

THE CONTRIBUTION OF TOURIST PROMOTION ASSOCIATIONS FEDERATION IN PROMOTING ROMANIAN AGRO-TOURISM

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Abstract. *In agro-tourism, promotional activities require significant investments due to the large geographical extent of tourist markets, fierce competition manifested on the market and intangible character of tourist product. Intangible nature of agro-touristic services leads to amplify the importance of promotion activities. Agro-touristic pensions have limited resources in conducting promotional activities so, they cannot be known on a wider market. Through the establishment of the federation, a close collaboration of the efforts undertaken by associations was pursued in order to entry into new market segments and for a higher visibility in internal and external environment.*

Keywords: *agro-tourism, association, promotion*

INTRODUCTION

In agro-tourism, any organization, regardless of its size, must be aware of continuing need to communicate with potential or actual customers, public institutions, banks, media, concurrency, business partners etc. To achieve the best results on the market, a company must know its needs and objectives, develop and monitor their communication style and used methods. For this purpose, it has a very wide range of tools such as media, posters, brochures, speeches, events, exhibitions, special offers, contests, demonstrations, seminars, etc.

The role of promotion is to know all aspects which may arise in the communication process of the company and which can have an adverse effect, to design and carry out communication process of the organization in order to not only influence the action way or even public thinking but also to develop a favorable image for the organization and its offer.

Although the use of promotion is widely recognized, in our country a few organizations working in agro-tourism have a long-term promotion strategy and conduct regular promotional activities. Most often for the failure of promotional activities, the main excuse is represented by limited size of available funds. In addition, there is another common deficiency in the design and ongoing process of promotion campaigns, respectively assessing the efficiency of these campaigns.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To achieve this paper, I used information about promotion activities undertaken by agro-tourist promotion Associations Federation, data acquired from newsletters, press publications and statistical prepared by qualified institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Agro-tourism designates a fusion of agricultural activities at the agricultural holding with tourist services and can constitute a complementary solution to directly support agricultural development and can have positive effects at both social and economic levels.

Through the farm or, more precisely, the agro-tourist holding, agro-tourist products are provided to the tourists as goods or services such as: accommodation at the farm, food prepared and served within the household or as agricultural products sold to the tourists,

programs on the recognition of farm and activities that take place within an agro-tourist farm. Due to direct contact between tourists and to possibility of their involvement in different activities within the farm, relationships are established, cultural values are shared, kept and preserved traditions are known over time and passed from generation to generation.

In the context of market economy, the promotion is one of the words frequently used, being considered by many people as the secret to success in business.

In a restricted sense, by promoting it is understood the effort made by an organization to present its offer in a favorable light so that it sells more and faster. This is a simplistic approach which does not emphasize the entire power of promotion to create a certain image about a product, service, event, idea or organization, to exchange opinions and attitudes among different categories of public in order to determine the audience to act in a certain direction. Due to this power to determine the audience to act in a certain direction, promotion techniques have not applicability only in the economic field but also in non-profit fields such as social, cultural or political fields.

Through the establishment of Tourist Promotion Associations Federation in Romania, the member associations have aimed to promote the tourism with all its aspects within the regions they represent.

Tourist Promotion Association Federation aims to promote tourism for tourist destinations which the associations represent with their promotion on national and international level. As I already noted, in agro-tourism field we often meet pensions which do not have the financial resources to promote their offer and in such situation the affiliation to a national organization may represent for them the opportunity to promote themselves at national and why not at international level.

Table 1 shows the tourist reception with accommodation functions and accommodation capacity in agro-tourism pensions.

Table 1

Statistics with accommodation functions and capacity

No.	Specification	Measure unit	Year				
			2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
1	Tourist reception with accommodation functions	Number of units	4694	4840	5095	5222	5003
	Of which in agro-tourist pensions	number of units	1292	1348	1412	1354	1210
2	Tourist accommodation capacity	Number of beds	283701	294210	303486	311698	278503
	Of which in agro-tourist pensions	Number of beds	15448	16906	19783	20208	20683
3	Tourist accommodation capacity in use	Thousands beds-days	57138	59188	61104	63808	68417
	Of which in agro-tourist pensions	Thousands beds-days	3626	4039	4735	4892	5378

Source: <http://www.federatiaturism.ro/>

Through its activities, the Federation intends to improve the marketing activities, especially the branding ones of provided tourist destinations and products.

By the establishment of this federation, the member associations have set down the objectives to be pursued, in order to achieve objectives of each association.

The main objectives of the federation in terms of agro-tourism are:

- Creating some common and coherent policies in order to promote agro-tourist destinations in our country;
- Joint support in promoting agro-tourist destinations at the level of responsible central authorities and which may support tourism development;
- Promoting a common identity regarding promotion materials of agro-tourism destinations;
- Presenting destinations on external tourist market by creating common platforms, as well as the web page, participation at different fairs and profile exhibitions, joint brochure etc.
- Facilitating the access of funding sources for promotion activity and realization of promotional materials from the competent ministry and other structures;
- Attracting funding sources for agro-tourism development and promotion;
- Supporting the activities of cooperation with tourism information centers, establishing partnerships with regional tourism associations;
- Drawing up a joint database and a web platform in order to promote agro-tourist destinations;
- Initiating programs and measures about preparation and staff training of the associations, especially those from executive structure to improve their activity;
- Developing and expanding the present partnership by attracting new associative structure which aimed primarily to promote tourist destinations

To achieve the objectives mentioned above, Tourist Promotion Associations Federation performs several activities, at national and regional level.

The most important activities conducted to support tourism and implicitly agro-tourism fields are:

- Elaborating strategies on promoting and developing Romanian tourism;
- Elaborating tourist database with sights in different regions of Romania;
- Attracting programs and funding, in order to increase the quality of tourism;
- Organizing workshops, seminars, conferences etc.
- Conducting studies and analyzes in the fields of tourist interest;
- Promoting cooperation with central and local administration;
- Promoting cooperation and efficient communication between governmental institutions and NGOs;
- Editing promotional materials and own publications;
- Editing, multiplying and disseminating informative materials;
- Granting scholarship for studies in the country and abroad;
- Developing economic activities to achieve the objective;
- Attracting and using, according to the law, the financial sources as donations, grants, contributions, sponsorship, fees, levies, for performance and assistance;
- promoting the exchange of data, information, publications, cooperation with experts, associations and similar profile organizations from the country and abroad;
- Organizing training sessions and qualification of staff working in tourism;
- Building-up partnerships with national and international associations with similar goals or promoting the purpose of association;
- Coordinating the implementation of external technical assistance programs;
- Organizing travel scholarships and participation in national and international fairs;

- Pursuing other activities to influence the achievement of its purpose, according to current legislation.

As it can be observed, the range of activities that Tourism Promotion Association Federation carries out is very wide, pointing out the complexity and complementarity. To accomplish these tasks, it has as partners the following institutions:

- Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism;
- National Association of Travel Agencies in Romania;
- Rural Tourism, Ecological and Cultural National Association;
- Organization of spa tourism in Romania;
- National Association for Consumer Protection and Promotion of Programs and Strategies;
- Groove Hour Advertising Agency

CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion, we can say that agro-tourism is distinguished as a form of tourism especially designed for people who love nature, want to relax, love art and peasant culture, providing them the opportunity to spend their time in family farms. Achieving sustained and coherent promotion activities is currently very necessary due to economic and social developments but also to lifestyle changes in society.

In agro-tourism the transmission is mandatory through the promotion activity of much information as possible about provided services, so that the possible differences between customer expectations and obtained benefits after the consumption of services will not negatively affect the image of the organization and future acquisitions.

Tourist Promotion Association Federation helps to promote the agro-tourism as destinations which the associations represent with their promotion at national and international level.

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