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## **INNOVATION OF THE RURAL TOURISM AND AGRITURISM**

### *INNOWACYJNOŚĆ W TURYSTYCE WIEJSKIEJ I AGROTURYSTYCE*

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*Słowa kluczowe: agroturystyka, turystyka wiejska, innowacyjność, rozwój*

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**Abstract.** On the present stage of development of agritourism and rural tourism obvious there is a statement, that the phenomenon of electro-mobility can be the key to development and innovativeness. That suggestion is explained identically by pre-conditions of economic as well as organizational nature. How it is everywhere known, electric transport tourist vehicles find each time this more wide application in all well-known forms and types of tourism. Their ecological character of exploitation finds the direct measuring in the increase of tourist attractiveness of these regions in that those transport vehicles found the practical application. In connection with the above-mentioned process of electrification of the Polish agritourism and rural tourism probably deserves more wide discussion in the context of that promotes through the government of Poland of Plan of Development of Electromobility, that must also hug the distance rural spaces. In the present chapter an attempt was made indicated issues electromobility, as of key to the development of both the innovation of the farm tourism and the country tourist. Keeping an eye on formal existing restrictions and desired perspective directions of changes is an aim of deliberations, what in the future to conduct innovations perhaps for understanding the being of the influence of the phenomenon of the electromobility on the height in this sector of tourist services.

### **Introduction**

Along with the rapid development of the phenomenon of globalization there is growing number of evidence that place tourism in the heart of the concept of economic development. According to the estimates by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), from 2010-2030, it is expected that tourist traffic to the newly emerging destinations will grow twice as fast as in the developed world [Obi et al. 2016]. Agritourism, which is understood as a kind of rural tourism, is becoming a very popular form of tourism and agritourism is getting more and more popular. Like other tourist services, it is successfully growing in many regions of the world. This is particularly the case in European countries, especially in those where agriculture plays a significant role in the economy of the country. Due to many important factors, among which the political and economic situation as well as the activities of associations and organizations of a national and regional character should be mentioned, agritourism activity in individual countries is at a different level of development. This is reflected both in the placement of agritourist services, the nature of the facilities and in the offer of accommodation providers.

### **Material and methodology**

The article is of overview and conceptual nature. The aim of the article is to identify the basic problems of electromobility for the development and innovation of agritourism and rural tourism. The main problem of innovativeness is its complex nature and the multiplicity of links existing in it on the tourist market. The research was conducted using a review of national and foreign literature on the subject as well as descriptive and comparative analysis. The specification of the concept of innovativeness was made based on the theory of economics. The added

value of the article is the indication of specific features of innovativeness as the basic means of functioning of agritourism and rural tourism.

### **Innovation in tourism<sup>1</sup>**

Due to the high degree of market flexibility and quick response to changes in demand, agritourism farms can oppose the possible stagnation process and consequently enable lingering and even development in this market. While the innovativeness of such tourism market entities as hotels and travel agencies is obvious, in agritourism farms this aspect is not so unambiguous. The products offered by this group are addressed to customers (tourists), for whom, the values are the attributes, such as the environment, tradition, folklore or customs. An agritourist expects, therefore, the least interference with the natural and cultural environment, which seems to be incompatible with the idea of innovativeness, i.a. in offering new values to customers and resist stagnation. Even though there is research done on the innovativeness of tourism enterprises, it lacks fully successful attempts of recognising this phenomenon in rural tourism. The main concern is that there should be such an approach to the problem which will help to fill an existing research gap, mainly by settling the dispute between innovativeness and tradition in the agritourism offers [Puciato, Wos 2011]. As indicated in the available literature of the subject, implementing innovativeness contributes to meeting the changing needs of consumers in a better way, which in the current market reality is one of the most important conditions the competitiveness of the tourism enterprises [Goranczewski, Puciato 2010 Nuskiewicz, Roman 2013].

Innovativeness is considered a motor of growth [Romer 1990, Aghion, Howitt 1992, Grossman, Helpman 1994] and that is why it is important to understand its determinants. There are many different theories of innovativeness, which show the relationship between the competition and the innovation activity of enterprises. Avinash Dixit and Joseph Stiglitz [1977] dealt with this issue and according to them, the high competition discourages the implementation of innovative activity. Richard Gilbert and David Newberry, who took the similar position [1982], stated that the companies are more likely to carry out innovative activities if there is less competition in the market. They justified their views stating that in those markets where there is more competition, the gains from innovative activities are lower than in those markets where there is less competition. Kenneth Arrow, who drew the opposite conclusions [1962], claimed that the innovative activity in the conditions of tough competition enables the enterprise to achieve a better competitive position, and hence a higher profit. In turn, Michael E. Porter [1991] claimed that the lack of competition and monopoly discourages the pursuit of innovative activity even more. In a market economy, it is competing with new products, new technology, a new type of organization or a new source of supply that count.

Innovation is the specific entrepreneurship tool, which gives new opportunities to create wealth. The main external factors, favouring generating innovation in the services sector are: intensive technological progress, rapid changes in tastes and preferences and the requirements of customers, shortening product life cycle and increasing competition in the scale micro macro and meso [Krawczyk-Sokołowska 2011]. It is worth noting that in the market of tourist services innovativeness of enterprises is not only services, but also products. The specificity of this kind of businesses makes the most important sources of innovation such as the ability to work with other actors of the economy (e.g. in the framework of the cluster structures, cooperative relations or concentration), a predisposition to modern management techniques, the constant analysis of the environment, human resources development, research and development and collaboration with research units, the development of higher education in the fields of education, the ability to take risks, pro-innovative motivation system and high corporate culture [Januszevska 2008].

Innovation in the services on the market of rural tourism and agritourism is heterogeneous in nature and this is due to the fact that the party is looking for a demand-pull in traditional elements

<sup>1</sup> Based on the paper [Lewicki, Brelik 2017]

in products, related to the ecology, the natural environment, healthy food, tradition and peasant culture. These attributes are rather a contradiction of the idea of innovativeness, as introducing changes in the form of modern technological solutions and improving processes in these areas is not a process desired by potential clients in this case. It can even be said that from the point of view of the demand side, the high quality of both agritourism and rural tourism products is associated with a long-term unchanging shape and tradition and rural culture, and any attempt to introduce changes may cause a drop in demand and thus a decrease in financial inflows.

However, observations of market reality clearly indicate that both agritourism and rural tourism may be included in the innovation process. In the reception areas, where agritourism is more developed, various examples of its improvement can be noticed. Trying to address this specific contradiction between the traditional shape of the offer in this service sector and innovation, two important issues should be noted. First of all, when considering the issue of innovativeness of agritourism products<sup>2</sup>, you cannot omit the market segments to which they are directed. Expectations of innovativeness in the purchased agritourism products and rural tourism are significantly different, depending on the group of customers. The most „pro-innovative” are probably business guests, expecting attractive and modern services provided in the natural, rural surroundings. In this case, the answer to their needs is the phenomenon of electromobility. Such a solution may also be interesting to gathering enthusiasts who expect a peaceful rest after the hardships of travel and searching for forest fruits using electric means of transport. Even the most „anti-innovative” guests, festive and foreign, for whom any modernization of the product may contribute to not meeting the reported needs, and consequently to the lack of satisfaction with the purchased services, may appreciate the possibility of using electric farm machines.

Apart from segmentation of the market, the second important issue related to the controversy surrounding the innovation of agritourism products is its scope of changes. It must be stated with full certainty that in agritourism and rural tourism the scope of introduced changes must be thought out in such a way as to increase the attractiveness of the product, not to disturb its essence – the core [Puciato, Woś 2011]. The introduction of significant product or process innovations may lead to a decrease in the attractiveness of this type of offers [Olearnik 2013]. As a consequence, this may lead to the resignation of some customers from the purchase of this service and a decrease in demand. Such a behaviour may have negative economic consequences for entities operating in the field of agritourism and rural tourism on the Polish tourist services market.

Striving to use the existing potential better, including work, knowledge and capital as well as methods of their effective use for economic purposes, as well as building new forms of competitive advantage by increasing expenditures on pro-development activities, i.e. research and development, education, information society infrastructure, tourism are the only right solution. Innovation in tourism is, therefore, about creating new products, improving existing ones, introducing new additional elements or “opening” a new market, changing the way of servicing or conducting marketing activities in order to meet the needs and requirements of a modern client.

It should be emphasized that in the available literature, the prevailing view is that on the way to building a good product of rural tourism and agritourism and its market success in the form of its full commercialization, it is not necessary to apply modern technological solutions [Lichniak 2011]. Therefore, knowledge of factors that influenced the fact that electromobility is the key to the development and innovation of agritourism and rural tourism in other areas of Europe is

<sup>2</sup> According to empirical research [Sikora 2008], agritourism farm services are used by four main groups of clients. The first segment is made up of weekend and holiday guests, appearing in the countryside for holiday purposes at weekends and on holidays, in order to get to know holiday traditions, rituals and dishes. The second group of agritourists includes lovers of so-called gathering, especially mushroom pickers appearing in the autumn countryside. The third group consists of participants of business, training or conference meetings, expecting an extensive entertainment and recreation offer. The fourth segment of the agritourism market are foreign guests, mainly German citizens and the Scandinavians, for whom rural cuisine, nature and peasant tradition and the possibility of hunting mean exoticism.

becoming an imperative of immense significance in today's market realities. Electromobility is understood as the use of electric vehicles, both individual, such as electric car, electric scooter, electric motorbike or electric bike and public transport vehicles. The growing importance of electromobility is linked to, i.e. an increase in the production of renewable energy in rural areas. The concept of electromobility concerns both the economic and technical aspects of the vehicle as well as charging technology and charging infrastructure systems. In particular, the promoted process of electrification of rural tourism and agritourism is currently one of the most important development processes of this branch of services in most countries of the European Union<sup>3</sup>.

The issue of electromobility, as a key to the development and innovation of rural tourism and agritourism, is a significant research problem. In the available agritourism and rural tourism literature there are no such analyzes and studies in an interdisciplinary approach [Januszewska 2008]. Therefore, the most important organizational changes, in order to implement the development and innovation project, include: firstly, ensuring the stability of the market environment in the form of a proper process organization<sup>4</sup> for the development of electromobility, in particular, in rural areas. Therefore, it is necessary to create an appropriate and predictable organizational framework and maintain a balance between the implementation of electromobility and traditional elements related to ecology, the natural environment, healthy food, tradition and peasant culture. Secondly, it is important to ensure an even development of charging infrastructure in rural areas. Breaking the mental and practical barriers, resulting from the limited range of electric vehicles, requires the development of charging infrastructure for all types of transport as soon as possible. Thirdly, the interoperability of the charging infrastructure. The newly created infrastructure should provide full access to all means of electric tourism transport. However, at the organizational stage in the field of infrastructure development, a very important element may be processes consisting of the elimination of basic psychological barriers in the use of electric vehicles in rural tourism and agritourism. Therefore, first of all, the focus should be on indicating the benefits resulting from the introduction of such technological solutions in the scope of previously offered services.

At this stage of consideration, it should be noted that the issue of electromobility in rural areas was not included in the Polish tourism development program<sup>5</sup> [MSiT 2016].

Summing up the considerations regarding the existing limitations, it is important that the organizational algorithm in the area of electromobility, in particular with regard to agritourism and rural tourism, seeks synergy between innovation and values that attract both current and potential customers to this form of tourism. The aspect of ensuring accessibility to the so-called charging infrastructure is becoming crucial<sup>6</sup>. In particular, this process should apply to rural areas, where ecology and immaculate condition of the environment play a fundamental role. Therefore, at the stage of organizational changes, one should seek opportunities to increase the degree of agritourism and rural tourism promotion through innovation. Electromobility can play a special role in this process. Noteworthy is the fact that the tourism market may obtain financing from European funds, both in the scope of means of transport only and the infrastructure [Przeorek-Smyka 2008]. Consequently, it will reduce the distance to the countries, which in the development of electromobility see a path to development and promotion of agritourism and rural tourism.

<sup>3</sup> Observations of the market of rural tourism services and agritourism in the European Union countries clearly show that electromobility is one of the basic tools of innovativeness in this market.

<sup>4</sup> The need to meet the requirements of the modern market means that entities operating on it must look for new organizational solutions previously unknown on the Polish market.

<sup>5</sup> The phenomenon of electromobility in the field of tourism has been narrowed down only to the sector of sanatorium and spa tourism.

<sup>6</sup> Decisions on the selection of the specific location will depend on the business decisions taken by private entities, which ensure that the infrastructure will spring up in the places most convenient for users. At the moment, there are no guidelines as to the specific location of the charging stations in rural areas in Poland.

## Conclusions

Appropriate organizational actions in order to develop agritourism and rural tourism, combined with innovation, which electromobility offers, will aim to create expectations for the emergence of new target audiences, which will lead to the intensification of activities in the field of competitiveness of Polish agritourism farm in the international arena. In order to obtain as much organizational functionality, actions need to be taken today to build the market, even when the supply side in the market still does not see the potential benefits associated with this process. This organisational solution will certainly have a direct positive impact on the development of electromobility in rural areas, so as to later lead to the development of electromobility in all other forms and types of tourism in Poland.

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### **Streszczenie**

*Celem artykułu jest identyfikacja podstawowej problematyki elektromobilności dla rozwoju i innowacyjności agroturystyki i turystyki wiejskiej. Na obecnym etapie rozwoju agroturystyki i turystyki wiejskiej oczywiste jest stwierdzenie, że zjawisko elektromobilności może być kluczem do rozwoju i innowacyjności. Wniosek ten motywowany jest zarówno przesłankami natury ekonomicznej, jak i organizacyjnej. Jak powszechnie wiadomo, elektryczne pojazdy turystyczne znajdują coraz to szersze zastosowanie we wszystkich znanych formach i rodzajach turystyki. Ich ekologiczny charakter eksploatacji znajduje swój bezpośredni wymiar we wzroście atrakcyjności turystycznej danych regionów, w których pojazdy te znalazły swoje praktyczne zastosowanie. W związku z tym, proces elektryfikacji polskiej agroturystyki i turystyki wiejskiej z pewnością zasługuje na szersze omówienie w kontekście promowanego przez rząd Polski Planu rozwoju elektromobilności, który ma także objąć swoim zasięgiem poza obszarami metropolitalnymi, obszary wiejskie.*

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