MARKETING MANAGEMENT IN FARM AGRITOURISM

MANAGEMENTUL MARKETINGULUI ÎN AGROTURISMUL DE FERMĂ

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Abstract: *Tourism potential cannot be valorised if the people involved in tourism – tour-operators and tourists – cannot rely on a few elements that are strictly necessary to practice tourism: a travel agency, that recommends the best places for the practice of one's favourite type of tourism; some means of transportation that take the tourists to the desired place; a place where one can find proper accommodation; a place where one can have food properly; one or several places where one can have fun. The appearance of new channels of distribution and the changes of power structure have lead to a change of the priorities in the field of distribution and of managerial decisions, now that distribution has become, for many tour-operators, a critical aspect of strategic management.*

Key words*: management, marketing, agritourism farm*

INTRODUCTION

Among the reasons why any tour-operator should have a successful distribution are the following: *profit margins are narrow*, i.e. many travel agencies have small profits with high distribution costs (this points the field in which **managers** can save money); *distribution is a very competitive sector*; *the power of intermediaries is huge*, which needs **management** to pay more attention to this aspect of **marketing mix**; *global market (with new available markets often disparate) stimulate* a proper management of the market; *perishability of the tourism product* and the necessity associated

with it to remove any excess stock in the last minute; *intensity of information* is crucial in the decision-making process since it should reach the consumers in a proper way and at the proper time – hence the crucial importance of the **management of the flow of information** [1, 3, and 6].

In the case of larger tourism companies, the development of human resources is the responsibility of a specialised department or of a certain unit within human resource management, which allows the **planning and organising of professional training in a strategic way**, based on the training and education needs identified within the company and designed as to corroborate individual development aspirations and company needs. In smaller tourism companies, such as travel agencies or agritourism pensions, for instance, there are no such situations, but this function is attributed together with other wider responsibilities of human resource management. In this type of companies, this process seems rather the attribution of one of the members of the **managerial team** and, because of this, it seems it does not enjoy the attention or the treatment it deserves. This seems to be the cause of declining competitiveness of some small tourism companies. This is why it is recommendable that the employees of small tourism companies attend professional training courses outside the company, within specific academic programmes [5].

At company level, training human resources plays a key role in supporting or planning change which, in this context, can target technical requirements from the labour force (for instance, the introduction of new types of kitchen utensils in the case of an agritourism pension) or new systems of communication such as the Internet or the e-mail for all the employees. Both **marketing**, and the changes on the tourism market can require efforts for the training of the human resources of a company because the employees need to be ready for such changes: for instance, focusing on foreign languages to be able to deal with foreign tourists or to promote the investment in a destination on new tourism markets [2, 4, and 7].

MATERIAL AND METHOD

For the present research, we have analysed the role of marketing management in agritourism farm activities with a view to the development,

implementing, and coordination of marketing programmes meant to reach medium- and long-term objectives of an agritourism farm.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Marketing management deals with the activities of a company aiming at developing, implementing, and coordinating marketing programmes meant to reach the goals of the business, unlike **strategic management**, which focuses on the way these goals and means are stated and planned to reach the goals [1].

The features of tourism are the source of many hot potatoes of marketing in tourism, in general, and of farm agritourism, in particular, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Features of tourism

Feature	**Definition**
Perishability	Incapacity of stocking the product for later sale. Each product exists at a single moment in time, so that sale failure until that time results in income loss. Two unoccupied rooms in an agritourism pension mean a non achieved income, i.e. lost income.
Variability	Tourism is a product with a high degree of human contact. Each element of the tourism experience is based on the human interaction between tourism consumer and tourism services supplier, so that each interaction is unique. The fact that they make huge efforts in tourism marketing to smoothen performance variability through staff training and through other procedures does not annul this main trend towards variability.
Inseparability	Also called "simultaneous production and consumption", inseparability refers, in fact, to the fact that tourists have to interact with the supplier of tourism services or with the tourism destination to experiment a tourism product: a product does not exist unless a consumer uses it.

Intangibility	A tourism product cannot be inspected by human senses at the sale place (except for such surrogates as folders, brochures, etc.). The phrase "making tangible the intangible" expresses the effort of marketing of eradicating this feature. Intangibility does not disturb a consumer who has the experience of a brand or of a product.
Cost structure	Large fixed costs and small variable costs, a relatively short-term fixed capacity of supply and complementarity between different tourism elements.

Source: [1, 5]

The practice of marketing is based on the understanding of individual consumer behaviour from a multiple perspective:

- economic (price elasticity, prognosis of demand, etc.);
- sociological (reference groups, social class, family, etc.);
- psychological (motivation, attitudes, perception, learning, personality, etc.).

from a marketing perspective, we can do the pragmatic segmentation of an agritourism farm using the demographics above as in Table 2.

Table 2 Segmentation in the field of farm agritourism

Agritourism consumers	First segmentation	Second segmentation	
Ticket-paying visitors	General visitors		
	Education visitors	"Distance" to the pension	- Local residents - 1-1½ h by car - Domestic tourists - International tourists (per country of origin)
		Profile	- Families - Schoolchildren - Students
		Group size	
		Sale promotion / initiative respondents	
	Special interest visitors		

Free entrance visitors	Function / reception	Business / corporation		
		Spare time / celebration		
	Only shop / coffee shop			
Members of a loyalty scheme	Corporation			
	School			
	Education			

Source: [1, 4]

It is important mentioning that a tourism consumer has to make two important decisions concerning the tourism product and/or service:

- a *major decision*, in his country of origin, on what country to visit and what places to go to;
- a series of *sub-decisions*, either in his country of origin or in the country of destination, on the restaurant to eat at, on the type of amusement to choose, etc.

Any tourism marketer should know exactly what information the tourism consumer has to know how to better segment the tourism market: who is the tourism consumer, what he would like to have as accommodation, food, leisure, etc.; when to spend his holidays in the chosen place; where to spend his holiday in the chosen place; how to spend his holiday in the chosen place; why he want to spend his holiday at a certain time of year, in a certain place, and in a certain way.

CONCLUSIONS

Turning an agricultural farm into an agritourism farm should be done according to well-determined marketing rules. Thus, identifying options and assessing the farm should be done in two steps: identifying options and assessing the farm and the procedure as such; identifying legal considerations, licences, permits and regulations taking into account five aspects: zoning, licences and permits, perils and insurance; barriers and

access; conservation programmes; financial issues and developing a business plan; financing the firm.

Enterprise marketing supposes the following: developing a marketing plan, suggestions for the firm marketing and partnerships with the community, top marketing ideas, building an Internet site, and directions for the tourists.

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