

THE ROLE OF TOURISM AGENTS IN PROMOTING RURAL TOURISM

BIANCA-ALINA RADAC¹, I. CSOSZ¹, IULIANA IOANA MERCE¹, IOANA ANDA MILIN¹, RALUCA ZAMFIR² J. HORVÁTH³

¹ *University of Agricultural Science and Veterinary Medicine of Banat Timișoara, Romania;*

biancaradac@yahoo.com

² *Erasmus University Rotterdam*

³ *University of Szeged*

Abstract: *This paper aims to present the great importance of tourism agents in promoting the Romanian rural area to their clients from Romania and abroad. It also aims to present the importance of the information trips for the agents, organized by the owners of hotels and accommodation situated in rural area, for the agents to have direct contact with the place, the landmark, the history and the geographical location of the place they are going to sell as tourism offer to their clients.*

I also want to make suggestions for a good collaboration between the agents and rural tourism tour operators, change of ideas between them in order to have a good offer for clients, or to be able to personalize an offer for the needs of a certain client.

Key words: *tourism; rural; agent; accommodation; hote; information; trip; offer.*

INTRODUCTION

The travel agency is a company acting as intermediary between the trader, direct providers of travel and tourist. Its activity consists of organizing, providing and marketing service packages or their components.

Travel agencies are divided into two categories: travel agency tour operator and travel agency retailers.

Travel agencies have always been among the leading promoters of tourism, which can directly address the consumer in person, but also through other means such as mailing campaigns, tourism fairs, media, etc..

Travel Agency is the main distributor of tourism. It holds the monopoly on the sale because it has two big advantages over other forms of distribution: almost complete protection of consumer and financial guarantees given to both tourists and providers.

Rural tourism gains more ground by creating diverse offers and a good value for price, important elements that determine travel agencies to sell and promote their offers.

MATERIAL AND METHODS. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Romania is among the countries with the most diversified tourism products due to natural resources at its disposal, biodiversity of flora and fauna unique to Europe. We can say that it is still a largely agricultural country with a general rural area that offers attractive scenery and opportunities for rural tourism development. Also in Romania are a third of the natural springs in Europe and 117 localities that have natural therapeutic elements such as water, sewage, gas and more.

Another tourist attraction, but this time the Romanian seaside is seasonal, which covers an area of 245 km, from the Danube Delta in the north to the border with Bulgaria, with long stretches of beach, with tourist resorts and major ports . And last but not least, it should be noted cultural heritage of our country has 30 monuments included in the

UNESCO World Heritage List, including the wooden churches of Maramures, Painted Churches of Moldavia and Dacian from Orăștie mountains.

We do not have to forget Romanian popular culture and visual arts, which are represented by national and international shows and festivals.

There are areas in Romania where rural tourism, ecological and cultural is well capitalized, and many have the potential and the lack of involvement are not exploited.

Many areas of our country are highly developed in terms of rural, ecological and cultural being known and appreciated abroad.

Rural tourism is a form of tourism that has developed from scratch in Romania, from the 90s, belonging to ANTREC undeniable merit. The two organizations - ANAT and ANTREC - have worked very well over time, but there were warnings about the collaboration between tourism and rural pensions, which have often preferred to directly address public.

Rural tourism is an opportunity for the Romans to look to ancient values of these lands, from traditions and to the beauty of the places.

Involvement of travel agencies in promoting rural tourism would be beneficial for development. A travel agency can make travel a segment known poor not by sale but by other agencies to promote the country and abroad, through various means of correspondence or promotional campaigns.

Objectives and activities for promoting

For proper functioning and profitable travel agency needs to impose certain objectives and promotional activities to attract and retain customers, as follows:

- the development of partnerships with tour operators , in order to resell their offers;
- informing other structure which aimed promotion of tourist destinations that they sell or resell;
- creating and promoting their own offers which may be resold also by other agents;
- attracting funding sources from the ministry and other structures to promote and achieve promotion brochures destinations;
- support for cooperation with existing tourist information centers in Romania
- creating a database and a Web platform where are promoted tourist destinations;
- creating a database of customers and their loyalty trying;
- measures of training and agency employees;
- develop strategies to promote and develop tourism / rural tourism;
- develop database travel arrangements with sights in different rural areas;
- editing of own promotional material and publications
- building partnerships with other agencies at home and abroad, with similar purposes or to promote tourism

Type of travel agencies

Travel agencies in Romania may be of several types:

a) travel agency tour operator: Activity is self-organizing and selling of travel packages or of their components, directly or through intermediaries;

b) Retailers: Who sells or offers for sale on behalf of a tour operator agency, contracted service packages or components;

In EU countries, as recommended OMT (Order of the Ministry of Tourism), there are also two types of travel agents:

a) Retailers: providing the public with information on opportunities for travel, accommodation and service delivery more information about rates and conditions of

service. Also, they are authorized by their suppliers to sell these services delivery charges specified. In the contract for the sale of tourism products (ticket voucher) is it clear that the agency acts as an intermediary.

b) wholesalers (tour operator) that conceives, prepares and sells standard travel products intended to be sold either directly or through their own offices or through agents retailer. Between travel agencies operating in the EU, the most common type is small independent agencies involved in particular in the sale of tourist services retail.

The importance of info trips and travel agencies staff training

All travel agents want to sell their offer and the offer of their collaborators, and to be able to do that they must do a great promotion of the services that they are selling. To be able to do that they must be informed and well trained.

Info trip is the "journey" organized by a tour operator partner travel agencies (reselling). In a info trip will be visited a destination, hotels, resorts, is "tested" hotels, restaurants, clubs and visits to various tourist attractions. A info trip is not a vacation, but a trip as "recognition" to that place to get familiar with the destination and know what to recommend to tourists when they want to go on vacation.

It is very important the quality of an info trip and when saying this we mean the organization and complexity.

A well organized info trip will include visits to hotels;

- Visit the resort with free time in each station;
- Testing accommodations hotels and restaurants;
- Time for discussion / workshop participants to info trip;

Info trips help us to know both destinations, specific met from one area to another, the services offered by hotels, restaurants, fun ways, visits and tours that can be made in every place in part.

We live in a world of change and therefore must constantly learn to be ready all the time and put a smile on the face of every tourist that visit us!

A very well organized info trip that gives enough information to travel agents about a location, accommodation and the easiest ways of getting to that place, will guarantee a sure sale of the touristic product.

CONCLUSIONS

Should be considered the most important destinations and promoting forms of tourism in Romania on major domestic and foreign tourism markets.

Should participate in tourism fairs in the country and abroad, primarily to promote tourism agency and implicitly for the sold and resold through it.

Information tours are a great opportunity for a deep knowledge of locations from which tourists can be presented in detail tourists interested in a particular destination.

Travel agencies should see their own advantages in promoting rural tourism. Through the promotion, sales increase and everyone stands to gain both direct rural tourism operators and reselling agency.

Another important factor is a good image left by the travel agency to the client that enters the agency and wants to buy a stay, quality of service and promptness of travel agents.

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