RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH EDUCATIONAL RURAL TOURISM

POSIBILITĂȚI DE RECREERE PRIN PRACTICAREA TURISMULUI RURAL – EDUCATIV

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***Abstract**: Practicing agritourism means, from the point of view of the farmer involved in agritourism, meet the following three things: have what to show (free of charge) to the visitors; ask the visitors to do something (free of charge); offer the visitors something to buy (mainly drinks, foods, and souvenirs). The success of an agritourism farm depends on the way a farmer manages to link these three elements (for instance, through a theme). No matter if his farm is focused on education or on entertainment (or, why not, on both), the farmer needs to be able to feed the tourists and to meet their expectations during their stay at the farm. If the consumer of educational rural tourism is a schoolchild, the farmer needs to appeal to the teachers in the village to organise interesting educational, entertainment, or educational-entertainment activities on his farm if he wants the visitors to come back to his farm or to recommend the agritourism farm to other visitors for the recreational-educational activities practiced there.*

***Key words**: recreation, educational rural tourism, tourism consumer*

INTRODUCTION

The consumer of rural tourism has evolved in the direction of associating this type of tourism with other types of tourism (entertainment, educational, etc.) meant for the free time. This explains the appearance of the most unexpected combinations of tourism that consumers of tourism from all over the world have got accustomed with and that they seek in both their countries of origin and abroad: a good example is ***agritainment***.

All these **hybrid forms of rural tourism** have a single goal – ensuring the stability of the incomes on a small (agritourism) farm through different activities in the rural area (1, 2, and 3).

The first great advantage for tourism consumers is that small farms are the only capable of remaking the early simpler and human-scale image of agriculture – another myth closely related to the **myth of the golden age of mankind**. This is where the wish to **experience a farm** comes from.

Most authors in the field of rural tourism agree that it has three main components: **a small business promoted through direct marketing**; **an agricultural event organised by local authorities** (agricultural festivals, agrarian markets, etc.); **a regional promotion** (1, 5, and 6).

The success of any agritourism farm could depend on just the way the farmer manages to link these three different elements (for instance, through a theme).

No matter if his farm is focused on education or on entertainment (or, why not, on both), the farmer needs to be able to feed the tourists and to meet their expectations during their stay at the farm (1, 3, and 6).

If the consumer of educational rural tourism is a schoolchild, the farmer needs to appeal to the teachers in the village to organise interesting educational, entertainment, or educational-entertainment activities on his farm if he wants the visitors to come back to his farm or to recommend the agritourism farm to other visitors for the recreational-educational activities practiced there.

The greatest threats, in this context, are agritourism substitutes, i.e. agritourism pensions that offer too little from what rural tourism really means in activities.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The goal of the present paper has been to present the features of the **educational trip in the rural area**, the only type of tourism capable of making public the life and activity of the farmers, of creating a positive image of agriculture for the generations to come of tourism consumers from both the urban and the rural environment – for which agriculture should be reinvented if we wish to have agriculturists in the future.

All this can be integrated into a public, regional educational strategy aiming at exemplifying for the children the concept "organisation" and the way the most remote goals can be touched.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Educational rural tourism covers a wide range of activities that go from classes proper or short-time workshops to full courses. In Western countries, there are also school-farms providing accommodation for the children with special needs.

Small vegetal farms can organise cooking classes, flower display classes, or medicinal plant remedy preparation classes. In Maryland (S.U.A.), for instance, farmers have organised farms that look just like a farm from the 18th century: crops, tools, clothing, cooking, etc.

Floral display courses for the children should start at school, with a "warming up" presentation of the way flowers should be cared for, a presentation that helps children see how much or how little they know about caring for flowers and why it is important to attend such a course.

Cooking classes on a farm. Adults can leave for just one day their concrete and glass cages in town to go to the countryside to learn how to cook national, regional, or local dishes in a relaxing atmosphere, and to participate in cooking competitions in the rural area.

The cooking classes should start with a walk to the local market or through the farmer's vegetable garden – in Romania, this vegetable garden has all the chances in the world to be organic given the limited incomes of the farmer that prevent him from purchasing chemical fertilisers, herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, etc. – in search of vegetables, fruits, and aromatic plants.

The classes continue with the presentation of different commodities, tools (knife, meat chopper), and machines (fridge, blender, microwave oven, fryer, peeling and cutting vegetable machine, meat mincer, kitchen robot, etc.) and with the preparation of food produce to be cooked: measuring the amounts necessary for the dish, progressive mixing of the ingredients in accordance with the recipe, baking, rising, fermenting, or boiling, and portioning (2, 4, and 6).

As a principle, the themes of these classes should contain the following: ensuring the proper sanitary conditions; preparing basic dough; preparing hot entrees; preparing cold entrees; preparing deserts; preparing roasts; preparing hot hors-d'oeuvres; preparing cold hors-d'oeuvres; preparing dishes based on rabbit, lamb, mutton, chicken, pork, venison, or beef; preparing dishes based on vegetables, rice, eggs, and pasta; preparing dishes based on fish; preparing liquid dishes (soups, potages and, rarer, crème-soups and consommés; preparing salads; preparing sauces; and preventing environmental pollution.

Medicinal plant-based natural remedy preparation classes. If, at the beginnings of agriculture, shepherds identified medicinal plants and then made medicines to treat diseased animals through trial and error, nowadays identifying medicinal plants necessary for the treatment of the diseased animals, establishing the active ingredients to be used in treating certain diseases, and establishing the parts of medicinal plants to be used to maximise the potency and efficiency of nature therapy is done on scientific grounds.

Medicinal plant-based natural remedy preparation classes should cover, from this perspective, classes of *identification*, *collection*, *handling*, and *preparation* of natural remedies.

There is a wide range of methods of preparation of natural remedies from medicinal plants:

- ***Boiling*** is the most widespread method of preparing remedies from medicinal plants but it is not always recommended since the active substance can be destroyed through boiling. When boiling is a must, the collected material should be boiled for 30 minutes to maximise the extraction of the active substance. The collected material can be stored and boiled later on, to avoid deterioration during storage.

- ***Soaking*** the collected material in warm water to extract the active substance is practiced when boiling is not recommended: normally, soaking over the night allows the extraction of the entire amount of active substance.
- ***Pulverisation*** is done by drying and finely grinding the collected material to mix it with water or oil during administration.
- ***Juice extraction*** is done by passing through a clean piece of cloth of the crushed collected material: the juice can be used as such or diluted with water, depending on the doctor's recommendation;
- ***Preparing a paste*** is done by grinding the fresh collected material or by mixing a dry powder with oil, water, molasses, or bee honey;
- ***Preparing a bolus*** consists of shaping bolus from a paste obtained from the collected material right before administration or before being dried for storage.

Choosing one or another of these methods is done taking into account the following:

- the potency and the efficiency of the preparation;
- the way of administration (external or internal use);
- the time when the preparation is administered (immediate use or storage).

It is possible to use two or even more methods of preparation when the same medicinal plant is sued in the treatment of several diseases.

In the case of the **agritourism animal farms** or of the **agritourism farms of the "mini-zoo" type for children**, the most popular type of agritourism activity is "**taking care of one's own pet**", a type of **educational tourism** (for young tourists) that brings income for the farmers. Table 1 presents the organization per months of agritourism activities on an **agritourism animal farm**.

Table 1.

Organization per months of agritourism activities on an agritourism animal farm

Month	**Type of activity**
January	- visiting the farm and contacting the new incomers to the farm: lambs, kids, etc. - rides in a horse-pulled sledge
February	- familiarising with equine behaviour (colts)
March	- rides in a horse-pulled chart, observing cattle, sheep herds
April	- marking and identifying animals - preparing grilled lamb and lamb soup
May	- sheep shearing and ewe milk measuring
June	- preparing green cheese and cheese
July	- accompanying the herds to the pasture
August	- preparing cheese for the winter
September	- monitoring transhumance - vaccinating the animals
October	- preparing the animals for the wintering - knowing the main feeds
November	- preparing mutton pastrami - knowing the main animal species and breeds
December	- slaughtering pigs + preparing traditional pork produce and dishes

The chance to interact with the animals (rabbits, kids, colts, lambs, poneys, piglets, and ducks), to ride poneys, to make rides in horse-pulled charts or sledges or in hay-loaded charts can be a wonderful experience both for the children and for the adults.

Despite all this, apparently healthy animals can carry bacteria that can disease people. Most people do not get diseased by simply touching the

animals: the truth is that some people – the very young ones, pregnant women, and people whose immune system, no matter the age, is deficitary – are exposed to the risk of being diseased because of animal-carried bacteria from the animals on the agritourism animal farm.

CONCLUSIONS

From this perspective, we can draw the conclusion that Romanian local culinary heritage does not have the reputation of other culinary heritages that allow the identification of rural traditions from this perspective.

The causes are multiple: historical (frequent wars, migration of the population, etc.), sociological (disappearance of the extended families, modern coking, etc.), socio-economic (diminution of self-consumption, increase of female paid work, etc.), economic (increase of the living standards, modernisation of the techniques of processing agro-alimentary produce), market (changes on the market of demand and offer of agro-alimentary produce), personal (social changes, financial changes, changes in taste, etc.).

We hope that the suggestions for a possible programme of a **visit to an agritourism animal farm for schoolchildren** should take into account mainly the localities in which **agritourism** could become "**the main economic activity**" and then the localities in which **agritourism** could become "**the activity specific to the area**".

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