

Rural Tourism as a Measure of Regional Development

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Abstract: *The area "Szatmar" was for a long period cattle-breeding region. Also nowadays, we can find here squalid pastures which give to this area unique plasticity. Inhabitants in this region not only breeding the cattle for nutrition, they also used fruits from wild growing trees, which were located in the flooded regions. The most important fruits were "Nemtudom" or "Penygei szilva" (plum) that they mansyded used. This area was in the economic crisis, the state of cattle drastic fell. Fruits which grown in these regions have no change to get to the markets. Also cooking of plum jam that we can consider as folk tradition, not expanded-not flourish. Rural tourism can be through the fruits using more developed.*

Key words: *rural tourism, Szatmar, development of country*

The economic role of tourism is well known nowadays: with its help buying power produced elsewhere can be attracted into a region to create such income that is suitable for diversifying the economy and retaining the population. This is why it is a general trend to develop tourism. Furthermore, these beneficial results are reached with utilising such resources that would otherwise be lying unused or would yield less economic income (e.g. national parks and nature reserves, historic monuments, lakes, rivers and storage lakes, areas not suitable for cultivation, rural environment and lifestyle, etc.). Thus tourism is an important regional development factor as well.

Tourism, however, has effects not only on the economy but on the natural and social environments as well. These effects might be not only advantageous but disadvantageous as well (e.g. crowdedness, inflation, speculation, destroying natural values, loosing of the morals, depreciation of the traditions and other cultural values and even tourism treated badly adds to the spreading of drugs, prostitution and crime). Therefore today reaching sustainable development become essential in tourism as well.

Sustainability has a special meaning in rural tourism. On the one hand – as in each field of life – in rural tourism the natural and cultural heritage should be protected as these values present the attractions visitors come into the region as a destination. On the other hand, however, the task of rural tourism is to utilise these values or it would be enough to organise the protection of these values. Sustainable development therefore is based on the utilisation of the natural and social values connected with their protection. For the utilisation tourist organisations operating professionally are required because if visitors are not coming suppliers go into bankruptcy or our villages become deserted.

All this means that an environment friendly rural tourism with marketing attitude should be developed as the lack of the preserved environment and the lack of income would endanger the sustainability of tourism in the long term and in the short term respectively. Sustainable development can only be reached by conscious development. The conscious development of rural tourism presumes planning and the creation of the modern institution system inevitable for implementing the plans together with appropriate economic and legal control, motivating system orientating private investments, developed infrastructure, professional labour, rural tourism establishments operating professionally and environment friendly, effective non-profit institutional and regional marketing, correct and friendly behaviour of the population and the institutions with the visitors, reasonable public safety and appropriate health-care. This means that without professionalism and the active co-operation of the private sector sustainable development cannot be reached. Besides government key responsibilities as the planning, controlling, infrastructure development, education, etc helping the people that need it to rest and to take holidays are tasks of public purposes. From private companies the establishment and professional and correct operation of the profit orientated rural tourism constructions can be expected. Thus an important condition of obtaining sustainable development and competitiveness is the proper co-operation of the public and private sectors.

The starting point of conscious development is planning. The development of tourism has to suit the requirements of the double integration, therefore rural tourism has to be – in the framework

of regional development – integrated into its environment and within rural tourism the rural attractions (tourism products) has to be planned together with each constituent. (If a region expects the growth of tourism only from constructing one hotel or pension or rural accommodation it will be mistaken sooner or later. Only for an accommodation to be paid no one will travel. Visitors seek for sights worth visiting first then look up travel opportunities evaluates the time then search the accommodation possibilities compare the prices regard public safety, entertainment offers and other services. These together present the base of comparison of the destinations to finally decide where the visitor would travel. The decision is easier if the visitor has some sort of an image about the destinations or receives appropriate information on the possible destinations...)

In planning the development of rural tourism the principle of hierarchy should be respected. According to the principle of hierarchy the first step is to determine the long-term aims (conception when accepting it becomes the official tourism policy, strategy of the country or the region), the middle-term development programmes are based upon these and finally, they are concretised by the particular establishments and the projects constructed for the complex tourism products and packs.

Short-term aims of tourism development:

- Increasing the specific spending of the visitors,
- Reducing seasonality,
- Increasing average staying time,
- Increasing the number of visitor nights,
- Improving the ratio of domestic and foreign tourism.

Elements of the measure system:

- Supporting the development of tourism attraction and service,
- Country marketing (activity of the Hungarian Tourism Inc.),
- Modernising the legal control associated with tourism,
- Inter state tourist co-operation agreements.

Aim of rural tourism:

- Increasing the population retaining strength of villages, keeping the agricultural producers,
- Widening the measures of regional development,
- Increasing the local export possibilities of agricultural enterprises, reviving gastronomic traditions, establishing and strengthening new tourism services,
- Establishing the organisation of rural, regional service suppliers,
- Increasing the standard of horse services with organising quality assurance,
- Strict control of environmental prescriptions, continuous control and reduction of the loading of the rural natural environment,
- Reviving and drawing of the natural resources and social-cultural heritage from the realm of dead values,
- Surviving agriculture and conserving the rural landscape,
- Continuously supplying training for the human resources in order of quality assurance,
- Organising and teaching diverse marketing activity in order to effectively increase tourism,
- Activating the economy of rural areas.

The main attractions of rural tourism are living traditions (material, mental, cultural and production traditions), rural lifestyle, familiar atmosphere and human relations. These present not the base of a particular tourism type but a diverse offer bond to specifics might be different by landscapes, settlements or even by inns and present good conditions for the development of rural tourism connected to these specialities.

The offers of regional tourism extend from rural tourism through ecotourism and agricultural tourism till thematic offers containing even different fruit routes for example. The summarising framework of the particular product types are outlined in the following – brief – terms:

Ecotourism: Contains all forms of tourism based on nature where the main motivation for the visitors is to know and protect nature. Besides, studying the local culture is important and learning is the basic motivation.

Agricultural tourism: Includes tourism settled primarily into agricultural regions organised for selling agricultural conditions and products together with bio-production of plants and cattle and other products carried out in rural farms.

Rural tourism: An offer presenting the traditions of rural landscapes and settlements based on co-operation and including the organisation of programmes and events apart from local accommodation and service.

Thematic offers, thematic routes:

- Community of historical past, monuments, traditional trade connections,
- Presenting production cultures and products (cheese, vine, fruit...) specific for the regions,
- Routes based on craftsmanship and folklore traditions.

In the first years of the era after the regime change letting village accommodation belonged to the “forced enterprises” category as agricultural counties offered very limited ways of earning a living for the inhabitants.

With the ceasing of the holiday resorts of the National Board of Trade Unions especially large families searched for cheap accommodation. The meeting of the supply and demand in the first half of the 1990s resulted in the increase of quantity.

The formation of small regional and then county associations and organisations re-started the rural tourism already in good operation in the 1930s by the quantification of the accommodation places. By the end of the 1990s rural hosts recognised that it is not enough to tidy their own garden but the appearance and cleanness of the whole village and especially the programmes for the visitors resting in the village are very important.

Today’s development went on this way. Cooperation of small regions resulted in that events attract visitors into Hungarian villages in every part of the year in numerous parts of the country.

Especially gastronomic events are highlighted as villages still preserve the traditions of preparing old folk meals.

Rural tourism at its present development level fulfils the requirements primarily of domestic tourism. However, with sensible development, high quality programmes and the better utilisation of the natural resources it may become an attraction for foreign visitors as well.

The aim was to establish a high quality receiving base where the conditions of active resting in the real Hungarian villages are offered and proved for both domestic and foreign visitors.

The visitor receivers of rural tourism are qualified houses in 60% that are suitable for the EU norms as they received their appropriate sunflower quantification on the basis of the quantification constructed by the National Association. Despite all, there are problems in the Hungarian rural tourism to be solved:

- Lack of appropriate professionalism. Visitor receivers operate without any kind of training and qualification,
- There is no appropriate, effective marketing,
- The cooperation between hosts and service suppliers is missing,
- Lack of support from the leaders of the majority of the settlements involved,
- Faster increase of visitors is impeded by the lack of infrastructure and environmental protection,
- Lack of appropriate language knowledge,
- Organisation of programmes is not continuous and occasional events impede the visitor receiving of similar quality,
- There is no financial background of the entrepreneurs to keep and teach folklore.

Rural tourism considered not only as a possibility added to the income by the receivers but as a possible way of survival and development of the disadvantageous deserting regions fighting against unemployment and having mostly small villages.

Many state that rural tourism may save disadvantageous areas. This means not the only way of their survival but it can be a part of the well-planned development programmes. It may play a significant role in the self-employment and additional income of the inhabitants of the disadvantageous regions.

Rural tourism also means besides economic factors the village renewal, building heritage and life preserving, life standard improving effects associated with regional development. Recreation increases

the field of vision of the village dwellers and the functions of our villages. Its region developing effect can be felt directly and indirectly as well.

How rural tourism become a measure of regional development?

Its aim is to enable the construction of such a high quality tourism offer by supporting and implementing tourism developments (accommodation and programmes) that create the possibility of closing the economic gap in the today less developed regions.

One pillar of the improvement of quality conditions is to prevent the formation of self organising initiations lacking professionalism by high standard education and training:

- a. Starting such training in an organised form that improves the professional and language knowledge of those operating as visitor receivers. Most of our village visitor receivers have horses and provide carriageing and horse riding opportunities for the visitors. For them it is vital to organise a wider training.
- b. In order to be on the market accommodation holders should be provided to be on the Internet and the number of visitors should be increased by the operation of the on-line accommodation booking system. The lack of financial opportunities of the visitor receivers impedes them to be fully connected to the present systems. Hosts and servicers have to be made accessible directly on-line through grants.

To collect those service suppliers in the micro regions having natural or cultural attractions that have several years of practice and besides their hose offer a wide range of high quality services for both domestic and foreign visitors.

Significance, conditions and tasks of rural tourism

1. Significance for visitors (motivations)

- Appearance of the demand of rural environment,
- Attraction to the new and unknown,
- Attraction to the different environment and activity,
- Getting away from tight work,
- Curiosity,
- Closeness to nature,
- Rest, cultural and sport possibilities in villages,
- Feeling safe in human environment (significance of human friendly environment),
- Cheaper than the towns, hotels or popular resorts.

2. Significance for the village and the village dwellers

- Improving salaries (additional income),
- Realising greater employment (reducing potential unemployment),
- Directly selling agricultural products (local export),
- Continuous training, ability development (training – self training),
- Preserving the conditions of the rural environment (keeping traditions).

How do village events help to regional development? Presenting through a given example

The small region of Szatmár was an excellent cattle raising area for a long time. Even today the bewildering grazing lands with “left trees” can be found that give a unique face for the landscape. Besides cattle raising the fruits of the “jungle” orchards along the flood-plain of the rivers in the area were used by the inhabitants.

The main fruit was the “Nemtudom” (don’t know) or “Penyige” plumb that was used for several purposes. Dried, jam and from the poorest ones spirits were made out of them.

Then the region experienced an economic crisis as the rich cattle decreased drastically. The larger part of the grazing grounds bewildered.

Local fruit presented no base for trading thus it had no chance to get to the market.

The folklore tradition of plumb jam making was dying as well as the local inhabitants owned jam enough for several years.

In the second half of the 1990s the “Plumb Jam Fest” was organised with small regional cooperation. This is called that because the aim of the organisers was not only to make jam of the plumb

but to show to the visitors possible traditional instruments used in the different stages of the ancient process. Furthermore, the settlements (19 of them at the first occasion) tried to present their own look, tradition and culture.

The successful event reached its aim. The attention of the visitors was driven to the plumb jam. Even at the first time the supply of the visitors with jam was difficult and the stored capacity was started to be sold. After 3 years the former stored capacity was completely sold and the demand still grew. Families started to make jam continuously and the marketing work improved continuously. The growing demand resulted in that more families dealt with plumb drying and also with jam making. The event appears as a tourism product and it is visitor attraction as it widened the tourism season and revived a folklore tradition.

After 10 years the inhabitants realised that it is not enough to process the fruits of the former jungle orchards and the plantation of the “Nemtudom, Penyige” plumbs – considered worthless earlier – started again.

Today it was realised that a tourist event generated the increase of agricultural production the condition of which is the new high quality plantation. The event has been organised each year for 10 years and the interest in the event and in the plumb jam is ever increasing. Programmes attract more and more visitors into the region who use the village accommodation. The demand for the plumb jam has been continuously increasing. Naturally the life standard of the inhabitants has been increasing as well.

After the plumb jam the yield of another cornel plant considered insignificant was processed. Today the yield is processed in 100%. Plantation has been started in the case of this plant as well. The same is under way in the case of nut, pumpkin, cabbage. These plants were close to extinction in their former production sites. Today their processing has advanced greatly.

In 2004 the first JAMERY of the country was founded with the aim of further improving the tourism attractions of the small region and helping the visitors to buy the high quality product.

How does then rural tourism influence regional development?

- helps the survival of agricultural production and process,
- provides the survival of folk tradition and strengthens identity,
- urges complete end product production,
- increases the life quality of those living in villages establishing self employment,
- generates regional collaboration.

The example is only one out of the many proving that today rural tourism is not selling village accommodations but is associated to visualize traditions for their survival that presents attractions for visitors and the resultant end product appears to be marketable.

The step forward could be that if a shop system based on the products produced on the basis of folk tradition. This product range is already well known and demanded in Western Europe thus there is all chance for its success in the countries of Eastern Europe and to operate not isolated further improving the life standard of the village dwellers.

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Vidiecky turizmus ako nástroj rozvoja vidieka

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Zhrnutie: Oblasť „Szatmár” bola dlhé obdobia chovateľskou oblasťou. Aj dnes tu nájdeme nevyužívané pastviny, ktoré dodávajú tejto oblasti jedinečnú tvárnosť. Obyvatelia tejto oblasti popri chovu zvierat využívali na svoje účely plody divo rastúcich ovocných stromov, ktoré sa nachádzali v záplavových oblastiach. Najdôležitejším ovocím boli slivky zvané „Nemtudom” alebo „Penyigei szilva”, ktoré využívali na sušenie, varenie lekváru a najnižšiu kvalitu na pálenie pálenky.

V dôsledku poklesu chovu hovädzieho dobytku sa táto oblasť dostala do hospodárskej krízy a v dôsledku toho sa prestali pastviny využívať. Spomínané ovocie dovtedy netvorilo predmet obchodu. Tak napríklad varenie slivkového lekváru, ktoré môžeme považovať za ľudovú tradíciu, sa tak stalo prostriedkom rozvoja vidieckeho turizmu.

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