

DEVELOPMENT FACTORS OF AGRITOURISM FARM OFFER IN POLAND – WIELKOPOLSKA REGION CASE STUDY

Abstract: *The paper presents the development factors which determine forms of leisure and recreational services on agritourism farms. Author shows similarities in terms of leisure and includes farms of the same type due to attractiveness and type of services. The practical purpose of the research is the use of the results to tourism activities in the economy of the region Wielkopolska.*

The data source is a questionnaire survey on agritourism farm owners in Wielkopolska voivodship and their potential customers. The methodology is based on a standardized interview among farm owners (218 questionnaires) and a diagnostic survey to potential guests (100 questionnaires). The dissertation contains also an analysis of secondary data source and an analysis of scientific and statistical documents, based on Polish and foreign sources.

The analysis characterizes recreational offer and services, identifies factors and conditions for their development in the context of sport and leisure. It was found that the supply of agritourism farm activities in Wielkopolska is very diverse. These are offers of services above all such as horseriding. The diversity of recreational activities allows to classify agritourism farms in Wielkopolska in certain types, that is to say:

- Recreational and sports tourism farms;*
- Health and food tourism farms;*
- Natural and ecotourism farms;*
- Educational and entertainment farms.*

However the terms and factors, such an attractiveness and potential of environment are very different for farms and areas, their development (tourism function) is uneven in the region. The offer is almost converging with the notions of potential customers but currently most agricultural sectors are in crisis.

Based on the analysis it is possible to create the product brand for regional agritourism which will be formed on health and physical activity. The best way seems to be the collaboration of farms with other science and economic organisations to create a cooperative network. However, all this requires a financial and institutional support at a local and regional level.

Key words: *agritourism; classification; factors, farm; leisure; offer; rural tourism; typology.*

JEL: *D22; Q100; Q120; Q130; R31; Y4.*

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship in the countryside is mainly connected with the development of agricultural economy and food. In recent years, in all countries of the free market economy great transformations have been undergoing at the countryside,

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changing more and more its structure and functioning. At the dawn of the XXI century world agriculture faces new challenges and development opportunities concerning the industrialization processes, the progress of biotechnology, changing climate conditions, new challenges and opportunities in the age of information and globalization of the economy [17]. The evolution is heading towards a change of the image and identity of a village, from traditional one, based on family farms; towards a modern, manufacturing one. A very common model of these changes for European countries is American agriculture.

As a consequence of these changes, as well as in terms of additional specific factors for Polish circumstances (such as f. ex. accession to the European Union), the concepts of “agrobusiness” and “agrotourism” emerged in literature. The notion of agrobusiness appeared in the work of Davis and Goldberg (in 1957), where it was initially defined as “the amount of all the activities related to the production and distribution of material supply of farms, production activities on farms, storage and processing industry based on agricultural products [17]. The Encyclopedia of Agrobusiness [9], in turn, quotes that it is a subsystem of the national economy, integrating activities that are directly or indirectly involved in the production of final food products. On the other hand, the concept of “agrotourism”, is closely related to the tourism economy and implies a wide range of services, activities and facilities based on qualities and values typical for the village, that farmers and the rural community maintain and sell to tourists [1]. Agrotourism mainly evolved in the process of searching for development opportunities in rural areas during the period of transformation and restoration of their quality and durability. The first development project of rural areas through agrotourism was developed under European conditions in Muhlviertel, Austria approximately 35 years ago. Moreover, agrotourism was from the very beginning assumed to be shaped according to specific methods, including in particular the Method of Global Management, which is a method of solving problems based on systems thinking and acting [1]. Nowadays agrotourism (in Polish *agroturyzm*) was replaced by the notion of rural tourism (in Polish *turystyka wiejska*) and agritourism or farm tourism (in Polish *agroturystyka*). The general definition of agritourism, comes as a form of active leisure (educational, cognitive, recreational or health) in the farmhouse, where agricultural production equally with the surrounding infrastructure, natural, recreational and cultural cause the greatest interest of tourists [15, p. 27]. This concept has also direct justification of the definition agritourism by Momsen, adopted by the Encyclopedia of Tourism [8, pp. 1–2].

In terms of national economy, the Polish village has also undergone numerous transformations. The changes were primarily the effect of system transformation, the transformation in forms of property from public to private. Their greatest flourishing period occurred between 1982 – and 1992. Next aspect are changes in the structure of agriculture and rural areas, in terms of changes in land use, crop livestock structures. Finally, dynamic urban development as well as

the migration processes in recent years, resulted in functional and demographic transformation of Polish countryside. A whole range of changes in the functioning of rural areas was the subject matter of research during the period of integration with the European Union, as described in numerous scientific papers and conference proceedings [f. ex. 13]. The most important aspects of these changes include: opening up to foreign markets, the development of entrepreneurship and job creation, modernization and renewal of infrastructure, the need to diversify the activities in the area of countryside as well as diversification of its activities in its sector. As a result of the system requirements the farm advisory system was created at that time (supervised by the National Center for Counseling and Development of Agriculture and Rural Development), as an active instrument of state policy, functioning till now [4].

Modern agriculture and the countryside face major problems. The main difficulties are the growing financial crisis, progressive economic stratification, increasing unemployment rate, nature protection and the environment issues, including the greening of country and facilities in rural areas. In the area of these transformations, as well as these problems, cultural identity and the development of rural tourism is situated. Management and economics experts are debate on the institutional conditions of the development of tourism, including the role of government and local government policy. Equally important are social aspects of local communities issues and the sustainability, assuming even partnership of all involved public authorities in the rural entrepreneurship. The implementation of tourism development program in the rural areas still requires shaping proper pro-social attitudes overcoming negative attitudes. The social image of farmers, based on past and present experience. It is an important issue for acceleration of the socio-economic development of rural areas [14].

Tourist activity takes place in space, which according to Drzewiecki can be named as rural recreation space [5] or, more precisely as space of agritourism. Rural recreation space has already been characterized precisely (abbreviated RRS) several years ago. Its analysis are presented at the municipal level, because relevant statistical indicators are fixed there [5; 16]. These are:

1. population density for 1 km² of agricultural land (not less than 80 persons/km²);
2. the percentage of individual farms (formerly private) in the area of agricultural land (over 60%);
3. the percentage of meadows and pastures in the agricultural area (no more than 30%);
4. the percentage of forests in total area of the municipality (between 30 – and 60%);
5. the percentage of water in the total area of the municipality (at least 5%);
6. types of rural settlements (too scattered as negative);
7. the percentage of people earning living by non-agricultural sources (less than 60%).

These indicators represent some extend criteria of the natural and economic (1, 2, 6, 7) and socio-cultural attractiveness of the area (3, 4, 5), but today they are quite questionable due to the excessively targeting pressure on the agricultural aspect of the site [20, pp. 293–306]. In result of analysis present that, areas which meet adequate standards in at least three of the criteria presented above are considered to be conducive to the development of recreational and tourist forms.

An agricultural area is difficult to cristallize, however it is defined in the narrow sense, as referring to the area of farm which provide the service of agritourism, its buildings, natural lay of the land and changes arisen as a result of the activities of the owner [20, pp. 293–306]. In a wider range it is rather a space similar to the RRS, referring not only to a closer, but to the further region of the farm, including location of the land and architecture of the area, the landscape, the quality and purity of the natural environment (air, water, etc.) [16]. Considering the type of production, there are five types of agricultural space:

- agricultural space (with the dominance of the lanscape of fields and crops);
- breeding space (with the dominance of the landscape of meadows and pastures);
- orchard and plantation space (with the dominance of forest and fruit trees);
- fishing space (with the dominance of the landscape of ponds and dykes);
- forest space (with the dominance of the landscape of woodland) [16].

Some authors also attach the rural space with the domination of the cultural landscape to the above list. Touristic attractiveness of the space is usually tested with wide variety of methods, which are grouped by i.a. Tomczyk [18, pp. 19–35]:

1. simple measures of ordering space, such as:

- cluster methods of spatial units based of their identity;
- methods of grading point;
- a factor of attractiveness based on the method of standardization of features.

2. methods with a higher degree of aggregation, such as:

- modelling methods;
- the methods of factor analysis;
- taxonomic methods;
- synthetic measures of development.

3. qualitative methods.

Virtually none of them is fully equivalent of the assessment of the suitability of land for the development of tourism, although approximates it highly.

To the factors affecting the development of tourism in the country in its broadest sense (largely they are exogenous factors which influence was mentioned earlier, such as the type of Polish agriculture or changes in rural areas), Balińska [2, pp. 28–32]

adds also legal, financial and institutional factors (treated in this dissertation as secondary), and the supply and demand side-determinants (eg. diversification of offers). Durydiwka [6, pp. 53–64; 7] who defines the level of the touristic function of rural areas in Poland, concluded that the most important in this regard is the attractiveness of natural landscapes (frequently evaluated with the landscape inventory method and point scoring quality classification method) but also exploitation of the landscape attractiveness in the economic context (land exploitation) and tourism (tourist movement). To determine the touristic function of the examined areas author predominantly uses the empirical measures, such as the number of tourists accommodated and the number of companies registered in the Regon system in section H, analysing their relationship with other variables mentioned above. Durydiwka also concludes that other modifying factors such as proximity to urban areas, environmentally valuable areas and high quality cultural assets may impact the examined relations. A similar relationship of even more economic kind was evaluated by Johnson and Beale, by verifying the ratio of recreational activities income in the county to its overall income, defining it as the county recreation score [3].

At the lower level of reference the factors influencing the development of the farm organization towards tourism should be also analyzed as well as the development of its particular recreational offers and concentration on specific touristic areas. The analysis and conclusions of the case studies concentrate to distinguishing similar in the aspect factors, as emphasized by Durydiwka [6, pp. 53–64; 7], forms and level of attractiveness of the natural environment values. The most important of them include:

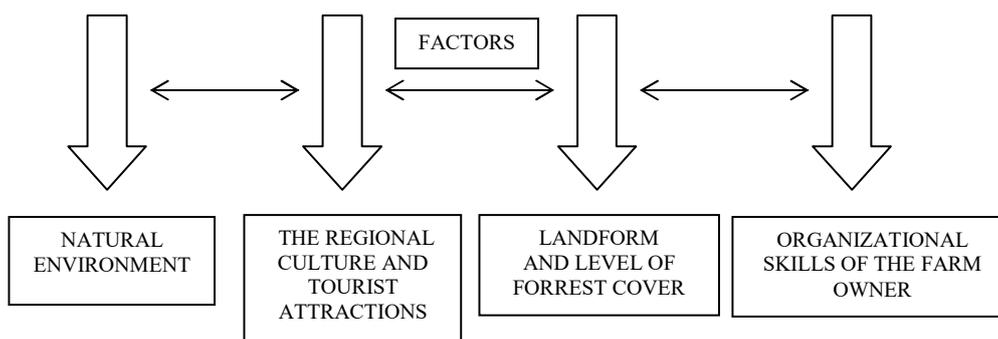
- the natural environment (fauna and flora);
- surface waters;
- the level of afforestation of the area;
- the location of the land;
- regional culture;
- tourist attractions.

Poczta [12] lists similar factors examining the impact of these variables (sightseeing values) on the development of the offer and undertaking recreational activity in agritourism farms in the district of Międzychód (Wielkopolska), taking into account the following determinants:

- an area of outstandingly natural beauty legally protected;
- afforestation;
- lake cover percentage;
- the percentage of meadows and pastures in the total utilised agricultural area;
- the number of natural monuments per 1 square kilometer.

On the other hand, Jalinik [11] concluded, that the organizational skills of the owner are of the greatest importance to the farm, placing them among the variables affecting the type of agritourism farms.

THE TYPE OF AGRITOURISM FARMS



Source: self-study based on Jalinik 2007, pp. 111.

Figure 1. Factors determining the type of agritourism farms.

As a result of such assignation of the factors, the diagnosis and analysis of the internal organization of farms seems of essential importance.

2. Conditionings of the development of agritourism farms offer in Poland on the example of Wielkopolska Region – research²

2.1. Research methodology

The aims of the study

The aim of the study was to analyze the diversity and to assess of the factors determining the possibility to provide tourist and recreation services in agritourism in the region of Wielkopolska. In order to achieve these goals, the following detailed goals were established:

1. Explanation of the meaning of recreational offer of agritourism farms considering the current trends in tourism and the needs and values of a modern man.
2. Evaluation of the possibility to adopt the offer of a healthy lifestyle in the prospect of the development of rural tourism and health promotion in the region.

² Based on the thesis carried out at the Department of Geoecology, Tourism and Recreation of the Academy of Physical Education in Poznan under the supervision of Marek Stuczyński, M.D., Ph.D. The thesis carried out for the needs of the dissertation was covered by the promoter grant from the National Science Centre No. 5164 / B / PO1 / 2010/38.

3. Demonstration of the situation of agritourism marketplace in the region of Wielkopolska in terms of recreational offer, based on surveys and analysis of documents.

4. Identifying the types of specializations of agritourism farms prospering in the administrative area of Wielkopolska region and classifying various areas and farms in homogeneous groups (clusters).

5. Internal analysis of particular groups in terms of the factors affecting the formation and development of recreational activities.

6. Searching for other dependences between recreational offer and different variables, such as f.ex. the expectations of recipients.

7. Defining the standard criteria for the development of innovative local agritourism product.

Study area

The subject of the research were agritourism farms located in the region of Wielkopolska in 2009–2012. The data of Agricultural Advisory Centre of Wielkopolska region in Poznań – WODR [19] were used in the study (according to the census of 395 farms, as reported by the data available on the website of WODR www.wrow.wodr.poznan.pl from June 2009 to June 2012). The study finally included 218 households.

The survey research included 100 people among potential tourists of agritourism farms residing in the city of Poznan, which was the basic criterium of the selection of respondents to the sample.

The examination procedure involved three stages of the author's own testing:

1. The phase of electronic tests – conducted throughout the entire project period, which was completed by only a few respondents, the research was conducted with the use of an online questionnaire.

2. The phase of field research – consisting of stages from 2009 to 2012, the research was carried out with the use of direct interviews in agritourism farms.

3. The phase of the surveys – conducted mainly in 2011–2012, the study was carried out with the use of questionnaires in potential visitors of agritourism farms in the region of Wielkopolska. The research have also a practical aspect. The obtained data can be useful in specifying agritourists products in the researched area, both for agritourists interested in the subject (to facilitate the selection of sites according to their preference), and for the farm hosts (increasing the quality of services and products). The typology of agritourism farms allows to indicate strategic plans and cooperation between farms and other business entities. It is also possible to develop specific specializations for particular recreational activities and to formulate development paths for individual units. A comparison of the expectations of service users from different segments of the tourism market with a real offert of agritourism farms could be an additional aspect.

3. Conditionings of the development of agritourism farms offer in Poland on the example of Wielkopolska Region – case study

During the study, an analysis of the factors affecting the recreational offer of the farms according to the farmers was carried out. This section was divided into two groups of factors:

- promoting the development of the offer;
- restricting the development of the offer.

Next, it was determined which of the external or internal factors were the most important variables in the development of agritourism farms, as well as in the constructing its recreation offer – initially and during the research. When determining the impact of the selected factors, most of the farmers emphasised the importance of the order of the successive variables.

1. the increase of competition;
2. the support of other units;
3. promotion of the region and its products.

The least influential factors according to most of the farmers in the initial period of the farm included:

1. geographical conditions (most of the farmers held extreme opinions and for more than 75% of them, however, the factor was essential);
2. cost-effectiveness of the offer;
3. the needs of tourists appearance.

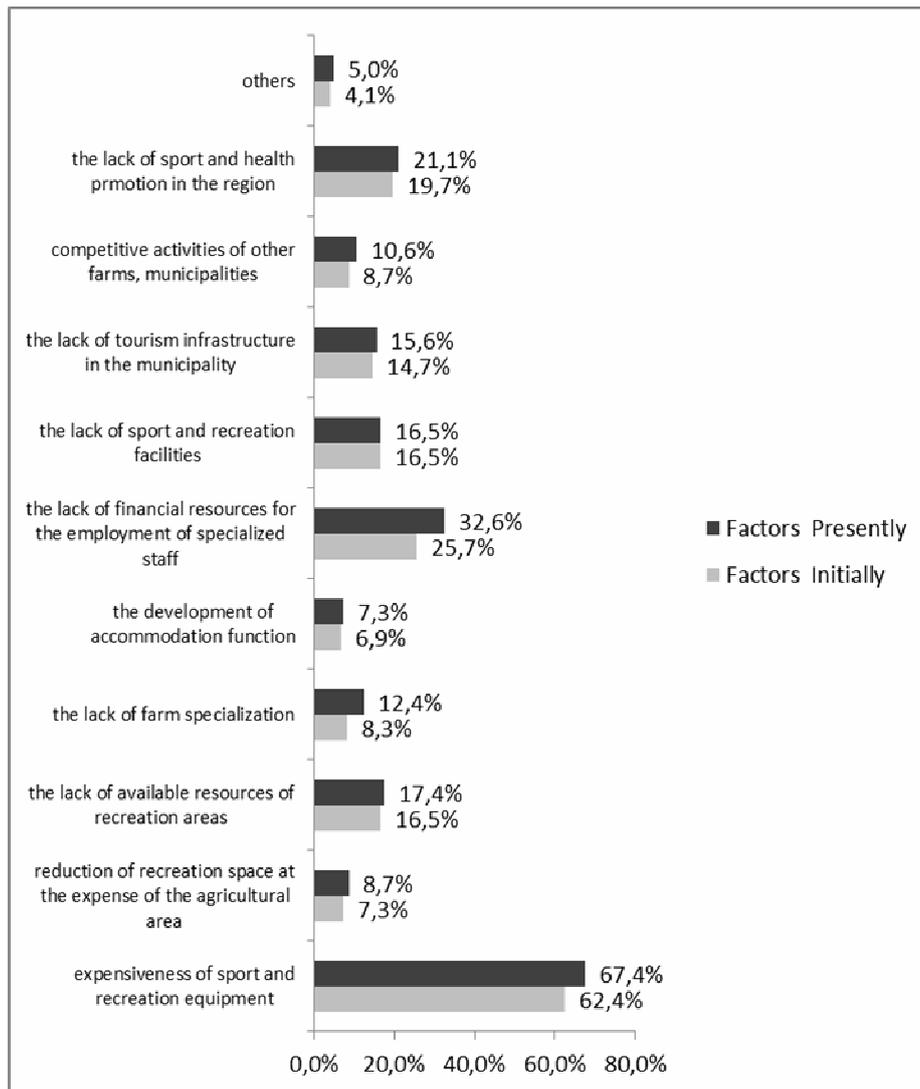
Table 1

Factors promoting the development of the offer of agritourism farms

Factors	The percentage of the farms %	
	Initially	Presently
The location of the land		
The vicinity of natural attractions and recreational facilities	46,8	48,2
Purchase and modernization of the sport and recreational equipment	67,9	74,3
Ownership and increase of the recreational space	29,4	31,7
Specialization of the farm in a particular activity	28,4	29,4
Redirecting the farm to organic methods	20,2	22,9
The availability of the sports and recreational facilities in the district	5,5	7,3
The availability of the tourism infrastructure in the district	14,7	17,9
Quality and development of the accomodation features	24,3	27,5
Support and advice of other units	20,6	26,6
The employment of specialized staff	10,1	10,6
Promotion of sport and health in the districts, region	4,1	5,0
Creating a common regional brand product based on health and recreation	11,0	11,5
A change of inhabitants' opinion on a healthy lifestyle	6,9	8,3
A change of tourists' opinion on a healthy lifestyle	10,1	17,0
Competitive activities of other farms, districts.	12,8	20,2
Cooperation between agritourism farms	0,9	2,3
Increased promotion of the recreational offer	8,3	8,7
Others	12,4	15,6

Source: self-reported data based on Smoleńska 2014.

This assessment has practically not changed in the latter period of activity. For 75% of the farmers, however, such factors as: own resources, cost-effectiveness and own ideas gained significance. According to the opinion of 25% of the farm owners, the tastes of the participants of the farm activities lost importance.



Source: self-reported data based on Smoleńska 2014.

Figure 2. Factors restricting the development of the farms' offer.

The farmers also choose from the group of specified factors (up to five) which they believe have the greatest positive impact on the development of the

recreational offer in the farm. Definitely the most of the farm owners (and the number of them is growing) associate the positive influence on the development of recreational offer of their farms with the proximity of valuable sightseeing (74.3%) and the location of the land (48.2%).

Factors restricting the development of the offer are categorised slightly different by the farmers. Most of the farm owners perceive the restrictions in the development of the farm offer in lack or high costs of sport equipment (67,4%) as well as by the lack of funds for the employment of qualified staff.

The lowest risks are perceived in the development of lodging or in limiting the recreational space in favour of farming.

In the interview, every farm owner could express their own opinion on the two variables which might mutually influence the direction of the farm activity, which is: the development of the farm offer (accommodation and catering) and the development of the recreational activity (services).

Most of the farm owners (63,76%) claimed unambiguously that the investments in the development of the tourist accommodation have no impact on the additional farm offer. The rest part of the landlords thought the opposite or was not able to express their opinion on the subject.

The conducted survey allow to extensively diagnose the condition and directions of development of agritourism in the region of Wielkopolska and answer most of the questions and hypotheses, which will be discussed in the last part of the thesis. Based on the preliminary conclusions that can be extracted on basis of the results, one can already ascertain that the recreational offer of agritourism farms is rich and is clearly developing towards physical activity or farm-stay and convivial enterprise, but it is still not organized or specialized well enough, even it is invariably in full development.

Conclusions

Referring to the methodological assumptions of the research project, conducted studies allowed to identify the main factors influencing the offer in the opinion of the farm owners. According to the farm owners, these are the variables on which the possibilities of farm development highly depend. Simultaneously they are the external factors, independent of the farm owners. The following are considered as the most significant ones:

- development of competition;
- support of other units;
- promotion of the region and its products.

Similarly, indicating the factors on which the formation of recreational activities depends, farmers largely emphasized:

- the proximity of natural attractions;
- the location of the land;
- purchase and modernization of the sport and recreational equipment.

Only the last of the above factors cannot be categorized as an external factor. However, the fact that the farmer cannot afford the purchase or modernization of equipment and sports facilities can be understood as an external reason, beyond their control (lack of co-financing, low farm income, high price of the equipment, etc.). There are also internal factors (depending on the farm) in the list of determinants indicated by the farmers, but they were of marginal importance in the opinion of the farmers comparing to other initiatives independent of them. It is worth noting, however, the creativity and inventiveness of farm owners is often emphasized in the vision of the development of modern tourism. Meanwhile, the owners of the agritourism farm consider the factor as irrelevant, and probably often absent in their organizational skills. Thus the necessity to support and experiences exchange of different units in promoting the development of tourism arises. However, the internal factors depending on the accommodation provider in the modern development of this field, should be perceived as those of greater influence.

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