THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN AND INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL:
EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES TRAINING IN AGRITOURISM IN
WIELKOPOLSKA REGION

Magdalena Kozera-Kowalska, Jarosław Uglis
Poznań University of Life Sciences
mkozera@up.poznan.pl, uglis@up.poznan.pl

Keywords:
education and training of human resources – agritourism – human capital – intellectual
capital

JEL classification: J24, L83, O34.

Abstract:
Agritourism is a rapidly growing form of business initiative in many countries around
the world. The elementary factor in the development of this form of tourism is a well-
educated workforce (farmers), which has current knowledge about the preferences and
expectations of agro-tourists. This knowledge demonstrates the quality of human and
intellectual capital of agritourism operators. The source of knowledge on the
determinants of agritourism development is school education. It includes education at
secondary level (techniques of rural tourism), higher education (in tourism and
recreation with a specialization in agritourism) and specialist courses and training run
by the agricultural advisory centres. Studies have shown that agritourism suppliers have
better than average farmer education level.

Introduction
In the dynamically changing realities of management, market operators seek solutions
to ensure their survival and development. Social sciences, including economics and
management, try to describe these solutions and formulate appropriate models. Not all
occurrences equally submit to this modelling. Such occurrences should be the socio-
economic activities of the people, the creators and participants of the organization. They
describe both the theory of human capital, and this was founded on the basis of the
concept of intellectual capital. In both cases, it is difficult to speak of a homogeneous
conceptual apparatus and the standardized measurement methods. Meanwhile, the role
of human capital and intellectual development of various fields of human activity
increases. Examples of perceiving this role are knowledge-intensive sectors (IT,
banking, insurance services, etc.). The role of human and intellectual capital is also
being increasingly recognized in agriculture and in rural areas. The field of non-
agricultural activity, the activity of agritourism in particular reflects these resources. It
THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN AND INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL

includes the provision of tourism services through family farming in active farms for agritourists who have arrived for leisure.

The article has presented some elements of human resource development in agritourism activity in the region of Wielkopolska. Particular attention was paid to the formation of human resources within and beyond the education process, and the effects of improving human resources for agritourism.

1. Methods, literature overview

Source materials from the authors' own research and analysis of the literature sources were used in illustrating the effects of changes in human capital. The study results are presented in graphical and tabular form.

Both the study of human capital and intellectual capital, for which it is the causative factor, are not a novelty. They have been conducted for years by many prominent Polish and foreign researchers (Barcicki, 2000; Dobija, 2003; Kosiewicz, Kicińska & Rogowski, 2006; Sveiby, 2006). They are interdisciplinary in nature and involve theorists in sociology, economics, management science and representatives of other disciplines, as well as social, economic and political practitioners.

The novelty seems to be, however, moving them to agricultural land, constituting a specific socio-cultural as well as economic and organizational area. The problem is significant, especially in such activities as tourism, which is the fulfilment of demands in the development of non-agricultural functions of agriculture and rural areas. In analyzing agritourism it is not sufficient to describe human resources only through the prism of quantitative traits such as the number of employees (Wysocki & Kołodziejczyk, 2007), age or level of formal education (Stawicka, 2006), or productivity (Golaś & Kozera, 2008), etc. Furthermore, in the case of basing agritourism on aggregated data, alongside the many advantages, it has the disadvantage that deprives the individual characteristics and does not reach the circumstances determining the final effects of technical and economic decisions taken individually. This justifies the need for studies at a micro level, based on information coming directly from farms and from the people who operate them.

It seems that it is this last approach which is the most rational look at the realities of the contemporary perception of human activities in rural areas. Look at the functioning of agritourism operators in a market economy. Farm holdings involved in agritourism determines the effectiveness of this activity as well as the partial effectiveness of each of its components. The argument confirming this view is the increasing efficiency of pro-development activities, which can be seen in the number of agritourism farms throughout the Wielkopolska region (Jęczmyk et al., 2005; Kozera-Kowalska & Uglis, 2015). In the context of these activities the role of human capital, especially in terms of
THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN AND INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL

individual skills, commitment and mode of action and a critical look at the results should be emphasized. Human capital is very broad and includes such elements as human genetics, medical conditions, attitudes, skills, experience etc. (Paluszkiwicz, 2005). Not all of these features are possible in estimating a conventional measurement. However, individual human and intellectual capital guiding agritourism are causative agents of organizational capital formation, understood as the infrastructure of technical and organizational information forming the basis of the business, and establishing and maintaining relations with the market and its participants, referred to as the capital market. The human impact on available tangible and intangible asset resources results in the end result in forms of high efficiency of operation “FIG. 1”.

FIG. 1: Individual human and intellectual capital as a factor stimulating the efficiency of farms

Organizational - technical and informatics infrastructure

Tangible and intangible factors of production

Social- economic- and technical efficiency of farms

Connections and relationships with market participants

Farmer: individual intellectual capital

Source: own elaboration.

Furthermore, both the tangible that intangible effects of human impact on available resources, particularly in agritourism, are a factor in the uniqueness of the place. This applies both to its physical aspects (aesthetics of buildings and farmyard, room facilities, etc.), and an atmosphere that encourages re-using the services of the farm. In discussions on the development of non-agricultural functions of agriculture, including agritourism activities, increasingly it stresses that the quality of human capital is determined by both the ability and way of learning and access to directional education at various levels and in various forms. These findings are formulated against the disturbing results of analyses on the level of education that is taken as the basic indicator for this issue. Addressing this among other are Wysocki & Kołodziejczak (2007), Adamowicz (2008), Czerna-Grygiel (2008), Pocztka & Mrózewska-Kamińska (2008), Miś (2009), Mossakowska & Zawojska (2009), Kozerka (2014) et al.
2. Results and Discussion

The generalized studies of the level of formal education of the Polish rural population are not optimistic. These indicate that almost 60% of the rural population have below the average education. Moreover, cited long-term forecasts predict only minor changes in this respect. This means that the Polish countryside lags significantly behind the national average, especially in the area of higher education (projected at 5% for 2030 compared to 14% among the overall population), and the significant advantage of people with primary education, compared to urban residents and Poles in total. Analysis of literature and own research (Kozera-Kowalska & Uglis, 2015) revealed that leading agri-tourism farmers have a better education level than the average farmer.

It should be noted that although agriculture is a sector of the economy of the least educated workforce, its level, both in terms of general and directional education (including agricultural and agri-tourism) is improving steadily (Koloszko-Chomentowska, 2008). A relatively new driver of these changes is individual educational aspirations of the farmers. This applies especially to young people, who are fulfilling the need to find non-agricultural production sources of income in agriculture. These people are trying to acquire additional qualifications beyond the scope of school education. The look for them often beyond the formal education system, i.e. taking part in further training courses (e.g. information technology), retraining and other (Kozera & Grabowska-Chencze, 20014). This process is reflected in agri-tourism, though just as it is diversified regionally.

Wielkopolska is an example of a region in which these processes can be observed. In this province (Uglis, 2012), as in other provinces in the country, tourism has been growing rapidly since the early 1990s “FIG. 2”. The development of agri-tourism confers many benefits to both the farmers in the activity and other residents of the village as well as agritourists (Ciepiela, Kur-Kowalska & Jankowska, 2015; Jęczmyk et al., 2015).
FIG. 2: The development of agritourism in Wielkopolska region between 1992-2014

Source: own elaboration based on data from the Wielkopolski Agricultural Advisory Centre in Poznań

3. School education and extracurricular personnel for agritourism business

Knowledge is the basis for the development of agritourism business in the quality of human capital represented by farmers conducting this activity. The knowledge which they engaged in this activity possess is now becoming an important factor in its success. Undoubtedly, the source of this knowledge can be assumed, however, school education is the primary source. It includes education at secondary and higher level. In an era where knowledge quickly becomes obsolete, there is a need to meet new requirements in the growing importance of gaining specialized courses and training as reported by agritourists. They must also meet the changing demands of the market.

In Poland, in the area of rural tourism, technical high schools are engaged in the training of personnel for agritourism at secondary level. This is a relatively new education profile which has been operating since 2008. The classification of occupations for vocational education in Poland provides for the possibility of training in this profession in a 4-year technical or two-year post-secondary school. There are 45 schools in the country offering such a profile of education. In order to obtain the professional title of rural tourism technician during training, the student must gain two qualifications:

a) T.7.: tourism activities in rural areas,
b) T.8.: conducting agritourism farm.

Graduates are fully prepared to organize and conduct agritourism, including agrotourist services, thanks to such precise qualifications.

Secondary school graduates can expand their knowledge about agritourism at university level. The University of Life Sciences in Poznań has an interesting education offer in human resource training which currently offers tourism and recreation with
a specialization in agritourism. Education in this field has been conducted at the university since 1996, initially under the direction of animal husbandry, whereas since 2010 as bachelor of tourism and recreation studies with a specialization in tourism, in which more than 150 people have obtained a Bachelor's Degree.

In addition, the Wielkopolski Agricultural Advisory Centre in Poznan (WAAC) is very active in organizing various types of training courses for owners of agritourism farms and other rural residents as well as numerous agritourism associations. WAAC employees are pursuing specialized courses for people who want to start their own agritourism business on a farm, and training, among others, in marketing in rural tourism and agritourism, developing agritourism product offers, agritourists nutrition and direct sales of agricultural products from own crops. According to information obtained from WAAC, it appears that between 2010 - 2014 an average of 52 different specialized training courses (39 in 2012 and 65 in 2014) were conducted annually.

Conclusion

The strong connection between agritourism with the changing economic environment means that the results it achieved are the impact of three factors: the quality and the functioning of educational institutions (schools, universities, agricultural consulting, training and adult education etc.), individual skills in shaping and exploitation of knowledge and the skillful association gained of the intellectual capital in this way with the material resources. The interaction of these factors determines the effects of farm tourism in the final analysis, and its development and the individual level of life. These effects are consistent with the wider mission of the Tourism Development Strategy in Poland up to 2015. It is emphasized therein that tourism ("Kierunki rozwoju turyzmu", 2008), including agritourism, should be a synergetic area in relation to other activities and co-create the future level of national income; it is to contribute to creating a positive image of Poland; respecting the principles of sustainable development; taking care of the cultural heritage, traditions and natural wealth, and thus ensure the competitiveness of Polish regions of the country and as a whole. Implementation of the formulated objectives will be possible only in conditions of a high level of education, its wide availability and, above all, a high level of individual motivation of those involved in agritourism, their educational endeavors and aspirations. These measures should be supported at government level, among other, by creating the legal, institutional, financial and human resources for tourism development.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that there are multiple opportunities in the Wielkopolska region to broaden and update knowledge of tourism. It is likely that the number of educated and well-trained people in the field of agritourism in the region will increase, which will contribute to raising human capital and intellectual personnel working in agritourism business.
References:


THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN AND INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL


453
Hradec Economic Days

DOUBLE-BLIND PEER REVIEWED PROCEEDINGS OF
THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE
HRADEC ECONOMIC DAYS 2016

FEBRUARY 2ND AND 3RD, 2016
Vol. I
Edited by Pavel Jedlička.

The proceedings have not been amended or proofread. Editor is not responsible for the language used in the papers.

© 2016 University of Hradec Králové

ISSN 2464-6059 (Print)
ISSN 2464-6067 (Online)