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TYPES OF AGRITOURISM PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES IN THE OPINIONS OF UNIVERSITY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

RODZAJE PROMOCJI DZIAŁALNOŚCI AGROTURYSTYCZNEJ W OPINII STUDENTÓW I UCZNIÓW

Key words: promotional activities, agritourism farms, market segments of agritourism services

Słowa kluczowe: działania promocyjne, gospodarstwa agroturystyczne, segmenty rynku usług agroturystycznych

Abstract. The article presents forms of promotion used by agritourism farm owners in the opinions of 139 students of the University of Life Sciences – SGGW in Warsaw and 35 secondary education students of Jadwiga Dziubińska Agricultural Education Centre Schools in Gołdkowo. The paper presents segments of the market for agritourism services in the opinions of survey respondents. According to university and secondary school students, most owners of agritourism farms promote their facilities on their own websites. In the opinion of secondary school students, service providers also promote their facilities on tourism fairs and in the traditional media. However, in the opinion of students entering higher education, as well as those who are prospective graduates, a very important way to promote an agritourism offer is the information transmitted in direct contacts. According to the respondents, families with children most often buy agritourism services.

Introduction

Promotion, a word derived from Latin *promotion* and *promovare*, means ‘support’ and ‘move forward’, ‘expand’ [Śliwińska 1999]. Sales promotion covers a series of tactical marketing techniques developed within strategic marketing in order to increase the value of a product or service by achieving a certain sales volume and implementing marketing objectives [L. Miles 2006]. The concept of promotion is not an easy definition to understand. The definition itself is not helpful because customers believe that promotion is a form of competitive fight aimed at attracting clients.

Promotion is part of a series of marketing instruments for influencing the market, i.e. the so-called marketing mix. It is also strictly connected with every element of this system. Promotion is not intended to substitute the marketing mix; on the contrary, it is intended to strengthen each marketing mix element [Kruczek, Walas 2004].

According to Sztucki, “promotion is marketing influence exerted on clients and potential buyers consisting in providing information, arguments, promises and words of encouragement that persuade to buy products on offer and create a favourable opinion on producers, retailers and service providers” [Sztucki 1999].

As Sznajder puts it, “promotion is the influence of the company on customers consisting in providing them with information intended to increase their knowledge about the company products and the company itself in order to create preference on the market for them. It is, thus, such a way of the company’s communication with the surrounding environment that is to contribute to the increase in demand for goods sold by the company” [Sznajder 1993].

It is mainly a customer who determines the quality of products because a customer participates in the production process. The task of promotion is to influence a client in the moment a service is provided, which does not take place in the case of tangible goods. Thus, on the one hand communication with a client is part of the service, on the other hand the aim of promotion is to remind a client that the promised service will really affect them, i.e. the producer has kept the promise [Pawlicz 2008].

Promotion, as an instrument of marketing, is becoming more and more important in the tourist sector because of the increased number of tourist services suppliers and a need to specialize. Offers are becoming more and more substitutive and this means that promotion must differentiate them. Markets are divided into smaller segments, which require a different marketing policy [Roth, Schrand 1992].

Promotion is also an important element of integrated marketing activities in rural tourism, including agritourism [Sikora 2012]. For an agritourism farm's owner, the aim of promotion is to communicate with the market, shape customers' social awareness, which helps create the farm's and its products' image and ensures their lasting presence on the competitive market [Tew, Barbieri 2012].

Research objective and methods

The article aims to present forms of promotion used by agritourism farms' owners. The article also discusses the segments of agritourism services. In order to identify these factors fully and objectively, the empirical material was gathered with the use of surveys and their adequate research technique (a questionnaire). It was sent to 174 respondents, including 125 extramural students of the Faculty of Economic Sciences of the University of Life Sciences in Warsaw (46 first year students of the BA studies in the field of Economics, 30 first year students of the MA studies in the field of Finance and Accounting and 8 students of MA studies in the field of Management), 14 extramural students of the fourth year of the Faculty of Farming and Biology (the field of Farming) and 35 students of Jadwiga Dziubińska Educational Training Centre Schools in Gołdakowo (12 students of the 1st form trained in Agribusiness, 18 students of the 2nd form trained in Farming Mechanization and 5 students of the 2nd form trained in Veterinary). The respondents were both men – 52.9% and women 47.1%. Most of them (64.4%) live in rural areas and 15.5% in towns with the population below 100,000, 4.6 in towns with the population below 500,000 and other respondents in cities with the population above 500,000.

The respondents formed three groups, i.e. those who attend a secondary school, those who have started studying and those who are going to complete university education soon.

Forms of promotion used by agritourism farms' owners

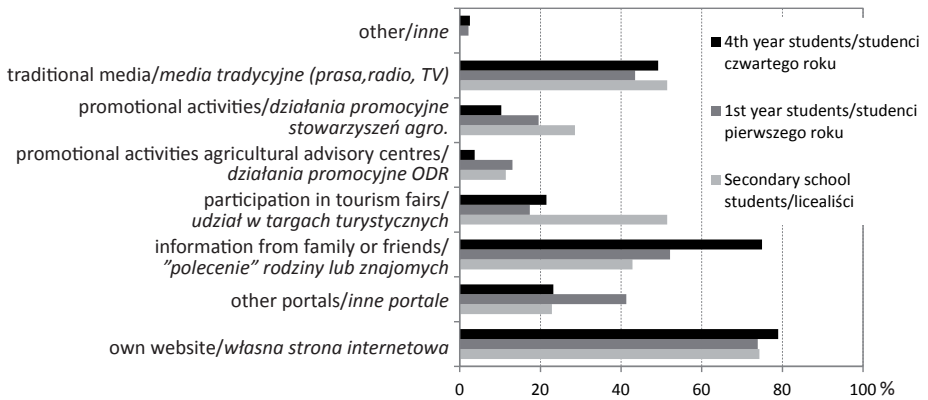
The most efficient form of promotion of an agritourism farm is the maximization of customer satisfaction. They can inform many people they know about their satisfaction, which increases the number of people who are eager to spend a holiday on a given farm. The first guests are absolutely essential and informing those who have not known about the farm so far but would like to have a rest in the country is also very important [Roman 2014].

The research shows, that in the respondents' opinion, agritourism farm owners generally promote their facilities on their own websites. The comparison of the methods of promotion used by agritourism farm owners is presented in Figure 1.

It must be mentioned that one can find many agritourism offers on-line. Unfortunately, many of them are not developed in a professional way. They lack a lot of essential data, e.g. information about things that can be used: kitchen, fridge or car park, or detailed prices. Another problem is that information on agritourism farms' websites does not always correspond precisely to the actual state of the facilities. One can also find an unusual way of popularizing an offer by presenting an on-line farm diary. This triggers real interest and results in a desire to visit the given place.

According to secondary school students, service providers also promote their tourist facilities on tourism fairs and through traditional media (the press, radio, television). But in the opinion of university students, the information passed to other people in a direct way is a very important method of promotion. A customer's positive opinion about a given farm and its recommendation in direct interpersonal contacts remain an essential reason and a verbal incentive to attract interest in the given agritourism farm.

The above-mentioned promotional activities are addressed to various segments of the agritourism services market.



* respondents could indicate more than one answer/*ankietowani mogli wskazać więcej niż 1 odpowiedź*
 Figure 1. The methods of promotion used by the owners of agritourism farms in the opinion of university and secondary school students, n = 174

Rysunek 1. Sposoby promocji wykorzystywane przez właścicieli gospodarstw agroturystycznych w opinii studentów i uczniów, n = 174

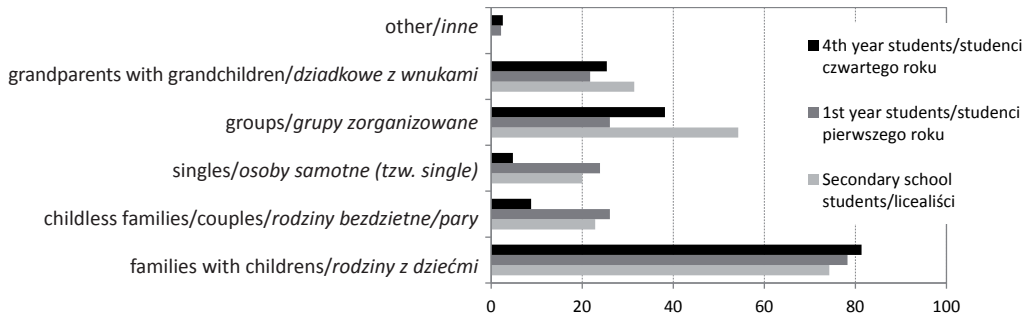
Source: own study

Źródło: opracowanie własne

Types of agritourism services segments

According to the respondents, agritourism services are most often bought by families with children (Fig. 2). Most probably this is a result of the offer being adjusted to the needs of the market. Cycling excursions and walks in the forest together with berry and mushroom picking are often organised for tourists staying on farms. Tourists resting in the country can appreciate their contact with animals, e.g. horses, ponies, goats, poultry and other species of birds, pigs, deer, fallow deer, ostriches, emus or llamas. The time spent on agritourism farms is for sure an unforgettable experience for children.

It must be mentioned that secondary school students in general support the opinion that organized groups often visit agritourism farms. It may result from the fact that secondary schools often organize classes in such facilities.



* Respondents could indicate more than one answer/*Ankietowani mogli wskazać więcej niż 1 odpowiedź*
 Figure 2. Types of agritourism services market segments in the opinion of university and secondary school students, n = 174

Rysunek 2. Rodzaje segmentów rynku usług agroturystycznych w opinii studentów i uczniów n = 174

Source: own study

Źródło: opracowanie własne

Conclusions

Based on the conducted empirical research and the author's own observations, the following conclusions can be formulated:

1. The aim of agritourism promotion is to create communication between a farm's owner and the market and to shape customers' social awareness, which helps to create the image of a farm and its products ensuring lasting presence on the competitive tourist market.
2. According to university and secondary school students, most agritourism farm owners promote their facilities on their own websites. According to secondary school students, service providers also promote their tourist facilities on tourism fairs and through traditional media. But in the opinion of university students, information passed on to other people in a direct way (word of mouth) is a very important method of promotion.
3. According to the respondents, agritourism farm services are most often bought by families with children.

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Streszczenie

Zaprezentowano stosowane przez właścicieli gospodarstw agroturystycznych formy promocji w opinii 139 studentów Szkoły Głównej Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego w Warszawie i 35 uczniów Zespołu Szkół Centrum Kształcenia Rolniczego im. Jadwigi Dziubińskiej w Gołdówce. Przedstawiono także segmenty rynku usług agroturystycznych w opinii osób biorących udział w badaniach. Zdaniem studentów i uczniów właściciele gospodarstw agroturystycznych w większości promują swoje obiekty na własnych stronach internetowych. W opinii uczniów usługodawcy promują swoje obiekty również na targach turystycznych i przez media tradycyjne. W opinii studentów rozpoczynających studia wyższe, jak i osób kończących studia bardzo ważnym sposobem promocji oferty agroturystycznej jest informacja przekazywana w kontaktach bezpośrednich. Według badanych osób najczęściej z usług gospodarstw agroturystycznych korzystają rodziny z dziećmi.

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