

RURAL AND FARM TOURISM AS A SUBJECT OF MANAGEMENT

Gheorghe DANCIU
Cornelia PETROMAN
Ionuț, RISTEA
Loredana VĂDUVA
Diana MARIN
Ioan PETROMAN

***Abstract:** Tourist farm activity is younger compared to its leadership, but each has evolved from empiricism to concrete sphere, from the classical structure to a modern structure. Because the classical managerial type was descriptive, rigid and fragmentary, it is necessary to move to modern management due to its characteristics through a judicious organization and management of farm activities and the behavior of those who exercise the management act, in order to improve the activity of agrotourism farms, achieving on long-term the transition from amateur in farm tourism problems to professionalism, the success of the farmer, becoming manager being given the high standard of responsibility, business ethics, the ability to coordinate educational, entertaining, recreational and public activities, efficient resolution of crises, effective treatment of conflicts between the host community and tourists, the ability to turn visions into reality, the ability to motivate tourists to return to farm, the ability to improve communication management and distribution management. In order to improve the management of rural and farm tourism, we propose the establishment of farmers' partnerships, farmers' groups with local authorities, economic agents in tourism, service providers, marketers, promoting mixed forms of tourism, encouraging the population to discover the traditions and customs of the area, initiating environmental protection measures, judicious use of resources and redirecting tourist flows to other areas with lower impact on local communities.*

***Keywords:** management, farms, rural tourism, farm tourism*

INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism with all its subcategories, agrotourism and farm tourism, can represent an alternative activity to agricultural, zootechnical, horticultural and processing occupations (1, 5, 9, 11, 12).

Whether it is practiced in rural areas, rural tourism, farm tourism or agrotourism, one of the most important aspects of agrotourist farm management is rural management of the destination, meaning information flow management, from farm tourist products and services, either directly or through travel agents and tourism consumers. (2, 4, 7, 8)

Destination management can be considered to be the kind of management, that also relies, on **knowledge management**, a type of management in which, the information infrastructure consisting of methodologies, technologies and practices, allows creation and access to the levers needed to achieve the goals in a farm business (3, 6, 17).

The main steps to be taken in order to improve knowledge management are:

- generating new knowledge;
- accessing valuable knowledge from external sources;
- the use of accessible knowledge in decision-making;
- integrating knowledge into processes, products or services;
- representation of knowledge;
- facilitating the growth of knowledge's volume;
- the transfer of knowledge to all parties involved;
- measuring the value of knowledge;
- analyze the impact of the management process.

In the **theoretical and practical knowledge referring to agrotourism and farm tourism**, the technological components are very important, they must include a collection of documents, a graphic representation, a navigation system, the assignment of this information, and the management of permissions and property. The second type of management absolutely necessary in improving agrotourism and farm tourism management is integrated quality management in agrotourism destinations. For a quality experience, there must be a code of good practice in Integrated Destination Quality Management with regard to marketing, reception, orientation and information to tourists, accommodation, gastronomy, preservation of the authenticity and disability of transport infrastructure and the quality of the natural environment. (10, 13, 15)



Figure 1. Measures to improve knowledge’s management

A third type of management essential in rural and farm tourism or agrotourism is made up from "**Best Management Practices**" which includes: (14,16)

- authentic experiences at the farm;
- providing an educational experience;
- personalized service;
- public facilities;
- maintaining an accessible environment;
- good community relations between the farmer's family and visitors;
- planning the financial future.

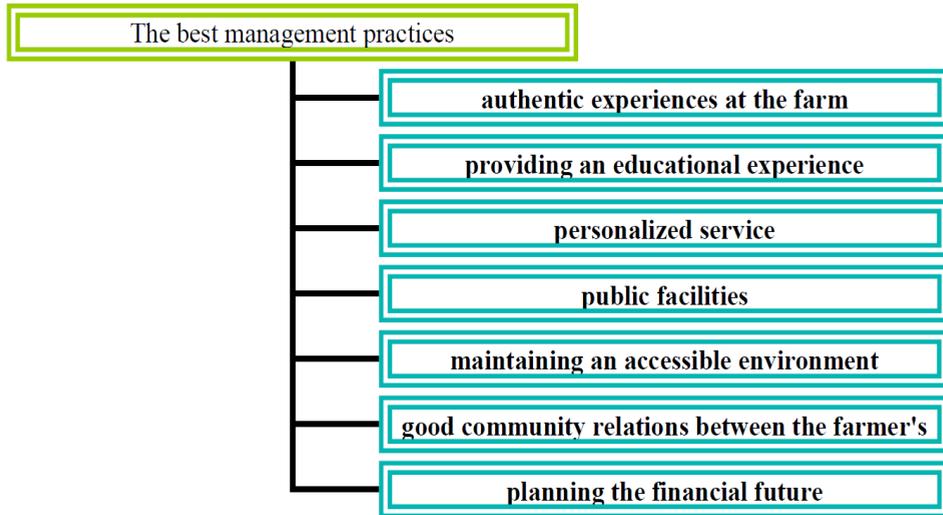


Figure 2. The best management practices

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The detailed analysis of the state of rural and farm tourism allowed us, in this scientific approach, to recommend to any farmer who has as his object of activity the practice of rural and farm tourism a few measures, good practices in the hospitality industry, reception capacity planning, diversification of leisure activities, acquiring communication skills with clients, helping to solve managerial problems that contribute to improving the economic activity of the farm.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to improve the activity of the agrotourism farms, we believe that the transition to **modern management** is necessary, which has the following characteristics:

- customization;
- it is anticipatory;
- methodologically applied;
- innovation;
- motivational;
- computerized;
- systemic;
- participatory.

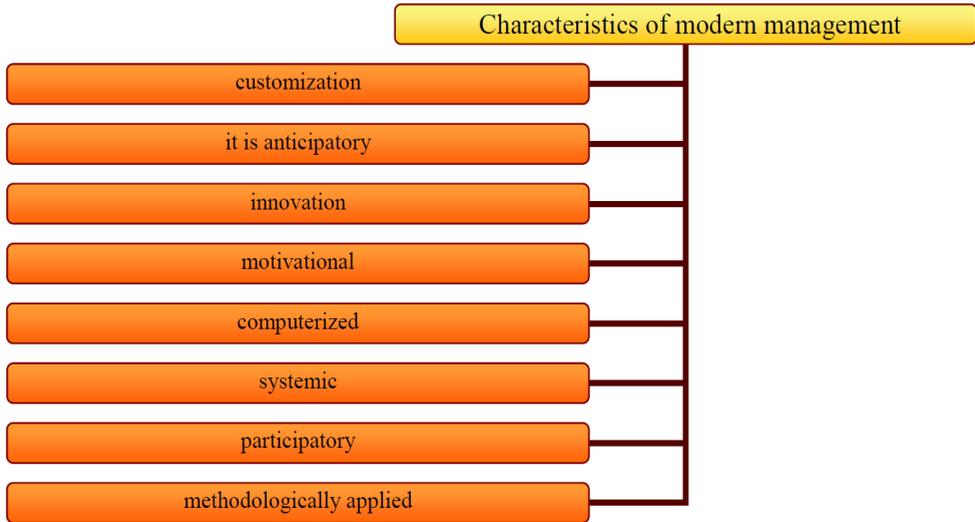


Figure 3. Characteristics of modern management of agrotourism farms

The best results from economic point of view are obtained only through a judicious organization and management of the farm activities and the behavior of those who exercise the management act, achieving in the long term the transition from amateurism to problems of farm tourism to professionalism, the success being given by:

- high standard of responsibility;
- business ethics;
- effective coordination of educational, entertaining and recreational activities;
- crisis resolution;
- effective treatment of conflicts;
- the ability to transform visions into realities;
- the ability to motivate tourists to return to females, loyalty;
- the ability to attract new tourists by diversifying farm activities;
- the ability to improve communication management;
- possibilities to improve distribution management;

In any agro-tourism farm, the managerial process is characterized by a series of features, with a specific character, depending on the field of activity of the farm:

- complexity and dynamism that demands from the farmer the adoption and implementation of smart and unique solutions;
- unity, continuity and cyclicity.

- management relations in the processes of forecasting, organization, coordination, training and control - evaluation of farm activities.

Hospitality at the agrotourist farm must include a number of activities specific to the field of activity, which include:

- farm accommodation,
- spaces arranged in a traditional system;
- food;
- retail outlets for products;
- shopping opportunities;
- educational and fun activities;
- leisure activities.

The offer of agrotourism farms has certain peculiarities, according to the field of activity, vegetal, animal breeding and exploitation, horticultural, forestry and processing; for this reason the rural tourism products are composed of a set of goods and services meant to satisfy the needs of farm visitors. For these reasons, the products offered by agrotourism farms have:

- tangible components, archaic equipment, traditional milk or meat products, specific production technologies;
- intangible components, farm climate, the behavior of host community.

We believe that in order to increase the economic efficiency of the agrotourism farms, it is necessary to implement **the profitability of the individual holding type**:

- depending on the location of the farm;
- the size of the rural community;
- relations with tourists;
- accommodation capacity;
- environmental impact;
- clientele;
- seasonality of production;
- number and type of proposed activities.

Although it is considered to be one of the basic functions, public nutrition is not mandatory for farms that use their surplus space to accommodate tourists, eager to participate in leisure and recreational activities. At farms that apply modern management in tourism production, this implies the existence of specific traditional varieties of food produced on the farm because:

- diet is a complex component alongside the accommodation system;
- determines the quality of the tourist benefit as a whole;
- it influences the attractiveness degree of the offer;

- increases the number of consumers who consume what they collect or prepare;
- promotes products and services by influencing attractiveness;
- diversifies gastronomic activity at the farms.

While staying on the farm, tourists do not require comfortable conditions of comfort, but require special food services, translated into practice by: fresh farm products, a traditional atmosphere in the serving spaces, offer diversified depending by season, refreshing and impeccable service, communication with the host, suggestions in the preparation of some products.

Farm management of rural tourism or agrotourism should operate as an open system, consisting of subsystems, which must be continuously improved, in order to increase farmers' wealth: the organizational, informational, decision-making and management methods and techniques. In practice, however, we find that the management process is continuous and uninterrupted and for the efficiency of the farms we propose to implement the following measures:

- establishing the objectives to be achieved;
- making decisions;
- drawing of tasks;
- carrying out the tasks;
- results analysis.

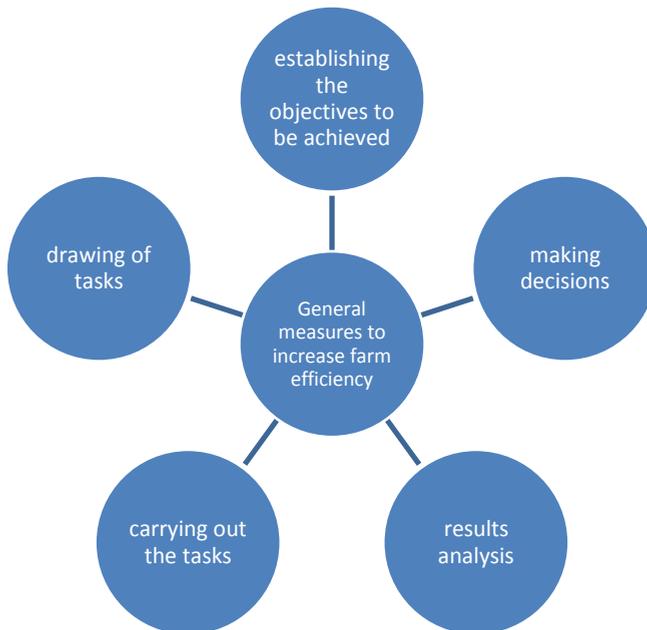


Figure 4. General measures to increase farm efficiency by improving management systems

To improve farm management we propose to pursue the following objectives in the agrotourism farm, regardless of its field of activity:

- grouping farm activities by season;
- grouping activities according to requirements;
- specialization of agrotourist farms;
- elaborating the organizational structure according to the modern management;
- qualification of the human resource;
- diversification of farm activities;
- implementing the best distribution management;
- improving quality management in critical points;
- improving communication management;
- diversification of the information flow;
- developing relational management.

Tourism as an aggregate service, regardless of its sphere of coverage, is one of the basic users of the natural and anthropic environment, contributing to its degradation if the flows of tourists are not well managed due to:

- high tourist intensity;
- the low degree of environmental supportability;
- reduced opportunity for leisure;
- the intensive development of classic tourism.

We consider appropriate and motivated, the development of new forms of niche tourism, such as rural cultural tourism, with its subcategories: agrotourism, farm tourism, adventure tourism, country tourism, village tourism, which are: forms of rural tourism with a low impact on the environment, addresses a small number of tourists with a familiar profile, falls into the price-quality category corresponding to the middle-income educated people, determines the sustainable development of local communities and increases the efficiency of farms by diversifying farm activities.

To improve the management of rural and farm tourism, we propose a series of measures with beneficial effects on farm activities:

- setting up farm partnerships, farmers' groups with local authorities, agencies
- tourism economists, service providers, marketers;
- promoting these forms of mixed tourism, educational, fun, alternative and shopping tourism;
- encouraging the local population to discover the traditions and customs of the area;

- stimulating the development of crafts;
- the initiation of environmental protection measures;
- the judicious use of resources;
- redirecting tourist flows to other areas with lower impact on local communities.

We believe that in order to support the local population and farmers in the area, the development and improvement of the farm management is necessary for the development of rural and farm tourism, the organization and functioning of the following entities: tourist village, shopping farm, direct sales of products, the local rural and farm tourism association, for the promotion of the leisure stay, the organization of guided activities, community-specific holidays. Among the specific activities of the farm there are also activities where the main motivation of the tourists who stay at the farm is:

- observation of the nature from the farm area;
- identifying floral ecosystems in wild flora;
- watching animals and wild birds in their natural area;
- appreciation of local traditions;
- preservation of perennial or cereal legumes;

Farmers who propose such farm activities, for tourists and co-ordinate them must have an appropriate level of awareness of the cultural and natural values of the area by providing accurate information. The standard and type of interpretation of farm tourism must be designed to satisfy:

- interests of the tourist;
- to respond to his needs and expectations;
- to not harm the farm;
- to not harm the nature;
- to protect the natural and anthropic environment.

CONCLUSIONS

The best results are achieved in agrotourist farms that have implemented modern management and have implemented environmental activities gentle with the environment, which for visitors is reflected very good to strengthen the local employment through opportunities oriented to local traditions and customs, community events, local culture and the natural environment. This modality of spending leisure time requires at the farm level to manage, organize and improve the tourism activity on the farm in order to preserve the natural balance, the environment-resources and the cultural-historical or technical-economic values and the realization of their sustainable exploitation.

Rural and farm tourism management must guide farm activities towards sustainable resource exploitation, reducing ecosystem pressure by redirecting tourist flows, protecting and preserving native tourism resources on farm or farm grounds, recycling waste, reducing uncontrolled exploitation of forest resources and agriculture, the social and economic development of communities and the preservation of natural habitats.

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NOTES ON THE AUTORS

Gheorghe DANCIU – PhD student at the Banat’s University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Agricultural Management, Calea Aradului, 119, Timisoara, Romania.

Cornelia PETROMAN, Professor at the Banat’s University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Agricultural Management, Calea Aradului, 119, Timisoara, Romania. Association International” (RSAI) and in the “Romanian Association of Tourism Journalists” (AJIR).

Ionuț RISTEA – PhD student at the Banat’s University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Agricultural Management, Calea Aradului, 119, Timisoara, Romania.

Loredana VĂDUVA – Assistant at the Banat’s University of Aricultural Sciences and Veterinary of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Agricultural Management, Calea Aradului, 119, Timisoara, Romania.

Diana MARIN – Lecturer at the Banat’s University of Aricultural Sciences and Veterinary of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Agricultural Management, Calea Aradului, 119, Timisoara, Romania.

Ioan PETROMAN, Professor at the Banat’s University of Aricultural Sciences and Veterinary of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Agricultural Management, Calea Aradului, 119, Timisoara, Romania