TOURISM BUSINESS IN DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN RURAL AREAS

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Rural tourism, including agritourism, fulfils an important role in the activation of rural areas, especially regions of high unemployment and particular natural and cultural qualities. Proper development of such areas should be multidirectional. Apart from the economical aspect, also the social and ecological aspect is of great importance. The increasing interest in the countryside and in relaxing far from great urban complexes creates a possibility of improving the living conditions in the country – not only for individuals concerned with organizing and selling tourist services, but for the whole community of villages, or even the region.

The aim of this work is to present the current state of rural tourism in the regions of exceptional environmental and cultural values, as well as to present its role in the development of rural areas of chosen countries—Finland, Italy and Poland.

Key words: development of rural areas, rural tourism.

Introduction

Tourism in Europe is one from the most effective and developed brange of economy. “The old continent” generates more than all international journeys in the world, including its peculiarity, intra-european what is 88 proc. from international travels. In 1995 almost 35 proc. of world tourism destinations was concentrated in West European countries and 30 proc. in the south regions of Europe. The tourism activities between European countries is higher then it between Europe and other regions in the world. Also here, it is observing the tendency to visiting the neighboring countries and regions because “of economic reasons (low traveling costs), common culture, similar language or history” (Jaszczak, 2008, p. 173).

In many European countries, agriculture has lost its leading role as a branch of economy ensuring the economical development of the countryside and providing for its inhabitants. In all these places, public authorities on the local, regional and central level have taken actions to search, with various results, for alternative or additional ways of making use of the potential of agricultural farms and activating local rural communities in order to bring the decrease of the living standard of villagers to a stop. A special need for improvement is noticeable in Poland, where the economical transformation has put numerous limitations on the country people – a slump in the market of agricultural produce, high unemployment, which has substantially hampered the possibilities of additional income in the countryside and seriously limited the perspectives of advancement for young country people (Nykiel, 2005).
Rural tourism makes it possible to use the village space, agricultural environment and infrastructure in a rational way. Transformations of rural landscape are also connected with adaptation, rebuilding and preserving of old dwelling structures, of architecture of the region, therefore also with preserving regional qualities, customs and folk lore. However, preserving cultural identity does not mean isolating the rural community from civilisation. On the contrary, there is a tendency to develop new attitudes, to act according to social norms and notice new values introduced e.g. by tourists.

However, the profits offered by rural tourism demand active involvement of the local community, local government and government administration. A right policy pertaining to the balanced development of tourism is crucial for the success of a touristic enterprise.

**The aim of this work** is to present the current state of rural tourism in the regions of exceptional environmental and cultural values, as well as to present its role in the development of rural areas of choosed countries-Finland, Italy and Poland.

**Methodology of investigation**

The research and the choice of the area are a consequence of actions implemented under the projects:

- "Actions for developing and improving rural tourism in Warmia and Mazury" approved by Italian Ministry of Production (no 212/02/POL/05),
- “Warmian House” (Project financed by EU no Z/2.28/I/1.4/045/06) (2005–2007),
- “HINTERLAND potentials for a spatial development under the aspects of decline” INTERREG III B.

The research included farms offering touristic services in regions of special environmental and landscape value – Häme region (Finland), Umbria (Italy) and Warmia and Mazury (Poland). The first step was to get acquainted with the characteristics of the farms and services offered by them, as well as with social and economical problems connected with farming and their role in activating local rural communities. An on-site analysis of most of the structures was made. A diagnostic poll method was used, with a direct interview technique. Later, literature was analysed.

The research made it possible to compare the specific of rural tourism in the selected regions, demonstrating similarities and differences.
Results

There are different descriptions and definitions of rural tourism in the literature. Among them are these with different interpretations in each European country:

- **argi(o)tourism/farm tourism** – all forms of tourism activities on rural area. It is connected with tourism product based on agriculture production and accommodation in typical farm buildings;
- **wilderness and forest tourism** – tourism based on the organization of tourism infrastructure in forest areas with the possibility of using the special tourism product;
- **green tourism** – even than in some countries it is more linked with rural areas (in distance with big city agglomerations) the „green tourism” is a type of tourism friendly to environment in opposite to the mass tourism;
- **ecotourism** – as a ecological form of tourism, which include the unique natural values as well as active promotion of environment protection, which also gives the profits for local society.

**Development of rural tourism in Finland (Häme region)**

Finland as a rural tourism destination offers plenty of possibilities to an international traveller. A variety of terms are employed to describe tourism activity in the rural areas: agro-tourism, farm tourism, rural tourism, soft tourism, alternative tourism, eco-tourism. The Finnish rural tourism has great possibilities to grow and develop even internationally. The business is more and more aware of the higher quality requirements among the domestic and foreign customers. “*When these requirements are met and when customer service is of high level, the rural tourism enterprises can attract more customers also from the demanding foreign markets*” (Turunen, 2003, p. 82–83).

The estimated number of rural tourism establishments in Finland is about 3600. Three quarters of these businesses have originally been farms. However, today tourism is a major source of income for only 15 proc. of these entrepreneurs The rural tourism industry in Finland is characterised by part time tourism entrepreneurship, limited financial resources, limited entrepreneurial skills and a low level of commitment to long term development of the businesses (Komppula, 2003).

Tourism on the rural areas in Finland is a type of tourism activities, which are located on the non-urbanized areas, but:

- urban tourism or it based on the mass tourism can also used the rural areas resources;
- the rural areas are difficult to define, not each type of tourism on the rural areas is „real” rural;
- different forms of rural tourism are placed on different rural areas;
• rural tourism is a complex activity and rural areas are transformed in the continous process.

Because of this fact the rural tourism in Finland is located on the areas outside the cities but includes multifunctioning of village, it is based on small scale of activity (small farms). It includes the open spaces and close contact with nature as well as cultural heritage and even local society with traditional works of daily life.

The rural tourism as a product „made in Finland” has small size and it uses small settlements with the group of buildings, farmsteads. Tourism development is characterised by slowly tempo, based when its possible on enterprise servised by families who live in the village. The main idea of its development is to keep the specyfic „genius loci” of this small enterprise. It is important to continue a tradition in the future and mainly to protect the unique natural and cultural values against urbanism of region as well as to show the rational use of this potential.

The tourism on rural areas in Finland in classic interpretation is defined as tourism activity, in which guests have the possibility of education and knowing of rural live style in “pure, non polluted nature” or regional traditions. The guests can take a part in farm works and taste the local cusine. Of course some of people seeking something more, they want to know normal life of village inhabitants and to continue a contact with farmers (Nykiel, 2005).

Rural tourism development in Häme region has possitive influence on the other functions. The specyfic of this form of tourism decides of it, the number of guests is lower than in hotel, its not necessary to rebuilt the farm settlements, the income from tourism gives the chance for additional jobs for inhabitants

The goals of tourism development in Häme region are (Hall, 1998):
• help in life stabilization of local community and continuation of identity of rural areas;
• projects of activization the local and regional economy;
• additional source of income for inhabitants of rural areas;
• help in minimalizing of presure in modernisation and intensyfication of production, which could be dangerous for environment;
• generation of regional income for financing the conservation works;
• educational aespects of rural tourism (lectures and workshops of history, culture, natural conditions for local people and tourists);
• regional and national strategies for tourism.

Development of rural tourism in Italy

The development of Umbria in Italy and its tourism (including rural tourism) was stopped by an earthquake in 1997, which covered 1/3 of the region. The tourism movement after the cataclysm decreased by half, as well as the demand for all touristic services. In order to improve the situation and restore the touristic value of Umbria, the Italian government and regional authorities decided to take the necessary
action. In 1998, the region of Umbria assigned a large part of financial resources for the restoration of buildings and repairs of the damages.

With the cooperation of the region, local authorities, private sector and educational units, a system covering all actions leading to restoring tourism in the region was developed. The analysis of the territory and of the demand for particular services allowed for setting the main goal. The key point was to develop products and services which have one aim or idea in common. These services were divided into thematic groups:

- theme parks
  - luoghi dell anima (soul places) - a concept of a spiritual territory, meditation courses, a large role of religious tourism, religious movements, 34 religious sites in Umbria;
  - paesaggio d'autore - a combination of elements of landscape and museums (the interior and its external surroundings);
  - sentieri di gusto (paths of taste) – typical Umbrian foods produced on a small scale (the demand for these products is increased by creating food trails);
  - sentieri di fare (paths of crafts) – handicraft, embroidery, pottery, painting.

- networks of connections;

- devices facilitating the flow of tourist information (including a card entitling for discounts for various services, e.g. the Orvieto city card). Typical Umbrian touristic products were also developed:
  - slow trek – getting acquainted with rural tourism, getting to know local people, tasting typical dishes, cart riding and horse riding,
  - sentieri del gusto (paths of taste) – guides to various taste trails, i.e. wine trails, museums of taste, tasting sites and their marking,
  - acqua d'Umbria sport (Umbrian water sport) – using the advantages of water basins (Trasimeno lake) and numerous streams, mountain springs, waterfalls,
  - acqua d'Umbria (water of Umbria) – creating a water list (like a wine list), places of water tasting
  - feste vive (living festivals) – religious festivals in small townships and villages, folk lore festivities connected with other attractions,
  - scuola in vacanza (summer school) – thematic courses, e.g. a course of Italian language for foreigners, a course in regional cuisine, short courses of cooking and handicraft.

Apart from the above mentioned, other products have been developed – ones pertaining to promotion, communication and marketing, reorganisation and standardisation of information and marking, system of navigation, organisation of programming courses, environmental certificates and product services, developing a local museum network (museum grouping), improving the information flow, creating a web portal, creating a touristic and regional "observatory" (Jaszczak, 2008, p. 395).
Development of rural tourism in Poland

The region of Warmia and Mazury is particularly predisposed for developing rural tourism. Its objects are located in all areas of unquestionable touristic and cultural value. It is estimated that there are about 2 thousand agritouristic farms in the voivodship. Strong motivation of people looking for new ideas for additional sources of income, closeness of nature attractions, possibility of linking them with other branches of tourism – these are the main qualities of rural tourism in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship. Rural accommodation facilities can be also used in active, business and transit tourism. The offered products of rural tourism (guest rooms, group rooms, separate housing units, small guesthouses, souvenirs) are an important element of touristic management in the voivodship. Rural tourism is spread quite evenly on the map of Warmia and Mazury.

Advice and directions for the region included in the Tourism Development Strategy in Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship are (Tourism Development, 2004):

1) to build objects of therapeutic tourism – rural sanatoriums, objects taking advantage of the climate and offering possibilities of long rehabilitation in peace and quiet,
2) to create weekend packages as an offer for city dwellers from neighbouring voivodships,
3) to use closed village schools for creating "nature schools" (boarding schools in the country used for school trips) for city children,
4) to promote regional cooking in agritouristic farms,
5) to create an efficient system of informing about the offers of rural tourism, connected with the regional system of tourist information,
6) to continue the categorisation of rural accommodation facilities,
7) to place water parks in strategic sites,
8) to care about preserving indigenous local tradition as well as cultural identity of immigrant people while creating a touristic product in rural areas.

The research has confirmed a general tendency for the growing role of rural tourism in activating rural areas of selected regions. It has also showed that village inhabitants are increasingly interested in providing tourist services and in additional sources of income. The analysed touristic structures in Häme, Umbria and in Warmia and Mazury are characterised by diversification of offers and products, but they contain common elements. Most of them were created in the early 1990s and since then they have substantially developed in terms of quality of the services, introducing additional tourist attractions and extending the list of offered products. The lengthening of the tourist season beyond spring and summer is also important for the development of structures, activation of rural areas and increasing number of workplaces (Jaszczak, 2008). Cooperation of these structures with local and regional institutions is a great incentive for their development and in the future it will be decisive for their success. The researched structures are also of crucial importance for
the lives of local communities, for preserving the cultural heritage and protecting the environment (tabl. 1).

Tabl. 1. Comparison of tourism characteristic of rural areas in the researched regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Poland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main forms of tourism</td>
<td>Eco-tourism, Forest tourism</td>
<td>Culture tourism, green tourism</td>
<td>Agritourism, eco-tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Additional</td>
<td>Additional/Main source</td>
<td>Additional/Main source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In agritourism farm- the income from tourism is additional for the family running the farm, but it is often higher than the income from husbandry</td>
<td>In agritourism farms- the income from tourism cannot be higher than the income from husbandry and the time devoted to hosting guests cannot be longer than the total time worked on the farm</td>
<td>In agritourism farm- the income from tourism is additional for the family running the farm, but it is often higher than the income from husbandry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation facilities</td>
<td>In farms, small scale of buildings, small hostels, wooden holiday houses, camps and</td>
<td>In hotel, motel- “locanda”, in old-styled, valuable buildings</td>
<td>Mostly in agritourism farm, small scale, new houses (sometimes renovated old one accommodation facilities – up to 5 rooms in the structure without taxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In agritourism farm accommodation facilities – up to 30 guests without the necessity of paying taxes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular tourism products</td>
<td>Health resorts-spa centres, finish sauna, slages, water products (lakes)-sailing, fishing, canoeying, winter sports</td>
<td>Theme parks, living festivals, historical monuments, religious places, italian (umbrian) cuisine, water sports, slow trek.</td>
<td>Water sports, sailing, canoeying, fishing, religious places, living on the farm, hunting, regional cuisine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorization</td>
<td>Categorization for all objects</td>
<td>Categorisation for hotels, there is no one for other objects i.e. agritourism farms</td>
<td>Obligatory for hotels, motels, a voluntary system of farm evaluation, so-called categorization, made on demand of the accommodation provider</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rural tourism in regions is understood in different way but it involves all actions in rural areas, including accommodation and catering facilities as well as complementary services, while agritourism pertains to a particular farm with its agriculture and animal husbandry. In Umbria, structures not being agricultural farms, but offering agritouristic services are subject to severe penalty.
Conclusions

The development of rural tourism in Finland, Italy and Poland has occurred more or less in the same time. Still, in spite of numerous similarities in the functioning of structures, there are also noticeable differences in terms of the specifics of accommodation and catering facilities, offered services and their quality, ways of financing, grants, legal aspects, external evaluation of farms, cooperation within associations and non-governmental organizations. Rural tourism and agritourism in analysed countries is related to the development of the whole farm offering the services as well as with the economical and social development of rural areas. The livelihood of country people and stopping their migration to cities have become important factors determining this development. Activating the society, cultivating traditions and customs as well as environmental protection have been decisive in the success of the planned touristic enterprises. Also the development of touristic products for the whole region has been of great importance.

As a result of the analysis, several conclusions have been made:

● regions in Finland, Italy and Poland are perceived as exceptionally attractive for tourists;
● considering the predispositions of these regions, the main area of creating touristic products should be active tourism. The basis of developing products in these areas can be youth tourism and rural tourism;
● the role of rural tourism is important in the activisation of rural areas by developing tourist facilities and complementary services as well as creating new touristic enterprises and expanding technical and social infrastructure involving the local people;
● all sorts of promotion, advertising and tourist information of particular farms and the whole region of researched areas should be the means of acquiring new guests;
● creating a categorisation system of tourist services in Umbria and other regions of Italy will be decisive for the quality of the services. In Polish conditions, it would be advisable to improve the system of grading agritouristic farms, so that voluntary categorisation becomes more common;
● it is important for the development of rural tourism to lengthen the touristic season beyond traditional summer holidays and create offers for shorter holiday breaks, winter holidays and so-called long weekends.

Literature


KAIMO TURIZMO VERSLO PLĖTRA EUROPOS SĄJUNGOS REGIONUOSE

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Nuolat didėjanti kaimo turizmo paslaugų paklausa, augantis susidomėjimas poilsiu kaimo vietovėse, esančiose toliau nuo didelių urbanizuotų vietovių, suteikia kaimo turizmui galimybę tobulinti apgyvendinimo sąlygas kaimi. Tai naudinga ir perspektyvi veikla ne tik atskiriems kaimo turizmo sodybų šeimininkams, bet ir visai kaimo bendruomenei, ir netgi visam tam regionui.

РАЗВИТИЕ ПРЕДПРИНИМАТЕЛЬСТВА В СЕЛЬСКОМ ТУРИЗМЕ В РЕГИОНАХ ЕВРОПЕЙСКОГО СОЮЗА

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С одной стороны, сельский туризм, как и агROTOРИЗМ, присоединяется к общим процессам и результатам развития сельской местности. Особенно это ощутимо в местностях с высоким уровнем безработицы и/или большим количеством социальных проблем. С другой стороны, развитие сельского туризма положительно влияет на развитие тех регионов. Наиболее всего это ощутимо в регионах, которые могут гордиться изобилием природных и культурных ценностей. Развитие таких регионов должно осуществляться в нескольких направлениях. Вместе с экономическим должны сочетаться социальное и экологическое развитие.

Постоянно увеличивающийся спрос услуг на сельский туризм, возрастающий интерес к отдыху в отдаленных от урбанизированных мест сельских местностях создают возможность для тех, кто развивает сельский туризм, улучшать условия временного проживания в сельской местности. Эта деятельность выгодна и перспективна не только для отдельных хозяев усадьб сельского туризма, но и для всей сельской общины, и даже целого региона.

Цель этого исследования – обобщить и представить нынешний опыт развития сельского туризма в регионах, пользующихся изобилием природных и культурных ценностей. В данной статье рассматриваются и анализируются особенности предпринимательства в сельском туризме, подобия и различия в трёх выбранных государствах: в Финляндии, Италии и Польше. Также для тех, кто заинтересован развитием сельского туризма, представлены предложения, как эффективнее использовать наиболее удачные примеры.

Ключевые слова: агROTOРИЗМ, предпринимательство, сельская местность, сельский туризм, услуги.