SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN WESTERN POMERANIAN REGION

Agnieszka Brelík

Introduction

Sustainable development is translated into Polish literature differently (Poskrobko 2001, Zaręba 2000). It is result that the concept itself is understood differently by the economist, ecologist or sociologist. However the idea of sustainable development grew from numerous environmental in earlier decades and was defined in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission 1987) as: Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The Brundtland report argued that the vast and complex issue of environmental deterioration should be integrated with the equally vast and complex issue of human development and poverty, clearly suggesting that both challenges needed to be resolved simultaneously and in a mutually reinforcing way (Robinson, 2004). Sustainable development is a contested concept even when the fundamentals are clear: maintaining the integrity of biophysical systems and reducing poverty and risks. From a governance perspective, such disagreement is an essential part of sustainable development, but one that makes operationalization difficult:

- Different ideas exist regarding sustainable development for actors in various sectors (e.g., energy, transportation, agriculture, food systems, waste management).
- Existing solutions tend to be sustainable within these sectors rather than across the whole of society.
- New developments bring new risks that cannot be anticipated.
- Sustainable development is a long-term, open-ended project that precedes and supersedes limited term, democratically elected governments.
- Sustainable development involves making choices, and perhaps trade-off decisions, on highly contested issues (which is to say that in some cases the notion of a “trade-off” might prove to be no more than a euphemism for fundamental irresolvable dilemmas) (Farrell et al. 2005).

Sustainable development derives from social consensus on what we consider to be unsustainable and what constitutes progress, perspectives that will differ across nations and localities. The substantial content of sustainable development cannot be scientifically determined as “objective knowledge,” but will always incorporate normative valuations that only become ascertained in the process of social interaction (Voss & Kemp, 2006). This situation calls for a different type of science, one able to deal with ambiguity, complexity, and uncertainty (Brand & Karvonen, 2007).

In March 2005, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) was released. Surveying the planet, it made a number of conclusions that many have stressed for years. The key messages from the report included the following points:

- For satisfactory health and a secure life, every person on Earth depends on nature and the ecosystem to provide the correct conditions.
- While Human changes to the ecosystem has helped improve lives by meeting the ever growing demand for food, fresh water, fiber and energy, But by doing so natures ability to purify air and water, protect herself from disasters and provision of medicines has been greatly depleted.
- The activities of humans is the cause of an unprecedented number of species to become or be on the edge of extinction, this threatens even more our own well being.
- An important obstacle to achieving the Millennium development goals of reducing poverty, hunger and disease is the loss of services originating from ecosystems.
- The mindset and behavior of humans needs to change or else the pressure on ecosystems will expand globally in years to come.
- Local communities need to be given ownership, share of the benefits and be involved in decisions if measures taken to conserve natural resources are to succeed.
- The human impact on ecosystems can be decreased substantially with todays knowledge and technology. However until the full value of ecosystem services are acknowledged and discontinue being seen as free and unlimited they are unlikely to be fully utilized.
- An integrated effort between all areas of government, business and international institutions will better protect natural assets. Policy decisions on investment, trade, subsidy, taxation and regulation among others will determine the yield of ecosystems (www.millenniumassessment.org)

Aim, method and procedure of research

The aim of the research was to gain information on the opinion of inhabitants of rural areas about the role of sustainable tourism and development of the area where they live. The research was carried out in 2007 in areas of the Western Pomeranian region in Poland. The method of research was a survey. After the gathered material was verified, 210 surveys were qualified for analysis.

Profile of respondents

There were more people aged between 26-45 who worked on agro tourism farms (35% of population). They are principally young people, mostly active, who use different forms of economic activities. 19% of those who took part in the questionnaire, were aged below 115 years, only 5% were aged between 15-18, 61% were aged between 19-25. However, there were slightly more women (53,5%), than men (46,5%) among respondents.

Figure 1 - The structure of agrotourism farms according to the age groups

Figure 1 shows that only 41% of respondents have a basic education and 27% a semi-higher education working within the agro-tourism service. This results from an old perception of farm workers, that you do not need a higher education in order to manage a rural farm. On the other hand, 14% of respondents with a higher education represent mainly people who have returned to the countryside, because they have a passion towards country life and they want to remain in close contact with nature. In addition the agricultural education is dominated mainly by the male population.
Those surveyed who didn’t speak English was 22,4% with German 17,4% but 20.4% spoke Russian well. Those surveyed were asked to evaluate their employment status. Most of them declared that they work in agriculture (34,4%), private sector (6,9), public sector (6,9) and tourism (17,9%). Thus, the majority of respondents also gained income from other sources. Most of those surveyed had worked on a farm in agrotourism for an average of nine years, most of them (50, 2%) after a parent/s death or they didn’t have any other choice (19,4), only 14,4% because they chose to.

Tourism activity in the opinion of the respondents

Those surveyed were asked to point out what kind of attraction they were offering to visitors. Most of them offered fishing, bicycling (75,1%), regional culture, (hunting, horse riding., baking bread and barbecues. The respondents valued nature, clean air as well as peace and quiet the most. Most of those surveyed offered accommodation in the same building where they live 62,3% and nearly 30% in separately located building.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
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<tr>
<td>same building where the surveyed live</td>
<td>62,69</td>
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<tr>
<td>separately located building</td>
<td>29,85</td>
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<tr>
<td>In adapted farm buildings</td>
<td>17,91</td>
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<tr>
<td>In bungalows</td>
<td>6,47</td>
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Source: own research.

The farmers offer visitors three forms of tourism (recreation 81%, walking 67% and specialist tourism15%)

To develop agi tourism activities need a proper edition of funds. The necessary new realization of investments would be reliant on grants and people’s own financial sources (loan and credits). 72.2% of respondents said that when starting up a new business their biggest investments were: buying furniture for the accommodation, electrical equipment, and also the modernization of habitable buildings. 54.5% of those questioned mainly funded renewal and investment work during the business start-up and organization of agrotouristic activities from current revenues and savings. It confirms the fact, that net worth is the base of any investment. It used foreign capitals:
- on principle of loan from familiar- 27,3%,
- from preferential credits-18,2%.

Comparing investments, which have been executed with it already will be realized within the next years, it is possible to remark slow change in direction of sponsorship development of investment in farm. Although current revenues still present the base (at all questionnaire) and austerities (at 54,5% respondents), however, additional capabilities of sponsorship could be seen in foreign capital but especially in assistance from foreign countries (30,5%) and from preferential credits (15%). If new capabilities to investing have appeared on the market, 38,46% farms rather will stay at hitherto existing profile, however, observing new capabilities.
Conclusion

Tourism is one way to encourage the diversification of rural economic activities (Bramwell 1994, Hunek 2000). Rural tourism is one of the main priorities of tourism development in many European countries, including Poland. The market for rural holidays is growing at the same time as the future of many rural regions is uncertain, due to changes in agriculture practice (including effects of the Common Agricultural Policy in the EU) or the increasing attractiveness of urban living standards. Rural tourism seems to be an appropriate tool to revitalize the declining rural areas and to ensure their sustainable future by job retention or even job creation, increased job diversity, service retention, farm support broadened cultural provision, landscape and nature conservation or the maintenance of rural arts. With particular regard to the rural undeveloped or declining areas, there is a tendency to approach tourism that will provide an economic panacea for development of rural regions. Rural enterprises have a relatively good basis from which to provide tourist services. Rural areas are visually dominated by agrarian and forest based economic activities. Land – use patterns, economic demands, and technological innovations in agriculture and forestry are the main reasons for visual changes in the rural landscape. The landscape which in itself attracts many tourists, is adversely affected if, for example, too many farmers stop farming (Tyrvanen et al. 2001).

References

[3] (www.millenniumassessment.org)
Title: Sustainable tourism development in Western Pomeranian Region

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Key words: tourism, sustainable development, Western Pomeranian Region

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