languages and the understanding of propensity to change in demand. A symptom of this barrier is also the personality of rural residents, who are largely separated from the metropolitan culture.

The credit barrier is echoed by the fact that hardly any farm owner benefited from subsidies or loans. The reason for this situation is not only the high interest rate, but also the lack of a chance to extend the payment period. This stops the practical undertaking of investment and renovation activities. The main assumption of the development of agritourism is to overcome this barrier.

So far, agritourism services have been popular among people who did not have more income and among those who preferred less active recreation. There was a strong pressure to cut prices. In the past, agritourism was mainly associated with a stable family vacation in the countryside. As of today, it has entered the stage of providing many attractions, such as horse riding, fishing, balloon flight, kayaking, learning traditional professions and many others. This type of situation has various effects, including economic ones. In the past, earnings mainly came from catering services and the lease of accommodation, while nowadays, recreational attractions are making an increasing contribution. Moreover, agritourists have ever greater expectations, and this determines

divergent economic strategies. While previously the focus was on attracting more and more tourists to a specific place, now the owners of agritourism farms focus on obtaining a higher profit while maintaining the same or even fewer tourists. They succeed in getting more income by earning money from attractions, among other things. When considering the barrier to quantitative development, it should be remembered that agritourism is neither a large-scale undertaking, nor an option for well-developing farms. The risk resulting from changes in the demand structure and from seasonality seems to be lower than the risk of agricultural production. A small degree of activity efficiently reduces earnings and thus the development opportunities of farms.

In terms of the workforce barrier, the basis of the economic success of each agritourism farm is independence and not employing hired workers.

While theorizing the infrastructural barrier, it should be noted that there are still no gas installations and sewage systems in some villages in Poland. Gas in cylinders is used, which is not only less safe to use, but also more expensive than natural gas, while instead of sewage systems, septic tanks are used, which are unhygienic and expensive to maintain.

Conclusions

The development of agritourism is a great opportunity to improve the quality of life of the rural population in Poland. Farmers who achieve success in running agritourism expand the area of their activity, thus reducing agricultural production. Undoubtedly, Poland's joining the European Union and its subsequent integration was quite a challenge for farmers. It is the agritourism that can be a key way for them in pursuing the diversity of activities in rural households.

The driving force behind the process of creating agritourism offers is the rapidly increasing demand for spending free time and rest in the countryside. In part, this process is also forced by the complicated financial situation of farmers looking for additional income. However, it should be remembered that not all people who decide to start an agritourism business achieve success. Some of them are forced to give up further activities. There can be many reasons for success and failure. They can be found in the surroundings or in the person managing the farm. The ability to operate effectively in the tourist services market is very often a factor in success.

There are conditions in Poland that are appropriate for the development of agritourism. These are housing resources that have not been used, the positives of the rural landscape, free labor resources on individual farms, the still interesting natural environment, ecological cleanliness, and price competitiveness of the agritourism services provided. In addition, Poland has relatively favorable natural and landscape conditions conducive to the development of agritourism, because there are rivers, forests, the sea, highlands, lakes, which are appreciated by people focused on rest.

It should be remembered that each region or tourist area must be interesting for a potential client. The tourist charm of a given area results from its specific anthropogenic and natural advantages. When choosing the right place for a tourist to rest, an increasingly important role is played by the condition of our natural environment, which after several years of inactivity on the part of governments leaves a lot to be desired..

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