

KILINSKA Klavdiya, SKUTAR Tetiana

Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University (Chernivtsi, Ukraine)

RURAL HOMESTEADS OFFERS FOR TOURISTS IN THE CHERNIVTSSI REGION

Abstract

Rural tourism is a priority trend in social-economic development of rural areas in the Chernivtsi region. There has been an increase in the number of rural homesteads in the region in recent years. The improvement of infrastructure and rural tourism services promotion are the important problems for rural tourism in the region. The article deals with the types of tourism services, which are proposed by homesteads in the Chernivtsi region, and the information and advertising sources, which are used for agritourism product promotion.

Key words: rural tourism, rural homesteads offers, promotion of rural tourism, informational and promotional materials, informational promotional sources.

Introduction

Rural tourism is an important factor to ensure sustainable development of rural areas. Development of rural tourism contributes to improvement of rural population living standards, preserves rural culture and environment.

Rich natural and recreational potential, clean environment, interesting historical and cultural landmarks, original ethnic and cultural heritage create favorable conditions for the implementation of various types of recreation in rural areas of the Chernivtsi region.

Body of paper

Rural tourism is a priority trend in social-economic development of rural areas in the Chernivtsi region. In recent years there has been an increase in number of rural homesteads in the region by 2.3 times, from 39 in 2007 to 91 in 2013. The average bedspace per one homestead in the region is 8 persons. More than 70% of the total number of registered rural homesteads are located in the mountain and pre-mountain areas of the region. Most rural homesteads are situated in the Putyla, Vyzhnytsya, Khotyn and Kitsman districts and there are no rural homesteads in the Zastavna and Gertsya districts. Besides, the region has rural homesteads and cottages which provide accommodation services but which are not included into both the State Register and the Register of Members of the Union for Promotion of Rural Green Tourism in Ukraine. In general, according to experts there are about 250-300 subjects of rural tourism in the region.

The Chernivtsi region has significant opportunities for the development of rural tourism, the efficiency of which largely depends on the use of modern marketing tools to promote rural recreational services in the market. In many European countries information technology, Internet and direct sales of tours by their owners or their advertising by the rural tourism location centers are widely used [Zinko, 2008, p.32].

As proved by the researches, the most common forms of promotion of rural tourism in the Chernivtsi region are issuing informational and advertising materials, posting information on the Internet and participating in specialized fairs, with more information about rural tourist offers provided in digital form.

The main sources of information on services the homestead owners propose are the following:

- advertising brochures and leaflets, catalogs and guides in rural tourism published by

public and state agencies;

- websites of local executive authorities and local government bodies as well as tourist information centers created by them;
- websites of public tourist organizations, such as the “All-Ukrainian Union for Promotion of Rural Green Tourism in Ukraine”, Tourist public organization “Palette of Bucovyna”, Association of the Tourism Industry Workers in the Chernivtsi Region “Tourist Bucovyna”;
- web-portals containing catalogs of tourist services in Ukraine in general (e.g. www.ruraltourism.com.ua), and in some of its regions in particular, including Ukrainian Carpathians - www.karpaty.info, Bukovina - www.mybukovyna.com, etc.;
- websites of owners of rural homesteads and tourist facilities;
- national and regional specialized exhibitions-fairs: "Ukrainian Village Invites", UITT "Ukraine - Travel & Tourism", "Bukovina tourist fair", "Petrivskyi fair" and others.

One of the first presentational publications for rural recreation in Ukraine was a rural tourism homesteads catalog "Ukrainian Village Invites" published in Ukrainian and English, with the assistance of the Union in 2007, where 80 best rural homesteads of Ukraine were presented, 8 of them - in the Chernivtsi region.

With support of the international project "Management of Green Tourism in the Regions of Ukrainian Carpathians and Stanytsia Lugansk" in 2009, an edition “Colorful Bukovyna, Horizons of the Target Tourism” was published, containing information on appealing for tourists natural, historical, architectural, ethnographic monuments as well as offers of 34 subjects of rural tourism (with photos), which represented 37.3 % of all registered rural homesteads in the region.

The most exhaustive information concerning rural homesteads in recent years is presented in digital form. One of the best is an information database posted on the website of the Association of the Tourism Industry Workers in the Chernivtsi Region “Tourist Bukovina” [7]. It contains information about accommodation possibilities and services in 75 rural homesteads (82% of total) and includes the following data:

- rural homestead name and information about its owner;
- address, phone, e-mail, web-site;
- distance to the district centre, to the centre of the region by railway and road transport;
- number of rooms (number of 1-, 2-, 3-bed rooms);
- additional services;
- average room rate per night (OB, B&B).

Information on the subjects of rural tourism, posted on web-portals of the Chernivtsi City Council, regional and district state administrations, tourist information center, tourist portal "My Bucovyna" forms a common list (by administrative districts), including information about the owner, address, telephone number and bedspace only.

Analysis of informational and promotional material shows that about 40 rural homesteads are the most heavily advertised, the majority of them are located in the Carpathian Mountains and Podnistrovyia. An important role in promoting their services at the market is played by popular websites of the *Union for Promotion of Rural Green Tourism* [5], *Green Tourism* [11], *Karpaty.info* [12], *Recreation in the Carpathians* [13], *Development of green tourism in Ukraine* [14] and others, where detailed descriptions and photos of rural homesteads are placed. Unfortunately, only a few rural homesteads have their own web-pages.

It should be noted that appearance of certain digital as well as printed (as mentioned above) informational and promotional material was due to implementation of some international projects. Tourist Information Centre Web-portal – www.chernivtsy.cv.ua – was developed with the financial support of the German Office for Technical Cooperation GTZ; web-site "My Bukovyna" – www.mybukovyna.com – and a Bukovina tourist map – with the

support of the European Union in the framework of cross-border cooperation "The Joint Operational Programme Romania – Ukraine – Republic of Moldova 2007–2013".

Using informational promotional materials published in 2004–2007, Y.V. Zinko, P.A. Horishevskiy, M.A. Petryshyn, V.P. Vasylyev and O.O. Hundyak made a marketing research of the rural homestead offers in the Carpathian region [2]. We conducted a similar study of existing living conditions and basic types of services of rural tourism subjects using the above-mentioned informational promotional sources for the years 2009-2013 (table no.1).

Table No.1: List of types of services and conveniences offered by the hosts in the Chernivtsi region

Service	On the basis of informational and promotional materials, %	
	2004-2007	2009-2013
<i>Basic types of services</i>		
Excursion programs	-	68
Private vehicle (transfer, excursions)	53	42
Organization of skiing, tobogganing	-	18
Collecting berries, mushrooms and herbs	-	97
National cuisine	-	24
Hostess bakes bread	55	22
Introduction to traditional house-keeping and farming	45	-
Vegetables from the garden	82	-
Restaurant, café	47	3
Fishing	96	94
Swimming	92	77
Horse riding	53	51
Hunting	57	21
<i>Accommodation conveniences</i>		
Telephone	80	80
Shower or bath	100	100
Toilet in the house	76	97
Television	96	93
Washing machine	100	-
Parking	94	95
Gas stove	88	-
Cooking facilities	-	27
Picnic area and campfire area (kolyba, barbecue, gazebo)	53	62
Traveling with children (playground)	96	-
Swimming pool	-	3
Sauna	8	44
Apiary	24	9
A host has a cow	67	-
Travelling with pets	55	-
A host knows a foreign language	25	27

As the table shows, there have been some changes in rural homesteads offers that are covered in informational and promotional publications in the recent years. Compared to the previous years, nowadays tours, picking berries, mushrooms and herbs, cuisine, etc. are more often advertised in informational materials. They do not focus on the following features of the vacation in the countryside as exploration of traditional house-keeping and farming, consumption of organic vegetables, etc., as it was before. In addition to the basic types of services they offer master classes in cooking Hutsul dishes, herbs baths, herbal teas with honey, organizing rafting, paintball, tennis, volleyball, billiards, etc. Tourists can also explore folk traditions, customs and rituals; join the celebration of national holidays and more. It should be noted that most rural homesteads areas focus on Ukrainian tourists as homestead owners barely speak English and other foreign languages.

Conclusions:

Informational and promotional materials as well as Internet play an important role in promoting rural tourism services market. Analysis of informational and promotional material shows that a relatively small part of the homesteads is represented in a few printed materials (catalogs, brochures, etc.). Besides, information on the majority of rural homesteads is present mostly in digital form, and do not fully represent their tourist offers. In addition, you cannot always see pictures of estates. In order to improve rural tourism marketing it is necessary to increase production of informational and promoting editions and improve their quality. To implement appropriate measures under the condition of domestic financial resources deficiency it is essential to expand international cooperation in the tourism sector with foreign partners.

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