

THE ROLE OF MARKETING PHILOSOPHY IN RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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Modern tourism, like many other business areas started to "branch" and has become a significant source of growth and development of companies, destinations, and entire national economies. All the effects of globalization and world economic trends can be integrated and analyzed through it.

The last decade of the twentieth century brought significant changes in tourism, especially in regard to the behavior of tourists as consumers. Accordingly, a strategic shift was carried out – from mass tourism towards the development of alternative forms of tourism such as eco-tourism, cultural tourism, rural tourism, congress tourism and others which are completely devoted to the individual and his specific needs. In this regard, special attention is directed towards the development of the rural tourism.

Rural tourism as a sustainable, multi-functional activity based on local resources and related traditional agriculture, culture and natural resources, is recommended for rural areas because of its multiple uses, and it is proved by numerous positive experiences of European countries. On the other hand, there are many rural areas which are exposed to continuous processes of depopulation, economic decline and complete marginalization due to the intense process of industrialization, urbanization and electrification. The village is declining, and takes away the authentic way of life and overall culture of the village, because people as carriers and transmitters of such values are leaving. Further depopulation, with the introduction of new non-agricultural activities and re-routing of mass tourism, cause the rural areas to squeeze traditional farming and rural life (**Demonja and Ružic, 2011; Hall, Mitchell and Roberts, 2005**).

Above mentioned leads to the need that the rural tourism as an instrument of revitalization deserves more attention, and to make an analysis of those factors that are essential and/or critical for initiating rural tourism business. Among them the application of marketing concepts in all stages of development of rural tourism takes a special place. Accordingly, this paper aims to provide insight into the role of marketing philosophy in the development of rural tourism. With regards to this, the structure of work consists of three interrelated parts. The first part gives the definition of rural tourism and analyzes the specifics of this selective form of tourism. Fundamental concepts of marketing in tourism are

analyzed in the second section. The third section argues the necessity of implementing marketing and its peculiarities in rural tourism.

1. DEFINITION AND CONTENT OF RURAL TOURISM

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2004, 9), "rural tourism is a term used when rural culture is a key component of the product". In order to realize this concept, a tourist needs to provide personalized contact and the experience of a specific rural environment. In addition, the tourists should be given, as far as possible, the opportunity to actively participate in certain agricultural activities and other activities, traditions and lifestyle of local residents. It certainly provides a whole new experience, which is almost impossible to achieve in destination of so-called mass tourism. Authors consider it necessary to insist on a complex definition of rural tourism because it needs to include all its elements. Thus, as tourism that takes place in rural areas, activities such as walking (trekking and hiking), biking, horseback riding, extreme sports (e.g. climbing), farm visits, tasting local food, hunting and fishing are also integral elements of integrated rural tourism product. Therefore, depending on the presence of such elements in the total supply, we can talk about agro tourism, green tourism, gastronomic tourism, nautical tourism, hunting tourism, cultural-historical tourism, different types of sports and recreational tourism (e.g. riding) and more. The above suggests that this is a very complex type of tourism. That is why the division of rural tourism is very rich and very committed to the characteristics of the area in which tourist activity takes place. In other words, the boundaries and content of rural tourism are determined by the specific characteristics and limits of rural area in which to develop. If there are opportunities for the development of several forms or types of tourism in certain rural areas, then they all belong to the broader concept, which collectively are called rural tourism. In any case, preserved rural area is an essential resource for rural tourism. Especially interesting are the areas where poor production, smaller quantities and maintaining the traditional way of life are carried out because they are so attractive to tourists from industrialized and suburban areas that have lost the key fea-

tures of recognition as a rural area. The above is especially important for Republic of Macedonia and its rural areas of exceptional natural beauty and rich culture and tradition.

Authors **Hall, Roberts and Mitchell** (2005, 6) highlight the sensitivity of tourism as an economic activity in the development of rural areas in the following segments:

- Generating new business and jobs is often limited due to small size and dispersed activity and low rates of return on investments;

- It requires more skill to achieve success, and the same is not possible to combine in one person;

- The development is in the hands of rural entrepreneurs, such as farmers and local municipal officials who often lack the necessary skills and knowledge in the field of tourism;

- It anticipates great number of micro enterprises;

- Sources of investment are often scarce;

- The duration of the tourist season is short;

In accordance with the preceding, it is possible pick out a few specifics for the tourist offer in rural destinations. Tourist offer is extremely fragmented, and consists of a large number of small, regionally dispersed bidders. These are mostly small family businesses, which offer warm welcome and personalized contact with tourists.

However, there is often a great lack of inconsistency with regard to the quality of services provided, which can vary to a greater or lesser extent. In addition, holders of such positions are limited with staff and finances, which directs them to join forces for more efficient implementation of destination management and marketing programs. In the examples of rural tourism development in Central and Eastern Europe risk factors that can affect the development of rural tourism are identified (**Hall et. al.**, 2005):

- Lack of understanding and / or misunderstanding of the concept of rural tourism, coupled with the wrong initial assumptions about the simple and easy generation market, income and employment, which often leads to failure and the creation of a given image of negative rural areas and the whole country as a tourist destination;

- Low level of quality accommodation, associated with the poor resources of investment and lack of planning for further development;

- Lack of information about the needs and desires of tourists as a result of insufficient or poor quality of marketing research;

- Lack of funds for starting and / or continuation of business as a result of insufficient understanding and support from the banking and other financial institutions;

- Low level of infrastructure in rural areas, but noting that this deficiency can be an advantage in terms of eco-rural tourism;

- Lack of information on the possibilities and opportunities of further development of tourism, leading to disconnection of villages in a unique tourist product and lack of support of local and regional, governmental entities;

- Non-compliance with the development objectives of local governments and development agencies, and as a result of inadequate communication, lack of confidence, and lack of shared vision of development.

It is noteworthy that in many cases in rural tourist destinations, tourism is an additional activity that provides significant support to the traditional rural economy, made up primarily of agriculture, forestry, crafts and other activities. Therefore, the holders of such positions are farmers, and not tourist entrepreneurs with all necessary supporting knowledge and marketing skills. Thus, as one of the key limiting factors in the success of rural tourism are planning, organization and implementation of effective marketing.

Many rural areas face a lack of their own tourism image, as a result of insufficient application of marketing concept to create a tourism product. In this way, rural destinations cannot be successfully positioned in the market or they work in difficult circumstances, and it is their main limiting factor for further progress. The cause is less attention focused on the so-called "Soft" elements of rural tourism development such as knowledge and skills in the field of marketing, management, modern computer technology, foreign languages and more.

2. CONCEPTUAL BASICS OF MARKETING IN TOURISM

2.1. The fundamental tenet of marketing philosophy

Contemporary needs of people as consumers, families, groups and the community at large are changing rapidly. Thus the enterprises need to inputs different contents. The basic assumption to meet their need is appropriate offer, which should coincide with them. Supply bidders realize their business goals in adequate exchange with market demand.

The business philosophy, which helps bidders to timely focus on the potential demand, and achieve their own business objectives, is known as the "marketing". Applying its principles to create a supply helps managers to focus themselves on those market segments that may contain the expected demand in a timely manner. Marketing is not just a need for manufacturing companies, but for all bidders regardless of whether it comes to material goods and / or services. The newest concept of marketing is increasingly seen as *managing profitable relationships* with customers (Customer Relationship Management). Relationships with customers are the basic setting for the success of modern managers.

Marketing concept is subject to change, like any other area of business economics.

They occur in at least two directions: a) changes to the treatment of consumer and b) changes in area of specific applications of different businesses. Today we can already distinguish and start a new concept of marketing. Previous (old) marketing concept based on several fundamental theses (1) Mass production, focused on economies of scale and

low costs, (2) Mass and high standardization of products in response to requests of more picky customer, (3) “Mass marketing”, based on a philosophy of maximizing the number of potential customers and based on appropriate media (TV, etc.) and the promotional mix and (4) “The average consumer”, founded on the basis of standardized messaging to the company. Generally speaking, the old marketing concept is based on a stable demand, stable processes and stable product. A new concept of marketing purposes, instead of the above, doesn't put an accent on customer *needs* any more but on the *value* he sees in the product, making the decision to purchase, along with the process of its consumption.

Unlike the previous concept, which was based on creating and maintaining customers, the new concept is based on the respect of the previous, but adds “the development of connecting with the customer” (Develop Customer Relationship) as a new task management. It is based on a reconceptualization of marketing mix, especially some of its instruments. However, it is important to note that the changes that have taken place at the turn of the century in the field of marketing philosophy did not lead to changes of fundamental principles and settings.

2.2. The objective needs of the application

As it is known, marketing appeared first in order to solve new problems in placements of a manufacturing enterprise. The phenomenon of marketing is to be understood as a reaction to the changing demands of enterprise environments and demand as most of its components. Expanding of the application of marketing to other areas is the logical flow from the increasing complexity of market and market relations with the other business areas. Today, the marketing concept and philosophy of business is just as important for industrial products and the service sector.

Tourism market is a special form of the market. Among the specifics of the service market and the appropriate application of marketing can be extracted: 1. The rapid growth of service markets, 2. The sensitivity of demand, 3. The exceptional competition, 4. Individuality of demand and consumption, and 5. Modern requirements for standardization (Mihailovic, 2011.).

These above mentioned specifics “dictate” the need and the specific application of marketing in tourism. In particular, we emphasize the need for *multiple layers of application of marketing* in tourism to the *destination* level.

A modern tourist has in mind what is offered, but based on the destination as a global goal to meet specific travel needs. That is why each bidder must bear in mind that his sale is under the “umbrella” of that destination with all its references which exist in the eyes of consumers.

Any changes that are rapidly taking place in the tourism market are a “challenge” for marketing managers. For the tourist market, apart from the extraordinary complexity of the phenomenon, its continuous expansion is one of the main

characteristics. Specifics of the application of marketing in tourism, in principle, derived from “nature” of the tourist service itself. It has three basic characteristics, namely (Mihailovic, 2011.):

(1) *The seasonal character of the demand.* Variations in demand are common in all sectors, but particularly pronounced in tourism. Demand is more pronounced in the season, which is different (summer, winter) depending on the type of travel needs. The role of marketing is to offer extended season and marketing tools to adapt to different intensity of demand. Seasonal demand is determined by the intensity of supply in all sectors of the tourism industry.

(2) *High fixed costs.* Tourist activity is characterized by high capital investment, because of the increasing of comfort that modern tourist demands. Equipment, air conditions, and other items cause high fixed costs which should be compensated from the income that tourist will spend. Therefore, the marketing managers should create that offer that will absorb enough income to cover these costs.

(3) *The interdependence of the tourism product.* Modern tourists are expected to be offered a combination of the tourism product or offer that will satisfy all his needs. In this conglomerate of products there are different types of services, as well as material goods, which constitute a whole offer.

Theory and Methodology of marketing is unique in its application of the fundamental determinants of tourism, and especially the following (Mihailovic, 2011):

1. *Consumer needs are fully the principle of economy,*
2. *The demand is unprecedented for the business success of the subjects in the tourism market,*
3. *The market logics is relevant to the enterprise in the field of tourism and tourist destination,*
4. *Profit is the motive of doing business (but not at any price) and*
5. *Increasingly prominent aspect of international business and upholding the principles of globalization.*

In order to complete the implementation of the concept of tourism marketing in the above mentioned, a paragraph should be added that in this area its *integrity* is more represented than any other where the phenomenon of marketing is applied (1) and in addition to economic (narrow), the application of marketing in this sector expresses social values (2).

In terms of treatment of tourism marketing, we should single out the wide application of achievements in other scientific fields. Therefore, marketing of tourism is associated with different (micro and macro) economic disciplines. We should primarily mention micro-economics (in the broadest sense), the organization, the science of consumer behavior, and macroeconomic disciplines: monetary economics, economic development, international economics, various multipliers and other related fields. Interdisciplinarity is especially required in the application of marketing in rural development.

Globalization affects in the way that tourist enterprises increasingly characterize the concept of international business. So it is necessary to single out the increasing role of international marketing methods in tourism, or transfer its settings to a specific tourist area. This is understandable, since every company has a logic of the international tourism business. Their business approach is logical from the domestic to global company. In all that, all the activities of modern enterprises in the tourism industry adapt to the market. At the same time there are major organizational changes in tourism businesses, through various forms of networking and cooperation, and the logic of international marketing is increasingly interpolated in tourism destinations and individual enterprises (Mihailovic 2011, 93).

3. UNIQUENESS AND NECESSITY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MARKETING IN RURAL TOURISM

Rural tourism is a special part of the overall tourism industry. Application of marketing comes from the nature and specifics of it as a segment of tourism offer. From above mentioned, it is still a logical conclusion that the application of marketing is based on three key components:

- Fundamentals of marketing philosophy (purpose, objectives and goals of the supply and demand holders),
- Application of marketing to the field of tourism and
- The specific application of marketing in the area of rural tourism, based on specific segments of demand and supply and adjusting to the specifics, especially of natural characteristics.

The fundamental thesis of this paper is that the *implementation of the marketing concept is one of the key factors of success in initiating activity and survival of rural tourism in the tourism market*. Specific characteristics of rural tourism “dictate” creating offers according to the modern requirements of demand. Consideration of the needs of tourists in rural areas is only possible on the basis of marketing research, as a lever to create an adequate supply.

In this area, particularly the application of marketing subtle due to the following constraints and challenges:

(1) *Large share of micro, small and medium enterprises and challenges of their (non) cooperation*. As holders of rural tourism activities, there are primarily small and medium enterprises, and not a small number of micro enterprises. Among these tourism offer bidders, there’s a strong competition rather than cooperation and it can be a significant problem. Clark (2005) concludes that the problems of small business at the same time the problems of rural tourism, bearing in mind the above mentioned.

Problems of non-cooperation are common and appropriate stimulation by government bodies is necessary, as well as the legal framework that would discriminate the cooperation positively in order to encourage it.

(2) *Responsibility for development is scattered at differ-*

ent levels within the private sector, at all levels of the national to the local within the public sector, but also at the international level (e.g. programs and funds for the development of the European Union). Integration and partnership between public and private sectors and the integration of rural tourism and other economic sectors are crucial, but often critical elements of rural tourism development strategy. Responsibility for the development of rural tourism is on several levels, from national to the local level, where you actually place the process of creating and consuming products of the rural tourism. The above mentioned clearly requires coordination in planning, organizing and implementation at all levels. However it is considered as good when there is stimulation and leading the whole process from the national or even international level, because then it is possible to achieve the highest level of mutual coordination among the participants in the development process (e.g. see PHARE program and the detailed results in Slovenia).

Also, the normal development requires coordination among government departments to ensure compatibility in the legislation.

(3) *The issue of effectiveness and efficiency of marketing in rural tourism, which takes place on multiple levels and destination of the specific products (e.g. accommodation on a farm, cycling, theme paths, etc.)*. Is marketing really effective on so many levels of? Can the marketing be adapted to each destination and the product level in an effective manner? These questions can be added the fact that resources for the implementation of marketing decisions are very scarce in rural areas and that their ineffective and inefficient spending creates additional problems in the development of rural tourism destination.

(4) *Researching specific segments of rural tourism, which are significantly differentiated, segment selection and positioning of their own deals and destinations in relation to the chosen target segments of the customers*. Development of rural tourism destination requires a very careful analysis and selection of those market segments which can be met and that match the previously defined strategic goals of development. Each segment has a different impact on the strategic goals of destinations such as, for example to increase spending or extend the tourist season. However, the creators and supporters of tourism development policies have a limited amount of information, which is caused by insufficient marketing research. Even traditional statistics and indicators (e.g. number of visitors, length of stay, consumption) are not recorded, and methodology through which data are obtained can often be of a very dubious character, while calculating market share and any comparisons are often not possible.

Understanding consumers of rural tourism requires knowledge and motivation, needs and desires, image, perception, and behavior before, during and after consuming the product. Quantitative indicators are not enough, and unfortunately they are, usually, the only ones at disposal. The

choice of market segments should be based on realistic estimates of destination competitive advantages. The goal is to meet expectations and offer value that the selected segment requests. Dividing segments may be based on a series of characteristics such as age, family status, income, behavior and interests, place of residence and mobility. As an example of market segmentation of rural tourism the following segments of consumers of rural tourism can be mentioned (European Commission 2000, 17): Daily visits, short (weekend) holidays, families with children, older generation, tourists with special interests, study groups, people with disabilities and others.

(5) *Expressed need for association of holders of supply due to scarcity of their own resources, and the use of cooperative marketing.* **Gorman** (2005) identified cooperation as cooperation between two or more bidders, where each partner brings some but not all of their resources, thus contributing to the overall marketing competencies of cooperation, with a view to mutual benefit. The same author stresses the importance of cooperation in the tourism sector, particularly for those bidders that are located in peripheral areas or centers, in case of rural tourism. However, in order to lead to successful cooperation it is necessary to bear in mind the following challenges and constraints (**Gorman**, 2005):

- The existence of interdependent stakeholders, and incentives that would induce cooperation and participation of partners,
- An effective way to share decision-making,
- The existence of constructive solutions that respect their differences,
- The existence of collective responsibility for future results,
- Awareness of the dynamic process of collaboration.

However, the benefits of cooperation have been identified in a number of rural tourism destinations, and some of them may be: (Clark 2005, 90): economies of scale, preventing the outflow of income from the destination and the multiplication of the economic effects in the local community, managing visitors in terms of spatial and temporal dispersion, access to new knowledge and marketing skills, technology and distribution channels, support education and training and access to greater financial resources.

(6) *The use of modern information technology for communication and distribution of rural tourism product.* The role and importance of marketing communications in practice is often misunderstood and simplifies the production of leaflets as accompanied with some form of direct mail. On the other hand, the possibilities opened up by the application of Internet and its services (e-mail, web, blog, etc.) are not fully recognized. It is necessary to take this opportunity for two-way communication (instead of former one-way), with leaflets and brochures as well as tangible support mechanisms. PR as a tool of promotion is often neglected, and only occasionally used as a supplement to the propaganda efforts.

Rural tourism development requires the integration of all forms of communication and achieving synergetic effect in creating and sending promotional messages to the environment.

(7) *Nature conservation and respect for the principles of sustainable development.*

Sustainable development is an essential element of any strategy for developing rural tourism. Rural tourism development must contain three essential elements of sustainability including: environmental, social and economic sustainability. The key elements of each of the rural tourism offer are clean air, clean water and distance from urban agglomeration, even more than other types of tourism. The above mentioned points to the need of promoting the social aspects of marketing whose principles receive its full confirmation just in this kind of tourism.

(8) *Global context of rural tourism is particularly interesting.* Namely, for international visitors, rural tourism products are interchangeable or there are significant substitutes on a global level but also within a country. The above mentioned is not well understood among individual bidders at the local level and the rural tourism offer in the immediate environment is often seen as the only competition. In addition, Clark (2005, 88) states that the concept of rural tourism for the consumer does not have a consistent global interpretation. It is not about technical definitions but rather about the perception of consumers. The same author explains that what is seen as a “green”, “clean”, “rural” or “free” in one country may not be so in another. Visitors from various countries bring cultural expectations determined by “rural” and which does not and often does not match the rural tourism offer of the host country.

CONCLUSION

The need for a marketing implementation in the field of rural tourism is encouraged by increasing complexity of market and market relations on a very dynamic tourism market. The development of information technology, competition and growth in its global character, the new buyer and the need for sustainable development are just some of the factors that determine a new way of keeping the rural tourism business. Today, the marketing concept and philosophy of doing business are becoming essential to all policy makers and implementers of rural development.

Specifics of the implementation of the marketing concept in rural tourism development arise from the very specific characteristics of rural tourism supply and demand. In particular, the application of marketing philosophy required a subtle approach to the following limitations and challenges: (1) high share of micro, small and medium enterprises and challenges of their (non)cooperation, (2) Responsibility for the development is scattered at different levels within the private sector, at all levels of the national to the local within

the public sector, but also at the international level (3) Questionable effectiveness and efficiency of marketing of rural tourism due to multiple destination levels and among specific products (4) Specific segmentation, targeting and positioning (5) The need for cooperative marketing (6) Modern information technology, (7) Nature conservation and respect for the principles of sustainable development, and (8) Global context of rural tourism.

There is no doubt that marketing in rural tourism should be seen as a means to achieve development of strategic goals of rural tourist destinations, such as long-term prosperity, guest satisfaction, profit maximization, extension of the tourist season, neutralizing the negative impact, stabilize employment, support and further diversification of existing economic activity, temporal and spatial redistribution of tourist demand and changing consumer behavior in terms of increasing tourist spending. Therefore, marketing cannot be understood simply as propaganda or simply as printing leaflets, but as a platform for defining business objectives and strategies, and creation of tourist products which deliver unique experience to consumers and generate profit for rural tourism destination and others who appear as the bidders.

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to research the role of marketing concept in the process of the sustainable rural tourism development.

Implementation of marketing philosophy in rural tourism is examined on the level of tourist destination, due to importance of cooperation and coordination on this macro level for the sustainable development of the rural tourism.

Key findings indicate that marketing in rural tourism should be seen as a means to achieve development of strategic goals of rural tourist destinations, such as: long-term prosperity, guest satisfaction, profit maximization, extension of the tourist season, neutralizing the negative social impacts, stabilization of employment, support and further diversification of existing economic activity, temporal and spatial redistribution of tourist demand etc.

The originality of this research comes from the analysis of the specifics of marketing implementation in rural tourism, which provides the guidance and ideas for further improvements in the sector of rural tourism.

Key words: *Rural Tourism, Marketing, Product, Diversification*

Международна информационна система AGRIS

AGRIS е международна информационна система за земеделска наука и технологии, създадена през 1974 г. под егидата на ФАО (организацията по прехраната и селското стопанство към ООН).

Основната цел на системата е да улеснява обмена на информация във всички области на земеделието, храните и горската промишленост, както и достъпа до научните резултати. Разполага с фонд от над 3 милиона документа, подавани от 240 национални, международни и междуправителствени центрове по света. Крайната цел е развитието на национални програми за аграрна информация, ползващи технологии, базирани на Интернет.

AGRIS предоставя информация в следните тематични направления:

Растениевъдство и животновъдство; Ветеринарна медицина; Технология на земеделското производство; Управление и законодателство; Селскостопанска механизация и строителство; Водно и рибно стопанство; Селскостопанско обучение; Съхраняване на селскостопанска продукция; Икономика, социология и развитие на селското стопанство; Горско стопанство; Замърсяване на околната среда, свързано със земеделското производство; Хранителни технологии и безопасност на храните.

AGRIS играе важна роля за улесняване на достъпа до научните резултати в областта на земеделието и храните. Тя се превръща в “ключов фактор и катализатор за създаване на нов модел за управление на информацията в земеделието на 21 век”. Един от основните аспекти за работа в бъдеще е подобряване на сътрудничеството с международните инициативи за подкрепа и координиране на изследванията в областта на земеделието. Ролята на страните участнички в системата е особено важна по отношение на документацията, недостъпна по други канали. Това са уникални ресурси, които AGRIS предлага на изследователи, преподаватели, студенти, специалисти.

В последните години се наложиха две нови инициативи, с които се цели подобряване на достъпността до информационните канали, като по този начин се увеличава тяхната значимост - свободен достъп и отворен архив.

Свободният достъп позволява при наличие на Интернет да се четат, изтеглят, копират, разпространяват, отпечатват документи или се дава линк към пълни текстове без финансови, правни или други бариери. Целта на тези стратегии е АГРИС мрежата да се превърне в ключов фактор за изграждане на нов модел на управление на информацията в земеделието. Крайната цел е подобряването на достъпа и обмена на информация.

При *отворения архив* се дава възможност за най-широко разпространение на изследователските постижения и максимална достъпност на научния архив в съответната организация, като същевременно се премахват ограниченията, характерни за сега съществуващите модели.

Националният AGRIS център за България е в Института по аграрна икономика при Селскостопанска академия. Негова основна задача е въвеждането в системата на реферати на българските научни статии в областта на селското стопанство и хранителната промишленост, както и извършването на информационни справки по заявка на потребителите. Освен статии от списания и книги, вече се въвеждат и дисертации, научни трудове, доклади от конференции и други материали, до които няма достъп по каналите на традиционния библиотечен обмен.

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