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RURAL TOURISM MARKETING: STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING OFF-THE BEATEN-PATH DESTINATIONS

Annotation: Today, world tourism is one of the most profitable sectors of the economy. It ensures high employment and socio-economic development indicators of the working population. Because in countries where the hospitality industry is developing special attention is paid to the effective use of labor resources. Tourism is a wide notion that can be understood in different ways. For example from Earth to Universe has a variety of tourism. Because tourism is the best option to relax and escape everyday problems for people. Thus in today's age most travelers top option has become visiting suburbs and engaging in rural tourism activities. Because I think so people are already get bored from big shopping malls, dining restaurants, urban cities, famous monuments, buildings. Noise pollution bothers them at all. They need peaceful life, tranquil places, fresh air, more oxygen. Rural tourism is the complex of all this activities. In this article I will highlight why we need rural tourism and some workable strategies to develop rural and ecotourism.

Key words: suburbs, non-urban areas, forestry, livestock, gastronomy, biological diversity, shelter, environmental conservation, poverty, sustainable tourism approaches, kayaking, rafting.

In these days rural tourism has a great potential to improve local people's life economically. Because for people who have a westernised lifestyle, life in rural areas is an unfamiliar concept. At first what is rural tourism? "Rural tourism is at the local level, a population density of 150 persons per square kilometer is the preferred criterion. At the regional level, geographic units are grouped by the share of their population that is rural into the following three types: predominantly rural (50%), significantly rural (15-50%) and predominantly urbanized regions (15%)¹. OECD also states that rural tourism should be:

- Located in rural areas.
- Functionally rural, built upon the rural world's special features; small-scale enterprises, open space, contact with nature and the natural world, heritage, traditional societies, and traditional practices.
- Rural in scale – both in terms of building and settlements – and therefore, small scale.
- Traditional in character, growing slowly and organically, and connected with local families.
- Sustainable – in the sense that its development should help sustain the special rural character of an area, and in the sense that its development should be sustainability in its use of resources.
- Of many different kinds, representing the complex pattern of the rural environment, economy, and history.

¹ OECD definition about rural tourism

Rural tourism can appear in different forms and shapes. In addition it includes many other tourism types which are directly connected with nature. For example:

- Agritourism:** “Agritourism is the symbiotic relationship between tourism and agriculture.”² In a simple context, agritourism is a form of tourism which activities are focused directly with agriculture, and utilizes the unique offerings of rural and agriculture rich communities.
- **Ecotourism:** it is a form of nature tourism (tourism to natural, unspoiled areas) which promotes environmental conservation and direct benefits for local societies and cultures, together with the provision for tourists of a positive, educative experience. Ecotourism also contains some sustainable development activities occurred in the natural environment.
 - **Environmental volunteer tourism.** Being an environmental volunteer helps people to be closer to the earth. It could include gardening, planting plants or trees, conservation, bio construction, clean ups and recycling and more.
 - **Outdoor sports tourism:** Doing some sports mountains, lakes, rivers, deserts, or other remote places are the best location. Hiking in the mountains, rock climbing, kayaking, rafting can be the best example for adventure sports to do in rural areas.

The real beauty of the nature without human participation, therefore, becomes a tourist attraction. Rural Tourism means experiencing “the actual culture” of a rural setting. Rural tourism may include farm tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, nature tourism, and eco-tourism. Unlike sightseeing tourism, it does not involve monuments or ancient buildings imparting knowledge about the region. The all things that tourists can do are

- Touring
- Cultural activities
- Water-related activities
- Health-related activities
- Passive activities
- Sporting activities

Touring. One of the main activities that tourists can do are hiking, horse riding, touring in gypsy caravans, motorized touring, small village touring, cycling, adventure holiday or wilderness holidays as a group. It will also give a feeling of unity.

Cultural activities. Archaeology, restoration of some rural heritages, artistic expression workshops can be a good examples of cultural activities in rural tourism. Tangible and intangible cultural heritages of the rural area can also attract many tourists attention and interest.

Water-related activities. If the suburbs located near the sea or river tourists can do wide range of water-related activities and sports like fishing, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, windsurfing, speedboat racing, sailing and others.

² Food and Agriculture Organization

Health-related activities. As we know that in natural places there are many wellness resorts such as fitness training, assault course, spa and health. Thus many tourists travels to rural areas for the purpose of health improvement by engaging in different health-related tourism activities.

Passive activities. such as relaxation holidays in the rural resorts, nature study in outdoor settings including birdwatching and photography, landscape appreciation are also some famous activities of rural tourism.

Sporting activities. There are some sports which suburbs are the best location to do this sports including potholing, rock climbing, tennis, golf, low-intensity downhill skiing, and hunting.

There is no doubt that in these days rural tourism can become the world's one of strongest economic sector. Even in some countries it already happened. Because of income which tourists bring to countryside, job opportunities especially for women like housekeeping, handcrafting, infrastructural developments and others. There are some strategies which can improve this tourism type worldwide. Below I will highlight some of useful methods and steps which some organizations and countries offer to develop rural tourism in every country.

- Clearly defining geographic area with it's natural, cultural, and human attractions. Finding the best location with original nature's beauty is a powerful way to attract environmentally conscious travelers. They may use hotels which promote rural tourism experiences by offering accommodations in natural settings and activities that allow visitors to connect with the natural beauty of the region. A prime example of this strategy can be found in the Sierra de Grazalema in Andalusia.³ Stunningly beautiful area, rural hotels should adopt sustainable practices and give travelers the opportunity to explore nature trails, participate in local agriculture and learn about rural culture. These experiences not only generate income for the hotels, but also benefit local communities by promoting environmental conservation and responsible tourism. Developing a number of beach resorts, with related investments in golf courses, casinos, and other infrastructure can attract more guests for suburbs.
- Tourism planning, infrastructure, and activities. Cooperating with local stakeholders who are willing to work together. As Morbier Rando, member of Swiss biking club said that "We were looking for a new experience, a complete change of scene, far from the stress of work and everyday life... we were delighted and ready to come back." Rural tourism activities should differ from other type of tourism with authentic emotions and full of energy. Tour operators should organize kind of tour packages which is not look like others with donkey riding, staying in a farm, walking around the countryside to explore nature's beauty. Ethnic elements reflected in the architecture and decor appeal to tourists looking for an authentic experience. Inside rural guesthouses, the rooms should be decorated with a blend of Arab, Berber, and African accents.
- Promoting rural tourism itineraries. In crafting new itineraries, if a basic methodology applied to form the foundation for training in tour planning. The approach focused on creating tourism products that could be marketed by local incoming operators and promoted directly to foreign tour operators or even the public. Creating detailed maps using ArcView, a sophisticated geographic information system can digitalize the tours and make the trip easier.
- Capacity building and training. program transferred knowledge and skills in a more systematic way through a comprehensive training program that: (1) educated tourism officials about best

³ <https://en.roiback.com/rb-academy/5-sustainable-tourism-strategies-to-contribute-to-local-economic-development>

practices in rural tourism planning and development, (2) taught tour operators how to improve and market their products, (3) encouraged local associations to promote tourism as a way to raise incomes in their communities. If knowledge, skills, and tools are transferred to national, regional, and local partners throughout implementation it can increase the income for host country. Tour operators, market survey methodologies, technical manuals drawing on international best practices, and a cadre of local stakeholders should train in various aspects of sustainable tourism development. A series of pilot initiatives demonstrated practical ways to add value to the rural itineraries.

Recently Morocco has becoming best visited rural destination in the world. Because of picturesque scenery, colorful cultures and hospitable local people. Situated at a unique crossroad between Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, Morocco attracts 5.5 million visitors each year. Yet it lags far behind competing countries, ranking 9th among the 10 principal tourist destinations in the Mediterranean basin⁴. From well-preserved ruins, baking bread in a traditional clay oven, wood carving, colorful patio of a rural guesthouses, till making pottery using traditional techniques handed down through the generations have been attracting many tourists attention in Morocco. Below there is a survey result about rural tourism in Morocco which is conducted by the Mrt Project.

RURAL TOURISM SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE MRT PROJECT: KEY FINDINGS

Number of foreign visitors surveyed	1,406 in six regions (Agadir, Desert-Oasis, Rif, Central High Atlas, Western High Atlas, and Middle Atlas)
Countries of origin	43 percent of the visitors came from France, followed by 21 percent from Spain and 9 percent from the United Kingdom.
Gender	Gender disaggregation was fairly even: 52 percent of those surveyed were men and 48 percent were women.
Age groups	The age range varied widely, with 52 percent between the ages of 26 and 45.
Number of visits to Morocco	56 percent of those surveyed had visited Morocco more than once.
Visits to rural areas	All had visited rural areas at least once. More than 65 percent spent up to four days in rural areas.
Motivation	The top reasons cited for visiting rural areas were: scenery, cultural heritage, interaction with rural populations, relaxation, historic sites, and outdoor sports.
Budget	Almost 30 percent of respondents said they expected to spend more than 600 dirhams per person each day. An equal number expected to spend 300 to 450 dirhams per day. Only 22 percent said they planned to spend less than that.
Purchase of local products	All visitors reported buying local products. Jewelry was the most popular at 32 percent, followed by traditional clothing/shoes at 26 percent, textile products at 22 percent, and pottery at 15 percent.

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