

AGROTOURISM AS AN ELEMENT OF A PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT BASED ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE CRACOW-CZESTOCHOWA UPLAND

Summary: The Cracow - Czestochowa Upland is popularly known as "the Jura" and constitutes one of the most attractive tourist areas in Poland. As a resting place its beautiful landscape is a really enhancing and inviting area for tourists. The aim of this paper is to show the promotional strategy of the region of Cracow - Czestochowa Upland and the course taken to improve it, while paying special attention to households involved in agrotourism in the northern part of the Jura.

Key words: Eagle Nest's Trail, household, agrotourism, Jurassic Association of Local Communities, promotion, administrative districts

The Cracow- Czestochowa Upland is very similar to the Franconia Jurassic Rocks in terms of its sheer beauty.

The Czestochowa Upland which spreads from Olkusz to Czestochowa is situated at a high level and is characterised by sharp-topped hills.

The highlands generally reach up to 200 metres above sea level with a few peaks reaching 350 metres. The exceptional beauty of the region is determined by superb limestone formations of strange shapes, rocky cliffs, caves, springs, ravines and gorges. This is all complemented by rich flora. The greatest attraction are the mysterious ruins of medieval castles once the old defensive line of the Polish Republic.

Hilly land, strewn with limestone rocks amongst beautiful forests; once referred to as "The Beskid mountains in miniature" - attracts specific types of tourists: walkers, cyclists, lovers of rock climbing and speleologists. Indeed, many famous alpinists started their careers here. The Jura is for some people a place to walk, while for others it is a place to go in for extreme sports e.g. paragliding. It is also an excellent place for cycling. The roads in the area are in fairly good condition and in many areas there is little traffic on the roads.

Likewise, the area is a true paradise for mountain bikers who use small roads or tracks. There are many trails of varying degrees of difficulty, but one should remember to adhere to the safety regulations. The Jura means omnipresent stones and rocks. The Jurassic GOPR Group (Volunteer Jurassic Rescue Service) has taken care of the safety of tourists in the area for many years.

The horse industry is developing as new studs are coming into existence. During the winter cross country skiers visit the area and there are now a few ski lifts in operation in Morsko, Cisowa or Jaroszowiec.

It is possible to go fishing or do water sports in a few aqueous basins (but it's a rather waterless area) in the basin of the river Wiercica which is full of trout and situated at the edge of the Jura - Poraj Lake. Two large Polish rivers have their springs in the area: the Warta and the Pilica.

The nearby pine, beech or hornbeam forests provide the possibility of picking the fruits of the forest such as: wild strawberries, blackberry bushes, bilberries and especially mushrooms.

Stretching out along the Jurassic rocks and hills and ruins of medieval castles of the "Eagle Nest's Trail" is one of the most important tourist trails in Poland. The first trail in this area was already marked out in 1927.

Its attractiveness is connected with its topology, numerous historical monuments, monadnocks, caves and natural virtues. The afore-mentioned virtues encourage many tourists come to see the Jura.

The Jurassic region has also many interesting towns to see, for instance:

Zarki – The city lies on the eastern edge of the Czestochowa Highlands on Leśniówka Stream within the Eagle Nest's Panoramic Park. The city is the intersection point of three towns namely: Żarki, Leśniów and Przewodziszwice. The parish church of Saint Simon and Saint Jude is also worth seeing.

Podlesice – this picturesque village lies at the foot of the highest peak in the Czestochowa region-Mount Zborów, which is 462 meters above sea level. It has many interesting rock formations in the surrounding area, the most well known being Okiennik Wielki. This limestone formation, which features a huge hole, hosted humans in its rocky shelters as far back as 100,000 years ago during the mid-Palaeolithic era.

Olsztyn – once a chartered city, it is located on the Czestochowa Highlands within the Eagles Nest's Panoramic Park and is the township seat. One of the greatest attractions are the ruins of the defensive castle built by Kazimir the Great in the 14th century. The imposing towers stood among limestone cliffs and was part of a defensive line for Władysław II Opolczyk in the years 1370-91. In 1587 Duke Maximilian besieged the castle and caused considerable damage to it. In the years 1570-1726 the castle was partially demolished and the materials used to build a local church.

Mirów i Bobolice – a royal castle of 14th century whose origins transferred from Ludwig of Hungary to Władysław Opolczyk as a fiefdom. An excellent example of a structure that is integrated into the rock of the peak but has lain in ruins since the Swedish invasion. The crest of the peak from Mirów to Bobolice is a great view point to observe the nearby Mirowska Mountain.

Janów – the town of Janów has been in existence since 1696 and the township has an area of 146 square kilometres and population of 6,200. The real attractions are the rock formations in the Wiercica Valley: Twardowski's Gate, Devil's Bridges, Cross Cliff and Bear's Grotto. Additional attractions include the ruins of a medieval castle built by Kazimir the Great in the 14th century, the cemetery chapel of St. Barbara's in Żuraw that dates from the 16th century.

Ogrodzieniec – is centrally located in the Jurassic rock within the limits of the Eagles Nest's Panoramic Park and occupies 86 square kilometres. The township offers beautiful forest trails with rich flora and fauna, super areas for rock climbing, as well as hunting. The township possesses a wealth of historical sites, one of which is the 14th century ruins of Ogrodzieniec castle in Podzamcze. The citadel arose during the reign of Bolesław Krzywousty. In 1530, Seweryn Boner converted the defensive castle into an imposing residence.

Not only can we witness the development of tourism but also the purchase of attractive plots and entire farms in terms of the interest shown with relation to this area. The increasing number of tourists arriving at the Jura is behind the development of tourism there which is contributing towards the improvement of accommodation and catering services. New guesthouses and inns are coming into existence.

One aspect of an effective marketing promotion is an appropriate view of the market and the consumer. All activities should be adapted to the current demands of the market, by accurately identifying both the expectations and needs of consumers, while also aspiring to fulfil them.

The basis of this approach is strategic awareness, which is expressed in terms of knowledge and abilities, ways of thinking and understanding, making assessments and conscious choices, as well as in actions that are planned and realized for the accomplishment of the purposes set out.

The aim of this paper is to present the realization of activities associated with the strategy of promoting the region of the Krakow - Czestochowa Upland and courses of direction for improving it with particular mention of agrotouristic farmsteads in the northern part of the Jura - especially on the land of the administrative districts of Czestochowa, Myszkow and Zawiercie.

When the local authorities of the Jurassic administrative districts realized the potential of tourism in the region and the prospect of developing deteriorating farms, they established the Jurassic Association of Local Communities with its seat in Ogrodzieniec in 1991.

It is a voluntary association of the Czestochowa, Katowice and Cracow provinces. At present, the Jurassic Association of Local Communities patronizes 33 administrative districts. In 2001, it further developed by the creation of the Jurassic Society of Rural Tourism, which mainly focused on agrotouristic households and its seat was also located in Ogrodzieniec. The Society also runs a centre known as Agrotouristic Information in Zrębice near Olsztyn.

Spending holidays on farms is not a very new concept in global circles. The world over, agrotourism is a very popular concept providing a delightful opportunity for tourists to enrich their lives with nature and adventure and at the same time instilling pride amongst farmers.

Rest holidays in the country are becoming increasingly popular with time. Today, it is a way of life for many households. In Poland the trend of agrotourism began in the last decade and this idea of business is rapidly developing, as more and more hosts are able to take tourists in.

For a household to receive a trade name, it must however meet certain conditions. Therefore, it must undergo inspection by the appropriate organizations so that the tourist can be sure that services will be at the required level. Each household should have a minimum of 1 ha of ground and located on rural lands.

The owner must also actively carry out some agricultural activity. It can be cultivation of crops but also husbandry of different animals e.g. of horses, sheep, rabbits. The host should also divide the house into five rooms in the residential part for guests (there is no possibility of establishing the business activity on the basis of needs and paying the income tax then).

Holiday cottages or converted outbuildings can not be used for the accommodation of tourists. After meeting these conditions - it would be sufficient to submit the proposal of the agrotourist business at the local government offices.

By the end of 2005 – such businesses could count on partial funding for the establishment of agrotourism from the European Union

It was necessary to determine the business plan together with a specialist employed at local governments, which referred to a plan of the expansion of the farm or husbandry carried out. Farmers received up to 50 per cent of the total investment, but no more than 100 thousand zlotys.

At present, the programme of partial funding has terminated, so there is no subsidy this year although specialists from the Agency of the Agrarian Market assume that there will probably be such a possibility from 2007, but on the basis of conditions that are as yet unknown. There are as many as a few thousand agrotourist households in our country – of which over 100 are registered in the Jura region.

Apart from accommodation, they often offer food and contact with nature in a broad sense. The touristic and financial success of agrotourism has been the result of the growing popularity of rest holidays in country areas and the promotion of this form of tourism. An important role is played by the low price of these services. The fact of the matter is that on such a holiday a person can forget about the city traffic and the stress of everyday life at a fast pace.

Agrotouristic houses in the Jura have a wide range of accommodation facilities. There is the possibility of booking the accommodation in guest rooms or in self-contained flats. Such guesthouses

not only offer tranquillity, fresh air and fine Jurassic views, but also offer a range of activities that we usually lack the time for, like horse riding, angling or mushroom picking, which can be testified by the majority of such businesses in the Jura region. In most of these households traditional home meals are also served.

If the accommodation provider does not offer food it is possible to get farm products and to cater for oneself. Practically speaking, it is always possible to taste organic vegetables and fruits straight from the garden and drink fresh milk. Households also offer additional attractions such as the following: organizing bonfires, collecting minerals of which there are plenty in the Jurassic lands, trips all over the surrounding area on a horse cart or on bicycles, demonstrations of how to bake bread, make butter and cheese with traditional methods, as well as weaving on a loom.

On customer request other items of interest can be organized by the hosts such as: music meetings, folk and song ceremonies, meetings with interesting people, folk artists, tourist trips around surrounding areas - observation of animals and birds in the forest and joint work on the land, in the homestead and at the apiary.

The afore-mentioned proposals do not constitute the only possibilities of spending an attractive and active holiday in country households. Additionally, it is no problem to find accommodation with a separate entrance, bathroom and even kitchen. Guesthouses which are part of an association have a similar system of classification to that of hotels with the use of stars. The Polish Federation of Rural Tourism implemented a marking system of "suns", ranging from one to three, on the principle of stars regarding hotels.

Creating the positive image of these places is a difficult and complex process. The promotion of city and region starts from the preparation of the right strategy. It is possible to show the city and region in a favourable light through the activity of its inhabitants, because they form the constructive layer of the large urbanized area of the afore-mentioned lands. Self-government bodies of administrative districts in the process of initiating a strategic plan for the promotion of country regions must find an effective method of passing on knowledge to the surrounding area. They should also pay attention to having an efficient system of receiving the information from the surrounding area with regard to the social partners.

It is possible to distinguish two main types of the social environment which the authorities of administrative districts must communicate with. First of all, there is the inner environment that consists of workers of the administrative district who participate directly in the administration of the local district, while also referring to their knowledge, motivation, practical skills, interpersonal competence, but also technology and organizational resources.

The external environment is also significant, as it first and foremost, includes all the inhabitants of the administrative district, which can be differentiated into various groups, organizations, associations and institutions or enterprises, as well as the actual environment itself as a territory that is adjacent to other administrative districts, on the basis of county, regional and national structures.

Areas of activity associated with the scope of the mutual communication and cooperation of the administrative district authorities with the local community refer to the following:

- information about progress with regard to implementing the plan
- possibility of the participation of inhabitants in meetings of the team (after previous notification).
- cooperation with the local media: providing information about the projects implemented in the local media at least once a year.

Another important activity that is undertaken by the authorities relates to that of promotion. Promotion enables the creation of demand for a given product i.e. the demand, and in consequence the best way to sell it and at the same time get the best price possible. In the case where the

administrative district is the product in question, the borough leader tries to sell its favourable features in the best way possible. This is of great significance, not only in prestigious terms but also economic ones. The manner in which the administrative district is perceived in other quarters is a big factor with relation to whether the administrative district receives budgetary funds for investment and whether the newly founded agrotouristic businesses will be able to get financial aid from the European Union.

If the administrative district thanks to the promotion campaign is well-known and commands a high placing in the ranking, then it has a greater chance of receiving funds and also arouses more interest among investors. The price of land would increase in such a region as the level of interest in purchasing land there would become widespread. All of this could become possible thanks to the promotion of tourism in the region, which in turn is the power behind development in the local area and a strong factor of social changes.

One should in addition emphasize that promotion is a continuous process and requires the right approach and promotion materials. The Jura is a special area in this respect. The promotion of the region brings positive effects in many aspects and even causes a sense of jealousy among the authorities of other districts. On account of the modest financial resources available no expensive folders are being published, but there is a greater focus on the actual ways of promotion and on other more significant matters. Over the past few years, a modest folder has been in publication with a rather small budget provided by sponsoring firms. The folder is very well laid out, which aroused huge interest among recipients, and during the Łódź Expo 2001 Trade Fair the folder and its way of presentation won the prestigious title "Mister Information" for the Jurassic Association.

The promotion materials also serve as tourist maps e.g. Janów or Niegowa districts. Such action is justified from an economic point of view as the local government pays only half of the necessary costs. Additionally, the local authorities receive financial resources from companies to cover the cost of printing, which allows them to promote themselves on the map. Some of the financing comes from small charges from the households involved in agrotourism there in which their services are advertised on the map. It is also important to note that the area is presented in many prestigious publications both at a local and regional level, which feature wonderful pictures of the area. The level of interest in the administrative district is also huge thanks to the different kinds of summer festivals and events that are organised. Thanks to all of this, cooperation with the media is developing and the publication of articles in the press also boosts the image of the administrative district and this is a strong point of the promotion.

This kind of promotion is also creating interest among a number of television stations, which contribute to the even wider scale of promotion by showing the administrative district on educational and tourist programmes. Finally, in the days of computerization a homepage is most essential and here is no exception. More information can be found at www.jura.info.pl. The homepage plays a very significant role, the more so as it is one of the best websites with regard to local districts. Many young people surf on this website which augers well for the development of tourism in the future. Careful attention to keeping the good image of the Jurassic administrative districts is a good indication of the host and encourages other borough leaders and mayors to do the same, which in turn leads to increased business from tourism and a greater chance of regional development.

The administrative districts participate in all the most important domestic trade fairs either directly or through the Jurassic Association of Local Communities. It is important to note that there is a lot to advertise in the region, because apart from agrotourism, the Jurassic local governments are famous for outdoor events that arouse great interest and attract crowds of tourists. For a few years now, a regional product has been promoted as "The Golden Region of the Trout" in Złoty Potok, which consists of elements of history, landscape, relaxation and gastronomy. Press conferences are organized and the media is kept informed about upcoming events in the local area. There are also

tourist information points where it is possible to gain information about the area, agrotourism, events, as well as what sights are worth seeing.

The authorities of administrative districts take care of the good image of the region as actively involved local governments. They encourage local leaders to create informal support groups for the development of the region and research of history with the aim of documenting the rich traditions of the region. They support archaeologists and writers, clubs and associations that operate in the administrative districts. They also provide access to the land of administrative districts for different kinds of tourist activity and help legal entities organize undertakings connected with tourism. Moreover, they try to raise funds and receive financial aid for the development of tourist facilities (an example of this is the bicycle lane that was opened between Złoty Potok and Ostrężnik in 2004). Apart from the afore-mentioned maps and printed folders, touristic and historical posters, calendars, postcards, leaflets are also published.

Competitions and exhibitions of works of artists are organised that are associated with the local administrative districts, in order to show and to promote the best of what can be found with relation to natural and cultural sources and human potential.

To sum up, the promotion of administrative districts is multidirectional and is a continuous operation, while it may be invisible in many stages but systematically follows the goals set out. It is carried out in a fluctuating manner with varying levels of intensity in order not to tire the potential recipient. The measure of the effectiveness of promotion is the increased interest in the administrative district and the increase in tourism, agrotourism and development of the region. Apart from the wide-ranging promotion campaign, the administrative district authorities also defined objectives regarding the development of tourism. Some of the more important ones have been listed below:

1. Introducing the concept of developing tourism at meetings in the local area even at the lowest unit of local administration, usually comprising single villages and getting acceptance by the community for the programme.
2. Making the administrative district pleasant for tourists and inhabitants.
3. Creating the positive tourist image of administrative districts in the media and institutions dealing with tourism,
4. Shaping the good image of administrative districts amongst potential buyers of tourist services
5. Creating a lobby agrotourism at the local government and outside the region.
6. Organizing full-time training courses for inhabitants that refer to the following aspects:
 - development of tourist services, including accommodation,
 - using products produced by the household in question as an element of tourism,
 - cooperating and interacting with inhabitants in order to make the administrative districts attractive for tourists,
 - searching for additional sources of income through the development of the tourist product,
 - using local dishes for the creation of the provincial cuisine as a brand product,
 - cultivating local traditions and culture as elements of the folklore of the Jurassic village,
 - improving the beauty of the surrounding area of the homestead that operates in agrotourism and the villages themselves,
7. Organising seminars on farms in other regions that are involved in agrotourism in order to point out good examples of activities in this type of business.
8. Running mutual action programmes with institutions from the land of the administrative district for the development and the promotion of the agrotourism.
9. Stimulating the idea of rivalry amongst inhabitants by organising and participating in tourist competitions.

10. Supporting an initiative and aiding initiatives for the population of the administrative districts concerning tourism.
11. Searching for leaders and directing work with them towards advisory services for tourism,
12. Organising and participating in fairs and tourist markets in the country and abroad and attracting potential investors, tourist operators and individual tourists.
13. Promoting the administrative district and households engaged in agrotourism with all the resources available to the local government, including the Internet.
14. Making the land of administrative districts available for special activities such as rallies, training courses, conferences and organisational aid.
15. Organising cultural, touristic, recreational and sports events on a regional and national scale aimed at attracting tourists and sponsors, while also creating interest among administrative districts.
16. Running a wide ranging cooperation programme with all institutions in Poland that are involved in the field of the developing tourism on the land of administrative districts and in the Jurassic region.
17. Reating a full information package about tourist services in the local area and the establishment of a tourist information office.
18. Printing and supplying folders, maps, postcards, handouts, catalogues and guides on a daily basis what contain information about the local administrative districts.
19. Enabling the establishment of district and regional associations that are active for the development of tourism in the region.
20. Supporting the preservation of the legacy of the cultural and traditional crafts of the region.
21. Protecting the area, nature and traditional landscape of the region.
22. Taking care of the development of tourist facilities at the local government, including the maintenance of access roads and car parks.
23. Searching for the possibilities of financial aid from EU funds and working out plans concerning the development of tourism.

In the Jurassic local governments the reason for developing agrotourism was first and foremost the development of tourism, which in the majority of countries has become an important branch of the economy and in some cases the main source of revenue. Additionally, in the Jurassic administrative districts there are not too many large factories which contributes to a big unemployment problem, thus the only way for the inhabitants is to start their own businesses.

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THE PRODUCT OF AGROTOURIST FARMS WITHIN THE MUNICIPALITY OF JANÓW

Summary. The municipality of Janów, including its agrotourist farms, has the product that together with modern marketing may contribute to the development of not only the tourism, but the municipality itself as well.