TRENDS IN WORLD TOURISM AS A CHANCE OF RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The World Tourism Organisation forecasts that tourism will continue growing although new tendencies and trends in tourism have been recently visible. Traditional tourism realized by big and constantly growing tour operators and concentrated on “3 S” (sand, sun, sea) is less and less popular. The time and space pattern of spending free time also has been changing.

People are more and more aware of the negative effects of mass tourism exploiting especially poor areas and populations. Potential tourists are presently better educated, have higher incomes, their intellectual expectations connected with tourism reach far beyond the beaches. “New” tourism is characterized by “3 E” (education, entertainment, excitement). New directions take into consideration sustainable development of tourism and ecotourism as a preferable form of it. That new approach creates chances for rural tourism, including agritourism development.

Key words: agritourism, development, world trends, tourism,

Introduction

Tourism, one of the most important economic activities of the world, the most dynamic labor market and investor – has been recently undergoing significant changes. Populations that accepted tourism in its mass product version has been dividing, looking for new forms and significance of traveling. Those new trends in tourism, meaning mostly more sustainable development of tourism, are also a chance of rural tourism and its forms, known as: alternative tourism, agritourism, ecotourism, green tourism, soft tourism. After “conquering” the world people are looking for more individual, closer to nature form of spending free time.

Literary overview

According to the World Tourism Organisation, tourists are the people who “travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and any other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited”[WTO 1995]. That very wide concept of tourism has its consequences it tourism statistics – in 2004, there were 736 million international tourist arrivals [World Tourism 2005].

The rapid and substantial worldwide growth of tourism activity created tourism as a one of the most remarkable economic and social phenomena of the past century. The growth will maintain at the world average 4.1% level, although the speed of growth will be different for particular continents. UNWTO’s Tourism 2020 Vision forecasts that international arrivals are
expected to reach nearly 1.6 billion by the year 2020 [Tourism... 2007]. Europe will remain the most popular tourist destination, although there will be a decline from 60 per cent in 1995 to 46 per cent in 2020. According to the forecast the rapidly growing number of arrivals will be the highest in Middle East (average annual growth rate at 6.7%), East Asia and Pacific (6.5%) and South Asia (6.2%). People more often are going to travel to other continents. The ratio between interregional and long-distance travel will shift from around 82:18 in 1995 to close 74:24 in 2020.

Tourism activities can, in particular, degraded the social and natural wealth of a community. Tourism in natural areas can be a major source of degradation of local ecological, economic and social systems. These tourism-related changes are particularly deleterious when local residents rely on those natural areas for their sustenance.

At the same time what is defined as mass tourism has been gradually loosing customers. The main factors building the mass tourism, such as: paid holidays, growing amount of free time, development of faster and cheaper means of transportation and growing level of discretionary income, mass scale of tourism product production, resulted with trends rejecting mass tourism consequences.

Changes in potential tourists’ tastes, needs and expectations have clear directions towards form of tourism described as more responsible - alternative tourism. [Neto 2003, Zangari 2004, Gutkowska 2000, Tyran 2005]. The most important factors influencing those changes are: socio-economic changes in developed countries, changes in tourism market, where supply is higher than demand so tour operators must pay more attention to the needs and expectations of tourists, especially those with more experience and money. Among the above mentioned socio-economic factors the most important are:

- demographic changes – aging of the populations, growing amount of one-person households,
- health – growing consciousness and care,
- growing level of education and intellectual expectations,
- informatics technologies – individual composing of travels
- transportation – cheaper and faster means of transportation for long distance travels, road jams can cause interest in short distance trips, for instance to rural areas,
- safety – global terrorism causing additional security clearances and long lines at airports,
- change of time and space pattern of spending free time,
- sustainable development – more participants of tourism shows care and respect to natural environment, social issues and economic gain of receiving populations and communities.

In literature there are several definitions of alternative tourism. An idea the most often connected with that form of tourism could be formed as everything that is not mass tourism is alternative tourism. According to Gaworecki [2003] alternative tourism “is an attempt of finding and dissemination of reasonable, different possibilities, in contrary to the prevailing current, conventional form of mass tourism, containing plenty dysfunctions”. Skliros [2005] thinks that sustainability of the tourist product can be reached “by the elevation of tourism through culture, nature, religion, as well as gastronomy. In one base: tourism-culture environment”. In a document of the People’s Global Exchange (Philippines NGO organization): Tourism, Alternative and Solidarity [2000] – alternative tourism is “an educationally-oriented” and “non-commercial” program. It also “promotes a socially and ecologically responsible” tourism that is “people-centered”. Most important, “…it creates a venue for initiating friendship and solidarity between peoples”.

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The most important kind of alternative tourism seems to be rural tourism in all its forms. According to Alexeiva and Stamov [2002] “… agritourism, hunting tourism and religious tourism are discussed, and their potential contributions to the development of rural regions are highlighted. It is argued that these alternative forms of tourism can influence the social and economic development of many rural regions in Bulgaria by (i) creating supplementary activities and added incomes for the local population; (ii) renovating villages and their communication infrastructure; and (iii) preventing migration from villages, allowing them to keep their identity”. Exactly the same reasons make that form of alternative tourism - rural tourism – important for Polish agriculture population. Farmers population lives mostly on small and medium farms (80% farms < 10ha), where small scale of production and high costs of that production make it hardly profitable. During the last Agricultural Census in 2002 only about 50% of farms declared any market production, rest of them ceased farming or produced only for their family needs [Agricultural Census 2002].

Material and methods

To find the most recent trends in the world tourism the achievable publications, reports and internet pages were revised. Also Polish publications were analyzed. Statistical data concerning tourism in the past and forecasts of tourism development were taken into consideration. The paper is an overall review of the recent tendencies and trends in the world tourism development aiming at finding arguments supporting thesis that those new trends to same extend can positively influence development of rural tourism as a form of alternative, soft, nature friendly tourism.

Results

Although mass tourism seems to lose part of their customers, as the cheapest, organized form of tourism will stay in business in the future. Thanks to the globalization of tour operators efforts their offer will be interesting and important for tourists in developing countries and all those who have limited disposable income. It will also stay the biggest employer and the most dynamic labor market – 74 mln. people all over the world [www.madiainfo2004], plus all those working in high seasons without official affiliations. As the supply is higher than demand, growing competition among the tour operators and their products results in lower prices but most often, in increasing quality of services.

At the same time there is rapidly growing group of potential tourists that are looking for tourism without all dysfunctions of mass tourism and expect new offers described above as alternative tourism or decide to prepare their “own tourism product”. Internet makes it much easier – from your desk you can find information, make reservations, receive confirmations, make advanced payments if necessary – with some experience the travel agency is unnecessary. For instance, internet has become the most important bridge between the Polish agritourism farms and their potential customers. Rapid development of agritourism in Poland in the 90. was not accompanied by means of communication between farmers, agritourism providers and city dwellers. There were very limited numbers of catalogs available. Associations of agritourism farms had limited sources, knowledge and opportunities to promote tourism activities of their members (for instance during tourism fares). It seemed that could be the biggest problem and barrier in further development. Instead of that, in unexpectedly short time most of the farms bought computers and got connected to the internet. Now, the web sites are their most important promotion tool, means of
communication with the outside world and potential customers. As the survey [Król 2006] confirms, the percentage of agritourism farms with their own webpage is rapidly growing as also their quality and contents.

Tourism described as “alternative”, although different in particular countries, has several common characteristics that could be find in analyzed materials:

• higher differentiation and variation of tourist offers,
• sustainability,
• higher intellectual expectations – trip as educational process,
• smaller groups or individual trips,
• new attitude and behavior of tourists and tour operators,
• building offers on local social and economic potential,
• empowering local communities.
• rural tourism, agritourism – pointed out as the most important forms of alternative tourism.

Discussion

More and more often tourists expect individually tailored offers in compliance with their interests, testes or life style. Huge tour operators can not fulfill those needs. This means more space for small travel agencies and their niche products. It also means smaller communities, smaller accommodation objects, smaller groups or individuals traveling to new places. To all those needs, expectations and tendencies rural tourism fits perfectly. Tourists want more or less active forms of spending their free time and want to join it with staying in less popular or unknown places but full of cultural, educational, interesting values. That part of the market is going to grow as tourists pay more attention to natural environment, sustainable development, ecotourism, thematic tourism, adventure tourism – form that can give them much more than traditional “3S”. The idea of “3E” - education, entertainment, excitement, can also be fulfilled by the offer of rural tourism, if only the “product” takes into consideration those needs. Also European Union funds available for rural areas, tourism and agritourism can help in keeping or restoration of national and local heritage, that can part of those “3E”.

Conclusions

Mass tourism is not going to disappear. It is and will be financially and organizationally the most available form of tourism for populations in developing countries and poorer parts of population in developed countries.

Significant part of tourism market has been changing its character to comply with new needs, expectations and tendencies of time spending. Alternative tourism seems to be a wide idea covering several forms of tourism activities being in opposition to mass tourism. From the Polish rural areas interest point of view, the most important are all forms connected with rural tourism, agritourism, ecotourism, agri-ecotourism. New trends in the world tourism can and will enhance demand for rural tourism offers. There is separate problem how to utilize that demand and turn it into profitable business, increase benefits and minimize negative impacts for rural areas. That part of tourism market needs knowledge, experience, financial sources and national and international marketing.
References


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