

TERMS OF STRATEGIC PLANS IN RURAL TOURISM AND FARM SERVICES

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Abstract: *Strategy requires new goals, new methods to ensure the continuity and improvement of its, containing general efforts of agro-tourist farms including adjustment of the requirements of the market. The components of the plan which compose the strategy may change during the activities, which will influence the change of agency plans in rural area. Tourism agency must know the basic elements in a way that they include themselves harmoniously in work objectives of agro-tourist farms.*

Key words: *strategic plan, rural tourism products and services, rural area, farm*

INTRODUCTION

For the management of a travel agency in the rural area, the strategy concerning the rural tourism products and services should contain the action plan destined to ensure the achievement of positive economic results in the competition with its competitors.

In the making up of a competitive strategy of rural tourism strategies, the managers of the travel agencies should take into account the following components [6,8]:

- Identifying, analysing, and separating the basic elements of the strategy;
- Knowing the demands that occur in the application of the strategy;
- Integrating the basic elements in a proper, compact strategic plan.

The strategy of rural tourism products and services should also rely on the following elements [3,6,8]:

- A travel agency that manages the tangible elements of rural tourism products and services such as the rural tourism product, equipment, and investments;
- The notion of rural tourism products and services (the way the travel agency would like to have its rural tourism products and services assessed);
- The distribution system of rural tourism products and services;
- The competitors (travel agencies and other rural tourism operators that provide the same categories of rural tourism products and services);
- The users (the beneficiaries of rural tourism products and services).

These conditions should be met if we bear in mind that there is some clear strategic direction for each rural tourism product or service meeting the consumers' needs [1,4].

The strategy of rural tourism products and services relies on the concept of marketing to develop such partial strategies as [2,5]:

- A strategy for diversified rural tourism products and services;
- A strategy for the offer and price of rural tourism products and services;
- A strategy for the quality of rural tourism products and services;
- A strategy for the availability of rural tourism products and services.

For the managers of a travel agency, it is not enough to know well the agency and its customers: they should also know the way their competitors operate. The information the manager of a travel agency can collect on his competitors are elements participating in

his own policy of developing strategic plans. Each travel agency manager should analyse the activity of his competitors not to hinder it but to be able to make a difference.

Among the numerous tasks of a travel agency manager in the rural area is coordinating the way in which the basic elements of a strategic plan match the goals of a profitable activity. He should also periodically check the way the strategic plans are implemented and how much the rural tourism product has been improved in relation to the exigencies of diversifying rural tourism products and services.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper presents solutions for the improvement of rural tourism based on the development of new strategies that contribute to the diversification of rural tourism products and services and provide tourists with new alternatives for their leisure time.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Valorising a rural area strictly depends on the contents of rural tourism products and services, on the variety and quality of the products and services provided by both travel agencies and rural tourism products and services providers.

Among the motivations making tourists agree with a certain type of rural tourism – a certain travel destination, a certain variety of rural tourism projects – there is also a factor of attractiveness called “agreement” or entertainment, relaxation, pleasure that accompanies the active rest of the tourists, so much needed while spending one’s free time during holidays.

The concept of active rest seems a contradiction in itself because, for some tourists, holidays is a form of rest aiming at getting rid of daily problems, of enjoying doing nothing, of recreating.

The polluting effects of the urban agglomerations due to the daily fuss of the traffic of individuals acts on the psychic and physic of the individual – resulting in nervous fatigue.

Because rural tourism is more and more turning into a characteristic type of mass consumption, the concern for integrating varied holidays in the range of rural tourism arrangements ranks first among rural tourism products and services.

There are no precise limits between active and passive rest: for instance, in all-inclusive traditional rural tourism products and services providing tourists with a variety of rural tourism products and services, there are frequent demands for some alternative agreement activities, free time relaxation, or entertainment that are positively acquired from the perspective of originality, variety, attractiveness, and quality.

New structural processes and changes of customers are more and more taken into account in rural tourism practice through the gradual passage of a considerable number of rural tourists from the “passive” to the “active” group.

In the ongoing process of enriching the rural tourism offer, the **concerns of rural tourism tour-operators and rural tourism products and services providers** to diversify the rural tourism offer including new, more complex, and more attractive activities than traditional ones rank first.

What we need to do is to reorganise rural tourism promotion and develop such strategies for the innovation of rural tourism products and services that both primary and secondary rural tourism products and services meet the following demands of rural tourism consumers (Figure 1):

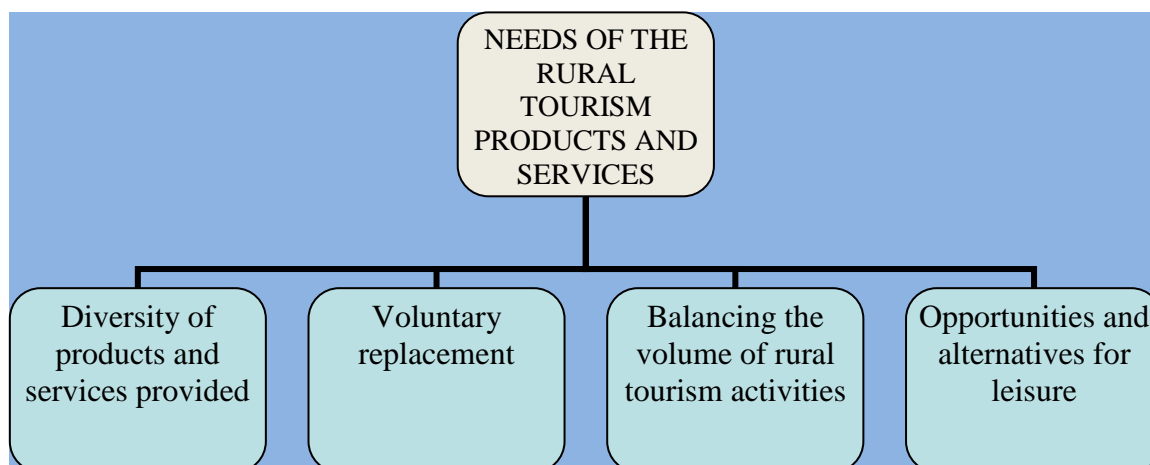


Figure 1. Demands of rural tourism

- **Diversity of products and services provided from the point of view of attractiveness** to influence the tourist's decision and to make him ask as many products and services as possible and, eventually, prolong his stay or come back to the same rural tourism destination again and again;
- Accept voluntary replacement – given the circumstances stipulated by local regulations – of **a range of rural tourism products and services with another one**, with a similar degree of attractiveness, and capable of satisfying the rural tourist's exigencies;
- Accept **balancing the volume of rural tourism activities** given that, worldwide, there is a trend to gradually reduce the length of a stay in a rural area by increasing the attractiveness of the offer;
- Provide **opportunities and alternatives for leisure** at any time of the day and in any circumstance.

The Government's Ordinance No. 21 from 1992 concerning the protection of the consumer defines quality as the "ensemble of the features of a product or service that makes it capable of meeting expressed or implied needs".

From the perspective of rural tourism products and services providers managers, this definition asks for a re-adaptation of the strategic goals and shows the degree of improvement a firm is determined to reach and keep to meet the customers' preferences.

Rural tourism products and services providers involve much labour force, difficult to estimate based on a single system of marketing approach. Together with the four instruments of marketing mix – product, price, promotion, and distribution – there is also, in the rural tourism products and services, inner, interactive marketing.

In service marketing, the quality of products and services depends mainly on the hospitable attitude of the products and services providers.

From the point of view of the customers, the following difficulties occur in the assessment of rural tourism products and services quality:

- The customer can assess the quality of rural tourism products and services before even consuming them;
- The customer can assess the quality of rural tourism products and services after purchase or consumption of these products and services;
- The customer takes for granted the features of the rural tourism products and services though he cannot assess them right after purchase or consumption.

The elements of the assessment principles of rural tourism products and services quality are as follows:

- Communication;
- Accessibility to rural tourism products and services;
- Training the staff;
- Making the staff responsible;
- Environment;
- Hospitality;
- Security.

CONCLUSIONS

When a firm providing rural tourism products and services improves the contacts between the staff and the customers to make the staff work as a team, we need inner marketing to make it work; interactive marketing implies that rural tourists perceive high quality, which depends largely on the interaction between provider and consumer of rural tourism products and services.

There is a close relationship between productivity, quality, and profitability in the rural tourism products and services industry. When the customers perceive differences in the quality of rural tourism products and services, these differences will also be noticeable in the level of profits.

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