

The Evaluative Dimensions of the Services in Agro Tourism

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Abstract

The current and the future issue of all the forms of the tourism is ensuring the quality of the touristic product particularly seen from the aspect of the touristic services offered, without which any precioustouristic heritage cannot be capitalized.

The future of the Romanian tourism relies on the capacity of the actors involved to capitalize the amazing potential of the tourism and to adapt to the increasing expectations of the touristic demand up to the idea of foreseeing them. These two dimensions define a modern and competitive tourism.

As the expectations of the specific consumer concerning the quality of the touristic product diversify and multiply, the role of the human capital develops and a lot of new segments of the population get involved. Through specific activities of direct implication of these people, we come across a very interesting phenomenon of developing, training and education of the consumer, which translates into a boost of the level of acceptance of the specific services offered by the tourism and an increase of the client's satisfaction.

Key words: agro tourism, local tourism, tourists' needs

INTRODUCTION

The agro tourism is a specific form of the rural tourism, which has similarities and differences with local tourism. The rural tourism is a concept which covers the touristic activity organized and managed by a certain population, and it is based on the natural and anthropic potential, while the agro tourism comprises of activities such as: providing the accommodation and the meals in the farm, tourists' transportation, the supply of the additional services, together with the implication in the economic activity, in general the agricultural one, managed by the hosts as farmers.

Many specialists have identified Romania as being one of the European countries with the highest potential in developing the agro tourism as an important income source for the national budget and the investors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For a more accurate understanding of the issues that arise from the study of the services offered by agro tourism, I believe it is necessary to make, for the beginning, a clear distinction between the local tourism and the agro tourism, and in the background to analyze the evaluative dimensions of services in agro tourism, from the point of view of clients'/tourists' motivations, the clients who opt for this form of tourism, because the data that we have confirm that these services are in a relationship of interconnection with these motivations, where the services appear as a response to these motivations.

Because the two terms (local tourism and agro tourism), are identified, most of the time, by the collective mentality, as being one and the same thing, it is necessary to study them in order to find out both common points and points that make them different.

It is true that the two terms are identifying up to a certain point, having the same root (source), but exactly this matrix highlights the common identity elements and also the elements that lead to differences.

So, the term of local tourism includes the culture, the history, the traditions and customs of the rural areas and together with the specific of the farming households constitute as a touristic offer. In this context, it is also necessary to underline the differentiation between local tourism and agro-tourism, because the first one is characterized by the organization of tourist activity in the context of rural communities, regions and areas of the countryside, while the second one approaches the touristic area from inside the farms.

Agro tourism manifests itself as a form of tourism that uses for the accommodation and food services the "bed and breakfasts" and agro-farming landlords, benefiting from an unpolluted environment and natural tourist attractions but also offers tourists the possibility to make contact with the cultural-historical values as well as with the Romanian village traditions.

Integrated in the local tourism, the agro tourism covers the whole range of tourist services linked directly to the peasant household, offering accommodation, meals and entertainment in the previously recalled environment.

Agro tourism is always tied to the peasant house, the one who knows the mysteries and secrets of nature, this being the place where grow small livestock with which the tourist lost the contact long time ago, and also the place where he has the possibility of eating fresh fruits.

It is based on three elements that depend on one another:

- the attraction towards the beauties of nature;

- the accommodation and meals are of good quality and offered with hospitality;
- the transport and the access roads are very important in order to ensure a continuous flow of tourists.

Conclude that agro tourism differentiates itself from the local tourism through the following defining traits:

- it represents a combination of tourist activities with those of the agricultural exploitation;
- the agro touristic farm provides for the tourists natural products as well as “knowing the farm” programs;
- the agro tourism includes both the family activities that achieve profit but also agricultural activities;
- the number of accommodation places is reduced, and it has a rustic character;
- it has a large spreading in space;
- it avoids big touristic agglomerations in top periods.

We think that the analysis of the evaluative dimensions of the services system in agrotourism, has to be closely related to the clients’/tourists motivations, clients who opt for this form of tourism.

Before analyzing and highlighting these motivations, it is necessary to mention that the potential customers are tourists who live in urban areas, around the country and abroad and who opt for this form of tourism of the following reasons:

- ✓ the return to the nature - rustic environment offers to the modern persons’ health, physical and spiritual comfort as well as the restore of the functional balance mechanism;
- ✓ the understanding and the knowledge of the folklore, the customs and the traditional occupations;
- ✓ getting out of the monotony and the routine that tourists deal with in the urban areas, by checking the personal and creative skills and through their initiation into the mystery of the crafts and the traditional occupations;
- ✓ the privilege for tourists to visit the picturesque and attractive places, filled with history or religion;
- ✓ the popular hospitality, the gastronomic habits, the handicraft and the village ritual;
- ✓ the rest, the air and fruits cure, eating fresh food and the occupational therapy;
- ✓ the practice of specific sports like hunting, fishing and hiking.

It is necessary to come up with good services that respond fully to all the previously mentioned motivations and that will make the tourists return

for next year, turning them into true advertisers, because of the quality of the services provided by the farm will reach through recommendations to other prospective tourists who won't hesitate to come also.

Accommodation in a rustic environment, the meals made of products from the farm and participating at the main activities in the farm are the main services provided to the potential tourists.

For a period of 1-3 days, these services fully satisfy most of the tourists, but as the human being is by definition a social being who does not resist for long periods in isolation, the agro tourism providers must come up with a series of additional services such as:

- transportation services
 - the existence in the nearby of some roads or railways, as well as other ways of transportation;
- post and mail services, telecommunications and advertising
 - such as access to the internet and fax, TV cable and sales of tourist promotion materials;
- personal services
 - like hairdresser, cosmetics, manicure/pedicure, maintenance gymnastics;
- services related to leisure
 - fishing, hunting and hiking, excursions and trips;
- renting services
 - for sport equipment, boats, ATV, reception halls/rooms.

It can be seen easily that the agrotourism has borrowed from the local tourism a number of services for the purpose of diversification, satisfaction and the attraction of customers, services that are aimed on satisfying the previously named motivations. The evaluation of the services offered by the holiday farm is in fact their self-evaluation that the Romanian farmers had to diversify and prepare them at the tourists' disposal.

CONCLUSIONS

The beauty of the places in Romania have caused many tourists to visit for years the places where they have been before or even to settle permanently in our country. What could be more convincing as a motivator than the statement of Dr. Andre Lwoff - Nobel laureate. „When you're a European, who lives in the noisy cities of the continental shelf, you figure out that there in the Upside Country, how you the Romanians use to call it, you know and live the accomplishment of a peaceful feeling, the beauty of the visited monasteries, the tranquillity of the climate, that's why I thought that I should live there”.

But perhaps even more eloquent is the love of Prince Charles for the rural areas of Romania. Here is what the future King of the United Kingdom said about these places: "If these places disappear, it would not only be a tragedy for the people of Transilvania, but a loss for all the humanity."

A natural question arises: What determined Prince Charles and other many tourists to come to visit the wonderful places in the rural area of our country? The answer is simple: the motivations of each tourist and the quality of the agro-tourism services.

Some key points in providing quality services in agro tourism can be used in order to ensure the success. Such keys are: the identification of the development possibilities, identifying and attributing the specific responsibilities to all the actors involved, setting out the touristic product as a mix of services, the observation and the monitoring of the trends in the tourists' needs and expectations.

The agro tourism is a multifunctional and dynamical system and a leverage for the sustainable development of countryside in all its dimensions (economic, social, cultural and ecological one).

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