The role of trade marks in the field of rural tourism

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Abstract
As a result of the 2008 economic and financial crisis, a significant fall can be detected in the field of rural tourism. The Association of Tourism and Agrotourism (FATOSZ) jointly with the Ministry of National Economy have decided to improve the quality of the tourism product. Their common goal is to attract the target groups that participate in rural tourism back to rural Hungary. They would like to enhance the quality of accommodations and aim to meet the needs of the “responsible rural tourist” as well. The “responsible rural tourist” aspires to have the least possible effect on the environment and culture of the visited region. The responsible visitor minimizes the damage caused by himself and with his awareness of consumption promotes the local people’s welfare. The responsible tourist shows great interest in the agrotourism and getting to know the local folk culture.

Keywords: rural tourism, agrotourism, trade marks

JEL Classification: R51, Q13,

1. Introduction
The capacity and the number of hosts of rural accommodations have fallen by half since 2010 (Figure 1). The legal classification of accommodation establishments changed in the autumn of 2009, until the date private accommodations were categorized as other accommodations. From 2010 only those village hosts were transferred into the other category who provided rural accommodation services in settlements with a population less than 5000 thus the decline shown in the diagram of Figure 1 is not that unequivocal. We can assume that in 2010 a significant part of the hosts remained in the settlements with over 5000 people.
Families with children involved in domestic tourism give the largest target group of guests in rural accommodations and the economic and financial crisis that reached Hungary in 2009 reduced their discretionary incomes the most.

From 2014 the tourism industry has been growing rapidly in Hungary, if favourable price levels are maintained in rural lodging and quality services could also be offered, then the visitors who are believed to be lost would return as well.
The change in the number of nights spent at rural accommodations was mainly influenced by the diminution of the average length of stay, in order to increase this number it would be crucial to modernise the accommodation establishments and improve their quality in accordance with the requirements of the era. The quality assurance trade mark program of FATOSZ appears to be a good initiative in order to achieve their goals.

**Figure 3.: The number of guest nights of rural accommodation (nights)**

Looking at the numbers of guests at rural accommodation establishments in county distribution it can be said that the most visitors arrive to Heves and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén counties, however Vas and Győr-Moson-Sopron counties follow them closely, where the quality of the accommodation establishments has risen by leaps and bounds. In the field of rural tourism’s renewal in addition to the accommodation trade mark it would be possible to evaluate the hospitality of the hosts as well.

**Figure 4: The number of guests in rural places in 2014 (capita)**

Source: edited by authors, Hungarian Statistical Office 2015
2. Trademarks of accommodation

Most of the trademarks can be found in the area of lodging, the sunflower system introduced to the field of rural tourism stands out from the rest, by the end of 2015 1031 host registered in this system. This high number indicates that the steps taken towards the renewal of the lodging’s quality were much needed.

At the rural accommodation establishments 1-4 sunflowers are used in conformity with several quality criteria, the external (building, courtyard) and internal (building, installation) spaces; the variety of services and their necessary staff requirements are classified separately.

The trade mark that certifies the rural accommodation establishments with a sunflower is created and operated by the ministry led by the minister of tourism, whose fundamental purpose in accordance with the 239/2009. (X. 20.) government decree that contains the detailed terms and conditions of the accommodation service activities and the order about the issuance of licenses for operation of accommodation, is to guarantee high-quality accommodation services that meet the professional expectations. The classification of services is executed on the basis of professional criteria that was developed by the Association of Rural Tourism and Agrotourism and was approved by the ministry led by the minister of tourism.

Figure 5: The National Trade Marks

Source: edited by authors, www.nfh.hu/nod/8622

Regarding the distribution of trade marks, Boros-Abaúj-Zemplén county leads, then Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg megye follows on the second place, while Heves and Baranya counties are on the third and fourth place. The ranking that has been rearranged compared to Figure 4 shows that in the smaller settlements of the counties that are afflicted with unemployment have big hopes for the new rating system.
Each of the accommodation rating marks can affect the rural tourism, as a tourism product (Figure 7). However, it would be worthwhile to separately mark the eco-receptions that engage in organic farming with a green sunflower eco-label as well. The definition of eco-label refers to a certificate of a certain level of environmental performance that can be acquired voluntarily. Its attainment is based on objective criteria and any product, manufacturer or service provider that complies with the given conditions can obtain it. (Bodnár, L. 2005)

Eco-labels encourage the entrepreneurs to be more mindful during their activities of the requirements of environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability, thus present a responsible attitude towards their environment. Eco-labels are capable of distinguishing those products and services that meet the environmental, social and economic standards on a higher level than as it is required by the legislation. This distinguishing mark allows consumers to consciously choose the certified product and the companies that manufacture and sell it can gain a competitive advantage (WTO 2004).
The trademarks rate the accommodation establishments with stars, crowns and backpacks (Figure 7), their operation could facilitate the development of quality tourism in the field of rural tourism.

3. Trademarks of local products

The local product – citing the Handcraft strategy- is a commodity that is the product of a manufacturer who lives in the local, sub-regional (ethnography (small) landscape) environment.

According to the government decree – 11/2013. (III. 5.) VM decree- the product is considered a local product if it is a traditional product defined as local product that is native, produced or manufactured in the area that falls under the competence of LEADER HACS.

3. 1. The Traditions-Tastes-Regions program trade marks

The Traditions-Tastes-Regions (TTR) program was launched in 1998 by the Ministry of Rural Development to join the European Union’s Euroterroirs (Europe’s Regions) initiative (Kovács, D. 2003). As a result of the program a collection of Hungary’s traditional and
regional agricultural products and foodstuffs was created in order to allow the economic utilization of these special products.

The Ministry intended to expand the market opportunities of the high-quality local products with the TTR trademark and has set the objective of winning and strengthening the trust of the consumers. The Ministry is committed to make the TTR trademark stand for uniqueness, preservation of traditions and guarantee of high-quality.

**Figure 8: The Traditions-Tastes-Regions (TTR) program**

The TTR collection was published in print and an electronic version is available as well, its content can be downloaded from the Agricultural Marketing Centre (AMC) website ([www.amc.hu](http://www.amc.hu)), now hundreds of products can be found on this website. The necessary conditions for the trademark are the following (AMC 2015):

- It has an at least two generation (50 year) old documented history,
- It is connected to one or more landscapes of Hungary,
- It has a traditional, local method of production,
- It is regularly or periodically produced, marketed product,
- The Traditions-Tastes-Regions (TTR) program’s aim is to protect and preserve the origin and special properties of the traditional, high-quality foods, and it also helps the conscious consumer choices,
- The consumers are becoming more conscious when they pick from the stores’ supplies, search for the domestic, high-quality foods that were made using a
traditional or special method. In addition to the price, it is increasingly determining which food contains fewer additives, which one is artisan, traditional or regional product, which one was made with a special local method.

- The TTR program was created to collect and preserve values, which has become a collection of hundreds of traditional and regional agricultural products.

3. 2. The Door database

In the European Union the agricultural products and foodstuffs that are registered with protected designations of origin and protected geographical indications as well as the guaranteed traditional specialities can be found in the DOOR database.

The Hungarian Council for Origin Protection (MET) gives opinions on the specifications and the modifications of the specifications of the agricultural products and foodstuffs in the national stage of the reviewing procedure of the EU protection. The Hungarian Council for Origin Protection – based on the government decree 1374/2013. (VI. 27.) - is the government’s opinion-giving, proposal-making consultative body power during any administrative procedure related to the geographical indications of the agricultural products and foodstuffs, as well as to the recognition of the traditional specialties.

MET is composed of representatives of the competent authorities and original protection specialists. The EU regulation for the common organization of the markets in agricultural products (Regulation EU no 1308/2013) for each product (for example: cheese, dairy products, ham, wine) that bears protected designation of origin or protected geographical indication regulates separately the possible derogations from the general rules, the possibility of any compulsory or restrictive national legislation.

According to the MET guidelines:

- In the case of products with protected designation of origin, the product and the delimited geographical area are in a strong connection, all the phases of the production, elaboration and the preparation must take place in the given geographical area.

- In the case of products with protected geographical indication it is sufficient to have connection only in one of the phases. Thus the raw material for elaboration can derive from a greater area than the delimited one, it has to be defined in the specifications of the product.

4. Other trade marks

A trade mark to qualify spas has been introduced to the field of other trademarks, at the certification the bath units have to be evaluated separately as well. Furthermore, the process of the qualification of water stops has commenced, however its effects on the rural tourism cannot be detected yet.
5. Conclusion

To sum up, we can say that by all means the introduction of the sunflower trade marks’ system by László Csizmadia has set prosperous developments afloat in the field of rural tourism (Csizmadia, L. 1992). It would be rewarding to introduce additional trademarks so the visitors could gain more trust in quality, which contributes to the development of the responsible rural tourist model. The operation of the trademarks promotes the local products’ improvement and their presence in the market (Kósa, L. 1984,1998). The local products can even gain such a reputation in the TTR and DOOR programs that they may become part of the world heritage within the foreseeable future.

References


* Online full-text paper availability: doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.15414/isd2016.s7.12