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FOOD PRODUCTS AS AN ELEMENT INFLUENCING AGRITOURISM FARMS' ATTRACTIVENESS

PRODUKTY ŻYWNOŚCIOWE JAKO ELEMENT WPŁYWAJĄCY NA ATRAKCYJNOŚĆ GOSPODARSTW AGROTURYSTYCZNYCH

Key words: tourists, potential tourists, rural farm, agritourism farm, products, food, regional products

Słowa kluczowe: turyści, potencjalni turyści, gospodarstwo wiejskie, gospodarstwo agroturystyczne, produkty, żywność, produkty regionalne

Abstract. Rural areas in Poland have great tourism potential, which is used in offers made by agritourism farms. Catering for guests has great significance in such offers and is based on products produced by the farm owners. It gives the possibility to sell the products on the premises and provides farmers with additional financial benefits. The aim of the paper was to check if food products offered by agritourism farms in the Wielkopolska Province are considered attractive for both tourists, who have spent their leisure time there already, as well as for potential tourists, who have not spent their holidays there yet. In the studies, it was found that these two groups of tourists are interested in the products and meals offered by farmers.

Introduction

Rural areas in Poland have great tourism potential; beautiful landscapes, fresh air, biodiversity and an interesting cultural heritage all help to attract tourists. As a result, different forms of tourism, including agritourism are able to develop in such areas. This form of tourism has become very popular. On the one hand, agritourism is a form of leisure that has to compete with other forms of tourism, such as holiday resorts, as far as expenses are concerned, but on the other hand, agritourism farms offer more interesting and richer residency programs.

Agritourism is a form of tourism that is connected to a functioning farm, where agricultural production and animal breeding are regarded as one of the most important elements of interest/attraction. From what Drzewiecki [2005] has noticed for the past decade, or more, there has definitely been a qualitative expansion in recreational offers as well as a quantitative dynamic growth in agritourism farms.

Farmers offer tourists from cities and towns their own, traditionally made, local food and preserves. They serve meals prepared mostly from their own production. Selling milk, meat, eggs, fruit and vegetables provides farmers with additional income [Jęczmyk et al. 2011].

On the other hand, according to literature view food is a significant aspect of the tourist's experiences and tourist expenditures [Telfer, Wall 1996, Cohen, Avieli 2004, Armesto, Gómez 2006, Bowen, De Master 2011]. The offered cuisine (for example traditional or regional), products and meals are often the main factors influencing a tourist's decision of choosing a specific holiday destination. The results obtained from over 60% tourists, surveyed in 2010, showed that the main holiday attractions of an agritourism farm were the local cuisine and products provided by the farm [Uglis, Krysińska 2012]. Moreover, tourists who took part in the process of learning traditional methods of preserving food products or learning how to cook the traditional and regional meals described it as being a unique attraction [Warمیńska, Łoboda 2009].

Agritourists not only seek new culinary experiences, but they also quite often seek tastes which relate to their childhood, mainly from their mother's or grandmother's cuisine. Additionally, meals offered by farmers are natural and obtained locally from the farm itself.

As mentioned above, food products can be the main motivating factor for a tourist to choose a specific agritourism farm, or such products could also be viewed as an attraction by the traveller. Home-made cheese, bread, meat products, fruit and vegetables, honey, juice, beverages or other local products are becoming more and more popular among tourists visiting such places.

Food produced in a traditional way, without the use of chemicals, is a time-consuming and expensive process. Due to these reasons, such food is more expensive than the food sold in shops. The paper seeks to examine if food products offered by agritourism farms in the Wielkopolska Province are considered attractive for tourists who have spent their leisure time there already, as well as for potential tourists who have not spent their holidays there yet.

Material and methods

The aim of the experiment was to determine whether food products offered in agritourism farms in the Wielkopolska Province are attractive for potential visitors and for tourists who had already visited the place before. According to Panasiuk [2011], potential demand does not exist on the market since it does not cover the consumer's purchasing power. However, this should be a subject for further investigation.

The experiment was carried out on 244 adult Poznan citizens and respondents were chosen at random. The main criteria in selecting respondents were age and consent to take part in the study. The group examined included 64% females and 36% males. The experiment was conducted in September and October 2010 and was based on inquiry forms a survey by questionnaire.

Results

The experiment carried out shows that almost 64% of examined respondents had visited agritourism farms. Among them, 64.8% of respondents had spent their holidays there only once, 15.3% of respondents had visited such farms every year and only 19.9% had visited more times during one year. There were more females in the experimental group (tab. 1) and most of the respondents had finished university (51.3%) or secondary education (41%). Among the 88 respondents who had never been to an agritourism farm, 58% were females and 42% were males. This group (61.4%) included mainly people with secondary level education. Taking into consideration data concerning the educational level, it must be highlighted that the statistical value, chi square (χ^2) indicates significant diversity between the selected groups.

From an economic point of view, the income of the respondents is significant since it is a key factor greatly influencing the level and possibilities of tourism consumption. In both of the surveyed groups, the monthly net income for the majority of households, up to 92.9%, did not exceed PLN 6000 (Fig. 1). Most of the respondents from the first group described their net income as

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents

Tabela 1. Charakterystyka respondentów

Characteristic features/ <i>Charakterystyka</i>	User/ <i>Korzystający</i> (<i>n</i> =156)[%]	Non-user/ <i>Niekorzystający</i> (<i>n</i> =88)[%]
Gender/ <i>Płeć</i> :		
– female/ <i>kobieta</i>	67.3	58.0
– male/ <i>mężczyzna</i>	32.7	42.0
	$\chi^2=2.13, df=1, p>0.05$	
Educational level/ <i>Poziom wykształcenia</i> :		
– elementary or vocational/ <i>podstawowe i zawodowe</i>	7.7	13.6
– secondary/ <i>średnie</i>	41.0	61.4
– university/ <i>wyższe</i>	51.3	25.0
	$\chi^2=16.13, df=2, p<0.01$	

Source: own study

Źródło: badania własne

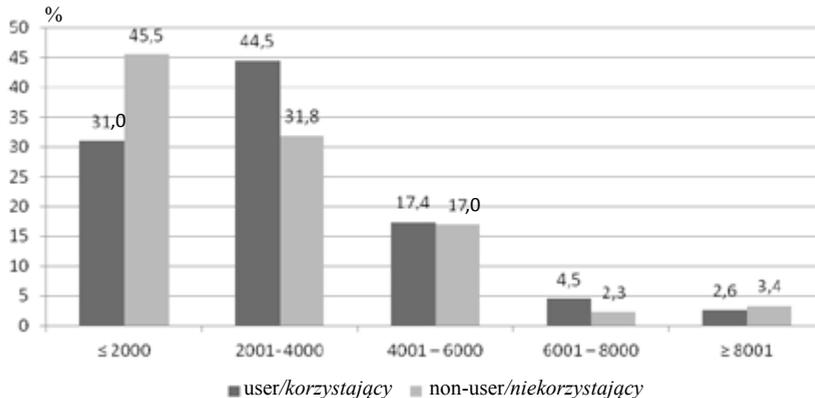


Figure 1. General monthly income in the households of examined groups in percentage value
Rysunek 1. Ogólny miesięczny dochód w gospodarstwie domowym („na rękę”) w badanych grupach
 Source: own study
Źródło: badania własne

being in the range of PLN 2000 to PLN 4000. However, in the second group income was less than PLN 2000 per one member of family. It must be stressed that the evaluated chi square value did not show any significant differences in income levels with regard to the groups. Thus, according to the data presented in figure 1, tourists visiting agritourism farms have a higher income.

Respondents were asked about the food offered by agritourism farms (Tab. 1). It turns out that 76.9% of visitors spending their holidays on agritourism farms consumed food offered by local farmers. Only 3.2 % visitors rejected food being offered to them, whereas 9.6 % of visitors consumed these kinds of meals depending on the situation.

A similar situation occurred among potential tourists since 75% of them were eager to buy a full catering package during their stay on agritourism farms, whereas 8% of the tourists remained uncertain. A significant difference was observed among visitors who were against the full catering facilities offered by agritourism farms, amounting to 17% (6.8% would rather not eat but 10.2% would be absolutely against eating on a farm).

The respondents were also asked about buying food products offered by farmers from agritourism farms during their stay or when leaving. Among respondents who already benefited from such farms, 23.7% always bought the products while 67.4% only bought such products from time to time. On the other hand, only 8.9% of the respondents were not interested in ever buying any products. In the second group, only 27.2% would buy such products but 61.4% would buy them occasionally and 11.4% would never buy anything.

Both groups of respondents were asked about the particular products they bought or would buy during their stay in agritourism farms (Fig. 2). The most popular products mentioned by the respondents were eggs, milk, cheese, fruit, vegetables and their derived preserves. However, meat and meat products seemed to be less popular. Furthermore, 43.59% of tourists were able to spend from PLN 20-50 on buying additional food products (apart from meals) during their stay on agritourism farms. On top of that, 29.5% of tourists were able to pay PLN 50-100 on additional food products and only 12.2% of them were ready to spend more than PLN 100. Among potential tourists the answers were similar: 14.8% could afford spending around PLN 20, 43.2% would spend from PLN 20-50, 35.2% would spend from PLN 50 -100 but only 6.8% would be able to pay more than PLN 100.

The respondents were also asked whether they pay attention to the ingredients with which food products of agritourism farms are prepared. Among those who benefited from such services, 50.6% usually paid attention to the ingredients, 20.5% sometimes paid attention to the ingredients but a ¼ of respondents – 25.1% always took the ingredients with which the food was prepared

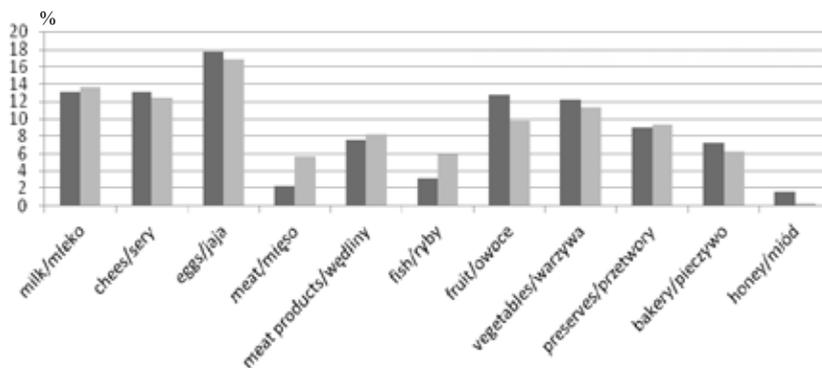


Figure 2. Percentage of different products most frequently bought on agritourism farms
 Rysunek 2. Rodzaj produktów najczęściej kupowanych w gospodarstwach agroturystycznych
 Source: own study
 Źródło: badania własne

into consideration. Only 3.6% of respondents claimed not to be interested in the ingredients being used. Nevertheless, 23.9% of potential agritourists surveyed declared that they would always take the ingredients into consideration, 44.3% would do it as a general rule, 21.6% from time to time only and 10.2% would never do it.

In order to determine whether the assumption that the gender of respondents determines the behaviour of an agritourism consumer was correct (Tab. 2), a U Manna-Whitney test was carried out. Nonetheless, the results obtained show that in the case of respondents who benefited from agritourism services, the assumption could not be proved. However, in the case of tourists who did not benefit from agritourism services, as far as expenses were concerned, the results obtained failed to prove that gender determines the amount of expenses made on additional food products.

Moreover, respondents were asked if they would be able to pay more for food products if the food was to be prepared according to traditional recipes. It turned out that, among tourists who benefited from agritourism services, only one person (0.6%) did not even consider the possibility. Furthermore, as many as 26.3% would definitely pay more, whereas 55.8% would rather pay and 17.3% decided they would not pay extra. If we take potential tourists into account, 52.3% of such tourists would hesitate whether or not to buy such products but 25% would definitely buy them. In addition 15.9% of respondents would apparently not do it but 6.8% would be against buying. Respondents were also asked if they know anything about the certification of regional products. Among those who benefited from agritourism services, 70.5% knew about the existence of such a system but 29.5% did not. However, in the group of potential agritourists only 65.9% had heard about it but 34.1% did not.

The experiment was used to verify the knowledge of respondents concerning certified products. Among agritourists only 41.7% were able to show concrete products. The respondents mentioned 19 products, which in their opinion, were certified. Only 6 of those products are protected by the European Union, among them the answers were as follows: oscypek 43.7%, rogal świętomarciński 28.1%, only 3.1% bryndza podhalańska, 3.1% andruty kaliskie, 3.1% wielkopolski ser smażony and 2.1% olej rydzowy. Apart from that, respondents showed product groups like: cheese, bread, or pork leg, but they were still not able to give the full name of the product.

In turn, more than half of potential tourists (55.5%) could not show any products, and those who claimed to know some of the products were not able to name them. Among all the answers, only 37.9% replied rogal świętomarciński properly and only 25% answered oscypek properly. The remaining products were classified as: bigos, eggs, cheese, fruit and alcohol.

Both groups were asked if the food offered by agritourism farms could be considered to be an element influencing the attractiveness of agritourism farms. It turned out that as many as 96.8% of agritourists and 90.9% of potential tourists personally thought that food could be an element influencing an agritourism farm's attractiveness.

Table 2. Food products' significance in agritourism
 Tabela 2. Znaczenie produktów żywnościowych w agroturystyce

Specification/Wyszczególnienie	User/ Korzystający (n=156)[%]	Non-user/ Niekorzystający (n=88)[%]
Did you use the local meals during your stay at an agritourism farm/ Czy podczas pobytu w gospodarstwie agroturystycznym korzysta (korzystał(a)by) Pani/Pan wyżywienia: – definitely yes/zdecydowanie tak – rather yes/raczej tak – hard to say/trudno powiedzieć – rather not/raczej nie – definitely not/zdecydowanie nie	37.8 39.1 9.6 10.3 3.2	34.1 40.9 8.0 6.8 10.2
$\chi^2=6.01, df=4, p>0.05$		
Do you buy/Would you buy local products or preserves from the lodging providers (eggs, jam, meat products, etc.)/Czy kupuje (kupił(a) by) Pani/Pan lokalne produkty od swoich kwaterodawców (jaja, dżemy, produkty mięsne, itp.) – yes always/tak zawsze – usually yes/z reguły tak – sometimes/czasami – never/nigdy	23.7 36.5 30.8 9.0	27.3 30.7 29.5 12.5
$\chi^2=1.56, df=3, p>0.05$		
How much money would you spend on buying additional food products/Jaką kwotę pieniędzy jest Pani/Pan w stanie przeznaczyć na zakup dodatkowych produktów żywnościowych: – up to PLN 20/do 20 zł – PLN 21-50/21-50 zł – PLN 51-100/51-100 zł – more than PLN 100/powyżej 100 zł	15.4 42.9 29.5 12.2	14.8 43.2 35.2 6.8
$\chi^2=2.18, df=3, p>0.05$		

Source: own study

Źródło: badania własne

Summary

The diversified nature and ever more complex services being offered by agritourism farms result in the choice of tourists regarding a particular offer to be influenced by many factors. The culinary aspect is undoubtedly one of the elements providing such resting places with their uniqueness. Meals and traditional recipes made out of natural ingredients increase the attractiveness of this form of leisure and this has been confirmed by the survey results shown in the article. Agritourists and potential guests in agritourism farms mostly appreciate the emphasis that is placed on the high quality of their food and this, in turn, motivates them to acknowledge and accept the high prices of the food products sold on farms in comparison with those sold in normal shops.

The culinary offers of agritourism farms are an important part of tourist products. Such offers bring benefits to both tourists and farmers since they serve as additional income for farmers, provide new jobs, protect the local culture and identity and because of all these reasons, developing such products is essential for the rural area developmental strategy to proceed.

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Streszczenie

Obszary wiejskie w Polsce mają duży potencjał turystyczny, który jest wykorzystywany w ofertach gospodarstw agroturystycznych. Dużego znaczenia w tej ofercie nabiera żywność gości, które często opiera się na produktach pochodzących z własnej produkcji gospodarstwa rolnego. Daje to możliwość ich zbytu na miejscu oraz pozwala na uzyskanie dodatkowych korzyści ekonomicznych dla rolnika. Celem artykułu było określenie, czy produkty żywnościowe oferowane w gospodarstwach agroturystycznych na terenie woj. wielkopolskiego są atrakcyjne zarówno dla turystów, którzy skorzystali już z tej formy wypoczynku, jak i potencjalnych turystów, którzy jeszcze nie wypoczywali w tych obiektach. Jak pokazały przeprowadzone badania zarówno korzystający, jak i potencjalni korzystający są zainteresowani produktami i potrawami proponowanymi przez rolników.

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